

**Negotiations over Chumbi Valley in Sino-Bhutan Relations:
Strategic Implications for India**

Dissertation submitted to the Department of International Relations,

Sikkim University in the fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of

Master of Philosophy

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DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

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(भारतके संसदके अधिनियमद्वारा स्थापित केन्द्रीय विश्वविद्यालय)

SIKKIM UNIVERSITY

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February 5, 2016

Declaration

I hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “**Negotiations over Chumbi Valley in Sino-Bhutan Relations: Strategic Implications for India**” submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** is my original work. This dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree or diploma in any other university.

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Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Negotiations over Chumbi Valley in Sino-Bhutan Relations: Strategic Implications for India**” submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** in International Relations, embodies the result of bona fide research work carried out by Junu Basumatary under my guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation is submitted for any other degree, diploma, associate-ship and fellowship. All the assistance and help receiver during the course of investigation have been deeply acknowledged by her.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
BNA	Bhutanese National Assembly
CPLA	Chinese People's Liberation Army
IDSA	Institutes of Defence and Study and Analyses
IMTRAT	Indian Military Training Team
IPCS	Institutes of Peace and Conflict Studies
NDFB	National Democratic Front of Bodoland
NEFA	North East Frontier Agency
NER	North Eastern Region
NR	Nepalese Refugee
NSCN-IM	National Socialist Council of Nagaland
PLA	Peoples Liberation Army
PRC	People Republic of China
TAR	Tibetan Autonomous Region
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam
UN	United Nation
WDS	Western Development Strategy

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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Kingdom of Bhutan is one of China's neighbors with which Beijing officially has unresolved border disputes.¹ Nestled in the Himalayan Mountains between China and India, Bhutan, is one of the smallest countries in the world in terms of population size.² Given its geographical position, it is not surprising that Bhutan has, until fairly recently, successfully resisted outside influence and pressure.³

The most important implication of its location and the crucial factor influencing the formulation of its foreign policy is that a friendly or dependent Bhutan is, for strategic reasons, a necessity for both India and China. Bhutan is usually defined as part of an Indian "sphere of influence."⁴ The strategic doctrine that India inherited from the British was based on three pillars: (1) safeguarding the northwest frontier of India through which successive invading armies had made inroads into Indian territory; (2) preventing the areas that are within India's strategic policy from falling under the control of foreign powers; and (3) ensuring the command of the Indian Ocean and its environs.⁵ Since the British period, a philosophy of "extended frontiers" has been followed, which means that a threat was to be met as far from the Indian borders as possible.⁶ India, being in a defensive position vis-à-vis China on the Himalayan frontier, is always sensitive about keeping an exclusive influence on the Himalayan states south of Tibet.⁷

Another strategic consideration for the security of northeastern India makes New Delhi very watchful of the Himalayan states. India cannot afford an aggressive or hostile Bhutan or any

¹ Bruce, Elleman, Stephen Kotkin, Clive Schofield(2013), *Beijing's Power and China's Borders Twenty Neighbors in Asia*, eds., New York: M. E. Sharpe.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Syed Aziz-al Ahsan and Bhumitra Chakma(1993), Bhutan's Foreign Policy: Cautious Self-Assertion?, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 33, No. 11, pp. 1043-1054.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

other neighboring country under Chinese domination.⁸The boundary disputes between Bhutan and China, therefore, is an Indian concern. As we know, Bhutan and China have two four disputed territorial areas, starting from Doklam in the west, the border goes along the ridges from Gamochen to Batangla, Sinchela and down to the Amo Chhu.⁹ This disputed area in Doklam covers around 89 square kilometers; and the disputed areas in Sinchulumpa and Gieu covers about 180 kms.¹⁰ China is claiming maximum territory in the western sector which is close to the tri-junction of Bhutan, China and India (Sikkim) for strategic purposes. It has offered Thimphu a deal: it wants Bhutan's northwestern areas in exchange for recognizing Bhutan's control over the central areas.¹¹ In 2004, the Bhutanese National Assembly (BNA) discussed the issue of territorial swap with China.¹² Bhutan did not make India party to these deliberations. This has raised ambiguity in India vis-à-vis this sector.¹³ As we know, China's border settlement with Nepal was through a package deal rather than through sector-by-sector settlement.¹⁴ The People Republic of China (PRC) wants Bhutan to compromise on area adjoining the Chumbi Valley.¹⁵

As we are aware, Bhutan and China officially do not maintain any diplomatic relations. Since 1910, Bhutan and British India had signed the Treaty of Punakha, wherein the former had agreed to conduct its foreign relations under the guidance and advice of British India.¹⁶ Bhutan also recognized the suzerainty of the British government in exchange for political autonomy after this Treaty of Punakha.¹⁷ The Treaty changed not only the political history of Bhutan but also had changed the social and economic aspects. Indeed, Bhutan had signed this Treaty for three reasons: First , to protect itself from China's expansionist policies ; second , it was not at all possible for Bhutan to maintain to maintain itself as a separate entity without the assistance of

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Bhutan-China relations(2004), Bhutan News Online, accessed on 30th May 2008.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Singh Teshu(2012), Sino-Bhutan Relations: Implications for India Security, IPCS. (accessed at <http://www.ipcs.org/article/china/sino-bhutan-relations-implications-for-indian-security-3692.html>)

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Murthy Padmaja(2015), India-Bhutan Relations: Serving Mutual Interests, IDSA. (accessed at <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-apr9-8.html>)

¹⁷ Ibid.

the British; and thirdly, it was one way to modernize Bhutan and bring radical economic modernization.¹⁸

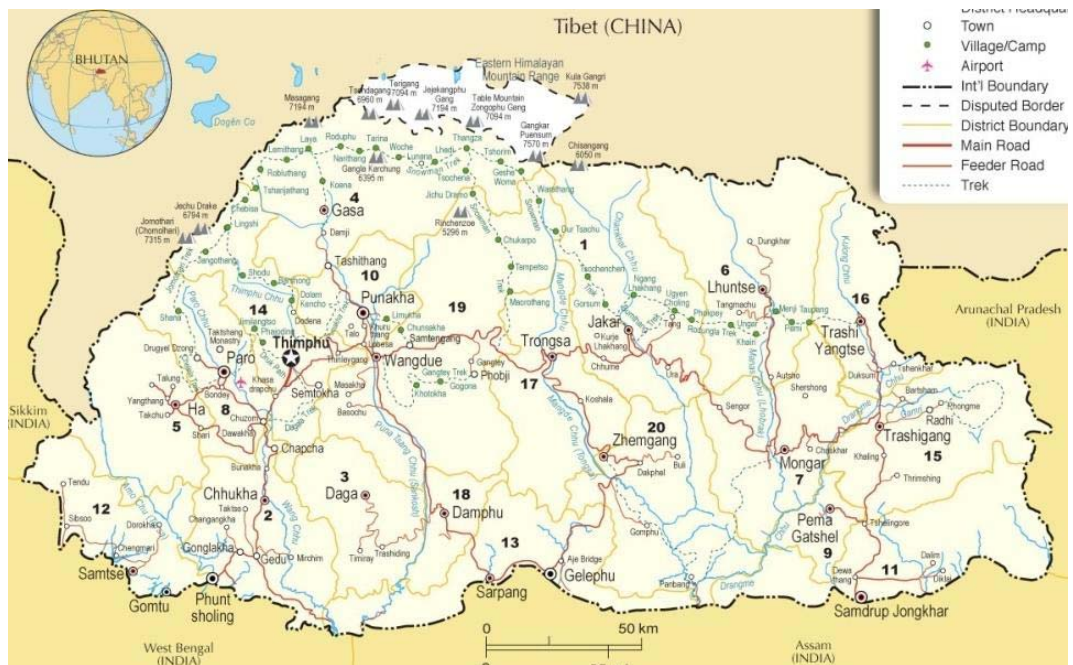


Figure: Map showing Bhutan and its border with Tibet.

After India's independence in 1947, Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, assured its neighbours, including Bhutan, that it shall respect the Treaties and Agreements of former British India. Bhutan later in 1948, send a delegation to India under the stewardship of Raja Sonam T. Dorji to discuss their relations with the independent India. The government of India gave an assurance that it shall always respect Bhutan's independence, if Bhutan maintained the same relations which had been set up by the British. During the negotiations, India indeed revised some of the essential provisions of the Treaty of Punakha to the benefit of Bhutan, and returned the area of the Dewangiri hill strip, an area of the 32 sq.miles in eastern Bhutan (now named as Deothang). India and Bhutan signed a treaty at Darjeeling on August 1949, according to which India promised non-interference in Bhutan's internal affairs. However, the treaty also obligated Bhutan to be guided by the advice of India in its external relations.¹⁹ This Treaty of 1949, therefore, became the reference for Bhutan's foreign policy orientation. As a consequence,

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Treaty of Friendship Between India and Bhutan (1949), <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b4d620.html>

Bhutan and China still do not maintain a formal diplomatic relations. But despite that, the two have conducted around 23 rounds of talks till 2015, over the contentious territorial issues.

During a meeting on the sidelines of the United Nations (UN) Rio+ 20 conference in 2012, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao met Bhutanese Prime Minister Jigmi Y. Thinley for the first time.²⁰ Later, it was stated that China was ‘willing to complete border demarcation with Bhutan at an early date’. As part of these negotiations, the Chinese offered a package deal to Bhutan which meant (a) conceding claims of 900 sq.km in the north of Bhutan, (b) insisting on 400 sq.km of territory in the west, (c) offering to establish diplomatic relations, initiate trade and pilgrimage, (d) making it clear that any further negotiations would be on acceptance of package deal.”²¹ By insisting on 400 sq. km of Bhutanese territory in the west, it seems that China is putting interest on Tibet’s Chumbi valley also borders with Indian state of Sikkim, and very close to the Siliguri Corridor, the Chicken Neck.²²

1.2 Chumbi valley

Chumbi valley is a valley in Tibet. From historical standpoint, Chumbi valley became part of Tibet in 1792.²³The valley is at an altitude of 3,000 meters. The inhabitants of the valley are called Promowa and are of Tibetan descent. The valley is attractive and it blooms at spring. After the British negotiations, it has been resulted in the establishment of a trade agency at Xarsingma (Yadong) and a Treaty between the British and Tibet in 1904.²⁴The Sikkim King Guru Tashi used to have house in Chumbi valley and reside there for most of the year. The 14,750 feet high Nathu La is the main gateway from Sikkim into the Chumbi valley, politically a part of Tibet.²⁵ The road to Lhasa via Yatung and Gyantse goes over the Nathu La. Extensive trade in wool, yak tails, and borax passed through the valley from north Sikkim. It is important to note that the Chinese, who used to claim Tibet as their Vassal state, had to travel through India, hence Sikkim and the Chumbi valley to reach Lhasa”.²⁶The Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950

²⁰Bisht Medha(2014), “Chinese Inroads into Bhutan: Diplomatic Gimmick or strategic Reality?”,IDSA.

²¹ MedhaBisht, “Sino-Bhutan Boundary Negotiations: Complexities of a Package Deal,” *IDSA Comment*. (accessed at http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/Sino-BhutanBoundaryNegotiations_mbisht_190110 on 19th January 2010).

²² Ibid.

²³ Gulati, M.N Col. (2003), *Tibetan Wars through Sikkim, Bhutan and Nepal*, New Delhi: Manas Publications.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

caused serious apprehension in Bhutan which was confirmed only when, in July 1958 China laid a formal claim not only to vast portions of Indian territory, but to some 200 sq. miles of Bhutanese territory as being part of Tibet.²⁷



Figure: Map showing Chumbi Valley and China's claim over Bhutan's Territory

As mentioned earlier, Chumbi valley is at the vital intersection of India (Sikkim) in the western region, Bhutan in the eastern region and China (Tibet) in the eastern Great Himalaya Range. Sikkim, the state of India, is a 'small mountainous tract of land, a thin wedge of a valley, hedged in between Nepal on the west, Tibet on the north and Chumbi valley of Tibet and Kingdom of Bhutan in the southeast.'²⁸ The area of south-west Bhutan, which is strategically important due to its topographical features, provides an excellent observation point over the Chumbi valley and the roads leading to it.²⁹ Since this area is closer to the strategic Jaldhaka barrage in the Indian state of West Bengal, China does not want to forego its claim on this

²⁷Kharat Rajesh (2009), "Indo-Bhutan relations Strategic Perspectives", Warikoo K (eds.), *Himalayan Frontiers of India Historical, Geo-political and Strategic Perspectives*, New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group.

²⁸ Sikkim, http://sikkim.nic.in/sws/sikk_geo.html

²⁹ Ibid.

disputed area. Over the years, the Chinese have constructed a road linking the Chumbi Valley with Bhutan.³⁰

This dissertation thus attempts to understand this complex territorial issue between India, China and Bhutan, particularly in terms of conflict resolution perspective. It shall examine the relevance of Chumbi Valley for China, India and Bhutan; and shall also look into the implications of Bhutan - China territorial negotiations for India.

1.3 Framework of Analysis

Territorial conflicts result often from vague and unclear language in a treaty that set up the original boundary. To mitigate such conflicts and peaceful settlement of disputes, negotiations are the most flexible means. Noted diplomat-scholar William Zartman defines negotiation as: “a process of combining conflicting positions into a common position under a decision rule of unanimity, a phenomenon in which the outcome is determined by the process.” Negotiations between states are usually conducted through ‘normal diplomatic channels’ that is by the respective foreign offices, or by diplomatic representatives. Accordingly, as Zartman points out, a negotiation is also ‘a learning process in which parties react to each others’ concession behavior’.³¹ From this perspective, negotiations consist of a series of concessions. The concessions mark stages in negotiations. They are used by parties to both signal their own intentions and to encourage movement in their opponent’s position. Parties ‘use their bids both to respond to the previous ‘counter-offer’ and to influence the next one; the offers themselves become an exercise in power’.³² Parties start from two points and converge through a series of concessions. The process of negotiation, therefore, is considered to unfold between fixed points: starting point of discord, end point of convergence.³³ The risk inherent in this approach is that participants engaged in concession-trading may miss opportunities to find new, mutually beneficial solutions to their shared dilemma and end-up instead in a purely regressive process which leaves both sides with fewer gains than they could have had if they had pursued a more

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Zartman, William(1977), “Negotiation as a joint Decision-Making Process”, The Journal of Conflict Resolution, Vol.21, No.4, pp.619-638.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

creative approach.³⁴ From, an Ontological viewpoint, negotiations, may run into various stages, each stage leading to other until final settlement. These are as follows.

(a) Pre-negotiation

Everything we do, if we are to perform the activity properly, requires a certain degree of preparation before hand. No doubt, there are many occasions we admonished ourselves for not being prepared, when things didn't turn out as well as we thought they would. Preparation is tantamount to any successful activity or endeavour. Negotiation is no different.

The first thing we need to determine is whether there is actually any reason to negotiate at all. Secondly we need to be clear on the specifics we want to negotiate about. We have to get '*our ducks in a row*' before we even contact the person with whom we are to negotiate.³⁵ We then need to establish some form of negotiation agenda before beginning our talks. We should identify the correct people who will be involved in the talks and their levels or responsibility and authority.³⁶ Where possible we should attempt to obtain as much information about these people and their company or organization. Intelligence gathering is crucial in obtaining a picture of the other side so we can assess their needs, motivations, and goals with respect to our own.³⁷

Next, we need to set up a venue where we are going to meet and have appropriate time to conduct the talks. It is a good idea to begin this process by establishing direct contact with your counterpart. We can begin by building some kind of rapport, and set out the agenda, through a variety of means such as phone calls, faxes, e-mails, and even an informal personal get together beforehand.

(b) Conceptualization

This phase is where we develop the foundation of the agreement by framing the issues, without becoming bogged down in the miniscule details. The building blocks need to be put together to understand the basic concept of the agreement we are seeking. It's like two separate

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Gennady I.Chufrin and Harold H. Saunders(1993), "A Public Peace Process", *Negotiation Journal*, Vol.9, No.3, pp. 155-177.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

parties coming together to consider the blueprint design, or structure of the agreement. We are attempting to formulate principles upon which we can both agree, such as who will provide financing or the licensing aspects for example.

This is the phase where we define each other's goals and objectives through fact finding and by establishing some measure of compatibility. The parties begin to consider creative options and discuss concessions. Proposals and counter-proposals, back and forth, until some manner of tentative agreement is reached. The terms of the partnership are re-framed until they reach the level, where both parties are as satisfied as they can be, within the various parameters of what they bring to the table. This is how we arrive at the basic concept of our agreement.

(c) Settling the Details

Simply put, this phase sees the completion of the agreement. Here, we use our external specialists to complete the details of the venture, that we are about to mutually embark upon. This phase discusses the problems of implementing the partnership realistically, so that it is both viable and workable. The final portion of this process is then left to the wordsmiths, usually our respective legal experts, to put our agreement into written form documentation, and to describe the contractual obligations to which both parties have agreed. This is not the 'walk in the park' like it sounds. Settling the details correctly and meticulously is extremely important. Many negotiations have collapsed because the parties failed to devote the necessary time and work to address the details efficiently. Until these are properly ironed out, we can't celebrate our success.

If we properly apply the phases of negotiation effectively and efficiently, positive results will manifest themselves in accordance to our efforts. Anything worth doing is worth doing well, and as negotiation is something we can't hide or run away from, we might as well do it right.

Noted Scholar, Harold Saunders, however, believes that the “pre-negotiations” is the most important phase. Indeed, he observes that “in many cases, persuading parties to a conflict to commit to a negotiated settlement is even more complicated, time- consuming, and difficult than reaching agreement once negotiations have begun.”³⁸ In particular, Saunders argues that understanding the pre-negotiation phase is crucial to a better understanding of the peace process.

³⁸ Saunders Harold(1996), 'Prenegotiation and Circum-negotiation: Arenas of the Peace Process'. (accessed at <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/example/saun7270.htm>)

And, given the number of intractable conflicts around the world, a better understanding of how to initiate peace processes is very much needed today.³⁹

The main task of the pre-negotiation phase is to get the parties to commit to negotiating their differences. This task is accomplished primarily by identifying and removing obstacles to negotiation. There are a number of obstacles to negotiations.⁴⁰ One obstacle is that the parties to a conflict may be unable to organize for negotiation. For instance, there may be internal differences of opinion which make the group unable to organize itself and present a consistent set of interests. A related obstacle is the absence of a credible representative or spokesperson for the group.⁴¹

There may also be a number of substantial obstacles to opening negotiations. A first step in the pre-negotiation phase is to define the problem at hand. Parties may be unwilling to negotiate because they have very different views of the nature of the problem. A first step toward negotiations is to get the parties to agree on a common definition of the problem. Without a common definition the parties will merely talk past each other. Even if negotiations occurred they would likely be unproductive, and would simply distract attention from the necessary task of defining the problem.

A second step is to get the parties to agree to negotiate. Before committing to negotiations, leaders must come to certain conclusions. They must decide that continuing in the present situation is not in their interests. They must decide that some fair settlement is possible, that is, each side must have some general idea of what an acceptable settlement might look like. Sander's notes that a central element in the judgement that a fair settlement is possible is the realization that each side's ideal solution is not attainable. The leaders must believe that the other side will be willing to negotiate, and that any distrust between the sides can be overcome. These psychological factors can present a greater obstacle to negotiation than the substantive factors.

Finally they must decide that it is possible to settle their dispute fairly given the balance of power between the parties. When the balance of power is very unequal it may not be possible

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Saunders Harold(1991), 'We need a Larger Theory of Negotiation: The Importance of Pre-Negotiation Phasa'. (accessed at <http://www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/example/saun7530.htm>)

⁴¹ Ibid.

for the parties to negotiate a fair outcome. Once the parties commit to negotiating, the final pre-negotiation step is to arrange for those negotiations to be held. Deciding on these arrangements may itself amount to a mini- negotiation. The parties must define the objective of the negotiation in a way that provides agreement on the principles that will guide drafting of a settlement. They must agree on a general strategy for the negotiations. The parties must also make physical arrangements for negotiations, such as setting a time and a location, identifying participants, or even deciding who will sit where. These physical arrangements can be politically sensitive. This dissertation will examine the various stages of Bhutan- China territorial negotiations and to examine its strategic implication for India.

1.4 Survey of Literature

Literature review for the present study has been done on three major levels, i.e. on the concept of conflict resolution, Sino-India-Bhutan border problems and on Chumbi valley issues. In the beginning study will explore the concept of conflict resolution from the various international perspectives. Then, the study will focus on Sino-Bhutan border problems. Lastly, it will concentrate on Chumbi valley issues. Accordingly, on the basis of existing literature on proposed themes, it tries to find out the research gap.

(a) Conflict Resolution from various perspectives

In the book, “*The Functions of Social Conflict*”, author Lewis Coser says that ‘Conflict is an instinctual for everyone in human society. There has been the conflict of war, but there has also the conflicts which are found in our daily lives and relationships’, it has been argued that whatever the reason is but conflict is always goal related. There has been generally something that we try to achieve through conflict, and also from different possible ways of reaching our goal. The existence of the possibility of different paths opens up opportunities for negotiation and different types and levels of conflict. Because conflict is a normal and functional part of human society, which talks about its variation in ways those others missed, such as the level of violence and functional consequences.

In the book, *Negotiation and Conflict Management: Essays on Theory and Practice*, author I. William Zartman, Negotiation is one of a limited number of decision-making modes whose characteristics has been taken as assumptions, not compatible with most of the theoretical

work on negotiation. The concession and convergence approach has problems of symmetry, determinism, and power, but above all fails to reflect the nature of negotiation as practiced. Negotiators begin by groping for a jointly agreeable formula that will serve as a referent, provide a notion of justice, and define a common perception. Power makes the values fit together if the swapping and timing is important for making the formula stick.

In the book *Conflict: Human Needs Theory*, John W. Burton, the military strategist has meant the most sophisticated means of deterrence, even a first strike against a potential enemy if seems necessary to prevent a more protracted-confrontation. For the traditional mediator it may be meant for pressing for some compromise that seems reasonable, despite a possible sense of injustice by weaker parties. Conflict resolution means terminating conflict by methods that are analytical and that get to the root of the problem. Conflict resolution, opposed to mere settlement, points to an outcome, view of the parties involved, which has a permanent solution to the problem. Because it seeks to get at the source of problems, conflict resolution aims not merely to resolve the immediate social conflict, the immediate family or ethnic dispute, but also to provide insights into the generic nature of the problem and thus to contribute to the elimination of its sources and the prevention of other instances. It is, in short, analytical problem solving process.

In the book, *The Negotiation Process and the Resolution of International Conflicts*, author P. Terrence Hopman, the development of negotiation theory has been organized around two major paradigms: bargaining and problem solving. For the bargaining paradigm, indicators of flexibility include concession rates, initiation of new proposals, and other soft behaviors. For the problem-solving perspective, flexibility is usually indicated by a search for better, mutually beneficial solutions to problems that satisfy the needs, identities, and interests of all parties. Empirical research generally reveals that bargaining behaviors are used more frequently in international negotiations. This has been explained in the dominance of the realist paradigm of international relations, within which most diplomats are socialized. Since diplomats generally construct their image of negotiations in terms of bargaining, it is hardly surprising that the behaviors should be prevalent in actual negotiations. In addition, empirical research methods utilized to study negotiations tend to emphasize bargaining variables, and more subtle problem-solving behaviors are more difficult to detect. The empirical prevalence of bargaining, however, does not imply that it is the best method to induce flexibility in international negotiations. On the

contrary, most research tends to reveal that problem solving produces greater flexibility and more frequent, efficient, equitable, and durable agreements than bargaining does

In the book, *International Conflict Resolution After the Cold War*, Daniel Druckman, the main schools of thought in the negotiation theory has been corresponded to four approaches to negotiation that is negotiation as puzzle solving, negotiations as a bargaining game, negotiation as organizational management and negotiation as diplomatic politics.

In the book, *the Peace Process and the Politics of Conflict Resolution*, author Amr. G. E. Sabet, the peace keeping process has been argued that the of conventional conflict resolution has been attempted to remove the justice from the Arab-Israeli conflict. The shift from a "closed agenda" has determined by the core values of an "open agenda" where everything is open for bargaining and the justice motivated "entitlement-benefits" matrix to the utility-driven "cost-benefits", which only lead to issue of transformation and the progressive scaling back of goals. Acceptance of adversary's framework has been reduced Arab negotiators to supplicants rather than counterparts whose perceptions which can be managed by the opponent. After examining Arab options, any kind of settlement emerges from the current process has made bound to fail because it cannot fulfill basic demand for justice, resulting in redefinition of the conflict in its broader religious and strategic horizons.

In the edited book *Peace and conflict studies* by the authors Charles Webel and Johan Galtung. The authors explain that, the international negotiation processes in conflict settings has been classified into major approaches – that is the importance of communications and dialogue as trust-building activities that help change the perceptions of warring parties by promoting cooperative solutions and the view of negotiation process risk the management process directed to change the utility preferences of the parties and the strategic ability to commitment themselves to a negotiation process – referring to 'realist' approaches to negotiation, which has been grounded in rational-actor assumptions about negotiation processes. These two approaches involve alternative assessments about appropriate bargaining strategies, risk, comparative advantage, and the sources of leverage in bargaining relationships.

The *New Politics of Conflict Resolution: Responding to Difference*, author Morgan Brigg, Conflict resolution has been substantial impacts on how to deal with disputes in a range of settings from the interpersonal to the international level. The avoidance is the threat of force, which would likely have been the first and possibly one as a choice for managing disputes.

Mediation and other well-known conflict resolution processes are now valued and accepted as real options for addressing a wide variety of conflicts.

(b) Sino-India-Bhutan Border Problem

In the book, *Essays in Frontier History: India, China and Disputed Borders*, by Parshotam Mehra, The India-China border dispute and the controversies has provoked and continues to provoke in its historical perspective. It has been agreed that there are gaps in the Indian case on the border but argues that the Chinese case is even more tenuous. On the basis of the some evidence, the Indian presentations are in fact far superior to the Chinese counterpart. Whatever might be the view in the historical details, the most urgent has to break the deadlock on the border. Thus, through the debate in India on the India-China border dispute may actually help normalise the relations between the two countries.

The *Sino-Indian border Dispute: India's Current Options*, author J. S. Dalal, The Sino-Indian border dispute has resulted to the failure of India and China to agree upon the exact delimitation of the boundary within the complexities of the Himalayas. India maintains about the treaties between India and Tibet which delimit certain sections, while the rest of the boundary has been well-known and established through custom and tradition. The Chinese question Tibet's past authority to conclude treaties, and insist that the Sino-Indian boundary requires delimitation. The origin and genesis of the vexing issue remains a major hurdle in attempts to improve bilateral relations. It has also been analyzed the conflicting claims in the context of the historical perspective, more importantly, in the light of emerging geo-political realities and changing imperatives.

In the article, *Sino-Indian Diplomatic Negotiations: A Preliminary assessment* by the author Sujit Dutta, the border disputes and the territorial negotiations with China has encountered since the formation of the new state in 1949, India has been gone through the most protracted and difficult negotiations and a compromise settlement has been eluded successive political leaderships in both countries. India's experience has made little difficulty in reaching boundary settlements peacefully and amicably with all its neighbours except for China. There were other disputed boundaries with China which were difficult to resolve and became conflictual.

According to the author Mohan Guruswamy, of the book, *India-China Relations: The Border issue and Beyond*, the main rule of 'The Great Game' on the India-China border has played

quietly and secrecy to its possible. In 1950s the rules seemed to prevail and the two contesting governments decided to keep the lid on the problems. On the surface, it was all Hindi-Chini-bhai-bhai and the practice of the Panchsheela philosophy, but underneath was the realisations of the large tracts of territory under the control of both parties were under dispute.

In the book *India-China Relations*, the author Shri Ram Sharma says that, politically Sikkim has been very close to Tibet as its early rulers came from East Tibet. The Sikkimese, if wanted to be a part of bigger and larger country than they should have preferred Tibet of which they were earlier a part. As on the other hand, India belonged to a different stock and culturally it was an alien land.

Again in the book, *Indo Tibet China Conflict* by Dinesh Lal, Tibet has been the point of contention between India and China for a very long time. India and China consider Tibet to be vital for their national security. Any strong power established in Tibet, become a direct threat to India. Tibetan developments are the central theme in the relations between these countries keeping in mind the border disputes, Tibetan problem, economic factors, religious factors and cultural factors.

In the book, *Strong Border, Secure Nation: Cooperation and Conflict in China's Territorial Disputes*, by M. Taylor Fravel has mentioned that, the emergence of Chinese as an international military power are concerns, that Chinese might level to violent conflict over territory. Developing theories of cooperation and escalation in territorial disputes, the Chinese keen to either negotiation or to the use force. In internal threats to regime security, especially ethnic insurgence, China has been offered concessions in exchange for support which would strengthen the state's control over the territory and the people. By contrast, China has used force to stop the decline of the bargaining power in disputes with its military.

In the book, *India-China Relations*, author M. L. Sali, has also mentioned that, the conflict, issues and changing nature of the bilateral relations has tried to analyze the strategic situation of India-China Border area along with prevarication policy of China. Dealing with the aspects of an economic and military power of India and China, these two Asian giants are on the path of emerging as the major Asian powers, but their success will always depend on how they overcome their internal challenges.

In the book, *India-China Boundary Problem, 1846-1947: History and Diplomacy*, author A. G. Noorani had mentioned that, the origins of the India-China boundary problem during the

British Raj has made an efforts to secure a defined boundary in the western and as well as in the eastern sector. The role of the bureaucracy and diplomatic negotiations, has also presented a nuanced analysis of the treaties and conventions, of the internal debates between British officials on conflicting policies.

In the article, *Bhutan an important Regional Partner for India*, by Abhismita Sen, has mentioned that the insurgency has been a sensitive issue in the northeastern borders of India. The construction of new roadways between Indian northeastern states and Bhutan will not only reduce transport costs incurred through longer routes of the well-developed states, but also lead to the installation of security forces, which combat insurgency. In 2013, Bhutan has no formal diplomatic ties with China due to unresolved border disputes. From the Kautiliyian model, Bhutan, though not to be very powerful supporter, stands to be crucial for India in its China containment strategy. Nevertheless, the great powers are working fast and it is time for India to achieve the yet outstanding success in the critical Indo-Bhutan relationship.

(c) Chumbi Valley Issues

In the article, *Identity Movement and Urbanization*, by the author Ashok Das Gupta, has mentioned that the Himalayan states, Bhutan and Sikkim (India) shares international border with Chumbi Valley of Tibet (China) along with the Royal Kingdom of Bhutan. Kalimpong continuous with both Bhutan and Sikkim Jelep la mountain pass of Sikkim connects Kalimpong with Chumbi valley. Teesta originats in Sikkim, whereas Torsha (Amu chu) in Chumbi Valley Torsha from Chumbi enters into Bhutan and then in Bengal Duars foothills of Jalpaiguri district Teesta from Sikkim flows towards Kalimpong and Jalpaiguri Duars Teesta has actually the margin of Kalimpong.

The author, Dinesh Mathur, in his article *Chinese Perceptions on various Territorial Disputes* examine that, the Chinese claims on the Tawang tract of Arunachal Pradesh being part of the Greater Chinese Empire. The Chumbi Valley in Tibet was once a part of the British Empire till 1907 when it was sold for Rs. 75 lakh to appease Tibet. Using this territory, the Chinese has driven a wedge through the Siliguri Corridor to dismember the eastern states from the rest of India. Therefore, Chumbi Valley remains, absolutely vital for India's national defence. If the sales by the erstwhile powers to Tibet are not recognized then the claims over Chumbi

Valley would appear legitimate. Once, the decision has been taken for its return, then the bargain for the Tawang area in exchange for Chumbi Valley.

In the Book, *Himalayan Frontiers of India Historical, Geo-political and Strategic Perspectives*, the author K. Warikoo explain that the geographical location and land-locked nature of Bhutan isolates it from the rest of the world. Bhutan has been the sandwich between the Chumbi Valley of Tibet, Sikkim and Darjeeling in the west and the Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh in India, on the eastern side. Since Bhutan has been the land-locked and sandwiched between two Asian giants – India and China, it maintains its relations and contacts with the rest of the world through Indian Territory. Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950 caused serious worry in Bhutan which were confirmed in July 1958, Communist China laid claim not only to vast portions of Indian territory, but also to some 200 sq. miles of Bhutanese territory as being part of Tibet. The area of southwest Bhutan, which is strategically important due to its topographical features, ‘provides an excellent observation point over the Chumbi valley and the roads leading to it’. Since this area is closer to the strategic Jaldhaka barrage in the Indian state of West Bengal, China does not want to forego its claim on this disputed area. Hence, the Chinese have constructed a road linking the Chumbi valley with Bhutan.

The article, *Chinese inroads into Bhutan worry India* by Brigadier Arun Sahgal, the author says that China is rapidly developing road infrastructure opposite the Chumbi valley including plans to extend railway network from Lhasa to Zangmu, as well as Shigatse and possibly to Yadong at the opening of the Chumbi valley. The defence of Bhutan is irrevocably linked to the defence of India.

In the article, *Sino-Bhutan Relations: Implications for Indian Security* by Teshu Singh. The author says that, any development in the tri-junction matters for India, as the region is very close to India’s ‘chicken’s-neck’ the Siliguri corridor which links the north-east passage. This move has alarmed New Delhi because it will bring the Chinese forces within a few kilometres of the Siliguri Corridor which connects the rest of India with the Northeast and Nepal with Bhutan. Chumbi valley has equal strategic significance to China because of its shared border with Tibet and Sikkim. Any development in the Chumbi valley that alters the status quo in Beijing’s favour will have serious bearings on India.

1.5 Rationale and Scope of Study

Border conflict in international aspects starts taking up with the intentions of extending territorial boundaries for the economic, social or political purposes, like how the China wanted to extend their territory towards Bhutan over Chumbi Valley, which came up to be major problem between India and Bhutan. Chumbi Valley is located five hundred kilometers (approx) from the Siliguri corridor-the 'chicken neck' which connects India to North East India and Nepal to Bhutan. Therefore, if Bhutan agrees with the Chinese offer then there will be definitely problem between India and Bhutan. On the other hand, Chumbi Valley is of geostrategic importance to China because of its shared borders with Tibet and Sikkim. So there is a chance of border conflict between India and China with respect to Chumbi Valley, if Bhutan accepts the Chinese proposal. Therefore, it is very important to study on this issue, to sort out the border conflict between India and China and also to maintain the active peaceful and friendly relations between India and Bhutan. The study will analyze the territorial issues between India and China over Chumbi valley, which will be of great significance in future, particularly in terms of conflict resolution in international perspective. In fact, this might enable us to understand the root causes of conflict between India and China. Further, it will throw radiance on the reasons for which the territorial conflict between China and India remain uncertain and thereby enable us to find out possible solutions to the territorial issues.

1.6 Objectives of the Study

- To examine territorial conflict between China and Bhutan.
- To examine the relevance of Chumbi Valley for China, India and Bhutan.
- To examine China-Bhutan territorial negotiations.

1.7 Research Questions

- What is the strategic significance of Chumbi valley?
- What are the main intentions of China, in asking for the extension of territory towards Bhutan over Chumbi valley?
- What will be the impact on India if Bhutan allows a territorial swap to China?
- How does Chumbi valley factors in Sino-Indian relations?

1.8 Research Methodology

The proposed study will base on qualitative study with the support of empirical evidences through the collection of primary as well as secondary data. Thus, the secondary data will be collected from the sources available like related books, journals, newspapers etc has referred.

1.9. Chapterisation

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Chumbi valley: Relevance to China and Bhutan

Chapter 3: Sino-Bhutan Territorial Negotiations

Chapter 4: Implications for Indis

Conclusion

Chapter 2

Chumbi Valley: relevance to China and Bhutan

Introduction

This chapter examines the relevance of the Chumbi valley for the two countries Bhutan and China. While doing so, it shall describe the history and the location of Chumbi valley.

Geographically, Bhutan is land-locked between two powerful countries, India and China. Bhutan's total land boundary is 1,169 km long (approx).⁴² Its border with China is 470 km and 699 km with India.⁴³ It is sandwiched between the Chumbi Valley of Tibet, Sikkim and Darjeeling in the west and the Kameng district of Arunachal Pradesh in India, on the east side.⁴⁴ As on the north, it is bounded by Tibet, whereas on the South it is surrounded by the plains of the Jalpaiguri district of west Bengal, and the Golpara, Kamrup and Darrang districts of Assam.⁴⁵ Due to its geographical location and the land-locked nature of Bhutan, it remains isolated from the rest of the world.⁴⁶ But it maintains its relations and contacts with the rest of the world through Indian Territory. For Bhutan, Calcutta is the nearest airport as well as its nearest seaport.⁴⁷ Bhutan doesn't have any territorial issue with India.

Geography of Chumbi valley

One of the territorial issues between Bhutan and China is related with the Chumbi valley. Chumbi valley is a valley in Tibet at an intersection of India, Bhutan and China in the Great Himalayan Range. The valley is at an altitude of 3,000 meters (9,500 feet).⁴⁸ The valley is beautiful with a forest slopes and it blooms at spring, it has a pleasant climate most of the year.⁴⁹

⁴² Bhutan Country Overview(2015), <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/economies/Asia-and-the-Pacific/Bhutan.html>

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Kharat, Rajesh(2009), "Indo-Bhutan relations Strategic Perspectives", K.Warikoo(eds), *Himalayan Frontiers of Indian Historical, geo-political and strategic perspectives*, New York: Taylor & Francis e-library.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Chumbi Valley, Encyclopaedia Britannica. <http://www.britannica.com/place/Chumbi-Valley>

⁴⁹ Chumbi Valley, encyclopaedia.

It is approximately 500 km from the Siliguri corridor “the Chicken neck” which connects India to North East India and Nepal to Bhutan.⁵⁰ The Northeast Region of India shares more than 4500 kilometers of international border with China (southern Tibet) in the north, Myanmar in the east, Bangladesh in the southwest, and Bhutan in the northwest. The width of the Siliguri corridor in West Bengal is about 21 to 40 Kilometers. It is connected to East India via a narrow corridor squeezed between independent nations of Bhutan and Bangladesh. The Siliguri corridor is also a tri-junction between Bhutan, Bangladesh and Nepal too, which connect with the narrow hub of rail, road and air arteries. Bangladesh “the land of Bengal” is bordered by India to its west, north and east; and is separated from Nepal and Bhutan by the Chicken’s Neck corridor.



Figure: Map showing Northern Eastern India

China, with its increased political, economic and military weight, is stepping up its presence in countries around India. The core of China’s policy is to enhance its economic interest by keeping a peaceful and stable environment particularly along its strategic periphery. The so called ‘String of Pearls’ strategy, with commercial goals in view in the short term and military goals in the long term, includes construction of new port facilities in select countries.

⁵⁰ Shukla Saurable(2012), “ Dragon tries to spread influence in India’s Backyard”, India Today, New Delhi. <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/dragon-tries-to-spread-influence-in-indias-backyard/1/197314.html>

To promote these objectives China is bound to ante its engagement with these countries, especially with its increasing material means at its disposal, posing further challenges to India's interests in its neighbourhood.

On the Chinese side, there are two roads which lead to the Chumbi Valley from Tibetan Plateau, one is S204 and another one runs parallel to Tibet-Bhutan boundary. Both are converge at the Chumbi Valley and from one goes to south to the base of Nathu La on Tibet side and another feeder road moves north along the Sikkim-Tibet. At that moment these two main roads leave the Tibetan Plateau, they move along narrow valleys with very high and steep surrounding mountain ridges.⁵¹

During the British period, 1904 the extensive trade in wool, yak tails and borax passed through the Chumbi Valley. It was only after the British negotiations to establish a trade agency at Xarsingma (Yadong); a treaty was signed between the British and Tibet.⁵² At the same period of time the Valley was at the forefront of the British military expedition into Tibet, as it was occupied by the British for nine month after the hostilities to secure Tibetan payment of indemnity.⁵³ Since 1951 the Chumbi Valley has been under the control of China. When a 1954 treaty between China and India over the Status of Tibet expired, the border dispute between the two countries erupted. But the trade relation between the two countries has been continued till 1962. "Bhutan and China had long differences with respect to the description of their common border, which follows through natural features, that is the watershed of the Chumbi Valley in the northwest and the crest of the Great Himalayan Range of mountains in the north. The part of China that borders Bhutan-Tibet or the Xizang Autonomous Region (TAR) has important historical, cultural, and religious ties to Bhutan."⁵⁴

The tension between Bhutan-China's relations has been increased with the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1951 and again rose with the anti-Chinese revolts in eastern and central Tibet between 1954 and 1958. The massive Tibetan uprisings in 1959 and the fight to India of

⁵¹ <http://vatsrohit.blogspot.in/2012/08/pla-options-in-sikkim-tibet-region.html> "PLA options Sikkim-Tibet Region", accessed on 2nd August, 2012.

⁵² <http://www.britannica.com/place/Chumbi-Valley> , "Chumbi Valley, China", accessed on 2015.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ <http://countrystudies.us/bhutan/51.htm>, "China", Source: *U.S. Library of Congress*.

the Dalai Lama, as well as the heightened presence of Chinese forces on the ill-defined frontier, alerted Bhutan to the potential threat it faced, and its representative in Tibet was withdrawn. Included in the territory occupied by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (CPLA) were the eight western Tibetan enclaves administered by Bhutan since the seventeenth century. New Delhi intervened with Beijing on behalf of Thimphu regarding the enclaves, but the Chinese refused to discuss what they considered a matter between China and Bhutan. Another problem with China emerged at this time as the result of the flight to Bhutan of some 6,000 Tibetan refugees. The specter of renewed Chinese claims to Bhutan, Sikkim, and Nepal was raised after China published a map in 1961 that showed alterations of traditional Sino-Bhutanese and other Himalayan borders in Beijing's favor. Bhutan responded with an embargo on cross-border trade and closer links with India.⁵⁵

The 1962 Sino-India war resulted consequences of a series of violent border incident after the 1959 Tibetan uprising, when India had granted asylum to the Dalai Lama. India initiated a Forward Policy in which it placed outposts along the border, including several north of the McMahon Line, the eastern portion of a Line of Actual Control proclaimed by Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai in 1959.⁵⁶

During the 1962 Sino-Indian border war, the tension was renewed as the Chinese army outflanked Indian troops, with the permission of Bhutanese authorities, retreated through southeastern Bhutan. At that time, Bhutan maintains a policy of neutrality with the fear of China and then confident of India's ability to defend it but later slowly and quietly Bhutan expanded its relations with India.

Cross-border incursions by the Chinese soldiers and Tibetan herders occurred in 1966, but tensions generally lessened thereafter and during the 1970s. In 1979 a larger than usual annual intrusion by Tibetan herders into Bhutan had brought protests to Beijing from both Thimphu and New Delhi. China, again seeking a direct approach with Bhutan, ignored the Indian protest but responded to the one from Bhutan. As part of its policy of asserting its independence from India, Bhutan was open to direct talks, whereas India continued to see the Sino-Bhutan

⁵⁵ <http://countrystudies.us/bhutan/51.htm>, "China", Source: *U.S. Library of Congress*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

boundary issue as intimately related to the Sino-Indian border dispute. A series of Border talks has been held annually since 1984 between the ministers of foreign of affairs of Bhutan and China, leading to relations that have been characterized by the two sides as “very good.”

From the China’s perspective, the two passes on the Chumbi Valley’s western border Jelep La and Nathu La are of particular significance as currently China controls Tibet’s Chumbi Valley, a wedge-shaped extrusion of land between Sikkim and the independent of Bhutan.⁵⁷ Therefore, the geographical importance of borders falls on the Chumbi Valley of Tibet prevailing between Bhutan and India’s Sikkim province. As, the Siliguri corridor running through West Bengal province between Nepal and Bangladesh through eastern Sikkim, and the Indian province of Arunachal Pradesh bordering eastern Bhutan.⁵⁸



Figure: Map showing Nathu La Pass and Jelep La Pass.

While Bhutan had historical ties with Tibet, its less definite dealings with China and the shedding of an isolationist policy gradually led Bhutan to develop political orientation towards

⁵⁷ Walcott, Susan M(2010), “Bordering the Eastern Himalaya: Boundaries, Passes, Power Contestations”, *Geopolitics*, vol.(1): p 62-81.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

India. Since the 1950s, Bhutan's foreign policy focused on building a close relationship with its southern neighbor, thereby enhancing its territorial security and prospects for socioeconomic development. At the same time, the Himalayas to the Indians were natural barriers that could enhance India's security vis-à-vis China. The first visit of India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru to Paro Bhutan in 1958 was the initiation of a "special relationship" between the two countries. Looking back over the decades since then, it is the expansion of Indian assistance in every field of Bhutan's development that has facilitated Bhutan's socioeconomic growth. Among all other donors today, India continues to provide the largest economic assistance to Bhutan.



With the launch of planned development in the 1960s, socioeconomic development and gradual political reforms have been the main issues of priority. In 1962, Bhutan had made its southeastern part accessible to the Indian army for safe retreat after it was defeated by China. China continued aggressive posture on Bhutan and only in 1984 the two countries opened negotiations for border settlement. Ultimately, China agreed to renounce its claims over 495

square kilometers of areas in the north, but continued to stake claims to the 269 square kilometers of areas in the northwest, which are adjacent to the Chumbi Valley.⁵⁹

Latest manifestation of this is the Chinese attempts to build in roads into Bhutan. The Chinese Premier Wen Zia Bao and Bhutanese Prime Minister Jigme Thinley's meeting on the side lines of Rio+20 summit was a result of Bhutan's ambition for a non permanent seat in the UNSC in 2013, which China appears to have exploited.⁶⁰



Geo-strategic relevance of Chumbi Valley to China

Chumbi Valley is situated between three countries India, Bhutan and China. For China, Tibet has been the core issue. Tibet shares boundary with Bhutan in the north and Indian northeastern states, Sikkim. Therefore, Chumbi Valley lies exactly in the tri-Junction of Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim. Tibet, being the core issue and Chumbi Valley's Border with Sikkim and Bhutan, the Valley has definitely some geo-strategic relevance for China. For which, China have

⁵⁹ <http://www.geopoliticalmonitor.com/india-china-tug-war-bhutan/> by Amitava Mukherjee accessed on June 18, 2014.

⁶⁰ <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Chinas-coziness-with-Bhutan-rings-security-alarm-for-India/articleshow/14361713.cms> by Indrani Bagchi accessed on June 23, 2012.

been asking for the territorial exchange with Bhutan, when Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Bhutanese Prime Minister Jigmi Y. Thinley met for the first time, during the United Nations Rio+ 20 conference in 2012.⁶¹ During these negotiations, it was identified that China was willing to complete border demarcation with Bhutan as soon as possible.

From the historically point of view, there used to have an extensive travel from Chumbi Valley to Tibet and Bhutan. It was only because of examining the economic importance of the Chumbi Valley to British India, which wanted to established a trade relationship with Tibet and Bhutan.⁶² Bhutan had a flourishing trade relationship with Rangpur (now in Bangladesh), which had seem a significant in tempting Bhutan to have mutual beneficial relationship with British India.

For any of the country, economic development is one of the most important elements to bring up the country's identity in peak level in global affairs. Therefore, in case of the Chumbi Valley the geo-strategic relevance cannot be underestimated. As China had intended to extent their territory towards Chumbi Valley in the Bhutan's part. So, there will be definitely there will so strategy that China might be looking further.

One of the Chinese interests on Chumbi valley is may be because; China will gain more proximity to India's North- East Region (NER) and Siliguri Corridor which connects North-Eastern states to India and Nepal to Bhutan. If China come closer Chumbi valley towards Bhutan than it will be very easy for then connect to the North Eastern Region of India. Mostly the Arunachal Pradesh, one of the north eastern states of India which china had been claiming as their territory since 2006.⁶³

The Chinese had been always focusing on the Tibetan issue since 1945. As Sikkim is one of the North Eastern States of India with the substantial Tibetan population and bordered by

⁶¹ Krishnan Ananth(2012), "China, Bhutan 'ready' to establish diplomatic ties", The Hindu. <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/china-bhutan-ready-to-establish-diplomatic-ties/article3559058.ece>

⁶² Bisht Medha(2010), "Chumbi Valley: Economic Rationale but Strategic Resonance", IDSA. http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/ChumbiValleyEconomicRationalebutStrategicResonance_mbisht_230910.html accessed on 23 September, 2010.

⁶³ "Arunachal Pradesh is our territory", rediff India abroad, accessed on 14 November 2006.

Bhutan, Tibet and Nepal. So, as being Tibetan populated state Sikkim might be prior in agenda of Chinese in marching closer to Chumbi valley towards Bhutan.

With the access to Chumbi valley, China will get closer to Bangladesh's periphery in the North as only a narrow stretch of land divides Bangladesh from Bhutan. Analysts have already pointed out to two important north-south strategic corridors on either side of India- first, the trans-karakoram corridor extending to Gwadar and second, the Irrawaddy corridor linking Yunnan to Myanmar. While connectivity with Nepal is well on the cards, some suggest that extending India rail networks at Siliguri via the Chumbi Valley has also been proposed. In fact some sources point out that by via India territory can also be a possibility.⁶⁴

Through the Chumbi Valley, China can conduct claiming the Siliguri Corridor. They can also use it for threaten the city of Kolkata and the whole of North Eastern India. But at only 30 miles wide in its narrowest stretch, the valley is extremely narrow for military maneuvers, so Beijing has been trying to expand the Chumbi Valley by incorporating the neighboring Doklam Plateau of Bhutan into it.⁶⁵

The restricted focus on the North-Western sector is important due to its close proximity to the Chumbi Valley. China realizes that to get essential influence against India, which it considers moving rapidly towards strengthening its military posture through structured modernization and communication infrastructure loudening.⁶⁶ By enhancing connectivity, it will get overarching influence over the Chumbi Valley, China will get a better hold over Tibet, thus weakening any potential cards which India would want to play at a later stage. Therefore, it has a nasty advantage for Indian military.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Panda Ankit(2013), Geography's Curse: India's vulnerable 'Chicken Neck', The Diplomat. (accessed at <http://thediplomat.com/2013/11/geographys-curse-indias-vulnerable-chickens-neck/>)

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ <http://www.eurasiareview.com/27092012-china-bhutan-relations-and-india-analysis/> "China-Bhutan Relations and India Anaalysis", Brig Arun Sahgal accessed on 27th September 2012.

⁶⁷ Ibid.



Geo-strategic relevance to Bhutan

As we all know that Bhutan’s relation with India has always been good enough. During the 1962 Sino-Indian war, Bhutan had allowed India to move its troops through the Bhutanese territory. On the other hand, Bhutan does not maintain any diplomatic relations with China. The relations between the two countries Bhutan and China have been always tense and strained. One of the reasons is that Bhutan’s dependence on India prevented it from charting a totally independent foreign policy.

In case of Chumbi Valley, it is an issue between China and Bhutan. China has taken forward to extend their territory towards Bhutan over Chumbi Valley with the Bhutan’s determination. But the Valley is situated between the three countries India, China and Bhutan therefore India cannot be kept aside from this issue. Also when it comes to Bhutan’s security, Bhutan cannot ignore India. As, Bhutan and India signed a Treaty of Friendship for peace between the two countries and non-interference in each other’s internal affairs on 8th August 1949.⁶⁸ Again, this Treaty was re-negotiated by India with Bhutan and signed a new Treaty of Friendship in 2007. The new Treaty replaced the provision required Bhutan to take India’s

⁶⁸ Kharat Rajesh(2005), “Foreign Policy of Bhutan”, New Delhi: Manak Publications.

guidance on foreign policy with broader sovereignty and not require Bhutan to obtain India's permission over arms imports.⁶⁹

Now, keeping in mind all the border issues between Bhutan and China and also the good relations between Bhutan and India, it will be discussed the geostrategic relevance of Chumbi Valley to Bhutan. For which, it can be divided into three major categories border, economy and geo-politics.⁷⁰ In 1960, the trade between the two countries was closed; from that time onwards China resorted to significant military posturing against Bhutan at least twice in 1966 and in 1979 along the border which remains the prime reason of dispute.⁷¹

“If Bhutan and Nepal were to come with the Chinese sphere of influence, the precarious land route along the Siliguri corridor a virtual Chicken Neck of seven north eastern states would become vulnerable prone to being cut off by any determined Chinese push isolating the entire eastern sector. It is for this reason Bhutan's neutrality is extremely important and absolutely imperative as it forms a barrier and buffer to Chinese desires of expansion to the south towards the Siliguri plains. Chinese designs in Bhutan plainly pose a threat in being to Indian security.”⁷²

In 1961, China published a map showing alterations of traditional Sino-Bhutanese and other Himalayan borders in China's favor. Bhutan responded with an embargo on cross-border trade with China and forged closer links with India. Following the 1962 Sino-Indian war, Bhutan adopted a policy of neutrality towards China, while quietly expanding its relations with India as it was more fearful of China's strength than India's ability to defend.⁷³

Strategically, Bhutan sits between Sikkim in the west and Arunachal Pradesh in the East. Its neutrality is an important construct in providing depth to the Chumbi Valley leading to Siliguri Corridor and Tawang the centre of Tibetan spiritual abode in India. Should Bhutan diplomatically ally with China-these two vulnerabilities will be abode in India. Should Bhutan diplomatically ally with China- these two vulnerabilities will be greatly exposed with attendant

⁶⁹ http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/IA17Df02.html by Sudha Ramachandran accessed on 17 January 2007.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² <http://www.eurasiareview.com/27092012-china-bhutan-relations-and-india-analysis/> “China- Bhutan Relations and India Analysis”, by Brig Arun Sahgal, accessed on 27th September, 2012.

⁷³ Ibid.

military ramifications. Access to Chumbi Valley through Bhutan, in addition to the traditional routes would sever and isolate North East in the event of a war with China. Simultaneously, Bhutan would open the Western flank of Tawang- Tenga sector exposing the threat to plains of Assam.

India is well aware of the five finger policy of China-Bhutan being one among them while Arunachal Pradesh, Ladakh (both parts of India), Nepal and Sikkim are other fingers, and the palm remains Tibetan Plateau.

Bhutan on its part has had adopted one- China policy and Chinese representatives were invited to the coronations of both the former and current Kings. Bhutan for long has wanted to be independent player in international affairs and free from India's over bearing influence. The entails assertion of its sovereignty against India and improving its relations with China. Besides, the economic incentive it can draw from China.

Indeed, China getting access to Chumbi Valley raises India's security concerns as it would provide China with a wider room to facilitate military manoeuvres. Therefore, Bhutan's strategic choices are of great geostrategic and military concerns to India. The recent development of infrastructure in Tibet has made to induct a sufficient number of troops with adequate logistic back-up at short notice. The only limitation was restricted deployment space, which after the deal would not remain.

But it is clear that, Bhutan cannot neglect India in taking their decision in this issue. It is so, because Indian economic investments in Bhutan are exemplified by Bhutan becoming a hydropower exporter to India. By 2020, India expects Bhutan to export 10,000 MW of power to India.⁷⁴ In addition, there are a large number of other economic programmes afoot. India is considered a trusted friend and an ally in Bhutan. Bhutan also leverages India's role as its strategic partner. The importance of the Chumbi Valley issue Geo-strategic calculations over the Valley have to be reckoned with. China has planned to extend its rail network to the points of the South Asian region, towards the Chumbi Valley. Whatever it may be, the mutual apprehensions, strategic stability in the India Bhutan China triangle would require statesmanship of a high order. This will depend on how the political and military leadership of the three countries will manage.

⁷⁴ Ibid.

Especially New Delhi and Beijing are able to manage the same ensuring Thimpu's Sovereignty and autonomy.⁷⁵

To Conclude, it can thus be surmised that the Chumbi Valley an essential ingredient of the China's forward policy. Chumbi Valley, a vital tri-junction between Bhutan, India and China, is significant as it is located mere five kilometers from the Siliguri corridor- the Chicken neck which connects India to North East India and Nepal to Bhutan. At the same time, Chumbi Valley is of geostrategic importance to China because of its shared borders with Tibet and Sikkim.

It is this geostrategic context that has made New Delhi sit-up and take notice of recent Chinese overtures to Bhutan. China and Bhutan have held a range of boundary talks and both sides are moving towards a joint field survey, in order to harmonize the reference points and names of the disputed areas. The focus of the joint-field survey was supposed to be on the disputed areas in the western sector which constitute the pastoral lands of Doklam, Charithang, Sinchulumpa and Dramana.

The exclusive focus on the North-Western sector is important due to the close proximity to the chumbi Valley. China realizes that to get requisite leverage against India, which it considers moving rapidly towards strengthening its military posture through structured modernization and communication infrastructure build up. For China, Bhutan and Nepal are critical cards against perceives Indian military maneuvering. It needs however to be underscored that the China-Bhutan reconciliation can only come with the settlement of the boundary issue where China seeks the Dhoklan plateau overlooking Chumbi Valley while making tradeoffs in the grazing grounds in North Bhutan. This complicates the China threat theory.

The moves in Bhutan together with rapid Chinese inroads into Nepal would greatly contribute towards China's desire to establish a continental bridge through Tibet. Bhutan on the other hand would provide Peoples Liberations Army (PLA) with the requisite launch pad to cut off the Siliguri Corridor either as pre emptive action or in concert with larger territorial designs. Trading off some territory in the North to Bhutan in lieu of the pastoral land of the Doklam plateau therefore appears to be a pragmatic step towards achieving larger strategic objective.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

Chapter 3

Sino-Bhutan Territorial Negotiations

Introduction

The history of border talks between Bhutan and China goes back to the 1950s when China published maps claiming Bhutanese territory, thus bringing the issue into the public domain. The disputed areas that China claimed covered a total of 764 sq kms covering the North West (269 sq km) and Central parts of Bhutan (495 sq km).⁷⁶ The North West part constitutes the Doklam, Sinchulung, Dramana and Shakhatoe in Samste, Haa and Paro districts, the Central parts constitute the Pasamlung and the Jakarlung valley in the Wangdue Phodrang district.⁷⁷ The intrusion by Chinese soldiers and Tibetan herders has often been an issue of concern in Bhutan's National Assembly (BNA) discussions, where many *chimis* (district representatives) have claimed that traditionally the land always belonged to Bhutan; and, historically there has been no precedence of Bhutan paying taxes to the Tibetan government for any of the disputed claims.⁷⁸

If one traces the trajectory of boundary negotiations between Bhutan and China they can be divided into three significant phases. The first phase can be termed as the “*pre-negotiation*” which started in 1984; the second phase can be termed as the “*conceptualization*”, which marked its incipience in 1996; and third can be termed as the “*settling the detail*”, which describes the present status of negotiations and can be traced until today. In the *pre-negotiation* phase, both parties decided to hold formal boundary talks and discussed issues of mutual concern. The Sino-Bhutan boundary issue till the seventies was being considered under the broader aegis of Sino-Indian border negotiations. The Chinese intent during this phase was to engage Bhutan bilaterally and create a conducive atmosphere for facilitating bilateral relations.

The “*conceptualization*” phase started in 1996, when China for the first time as part of the resolution package offered Bhutan a “package deal”, proposing an exchange of Pasamlung and Jakarlung valleys totalling an area of 495 sq km in Central Bhutan, with the pasture land of

⁷⁶ Bisht Medha(2010), Sino-Bhutan Boundary Negotiations; Complexities of the ‘Package Deal’, IDSA.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Ibid.

Doklam, Sinchulung, Dramana and Shakhatoe amounting to 269 sq km in North Western Bhutan.⁷⁹ In 1998 both countries for the first time signed a peace agreement promising to ‘Maintain Peace and Tranquillity on the Bhutan-China Border Areas.’⁸⁰ The agreement was seen as significant in Thimpu because China for the first time acknowledged Bhutan as a sovereign country and stated clearly in the agreement that “China fully respects the territorial integrity and independence of Bhutan.”⁸¹ This was the first official recognition and Bhutan could break free from the stated Chinese rhetoric of middle kingdom suzerainty. China during the talks also insisted on expanding the zone of engagement towards developing trade and formal diplomatic relations.

The “*setting the Detail*” phase can also be called the extension phase as both countries since 2000 have not shifted positions. In 2000, Bhutan extended the claim line of the disputed border. The same year, it also proposed technical discussions, using maps, between experts from the two sides. As can be gathered, the latest talks have not made progress beyond the stated positions. However, China-Bhutan engagement has intensified over the years, an aspect which sheds some light on the Chinese intentions of trying to create leverages inside Bhutan. The December 2009 statement made by the Ugyen Tshering, the Foreign Minister of Bhutan, in Kolkata is indicative of the potential that China holds for Bhutan. The Minister claimed that diplomatic and trade ties between Bhutan and China “are definitely conceivable in the future,” adding that an indirect trade link has already been established as India often buys heavy machinery and equipment of superior quality at competitive prices from China and then installs it in Bhutan. China, on its part, in the past few years has made inroads into Bhutan by exporting farming and telecommunication equipments. However, it has also not shied away from keeping Bhutan on tenterhooks. While China has been trying to engage Bhutan by promising the carrot of a promising economic engagement, it has also been using pressure tactics by intruding into Bhutanese territory.

As we understand, China is claiming maximum territory in the western sector is close to the tri-junction of Bhutan, China and India for strategic purposes. It has offered Thimphu a deal: it wants Bhutan’s northwestern areas in exchange for recognizing Bhutan’s control over the

⁷⁹ Kharat Rajesh S(2005), Foreign Policy of Bhutan, New Delhi: Manak Publications.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid.

central areas. The PRC wants Bhutan to compromise on the Chumbi Valley.⁸² Since the 1980's, the two governments have conducted regular talks on border and security issues with the intension of reducing tensions.



Figure: Map showing the disputed areas between Bhutan and China.

THE PRE-NEGOTIATION PHASE

470 out of Bhutan's 1,075-kilometer border are adhered to China and the rest 605 kms to India. Bhutan was once the bridge between Tibet and the east part of South Asia, and shares intimate religious, political, economic, and cultural bonds with Tibet. The Tibetan people cross the Himalayas along the Manas Chhu in east Bhutan and Paro Valley in west Bhutan to Assam, Bangladesh, and Bihar for religious, cultural, and trade activities. The twice-per-year bazaar fair in Bumthang, east Bhutan is a huge attraction for many Tibetan people. The Tibetan caravans offer wool, brick tea, edible salt, and musk in exchange for Bhutan's rice, paper, and dried

⁸²<http://www.ipcs.org/article/china/sino-bhutan-relations-implications-for-indian-security-3692.html> accessed on 31st July 2012.

pepper. Local governments of Tibet deploy officials in areas near Bhutan to purchase rice. It has been a ritual for Tibetans to travel a long distance along the Manas Chhu to embark on pilgrimage at monasteries near Guwahati, Assam.⁸³ The influx of Tibetan refugees forced Bhutan to close its border with China in 1959, shutting down all cross-border trade activities. No formal trade or commercial relations has been established between Bhutan and China since then.

Border issues between Bhutan and China used to be incorporated into China-India border discussions. In 1959, then PRC Premier Zhou Enlai issued a letter to India Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru expressing China's wish to stage direct bilateral talk with Bhutan. The letter suggests Zhou's intention to separate China-Bhutan border issue from China-India border negotiations.

Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950 caused grave apprehension in Bhutan which were confirmed in July 1958, communist China laid claim not only to vast portions of Indian territory, but also some 200 sq. miles of Bhutanese territory as being part of Tibet. In July 1959, in pursuance of its policy of integrating Tibet with the heartland, China seized control of the Bhutanese-administered enclaves in western Tibet in the vicinity of Mount Kailash and the Gartok region. The area of southwest Bhutan, which is strategically important due to its topographical features, 'provides an excellent observation point over the Chumbi valley and the roads leading to it'. Since this area is closer to the strategic Jaldhaka barrage in the Indian state of West Bengal, China does not want to forego its claim on this disputed area. Hence, the Chinese have constructed a road linking the Chumbi valley with Bhutan.⁸⁴

Since 1980's, both the government of China and the Bhutan had started regular talks on border and security concerns, with the aimed of reducing tensions between both the countries. The establishment of a Boundary Commission followed in 1981.⁸⁵ The committee on the basis of the historical documents and survey reports decided its claims on the boundary line with China.⁸⁶ Then the official boundary talks between China and Bhutan had started in 1984 with the India's approval. Before the official boundary talks between the two governments, Bhutan had established informal contacts with China through a diplomatic note sent to the Chinese embassy

⁸³Tan Renxia, *ibid*, p. 133.

⁸⁴Warikoo. K, Indo-Bhutan relations: strategic perspectives, *Himalayan Frontiers of India Historical, Geo-political and strategic perspectives*, 2009, p. 149

⁸⁵ S.D. Muni, 'Bhutan steps out', *The World Today*. Vol.40, no.12, December 1984, pp.515-16.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

in New Delhi in March 1981. Till today, there have been total 23 rounds of boundary talks between the two governments of China and Bhutan.



Figure: Map showing the boundary of China, Bhutan and India.

First Round of Talks

The first round of boundary talks were held at Beijing in 1984. The Chinese Foreign Minister, Wu Xueqian met with the Bhutanese delegation and said that, “China and Bhutan have been friendly to each other since ancient times and there is no conflict of interest between the two countries’, he had also vastly spoken of ‘Bhutan’s policy of independence and self reliance’.⁸⁷ Further he had also spoken that, ‘so long as the two countries continue their friendly negotiations on the basis of the five principles of peaceful coexistence the boundary question would certainly be settled’.⁸⁸The Chinese leader, vice Minister of Foreign affairs, Gong Dafei and the Bhutanese leader Om Prakesh, who was Bhutanese ambassador to India attended the talks.⁸⁹ During the talks, Chinese made it clear that their approach to the boundary issue with Bhutan would be the same as in the case of Pakistan, Burma and Nepal.⁹⁰ The Chinese leaders had also pointed, on which China was firm that it would not accept Bhutanese claims on strategic

⁸⁷ Mishra Keshav(2004), “South Asian Context (1963-1991)”, *Rapprochement Across the Himalayas Emerging India-China Relations in Post Cold War Period- (1947-2003)*, Kalpaz Publications: New Delhi.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ S.D. Muni, ‘Bhutan steps out’, *The World Today*. Vol.40, no.12, December 1984, pp.515-16.

points. It added that it would be more generous on less important territorial claims, but not on strategic points which are more advantageous to Bhutan and India,⁹¹ China would pressurize Bhutan into accepting the Chinese claims.

Second Round of Talks

The second round of talks were held in April 1985 at Thimpu, Bhutan, when both sides realized that was not much of a disputed between the Bhutanese and Chinese positions⁹² over their traditional boundary. It was possible that some convenient means could be adopted to develop cordial relations between Bhutan and China. During the talks the two sides discussed the 'principles' that should guide the settlement of the border issue. The joint communiqué said that the second round of talks have made the two countries know each other better and reinforced their friendship.⁹³

Third Round of Talks

The third round of border talks was held in Beijing in June 1986. Both the sides continued the process of exchange of views on guiding principles for settling the boundary question. Tashi Tabgyal leader of the Bhutanese delegation said the only problem with China is undefined boundary. Earlier Chinese Foreign Minister, Wuxueqian told the delegation that the important content of China's foreign policy was to preserve developing good neighbourly relations with adjoining countries and to maintain equality among nations, big or small. The delegation also met with Chinese premier, Zhao Ziyang, who said, 'it is China's sincere hope to settle the Sino-Bhutan-Bhutanese boundary question at early date. Our boundary question is not so complicated and can be resolved easily. He further added 'China sets great store by its friendship with Bhutan and will not interfere in its internal affairs'.

At this time, the Chinese Premier, Jiang Zemin, assured the Bhutanese delegation, Yeshe Tobgyel that Chinese would not interfere in Bhutan's internal affairs and the two countries vowed to maintain a 'peaceful and friendly border' while seeking an early settlement.⁹⁴ However, in India, the fear persisted that at the final stage. China may bargain with Bhutan in

⁹¹ Muni, n.51.

⁹²The Kuensel, 2nd May 1985.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Mohan Ram, 'Bhutan: Solution at Sight', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 10 July 1986.

demarcating its border with Bhutan and would ask for its direct presence in Bhutan through diplomatic facilities or/and cultural relations.⁹⁵

Fourth Round of Talks

The fourth round of border talks were held in Beijing from 10-14 May 1988. In the fourth round of talks, 'both the countries reached an agreement on the guiding principles for the settlement of the boundary issue, which stipulated that both the countries should observe the five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, treat each other on an equal basis and enter into friendly relations on the basis of mutual understanding and mutual accommodation with a view to reach a just and reasonable settlement'.⁹⁶ These guiding principles of the boundary talks were as follows:

1. Observing the five principles of peaceful co-existence: mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity; mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs; equality; and mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence.⁹⁷
2. Treating each other on an equal footing and entering into friendly consultations on the basis of mutual understanding and mutual accommodations with a view to reaching a just and reasonable settlement.⁹⁸
3. Taking account of the relevant historical background based on traditions, custom, usage and administrative jurisdiction while accommodating the national sentiments of the people and the national interest of the two countries.⁹⁹
4. Pending final settlement of the boundary question, maintaining tranquility on the border and status quo of the boundary as before March, 1959, and refraining from unilateral action or the use of force, to change the status quo of the boundary.¹⁰⁰

Both sides exchanged views on the demarcation of the Bhutanese-Chinese border. The two sides reiterated their desire to maintain a peaceful and friendly border, and expressed their keen determination to make every effort for an early demarcation of the boundary.¹⁰¹ Both expressed

⁹⁵ Kharat Rajesh(2005), Foreign Policy of Bhutan, New Delhi: Manak Publications.

⁹⁶ Mishra Keshav(2004), "South Asian Context (1963-1991)", *Rapprochement Across the Himalayas Emerging India-China Relations in Post Cold War Period- (1947-2003)*, Kalpaz Publications: New Delhi.

⁹⁷The Times of India, (New Delhi), 15 May 1988.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹The Kuensel. 4 June 1988.

their satisfaction with the result of the talks. The two delegations also had a useful exchange of views on international issues of mutual interest and concern and briefed each other on the efforts of their countries towards economic development and commended the achievement made by each other.¹⁰² In this way, the first five rounds of talks were spent on finalising the four guiding principles.

It is important to note that though the Chinese always give assurance of observing peaceful co-existence between them and others, in practice, they do not follow this. The question of the Sino-Indian border dispute may be recalled here where the peaceful co-existence agreement in 1954 was violated by the Chinese attack on India in 1962.¹⁰³

Fifth Round of Talks

The fifth round of border talks took place in Beijing in 1989. Substantive talks were initiated on the issue of demarcation of Sino-Bhutanese boundary. During these talks, both countries had claimed the 495 square Kilometer areas of Pasamlung and Jakarlung valleys as part of their territories respectively.¹⁰⁴ In particular, the Bhutanese delegation claimed that these valleys are Bhutan's territory on the ground that these valleys are below the source of Bazaraguruchhu (river) of KuroteDzongkhang of Bhutan.¹⁰⁵

Sixth Round of Talks

In response to the Bhutanese claims, the Chinese delegation offered a package proposal to Bhutan at the sixth round of talks which took place in Thimpu in August 1990. The meetings were 'secret' and the participants on neither side talked about them in precise terms. On boundary issue, both sides had considerably narrowed down their differences. According to this proposal, the Chinese had 'offered to give Bhutan the pasamlung and Jakarlung valley, with an area of 495 square kms in the central sector of the boundary if Bhutan agreed to concede the 269 square kms disputed area in the western sector.'¹⁰⁶ This offer was made to Bhutan, as the 269 sq. km. area in the western sector had great strategic significance to the Chinese for their security.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Kharat Rajesh S(2005), Foreign Policy of Bhutan, New Delhi: Manak Publications.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

However, the Bhutanese delegation did not agree to the Chinese proposal. Bhutan's Foreign Minister Dawa Tsering, later stated that the border talks between the two countries, which were held in a cordial atmosphere continued to make steady progress towards a resolution of the boundary problem.¹⁰⁷ He also said the border issue could not be resolved overnight. Both sides must show patience and tolerance and must make every effort to resolve the problem.¹⁰⁸

THE CONCEPTUALISATION PHASE

Seventh Round of Talks

The seventh rounds of talks were held in Beijing in 1992. During the time some positive developments took place. During the talks, according to Foreign Minister of Bhutan, 'the Chinese sides have more or less agreed to concede the areas of Pasamlung, Jakarlung and Majathang to Bhutan, which was claimed by them as part of their territory.'¹⁰⁹

Eighth Round of Talks

The eighth round of Sino-Bhutanese boundary talks concluded in Thimpu in 1993. The two delegations issued a joint statement describing the talks, as 'useful and constructive which helped it further enhance the mutual understanding and friendship between the two governments and peoples'.¹¹⁰

Ninth Round of Talks

The ninth round of talks took place in Thimpu in 1995. At this time, both sides explained their claims to each other in a spirit of goodwill and co-operation. The tenth round of talks concluded in Beijing in November 1996. It's Foreign Minister and the secretary of survey represented Bhutan. They put forward Bhutan's claims to Doklam, Sinchulung, Dramana and Shakhatoe in the western sector of the northern border and stressed that these were vital as pasture lands for the people of the Haa valley. The Bhutanese delegation also informed their Chinese counterpart that Tibetan herdsman had been untruding into Majathang and Jakarlung in the central sector of the boundary and had even constructed sheds.

¹⁰⁷The Kuensel, 1 September 1990.

¹⁰⁸ ibid.

¹⁰⁹The Kuensel, 10 August 1996, p.17.

¹¹⁰The Kuensel, 3 July 1993.

Tenth Round of Talks

During the tenth round of Bhutan-China border talk held in Beijing in 1996, China offered to exchange 495sq km area of Pasamlung and Jakarlung valleys (where China and Bhutan overlap) in Bhutan's north for Sinchulumpa, Dramana and Shakhtoe with total area of 269 sq Km, in the western Bhutan. On July 13, 1997 BBC reported that Bhutan accepted the proposals. Bhutan, alone cannot take decision to share this pie, since Doklam plateau and Chumbi valley are equally vital for India. Subsequent bilateral talks yielded no results. China began construction of roads and infrastructure in these regions. It led to a decisive Sino-Bhutan agreement in 1998 called "Agreement on The Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility in the Bhutan-China Border areas 1998".¹¹¹

Eleventh Round of Talks

The eleventh round of talks concluded in Beijing in November 1996. Bhutan was represented by the Foreign Minister of Bhutan and the Secretary of Survey. They put forward Bhutan's claims to Doklam Sinchulung, Dramana and Shakhatoe in the western sector of the northern border and stressed that these were vital as pasture land for the people of the Haa Valley.¹¹² The delegation also informed their Chinese counter part that Tibetan herdsmen had been intruding into Majathang and Jakarlung in the central sector of the boundary and had even constructed sheds'.¹¹³

Twelfth Round of Talks

The twelfth round of border talks took place in Thimpu on November 1998. The talks concentrated on three important points, firstly the establishment of diplomatic relation with Bhutan. Secondly, the establishment of trade relations with China and thirdly the question exchange of land.¹¹⁴ Therefore, it can be surmise that the Chinese are reluctant to reduce their claims on the western sector which is strategically important for them or to interfere in the question of Tibetan yak herders intrusion into Bhutanese territory unless and until the Bhutanese

¹¹¹<http://www.bhutannewsservice.com/column-opinion/commentry/bhutan-china-border-mismatch/> accessed on 1st January 2013 by Govinda Rizal.

¹¹²National Assembly Debates, The Kuensel, 9 August, 1997, p.2.

¹¹³ ibid.

¹¹⁴Kharatrajesh, sino-bhutan relation, foreign policy of bhutan,2005, p.140.

accept the proposal of exchange of an area of 495 sq. Km. with the pasture land an area of 269 sq. Km.

On the other hand, Bhutan cannot accept this kind of Chinese proposal, as large numbers of Bhutanese people depend on livestock for their livelihood, these pasture lands were vital for their survival. In additions to this, the Bhutanese claim that both the areas had always belonged to the Bhutanese.¹¹⁵ At the same time, bhutan an China have also signed an agreement to maintain peace and Tranquillity on the bhutan china border in 1998. In fact this was the first sinobhutan agreement. With the end of the 12th round of boundary talks, there was no final decision on exchange of territories as the proposed area to be exchanged has borders with Sikkim, the eight north eastern state of India. At the end it shows Bhutan's concern not to jeopardize India's interest in the Himalayan region while maintaining its formal relations with China.¹¹⁶

Thirteenth Round of Talks

During the 13th round of bilateral border talks held in Thimphu in the year 1999. China was represented by Mr.Wang Yi, Assistant Foreign Minister of the People Republic of China. During the 13th round of boundary talks he said that, he came for to Thimpu for 'signing the last year's intergovernmental agreement between the two countries which has special importance and significance'.¹¹⁷The Chinese added new dimensions by proposing the establishing of diplomatic relations and trade relations. There were signs of a "package deal" that can be seen such as the Chinese shifting goal posts, by making boundary settlement as a condition to diplomatic and trade relations.

Fourteenth Round of Talks

The 14th round of negotiation held in December 2000 where the Bhutanese foreign minister Jigmi Thinley led seven member delegation to China and met with Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji and Chinese Foreign minister Mr. Tang Jiaxuan. During the talks both the countries leaders had 'expressed their satisfaction with the progress being made on the boundary

¹¹⁵ ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

discussions and agreed to continue the dialogue in accordance with the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence'.¹¹⁸ Therefore with the signing of an agreement on the maintenance of Peace and Traquillity in the border area in 1989 it proves that the sinobhutan relationship have come to an development slowly and steadily.

Settling the Details

Bhutan had also extended their claim on border line, further on the one provided by the China government. It was during the same round of talks in 2000. Bhutan also suggested that technical discussions between experts from both sides be held using maps. In 14 July of the following year (2001), the King of Bhutan said to the National Assembly that border between Bhutan and China should stretch further along Doklam, Sinchulumpa and Dramana. The King also expressed faith that the border dispute between a small nation of Bhutan and a powerful, friendly nation of China would come to a successful settlement in the near future.¹¹⁹

Fifteenth Round of Talks

Several official interactions had taken place between China and Bhutan in the year 2001. The Bhutanese cultural delegation also visited China in April. In July the Bhutanese delegation visited Beijing to conduct border talks. The fifteenth round of boundary talks was held in Thimpu, in November 2001. From the Chinese it was led by the Vice Foreign Minister, Mr. Wang Yi. On the other side, Bhutan was represented by the Foreign Minister, JigmiThinley. During the talks, the main discussion was focused on the issue of international boundary between the two countries. Keeping this in mind the Chinese delegation, Mr. Wang Yi said that ' as the china and Bhutan are neighbouring countries, with shared of mountains and rivers, we should first of all achieve mutual understanding, we can achieve mutual support confidence and mutual assistance. We have made a lot of achievements in this regards. We will walks of the basis to make further progresses. He also added, 'it is my view that what counts most is that we must

¹¹⁸ The Kuenel, 25 September-1 october 1999.p.1

¹¹⁹ "National Assembly Discusses the Bhutan-China Border Talks", July 14, 2001, <http://www.kuenselonline.com/print.php?sid=325>.

continue the progress and, during this progress, enhance the mutual understanding so we can work together to remove the outstanding relatively minor issues'.¹²⁰

Sixteenth Round of Talks

The sixteenth round of China Bhutan boundary talks were held in Beijing, China on 12 October, 2002. Bhutanese Foreign Minister Lyonpo Jigme Yoesar Thinley met Chinese Premier Zhu Rongji. During the round of talks both the sides agreed to create a mechanism in which the border would be examined by map experts from both sides. In July 2002, the Bhutanese Minister of Foreign Affairs revealed to the National Assembly that China had claimed to be in possession of the license of ownership of the 3 places. Bhutan asked China to extend the generosity of a superpower to a small country like Bhutan, but China replied that it cannot afford to be generous to every single neighbor considering that it has 25 other neighbors.¹²¹ With this the Chinese Premier said that China and Bhutan are resolving their boundary issues through mutual understanding.¹²² On the other hand, Bhutan's foreign Minister said that 'Bhutan and China should further promote mutual understanding between the two people.'¹²³

After many round of boundary talks we can surmise that the Chinese reluctant to reduce their claims on the western which is strategically important for them or to interfere in the question of Tibetan yak herders intrusion into Bhutanese territory unless and until the Bhutanese accept the proposal of exchange of an area of 495 sq. Km. with the pasture land area of 269 sq. Km. On the other hand, Bhutan cannot accept this kind of Chinese proposal, as large number of Bhutanese people depend on livestock for their survival. In addition to this, Bhutanese claim that both the areas had always belonged to the Bhutanese.¹²⁴

Seventeenth Round of Talks

The 17th round of boundary talks was held in Thimphu in April 2004, during the talks both sides agreeing to assemble a team of specialists as soon as possible to examine the border. Both sides expressed wish to determine the border as soon as possible and decided to assemble a

¹²⁰KharatRajesh, *Sino-Bhutan relation*, foreign policy of Bhutan,2005, p.141.

¹²¹"Bhutan-China Relations, "Bhutannews Online, http://www.bhutannewsonline.com/bhutan_china.html.

¹²²KharatRajesh, *Sino-Bhutan relation*, foreign policy of Bhutan,2005, p.141.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴Kharatrajesh, sino-bhutan relation, foreign policy of bhutan,2005, p.142.

team of experts to examine the border as proposed by each. But there was no sign of permanent resolving the issue. In fact, there was a delay in any concrete decision by both the parties. Both the countries created lots of misunderstanding in Indi-Bhutan relations, since India's strategic interest is very much involved in the Himalayan Kingdom. On the issue of delay Bhutan Foreign Minister made a diplomatic answer that 'Big objectives take time to fulfill', he said 'I am optimistic about the outcome of the boundary talks also it would be better to conduct the talks without haste and with great care and patience after all it involves the national interest of the country.'¹²⁵ With this Bhutan wanted to ensure that its traditional grazing land is not affected and that the boundary is demarcated according to traditional lines.¹²⁶

Eighteenth Round of Talks

The 18th round of border talks occurred in Beijing in August 2006, and focused on the technicalities of the disputed claims. There are proceedings of the National Assembly of Bhutan that some stakeholders are putting pressure to resolve the border talks, for security and commercial reasons. For example, in 84th and 85th parliamentary in June and December 2006) two types of concerns were expressed: First, from the population near the northern border areas over the building of roads by the Chinese: and second, mounting pressure to resolve the border issue in the part of the Bhutanese chamber of commerce.

The foreign minister of Bhutan, Lyonpo Ugyen Tshering, recently stated that the next round would be held 'as soon as possible', demonstrating the governments renewed commitment to resolving the issue. In November 2007, Chinese forces dismantled several unmanned posts near Chumbi Valley. This, analysts put it, has 'distorted the Sino-Bhutanese border near Sikkim', with Chinese forces only a few kilometers away from the Siliguri corridor. Chumbi Valley, a vital tri-junction between Bhutan, India and China Border, is significantly as it is around 500 kilometers from the Siliguri corridor- the Chicken neck which connects India to North East India and Nepal to Bhutan. Meanwhile Chumbi Valley is of geostrategic Importance to China because of its shared borders with Tibet and Sikkim. The North-Western areas of Bhutan which China

¹²⁵Kharat rajesh, sino-bhutan relation, foreign policy of bhutan,2005, p.142.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

wants to exchange deal would raise strategic concerns in India. Its strategic significance for the Indian military is definite.¹²⁷

Nineteenth Round of Talks

The 19th round took place in Thimphu in January 2010 and dealt especially with the north western disputed sectors. For this, assistant Foreign Minister Hu Zhengyue acted as the Chinese government representative and according to the press release from the foreign ministry, discussions were also held on 'Bilateral regions and international developments of mutual interest and concern'. Therefore, the talk was concluded on an agreement to discuss the modalities for conducting a 'joint field survey of the four disputed territories in the rich pastoral lands of northern Bhutan.'¹²⁸

Twentieth Round of Talks

The 20th round of boundary talks was held in Thimphu in August 2012. The two countries, which have not established diplomatic relations, conducted the border talks with Bhutan expressing its wish to work with China to solve the boundary issue soon as possible. Despite the absence of diplomatic ties, the two countries have maintained political contacts, economic cooperation and people-to-people exchanges over the past several years. During the intervening period, the fifth Expert Group meeting was in the Tibetan capital of Lasa on 18th October 2012. The Boundary negotiations between the Bhutanese government and the government of the China are guided by the four principles, which was agreed to in the 1988 and the 1998 Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility in the Bhutan-China Border Areas.¹²⁹

Twenty-one Round of Talk

The 21st sino-Bhutan border talks held at Thimpu on 22nd August 2013. During the talks, both the countries had agreed to conduct the joint technical field survey of the 495 sq Km in the Pasamlung area north of Bumthang. The joint technical team who had visited the disputed area in

¹²⁷BishtMedha, Sino-Bhutan Boundary Negotiations: Complexities of the package deal, 19th January 2010. http://www.idsai.in/idsacomments/Sino-BhutanBoundaryNegotiations_mbisht_190110

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹http://articles.economicstimes.indiatimes.com/2013-08-20/news/41429373_1_boundary-talks-boundary-issue-next-round accessed on 20th August, 2013.

Bayul Pasamlung between 6th September and 9th September. The Minister informed the House that the latest round of border talk with China had been a success. The two countries, which have not established diplomatic relations, conducted the border talks last year with Bhutan expressing its wish to work with China to solve the boundary issue as soon as possible. China shares a contiguous border of 470 kilometres with Bhutan and its territorial disputes with the country have been a source of potential conflict.¹³⁰The eight member Chinese delegation led by Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenrin arrived at Thimpu for the 21st round of boundary talks between the two countries, a Foreign Minister said: The Bhutanese side will be led by Foreign Minister RinzinDorje.

Twenty-Two Round of Talks

China and Bhutan held the 22nd round of boundary talks in Beijing in July, 2014 to resolve issues surrounding disputed land, which also borders India's northeastern states of Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. At that time, China had made a strong pitch to improve relations with Bhutan and expressed readiness for an early and "Fair" solution to their boundary dispute. The Bhutanese delegation to the talks was led by Foreign Minister Lyonpe Rinzin Dorje and the Chinese delegation was led by Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin.

At a media briefing here after the President held talks King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh, when asked how worried India was over Bhutan-China border talks, said, "Relations between India and Bhutan stand on their own and they are independent of any other country". "If you have a border with a country, it is logical that you will have border talks. We also have a border with China and we also have border talks with China. Bhutan is a sovereign and independent country under the very wise leadership of its monarchy and its government. We have absolutely no doubt that Bhutan will deal with this issue in a manner that is in the best interest of both Bhutan and India".

Mukherjee, who is the first Indian head of state to visit Bhutan in 26 years, noted that the country is India's friendliest neighbor and the relations between the two are "unique and special", sustained by the tradition of close consultations and frequent exchange of high-level

¹³⁰http://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/china-bhutan-conduct-technical-survey-of-border-areas-113091800677_1.html accessed on 18th September, 2013.

talks. He said in the interview that India's commitment to exemplary relations with Bhutan is an example for the rest of the world and has only deepened over the years. "Developmental assistance and security cooperation are the bedrock of our relations and will continue as before," he said.¹³¹

Twenty-Third Round of Talks

The 23rd round of talks on China-Bhutan boundary issue was held on 23rd to 26th August, 2015. The vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin visited Bhutan and he met the 4th King Jigme Singye Wangchuk and Prime Minister Tsering Tobgay of Bhutan, and held talks with Foreign Minister Lyonpo Damcho Dorji of Bhutan in a friendly atmosphere.¹³²

During the talks the two leaders had in-depth discussions on the boundary issue as well as on bilateral relations. They also exchanged views on regional, international and matters of mutual interest and concern.¹³³ They reviewed the progress on the boundary issue following the outcome of the 22nd Round of Boundary Talks held in Wutai Shan, China in July, 2014, the two Expert Group Meeting held in October, 2014 in Thimphu and in March, 2015 in Beijing, and the first phase of the Joint Technical Field Survey of the Western Sector carried out in June, 2015.¹³⁴

The two leaders decided that the final phase of the Joint Technical Field Survey of the Western Sector should be carried out in September, 2015 followed by a meeting of the Expert Group towards the end of the year to compile a joint report of the two surveys of the Western Sector. They also directed the two leaders of the Expert Group to discuss specific plans for a mutually acceptable resolution of the boundary based on the progress achieved so far.¹³⁵

The Report of the Expert Group on the joint field surveys of the Western Sector and their discussions on specific plans are expected to be considered by the leaders during the 24th Round of Boundary Talks which will be held sometime in 2016.

¹³¹ <http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-visit-not-connected-to-bhutan-china-border-talks-pranab-mukherjee-2032922> accessed on 7th November 2014.

¹³² -23rd Round of Bhutan-China Border Talks, Kuenselonline.

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

The two leaders expressed satisfaction with the Talks and agreed that it had further deepened understanding between the two sides on the boundary issue and bilateral relations. The Talks were held in a very warm and friendly atmosphere.

During his stay in Bhutan, the Vice Minister called on the Prime Minister and visited places of historical and cultural interest including Paro Taktshang.

Liu Zhenmin expressed that China-Bhutan relations have achieved rapid development in recent years. The Chinese side pays high attention to the traditional friendship with Bhutan, stands ready to work with the Bhutanese side to propel bilateral exchanges and cooperation in various fields, and welcomes the Bhutanese side to actively participate in the “Belt and Road” initiatives and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), so as to join hands to seek common development. The talks on China-Bhutan boundary issue have made positive progress and entered a new stage. The Chinese side is willing to, on the basis of boundary negotiations in the past 31 years and in accordance with the important consensus reached in the 22nd talks on boundary issue in previous talks, continue to seek a fair, reasonable and comprehensive solution to the issue which is acceptable to both sides by means of amicable consultation, in a move to delimitate the boundary between the two countries at an early date.

The Bhutanese leaders asked Liu Zhenmin to convey their greeting and regards to the Chinese leaders, and expressed that although Bhutan and China have not formally established the diplomatic relations yet, the two countries enjoy a friendly relationship and increasingly close bilateral exchanges and cooperation. The two countries understand and support each other on international occasions, setting an example of harmonious co-existence between big and small countries. In recent years, exchanges between the two governments and peoples become more in-depth, wide-ranged and meaningful. The Bhutanese government adheres to the one China policy and is committed to deepening exchanges and cooperation with China. Bhutan highly appreciates China’s willingness to share developmental experience and fruits with other countries and commitment to the world peace and prosperity, and welcomes the initiatives such as the “Belt and Road” and the AIIB proposed by the Chinese side. The Bhutanese side is satisfied with the positive progress in bilateral boundary negotiation in recent years, stands ready to deepen and implement the important consensus reached in the 22nd round of talks on boundary issue by the two countries, and continues to strive for a solution to the boundary issue acceptable to both sides at an early date in the spirit of amity, trust and accommodation of each other’s concerns.

Both sides spoke positively of the previous joint survey on the disputed areas in the boundary between the two countries, and agreed to continue to safeguard the peace and tranquility in the border areas before the boundary issue is solved.¹³⁶

China is geographically one of the largest and the most powerful country in the world. Till today China had resolve the boundary issue with almost all the neighbouring countries but it is very important to mark that China has hasn't resolve any boundary issue with India and Bhutan from the traditional period onwards. It may be so because of the strong relationship between India and Bhutan. As Bhutan is a buffer state between the China and India, it has always been from Bhutan side to resolve the demarcation of the boundary line with China and also the question of Tibetan intrusion in Bhutanese Territory. At the same time Bhutan also wanted to maintain good relations and atmosphere of friendship and co-operation with China. These are always been in the objectives of Bhutan's Foreign Policy. Therefore the Foreign Policy of small states like Bhutan works for the survival in the way and especially when it is buffer between the two large and powerful countries.

¹³⁶http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjbxw/t1292399.shtml accessed on 27th August, 2015.

Chapter 4

Implications for India

Introduction

This chapter will examine the implications of Bhutan –China territorial negotiations and a possible territorial swap between the two for India . As mentioned earlier, the border talks between Bhutan and China started in the year 1984 at Beijing, for the first time. Despite the absence of a formal diplomatic relations, both have completed 23 rounds of boundary talks in 2015. As we know , after the 1962 Sino-India war, the major border confrontation between Sino-Bhutan occurred during the year 1966, at the tri-junction of Chumbi valley, Bhutan, Kingdom of Sikkim and Tibet, Chinese troops along with the Tibetan grazers entered the Doklam pastures against Bhutan. Doklam is an area where China and Bhutan intersect and it is just adjacent to the Chumbi valley”.¹³⁷ Then later, officially “China extended its claim on Bhutan territory near about 300 sq.km towards the northern area of Punakha”.¹³⁸ While related to this border issue “Bhutan wanted India’s advice and also to take up with China on this issue. On the other hand, China officially stated to Bhutan that Sino-Bhutan boundaries had ever been demarcated and that while China would like to do so ‘from side to side open consultations’ with only concern to China and Bhutan, without interference of the Indian government”.¹³⁹

In 2012 during the “Rio+ 20 summit UN conference on sustainable development meet at Brazil. The Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao and Prime Minister Jigmi Y Thinley of Bhutan constantly discussing on resolving border disputes”¹⁴⁰ which has created a concern for India. The reason is essentially the strategic implications for India and Bhutan of accepting China’s ‘package deal’ settlement, which consists of a exchange rather than a traditional sectoral

¹³⁷BishtMedha(2010), “India-Bhutan Relations: from development cooperation to strategic partnership”, Strategic Analysis, Vol.34, No.3, p.351.

¹³⁸ Singh Swaran, “Sino-South Asian Ties: Problems and Perspects”. <http://www.idsa-india.org/an-apr-03.html>

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ BagchiIndrani, “China’s Coziness with Bhutan rings security alarm for India”, The Times of India, accessed on 23rd June 2012. <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Chinas-coziness-with-Bhutan-rings-security-alarm-for-India/articleshow/14361713.cms>

approach to border resolution.¹⁴¹ In essence, the exchange would involve China trading 495 square kms of territory in the central Bhutan border area in return for 249 square kilometers of territory in northwestern Bhutan. The latter is where the territories of India, Bhutan and China intersect in an area called Doklam, adjacent to the Chumbi valley.¹⁴²

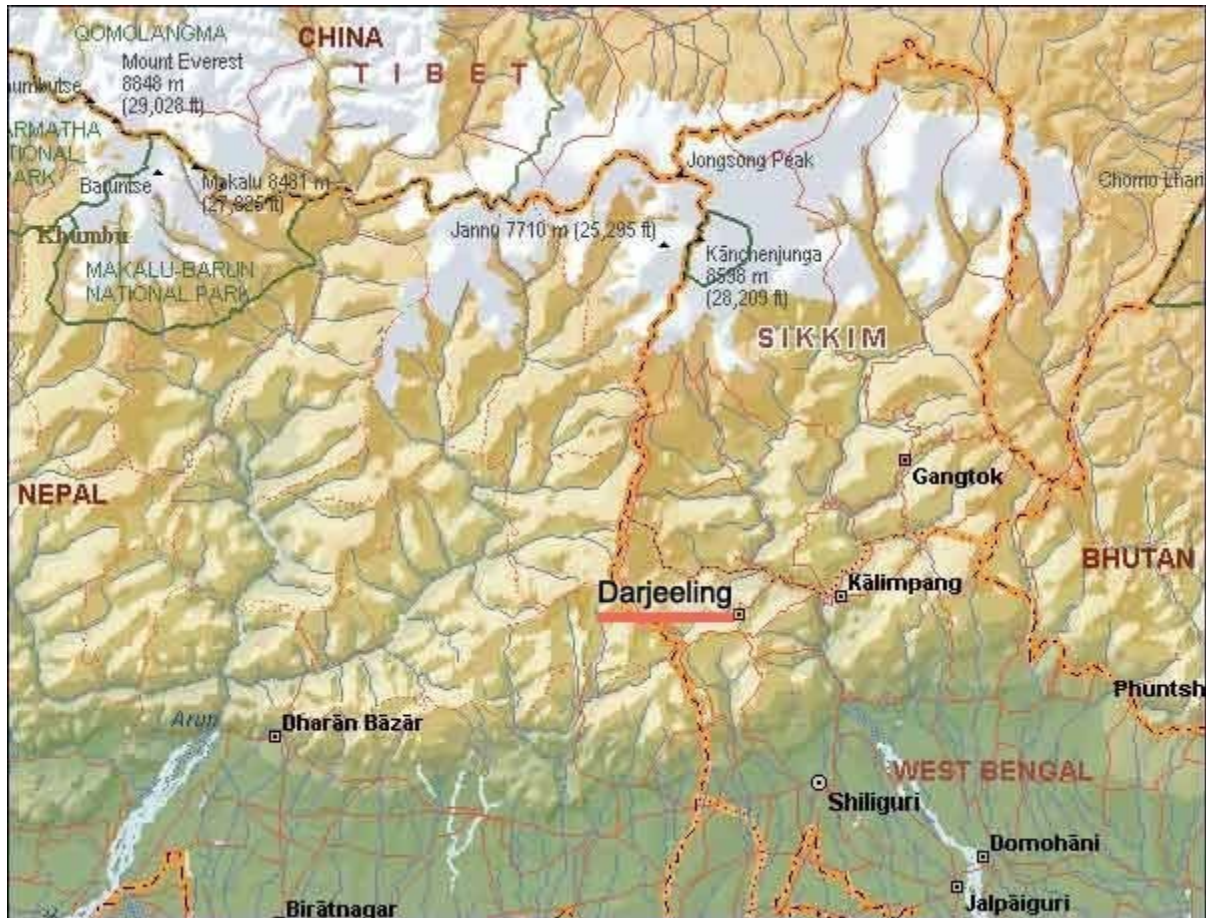


Figure: Map Showing India, Bhutan and Tibet

Implications for India

For Bhutan, acceptance of a speedy border settlement remains ‘an end in itself’.¹⁴³ Bhutan’s urgency to demarcate its boundary with China reflects its desire to be an independent actor positively engaged in the region.¹⁴⁴ However, acceptance of the Chinese deal would have

¹⁴¹Mathou, ‘Bhutan-China Relations’, p. 402.

¹⁴²Medha Bisht, ‘India-Bhutan Relations: from developmental cooperation to strategic partnership’, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 34, No. 3, May 2010, p. 351.

¹⁴³ Kumar, ‘Sino-Bhutanese Relations’, p. 248.

¹⁴⁴Bisht, ‘India-Bhutan Relations’, p. 351.

profound implications for the Himalayan kingdom; especially India will suffer the most. For the local Bhutanese people, the deal would mean giving away rich pastoral land ‘which is important to the livelihoods of people dependent on the area’.¹⁴⁵

For India, the deal would bring the Chinese to within 500 kilometres of the Siliguri corridor,¹⁴⁶ and offer China a ‘commanding view’ of Indian border defences and ‘provide a launch pad to progress operations into the Siliguri corridor’.¹⁴⁷ As a result, there are fears that the underlying motive for China’s quest to resolve the disputed border ‘seems not to be on the basis of traditional usage or history but owing to the strategic nature of the western border’.¹⁴⁸ Moreover, the Sino-Bhutan border negotiations appear to be part of a larger Chinese strategy in South Asia, whereby ‘China wants to gain as much as possible in the western sector of the dispute with Bhutan’,¹⁴⁹ reflecting the view of several commentators that ‘boundary settlement for China is about strategic enhancement’.¹⁵⁰

In the treaty, both nations agreed to ‘a provision that neither country would allow its territories to be used for activities unfavorable to the other’.¹⁵¹ As well, Bhutan and India share ‘intimate bonds in the areas of foreign affairs, economy, trade, education and technology, as well as national defence and security’.¹⁵² So it is doubtful that Bhutan would agree to the provisions which could have such comprehensive negative implications for India. Indian investment and strategic culture infuse all aspects of Bhutan’s development, hence the catch-cry that India is Bhutan’s ‘most dependable and generous development partner’.¹⁵³ This dependence means that any negative changes to India’s strategic settings would consistently interpret negatively for Bhutan.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Attributed to the view of the Indian Centre for Land Warfare studies, by Rochon, ‘Pinning Bhutan Against the Wall’.

¹⁴⁸ Pravnay Kumar, ‘Sino-Bhutanese Relations: under the shadow of India-Bhutan friendship’, *China Report*, Vol. 46, No.3, 2010, p. 248.

¹⁴⁹ Kumar, ‘Sino-Bhutanese Relations’, p. 248.

¹⁵⁰ See, for example, Bisht, ‘India-Bhutan Relations’, p. 351.

¹⁵¹ Jane’s, *Sentinel Security Assessment – South Asia – Bhutan*, Jane’s: London, 14 February 2013, p. 3.

¹⁵² Kuei-hsiang Hsu, ‘A preliminary study of the triangular relationship between Bhutan, China and India’, National Chengchi University: Taiwan, undated, p. 9, available at <<http://www.mtac.gov.tw/mtacbooke/upload/09707/0201/e1.pdf>> accessed 20 June 2014.

¹⁵³ Indian Centre for Land Warfare studies quoted in Rochon, ‘Pinning Bhutan Against the Wall’.



Figure: Map Showing China, Bhutan, India's North East Region and Siliguri.

Some of the implications for India with respect to Sino-Bhutan relations with concern to the extension of China's territory towards Chumbi valley can be sharpened out. Initially, the Siliguri Corridor is a terribly exposed route in India's geography. Rather than having a good people to people connectivity, free trade or economic relations routes and also the tourism services with the international borders countries. Many unwanted activities like gunning, human trafficking, illegal migrants, and insurgent's problems etc. takes place through the narrow routes of Siliguri corridor. Mostly from all these kind of illegal activities the North eastern states of India, which is considered to be an isolated region suffered the most to the extreme level.

In recent years, "the certain analysts have also speculated that the Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (PISI) has attempted to exploit the Siliguri via Nepal-based insurgent",¹⁵⁴ which will make India's National security (INS) unhealthy. With this many illegal activities

¹⁵⁴ Panda Ankit(2013), "Geography's Curse: India's Vulnerable Chicken's Neck's", The Diplomat. <http://thediplomat.com/2013/11/geographys-curse-indias-vulnerable-chickens-neck/>

would take place, which again raise the question of unsafe among the North Eastern Region (NER) of India. In this way, China is also trying to create connectivity to Siliguri by trying to inches closer to the Chumbi valley. From the valley, for the china it will be very unsophisticated to connect Nepal, Bhutan towards Siliguri and once it link up to the Siliguri corridor, it will be again effortless to connect China to Bangladesh and also to other South Asian neighbouring countries of India. Therefore, China's linking up with the India's neighbouring South Asian Countries will have very important implications with concern to National Security of India (NSI).

Tibet has been the major interest for China, and the Chumbi valley is at the tri-junction India Bhutan and China. From India, state Sikkim is the border to Tibet and also intersects at tri-junction to Chumbi valley. Sikkim, the only state in India where the Tibetan inhabitant Lepcha tribes are found settle. Therefore China's coming closer to Chumbi valley might be with some interest on Sikkim. Hence, it has some implication on India and it is important for the Indian's to be prepared and to keep eye of Sino-Bhutan relations.

For many years, India has faces an insurgency in the remote north east of the country, with insurgent groups frequently operating from bases inside Myanmar. Myanmar's military co-operation with the Indian government in dealing with these groups has been reportly linked with an Indian government's offer to supply a variety of Military hardware such as tanks, aircraft, artillery guns, radar, small arms and advanced light helicopters.¹⁵⁵ However, there are worries that the Myanmar military may use the weapons and other military equipment, such as helicopters, sold or donated by India for the crackdown on insurgents or against ethnic civilians. In April 2007, it was reported that Indian and Myanmar security forces were conducting joint military operations along the 1,643 kms Indo-Myanmar border to neutralize insurgent groups.¹⁵⁶ In the month of January 2010, an agreement was also signed between India and Myanmar to conduct joint military operations in north east and Myanmar against the Indian insurgents hiding in the dense jungles of Myanmar.¹⁵⁷ The aim was to ensure that no insurgents can escape to the

¹⁵⁵ Sharma Sushil Kumar(2014), Insurgency in North East India: External Dynamics, IDSA. (accessed at http://www.idsa.in/jds/8_4_2014_InsurgencyinNorthEastIndia)

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

other side when facing the heat on one side. The security forces were also to be more vigilant smuggling of drugs, arms and other goods.¹⁵⁸



Figure: Map Showing the Weapons Distribution through Siliguri Corridor.

The India's north eastern state comprises of eight states. Almost, all the states are well known for their insurgency groups. India has international boundary with Bhutan. Since, the year 1991, "Bhutan has had been providing 'one of the safe havens for various insurgent groups of North east India', like how 'Bhutan assignation with the (ULFA) United Liberation Front of Asom and also to the Bodo Terrorist, in order of chasing out the Nepalese refugees from Bhutan".¹⁵⁹ Therefore, if china inches closer towards the territory of Bhutan, it will be complex for the Indian Military to make in control the hidden insurgent groups in Bhutan from north east India. Also for various insurgent groups it will be easy to integrate with Chinese with respect to the technological weapons and other insurgent materials.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Bibhu Prasad Routray(2001), "Northern Insurgents in Bhutan: Time for a pro-active Action", Institutes of Peace and Conflict Studies. <http://www.ipcs.org/staff-profile/bibhu-prasad-routray-161.html>

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

In 2011, “the National Investigating Agency (NIA) has investigated against the Anthony Shimray, the chief arms buyer of the Isak-Muivah group (IMG) of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM), it was clear that the insurgent group was actively buying weapons from the Chinese companies. The National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) visited the Norinco headquarters in Beijing. Norinco or China North Industries Corporation is one of China’s largest State-owned weapons manufactures. Bangkok- based National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IN) rebels paid USD 500,000 to Norinco and bought 1,800 weapons that landed at Bangladesh’s Cox Bazar in 1996 and were transported onwards to Northeast India, to NSCN-IM and NDFB camps. Half of these weapons, of course, were seized by Bangladeshi security forces while being off-loaded”.¹⁶¹ Manufacturing of Chinese weapons in the large number in their weapons factories has got a main purpose.¹⁶² Hence, their motive is to sell the weapons in large number for their profit to the armed groups of northeastern states of India. Therefore, it is important for the Indian Government to come up with the proper strategy to stop the insurgency problems and also to bring development in India’s North east Region. Hence, Chinese marching towards the Region of Chumbi valley has a very important implication for India in respect to Insurgent problems.¹⁶³

In fact China supports the means to “the accessibility of the weapons and bombs among the terror groups in Northeast India that is actually keeping insurgency alive in the eastern frontier”. For better understanding, in 2008, “the mass car bombing occurred in Assam at Guwahati, Barpeta Road, Bongaigaon and Kokhajar by the armed group of Assam ‘National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB)’. Huge amounts of explosives like RDX or other plastic explosives, like C4 had been used as a fire erupted immediately after the blast”.¹⁶⁴ May be these heavy and huge amount of explosives were bought from the China via Bhutan and Bangladesh. Again, in 2009, bombing was carried out by the United Liberation Front of Asom(ULFA).¹⁶⁵ The bombing in Assam by any of the armed groups has always led to the extreme critical conditions.

¹⁶¹ Wasbir Hussain (2015), “Looking Insurgency in Northeast India: the Chinese Link”, Institutes of peace and conflict studies, <http://www.ipcs.org/article/india/insurgency-in-northeast-india-the-chinese-link-4826.html>

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ ‘30 october 2008 Assam Serial Bomb Blast’, North East Blog, accessed on 2010. <http://www.northeastblog.in/assam/30-oct-2008-assam-serial-bomb-blast/>

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.



Figure: Map showing India and Bangladesh Border.

On the other side, China has been trying to promote humble relationship with Bangladesh, even though they do have any shared international boundaries. In order to achieve the aim of China it has been providing military aid, training and several infrastructure projects to Bangladesh in recent years. If China gets access to Chumbi valley, it will get closer to Bangladesh's periphery in the North as only a narrow stretch of land dives Bangladesh from Bhutan. Many analysts have already done and also pointed out that "two important north-south strategic corridors on either side of India" are firstly, "the trans-Karakoram corridor extends to Gwadar" and Secondly, "the Irrawaddy corridor linking Yunnan to Myanmar". Therefore "connecting with Nepal is definite, extending Indian rail networks at Siliguri via the Chumbi valley has also been proposed in some recent years". In fact by "2017 China is looking to have a rail link going to Chumbi valley".¹⁶⁶ Too much connectivity of one big country with the buffer

¹⁶⁶BishtMedha, Chumbi Valley: Economic Rationale but strategic Resonance, 23rd September, 2010.
http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/ChumbiValleyEconomicRationalebutStrategicResonance_mbisht_230910

states will definitely create problems to the other big country, which is again indicating to India. Hence, this situation is exactly happening between India and China.¹⁶⁷

On the other hand, India and Bangladesh has already having an illegal migration. In recent years, illegal migrants of Bangladeshi's had created unfavorable conditions in the Indian state of Assam.¹⁶⁸ Due to the Bangladeshi's illegal migrant, many horrified activities are taking place like the child trafficking, women and girl trafficking, smuggling via India to the Middle East countries. According to the Indian media perception, Bangladeshi's are migrating illegally to India and creating problems.¹⁶⁹ As, China's interest on connecting with Bangladesh, might encourage Bangladesh to carry out with these horrified activities in large number, which will again create problems in India and it will also be concern regarding the National Security of India. Again, this is also an implication for India and so it is very important for India to maintain neutrality relations and keep eye on Bangladesh and China's relations.¹⁷⁰ "China also wanted to build up a maritime corridor from South China to Bay of Bengal so as to reduce its reliance on the Malacca straits as more than 75 percent of China's oil passes from it".¹⁷¹

The entire Sino-Bhutan border disputes are closely linked up with India. Like how, the Chumbi valley's issue is one of the border concerns for India. The Chumbi valley is situated in the tri-Junction between China, Bhutan and India. But the main issue is not between the three countries, it is the issue only between two countries that is China and Bhutan. On the other hand, this border issue has very important implications for India and its security. Therefore, the extreme close relations between India and Bhutan, India will always be concerned with the strategic consequences.

As a result of these complex dynamics, Bhutan finds itself 'caught between the rivalries of two regional giants'.¹⁷² From time to time, this rivalry plays out in Bhutan's favour. For example, India has stepped up its economic assistance programs in Bhutan in response to growing Chinese investment projects, such as the planned extension of the Tibet rail network

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ _ India Bangladesh Relation: A Bigger Picture, *The Diplomat*. (accessed at <http://thediplomat.com/2015/06/india-bangladesh-relations-the-bigger-picture/>)

¹⁶⁹ Ibid.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² S.M. Hali, 'Unhappy Neighbours', *South Asia*, November 2013, p. 40.

into the country.¹⁷³ At other times, Bhutan has had to contend with the Chinese pressure tactic of border incursions to bring it to the negotiation table.¹⁷⁴ This tactic has led some to describe China's policy towards Bhutan as a pattern of 'military intimidation followed by diplomatic seduction'.¹⁷⁵

Bhutan's border problem remains its biggest security challenge and, more broadly, an issue that is set to define its future as a nation state.¹⁷⁶ However, as 'mutual suspicion'¹⁷⁷ is a hallmark of Sino-Indian relations, it is difficult to see how Bhutan could agree to the Chinese deal given its 'critical security implications for India'.¹⁷⁸ For this reason, above all others, the remaining 269 square kms of disputed territory is likely to remain unresolved for the foreseeable future. Thierry Mathou, an author, ventures further and suggests that until there is complete normalization of Sino-Indian relations, Bhutan's treaty commitments to India would make any agreement with China infeasible.¹⁷⁹

Beyond the dynamics of Sino-Indian great power rivalry and the problems bestowed by geography for strategically-important buffer states like Bhutan, the Sino-Bhutan border dispute also points to a far more complex aspect of Himalayan geo-strategic politics—namely the role of Tibet.¹⁸⁰ Bhutan and Tibet have a long and complex history and continue to share common cultural and religious bonds based on Tibetan Buddhist ideology. For China, the Tibetan link with Bhutan is a powerful force in the dispute, as settlement of the border and the cross-border movement of people could help to legitimise China's rule in Tibet and vindicate its Tibetan policies.¹⁸¹ For Bhutan, in the absence of settlement progress, its continued cautious policy of non-advocacy of Tibetan causes could also aid in the normalisation of Sino-Bhutanese relations and lead to economic benefits from China's 'Western Development Strategy'.¹⁸²

¹⁷³ Hali, 'Learning Diplomacy', p. 43.

¹⁷⁴ Kumar, 'Sino-Bhutanese Relations', p. 249.

¹⁷⁵ Jha, 'China and its Peripheries', p. 4.

¹⁷⁶ Kumar, 'Sino-Bhutanese Relations', p. 248.

¹⁷⁷ Anindya Batabyal, 'Balancing China in Asia: a realist assessment of India's look east strategy', *China Report*, Vol. 42, February 2006, p. 179, available at <<http://chr.sagepub.com/content/42/2/179.abstract>> accessed 21 November 2014.

¹⁷⁸ Kumar, 'Sino-Bhutanese Relations', p. 249.

¹⁷⁹ Mathou, 'Bhutan-China Relations', pp. 388 and 397.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Kumar, 'Sino-Bhutanese Relations', p. 250.

¹⁸² Mathou, 'Bhutan-China Relations', p. 388.

In the context of the broader Sino-Indian border dispute, Tibet is also a driving factor that connects the wider strategic, nationalist and geopolitical narratives.¹⁸³ The Chumbi valley is situated in the tri junction of India, China (Tibet) and Bhutan. Therefore, the main reason of Chinese, extension of their territory towards Chumbi valley is with the concern of Tibet. Tibet is an autonomous state, but it is still under the supervision of the Chinese. On the other hand, India is happy to have Tibet as the neighbor state.¹⁸⁴ But, if China inches closer to the Chumbi valley towards Bhutan than it will be more easy for Chinese to have contact and create problems with the small states of India (Sikkim). Definitely, India do not want to have a direct border with China again, as Chinese had already creating a border issues with the India north eastern state of Arunachal Pradesh.¹⁸⁵

The acceptance of the Chinese deal would have profound implications for the Himalayan Kingdom. For the local Bhutanese people, the deal would mean giving away rich pastoral land 'which is important to the livelihoods of people dependent on the areas'. Acceptance of China's deal would also, in all likelihood, breach Bhutan's 2007 'Friendship Treaty' obligations with India.

As it is known that Bhutan is the only country in South Asia which does not have diplomatic relations with China. Bilateral relations have remained strained because of the dispute over their 470km border.¹⁸⁶ It has four disputed areas that stretch from Dhoklam in the west, Charithang, Sinchulimpa and Dramana pasture land. China is claiming maximum territory in the western sector that is close to the tri-junction of Bhutan, China and India for strategic purposes.¹⁸⁷ It has offered Thimphu a deal: it wants Bhutan's northwestern areas in exchange for recognizing Bhutan's control over the central areas.¹⁸⁸ In 2004, the Bhutanese National Assembly discussed the issue of sector exchange. Bhutan did not make India party to these deliberations. This has raised ambiguity in India vis-à-vis this sector.¹⁸⁹ (Chinese border

¹⁸³ Anand, 'Revisiting the China-India Border Dispute', p. 66.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Singh Teshu(2012), Sino India Relations: Implications for Indias Security, IPCS. (accessed at <http://www.ipcs.org/article/china/sino-bhutan-relations-implications-for-indian-security-3692.html>)

¹⁸⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

settlement with Nepal was through a package deal rather than through sector-by-sector settlement.) the PRC wants Bhutan to compromise on the Chumbi valley.

Any development in the tri-junction is a matter of concern for India. As the region is close to India's Chicken's neck: the Siliguri corridor which links the north-east passage. The move has alarmed New Delhi because it will bring the Chinese forces within a few kilometres of the Siliguri Corridor which connects the rest of India with the Northeast and Nepal with Bhutan. Chumbi Valley is of equal strategic significance to China because of its shared border with Tibet and sikkim. Any development in the Chumbi valley that alters the status quo in Beijing's favour will have serious bearings on India. Until now, 23rd rounds of boundary talks between China and Bhutan have failed to solve the dispute because of its close tie with India.

Bhutan has largely toiled under the influence of India. India-Bhutan relations were revised in 2007 and now it is more of an equal relation. This was followed by Bhutan's turn to parliamentary democracy. As democracy started taking ground, special ties with India have been questioned. Thus to neutralize its relationship, Bhutan has started turning towards China. There is a section in Bhutan that is thinking of opening similar points for China to maintain equilibrium vis-à-vis India. Bhutan is trying to come out of India's shadow and seeks to play a more dynamic role internationally.

From the economic perspective, the development of India's north eastern states is only with the increased of trade and commerce relationship with Bhutan, which is highly beneficial for whole India. For this Bhutan is a vital importance for India.¹⁹⁰ Traditionally Bhutan had trade relations with its neighbouring regions like the west Bengal, Assam, Tibet and Cooch Behar. In those days Bhutan used to import goods like indigo, clove, tobacco, betel leaves, cotton cloth, dried fish etc.¹⁹¹ Bhutan is very much rich in natural resources like horticultural products, hydel power, minerals. Bhutan has had traditional relation with Tibet with their common culture and religion.¹⁹² During 1950's Bhutan had traditional trade relation with Tibet but with the Chinese incursion over Tibet in 1959. Bhutan had to close the trade routes with Tibet. At that time,

¹⁹⁰ Kharat Rajesh, 2005) , *Foreign Policy of Bhutan*, New Belhi: Manak Publications.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

Bhutan economic conditions for their livelihood went very poor.¹⁹³ On the other hand Bhutan was left out with China and India. It was quit impossible for Bhutan to start trade relation with China, so in order to improve their daily livelihood Bhutan had to start trade relation with India. The trade with India was not running smoothly as because of the bad conditions of the roads and also for the dense forest in Bhutan.¹⁹⁴ Later, slowly India had helped Bhutan to improve their communication facilities, especially the roads. The good relationship of trade and commerce between India and Bhutan started and till today, it has been moving smoothly.

In recent years, Bhutan has recently opened up its economy. Chinese companies have been given contract to construct the world's tallest Buddha statue in Thimphu. In spite of Bhutan being an agriculture and forestry based economy; Beijing is exporting farming and telecommunication equipment and has also offered to invest in projects related to health and education services.¹⁹⁵ Unquestionably, China is an attractive source of investment. However, Chinese investment in any country comes with its own terms and conditions- they bring in their own workers and equipment. As a result, the benefits of development are not enjoyed by the local communities. However, this is not the case with Indian investment.¹⁹⁶

It has been noticed that due to the Chinese interference Bhutan had to stop trade relation with Tibet, in spite of having good and traditional relations between both Bhutan and Tibetan.¹⁹⁷ Now again, China is trying the do the same with Bhutan and India's trade relation, by trying to inch closer towards the Bhutan and Chumbi valley. China coming closer to Bhutan means creating treats to India.¹⁹⁸ So in order to stop the spread of treats in India, possible India have to close free trade relation with Bhutan, which will be a great lose for India as well as for Bhutan. Therefore, it is again great implication for India, to be aware in order to continue their trade and commerce with Bhutan for the betterment and standard livelihood for the north eastern people of India.¹⁹⁹

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Sahgal Arun, Chinese inroads into Bhutan worry India, Tribune India. (accessed at <http://www.tribuneindia.com/2012/20121030/edit.htm#6>)

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

Until now, Bhutan has never played its China card. But today, the security of Bhutan is vulnerable. Japan has announced that it will open its own diplomatic mission in Thimpu by 2014. Bhutan is no more a protectorate of India and is steadily moving towards China. Thus any policy towards Bhutan, therefore, will have to be carefully calibrated. Again this is alarm for Indian Government. Indian government should start taking up some proper strategy with any policy of Bhutan moving towards China now and then.

For India, the deal between China and Bhutan, would bring the Chinese to within 500 kilometers of the Siliguri corridor, and offer China a commanding view of India border defences and provide a launch pad to progress operations into the Siliguri corridor.²⁰⁰ As a result, there are fears that the underlying motive for China's quest to resolve the disputed border seems not to be on the basis of traditional usage or history but owing to the strategic nature of the western border.²⁰¹ Moreover, the sino-bhutan border negotiations appear to be part of a larger Chinese strategy in South Asia, whereby China wants to gain as much as possible in the western sector of the dispute with Bhutan, reflecting the view of several commentators that boundary settlement for China is about strategic enhancement.²⁰²

Hence, in the the present situation Chinese interest in Chumbi Valley primarily stems from three reasons. Firstly, China gains proximity to India's North-East and Siliguri Corridor, which connects North-Eastern states to India and Nepal to Bhutan. It needs not be underlined that Sikkim has a substantial Tibetan population.²⁰³ The Chinese focus on the Tibetan issue is also illustrative of the priority Tibet has in their agenda. Indeed, facts on the ground reveal that Nepal has intensified patrolling along areas with China since June 2010 and is not only detaining Tibetan refugees but is also handing them back to Chinese authorities. Recently, a visiting delegation of Chinese leaders called upon President Dr. Ram Baran Yadav seeking assurance on Nepal's one-China policy.²⁰⁴

Secondly, with access to Chumbi valley, China gets closer to Bangladesh's periphery in the North since only a narrow stretch of land divides Bangladesh from Bhutan. Analysts have

²⁰⁰ Panda Ankit, Geography's Curse: India's Vulnerable 'Chicken's Neck, *The Diplomat*. (accessed at <http://thediplomat.com/2013/11/geographys-curse-indias-vulnerable-chickens-neck/>)

²⁰¹ Ibid.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

already pointed out to two important north-south strategic corridors on either side of India- first, the trans-Karakoram corridor extending to Gwadar and second, the Irrawaddy corridor linking Yunnan to Myanmar.²⁰⁵ While connectivity with Nepal is well on the cards, some suggest that extending Indian rail networks at Siliguri via the Chumbi valley has also been proposed. In fact some sources point out that by 2017 China can have a rail link going to Chumbi valley. India's consent to provide transit access to Bangladesh via Indian territory can also be a possibility.²⁰⁶

Lastly, by enhancing connectivity and getting an overarching influence over the Chumbi Valley, China gets a better hold over Tibet, thus weakening any potential cards which India would want to play at a later stage. Further, with laid out road/railway infrastructure, it also gets an offensive advantage to thwart India's military posturing. According to sources, six roads so far have been built by China near Bhutan's North and North-West areas.²⁰⁷

However, if Bhutan comes with the influence of the Chinese sphere, the insecure land route along the Siluguri corridor, a virtual Chicken Neck of the eight north eastern states would become vulnerable prone to being cut off firstly, by any determined chinese push isolating the entire eastern sector.²⁰⁸ It is for this reason Bhutan's neutrality is extremely important and absolutely imperative as it forms a barrier and buffer to chinese desires of expansion to the south towards the siliguri plans. Chinese designs in bhutan plainly pose a threat in being to Indian security.²⁰⁹ It is also Indian responsibility to maintain a better relations with Bhutan, eventhough it has been maintaining. So that Bhutan remains in no choice of accepting Chinese proposal made during the Rio+ 20 submitt between Sino-Bhutan.²¹⁰ Thus, the Indian government should start taking up some strategy towards this particular issue in order to maintain the good relations with neighbouring countries and also to keep Bhutan away from China.

Given the importance of the issue, strategic calculations over the Chumbi Valley, India thus need to take some steps. In this regard a three divided approach can be suggested. First, India needs to took inwards and strengthen its defence preparedness and infrastructure

²⁰⁵ Banthalpad Shreyas, What if China breaks India's Chicken's neck (Siliguri Corridor) with the help of Bangladesh?, Quora. (accessed at <https://www.quora.com/What-if-China-breaks-Indias-chickens-neck-Siliguri-Corridor-with-the-help-of-Bangladesh>)

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

construction plans, in order to counter a plausible Chinese military offensive. Second, at the bilateral level, focused efforts are needed to engage Bhutan as a strategic partner, thus sensitizing it about Indian concerns. The role of the Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT) positioned in Haa district in Bhutan becomes important and needs to be given some attention. Thirdly, India should maximize its soft-power approach, providing an enabling environment in Sikkim for Buddhism to flourish. The commonality between Bhutan and Sikkim should therefore be endorsed in order to facilitate cultural exchanges between them. However it needs to be stated that the thrust of all these calculations and responses would require some deliberation. In recent years, as China is giving a foothold in South Asia. It is therefore, important to reflect on this particular reality. India needs to be aware of this facts and start shaping responses towards the issues of Chumbi valley.

Looking , at the overall Sino-Bhutan border relations. Traditionally, the border issues between these two countries took place only because of the Tibet. In the present context, it can be understood that any border issue occurring between China and Bhutan has major implications for India directly or indirectly. Like, in the case of Chumbi Valley is also seem to be the same, the Chumbi Valley issue is between China and Bhutan. But this issue has major implication for India mainly with respect to the security, geographically, economic and also many directly and indirectly.

Conclusion

In the present context, it can be understood that any border issue occurring between China and Bhutan has major implications for India directly or indirectly. Like, in the case of Chumbi valley, it also seems to be the same, the Chumbi valley issue is between China and Bhutan. But this issue has major implications for India mainly with respect to the security, geographically, economic directly as well as indirectly.

Bhutan and China do not maintain formal diplomatic relations. Even though, they have completed 23rd round of border talks till 2015. China has warmed up to give solutions to their territory issues. China is geographically one of the largest and the most powerful country in the world. Till today, China has resolved the boundary issue with almost all the neighbouring countries but it is very important to mark that China has not resolved any boundary issue with India and Bhutan from the traditional period onwards. It may be so because of the strong relationship between India and Bhutan. China has been questioning the India and Bhutan's strong relationship, since Bhutan and China started their border talks in 1984. Therefore, it can be said that China has always kept its focus on India's relations with its neighboring countries. As Bhutan is a buffer state between China and India, it has always been from the Bhutan side to resolve the demarcation of the boundary line with China and also the question of Tibetan intrusion in Bhutanese Territory. At the same time Bhutan also wanted to maintain good relations and an atmosphere of friendship and co-operation with China. These have always been in the objectives of Bhutan's Foreign Policy. Therefore, the Foreign Policy of small states like Bhutan works for survival in the way and especially when it is a buffer between two large and powerful countries.

As the Chumbi valley is at an intersection of India, Bhutan and China, it has significance for all the three countries, India, Bhutan and China. China wanted to exchange its territory with Bhutan. We can say that, among all the three countries, China has been showing more strategic implications to the Chumbi Valley. However, if Bhutan comes under the influence of the Chinese sphere, the insecure land route along the Siliguri corridor, a virtual Chicken Neck of the eight north eastern states would become vulnerable, prone to being cut off firstly, by any

determined Chinese push isolating the entire eastern sector. The presence of Chinese towards Bhutan has many impacts on India- could pose a threat to India's North Eastern Region, there will be a competition between India and China in the Bhutan's market with respect to the commodities of India and China, there could be a decrease in the good relations of Bhutan and India. It is for this reason Bhutan's neutrality is extremely important and absolutely imperative as it forms a barrier and buffer to Chinese desires of expansion to the south towards the Siliguri plains. Siliguri is again a tri-junction between Bhutan, Nepal and Bangladesh. Therefore, Chinese designs in Bhutan plainly pose a threat in being to Indian security. Mainly, with the insurgent problems in the Northern eastern region of India, as the region is very well known for the armed groups. For the armed groups of the Northeastern region, Bhutan is one of the most peaceful places. As the armed groups of North East India had promised to remove the Nepalis from Bhutan.

It is also an Indian responsibility to maintain a better relationship with Bhutan, even though it has been maintaining. So that Bhutan remains in no choice of accepting Chinese proposals made during the Rio+ 20 summit between Sino-Bhutan. Thus, the Indian government should start taking up some strategy towards this particular issue in order to maintain the good relations with neighbouring countries and also to keep Bhutan away from China.

Chumbi valley is at Tibet at the tri-junction of India, Bhutan and China. For China, Tibet and India has been the core issue. In last recent years, China has been focussing in maintaining a good relationship with the South Asian countries, especially with the Indian border nations. In order to promote their economic, infrastructure and political relations in a larger sense.

As China does not maintain boundary neighbours with all the South Asian countries. For which China intended to extend their territory towards Chumbi valley with Bhutan, by asking to swap the land with Bhutan. China wanted this to happen as because Chumbi valley is very close to the Siliguri corridor, which is located at the Indian state of West Bengal. The Siliguri corridor is also the tri-junction of the three South Asian countries Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. This area has been created a Free Trade Zone (FTZ) for Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. This Siliguri corridor also connects India with the North Eastern Region (NER) of India. The area is very sensitive, in spite of being heavily patrolled by the Indian Army (IA), the Assam Rifles (AR), the Border Security Force (BSF) and the West Bengal Police (WBP). The Siliguri corridor has

become the focus of the illegal crossing by the Bangladeshi rebels and Nepali Maoist Insurgents (NMI). In this area narcotics and weapons traffic also flourish.

There is an impact on India, if Bhutan allows a territorial swap to China. The impact will be mainly in the Northern Eastern Region (NER) of India and in the India and Bhutan's relations and also more impact on India China border relations. India and Bhutan has been following a good and friendly relations since independent. India has been supporting Bhutan whenever they are in need of India's help. So if Bhutan allows China to inches closer to the Indian territory, then there will remain no good relations and the friendship Treaty sign in 1949 between India and Bhutan, renewed in 2007 will no longer remain the same. There might not be continuing in the "Free Trade" between India and Bhutan. On the other side of the NER of India, which is known for the armed groups, will be more comfortable and easy for the armed groups to excess to the weapons concern with China, as China will come closer to Indian Siliguri corridor. Among the eight north eastern states, the seventh states will be developing in the particular region. There is a changes to cutoff the NER from rest of Indian states. Therefore, India can start thinking and taking some steps with concern to the Chumbi valley, where China wanted to inch closer. After the 1962 war, china kept India as the core concern for them. This is one of the reason why china wanted to inch closer to Chumbi valley. China has always been claiming some of the Indian territory like the McMahon Line and the India state Aurnachal Pradesh too.

Therefore, with the overall discussion of the above points, it can be seen that China and Bhutan relations in the present context, has a great implications for India. So the indian government should take some major strategy to over come the implications, especially with the concern of the northern eastern region of India and the relations with Bhutan. India should steps forward the friendship relations with Bhutan, so that Bhutan will not be influence by the Chinese further.

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APPENDIX - I

THE TREATY OF PUNAKHA, 1910

Whereas it is desirable to amend Articles IV and VIII of the Treaty concluded at Sinchula on the 11th day of November, 1865, corresponding with the Bhootea year Shing Lang, 24th day of the 9th month, between the British Government and the Government of Bhutan, the undermentioned amendments are agreed to on the one part of Mr. C.A. Bell, Political Officer in Sikkim, in virtue of full powers to that effect vested in him by the Right Honourable Sir Gilbert John Elliot-Murray Kynynmound, P.C., G.M.S.I., G.M.I.E., G.C.M.G., Earl of Minto, Viceroy and Governor-General of India-in-Council and the other part by His Highness Sir Ugyen Wangchuk, K.C.I.E., Maharaja of Bhutan.

The following addition has been made to Article IV of the Sinchula Treaty of 1865 :

"The British Government has increased the annual allowance to the Government of Bhutan from fifty thousand rupees (Rs.50,000) to one hundred thousand rupees (Rs.1,00,000) with effect from the 10th January, 1910".

Article VIII of the Sinchula Treaty of 1865 has been revised and the revised Article runs as follows :

"The British Government undertaken to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part, the Bhutanese Government agrees to be guided by the advice of the British Government in regard to its external

relations. In the event of disputes with or causes of complaint against the Maharajas of Sikkim and Cooch Behar, such matters will be referred for arbitration to the British Government which will settle them in such manner as justice may require and insist upon the observance of its decision by the Maharajas named".

Done in quadruplicate at Punakha, Bhutan, this eighth day of January in the year of our Lord One Thousand Nine Hundred and Ten, corresponding with the Bhutia date, the 27th day of the 11th month of the Earth Bird (Sa-ja) year.

C. A. Bell
Political Officer in Sikkim

Seal of Political Officer

Seal of Dharma
Raja in Sikkim

8th January, 1910

Seal of His Highness the Maharaja of Bhutan
Seal of Tatsang Lamas
Seal of Tongsa Penlop
Seal of Paro Penlop
Seal of Zhung Dronyer
Seal of Timbu Jongpen
Seal of Punaka Jongpen
Seal of Wangdu Potang Jongpen
Seal of Taka Penlop
Seal of Deb Zimpon

Minto

Viceroy and Governo- General of India

This Treaty was ratified by the Viceroy and Governor-General of India-in-Council at Fort William on the twenty forth day of March, A.D. one thousand nine hundred and ten.

S.H. Butler
Secretary to the Government of India,
Foreign Department

APPENDIX - II

TREATY BETWEEN INDIA AND BHUTAN, 1949

The Government of India on the one part, and His Highness the Druk Gyalpo's Government on the other part, equally animated by the desire to regulate in a friendly manner and upon a solid and durable basis the state of affairs caused by the termination of the British Government's authority in India, and to promote and foster the relations of friendship and neighbourliness so necessary for the well-being of their lives of peoples, have resolved to conclude the following Treaty, and have for this purpose, named their representatives, that is to say Sri Harishwar Dayal representing the Government of India, who has full powers to agree to the said Treaty on behalf of the Government of India, and Deb Zimpson Sonam Tobgye Dorji, Yang-Lop Sonam, Chho-Zim Thondup, Rin-Zim Tandin and Ha Drung Jigmie, Palden Dorji, representing the Government of His Highness the Druk Gyalpo, Maharaja of Bhutan, who have full powers to agree to the same on behalf of the Government of Bhutan.

Article 1 : There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the Government of India and the Government of Bhutan.

Article 2 : The Government of India undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan. On its part the Government of Bhutan agrees to be guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations.

Article 3 : In place of the compensation granted to the Government of Bhutan under Article 4 of the Treaty of Sinchula and enhanced by the Treaty of the eighth day of January, 1910 and the temporary subsidy of Rupees One lakh per annum

granted in 1942, the Government of India agrees to make an annual payment of Rupees Five lakhs to the Government of Bhutan. And it is further hereby agreed that the said annual payment shall be on the tenth day of January every year, the first payment being made on the tenth of January , 1950. This payment shall continue so long as this Treaty remains in force and its terms are duly observed.

Article 4 : Further to mark the friendship existing and continuing between the said Governments, the Government of India shall, within one year from the date of signature of this Treaty return to the Government of Bhutan about thirty-two square miles of territory in the area known as Dewangiri. The Government of India shall appoint a competent officer or officers to mark out the area so returned to the Government of Bhutan.

Article 5 : There shall, as heretofore, be free trade and commerce between the territories of the Government of India and of the Government of Bhutan' and the Govt. of India agrees to grant the Government of Bhutan every facility for the carriage, by land and water, of its produce throughout the territory of the Government of India, including the right to use such forest roads as may be specified by mutual agreement from time to time.

Article 6 : The Government of India agrees that the Government of Bhutan shall be free to import with the assistance and approval of the Government of India, from or through India into Bhutan, whatever arms, ammunition, machinery, warlike material or stores may be required or desired for the strength and welfare of Bhutan, and that this arrangement shall hold good for all time as long as the Government of India is satisfied that the intentions of the Government of Bhutan are friendly and that there is no danger to India from such importations. The Government of Bhutan, on the other hand, agrees that there shall be no export of

such arms, ammunition, etc., across the frontier of Bhutan either by the Government of Bhutan or by private individuals.

Article 7 : The Government of India and the Government of Bhutan agree that Bhutanese subjects residing in Indian territories shall have equal justice with Indian subjects and that Indian subjects residing in Bhutan shall have equal justice with the subjects of the Government of Bhutan.

Article 8 : (1) The Government of India shall, on demand being duly made in writing by the Government of Bhutan, take proceedings in accordance with the provision of the Indian Extradition Act, 1903 (of which a copy shall be furnished to the Government of Bhutan), for the surrender of all Bhutanese subjects accused of any of the crimes specified in the first schedule of the said Act who may take refuge in Indian territory.

(2) The Government of Bhutan shall, on requisition being duly made by the Government of India, or by any officer authorised by the Government of India in this behalf, surrender any Indian subjects, or subjects of a foreign Power, whose extradition may be required in pursuance of any agreement or arrangements made by the Government of India with the said Power, accused of any of the crimes, specified in the first schedule of Act XV of 1903, who may take refuge in the territory under the jurisdiction of the Government of Bhutan, and also any Bhutanese subjects who, after committing any of the crimes referred to in Indian territory, shall flee into Bhutan, on such evidence of their guilt being produced as shall satisfy the local court of the district in which the offence may have been committed.

Article 9 : Any differences and disputes arising in the application or interpretation of this Treaty shall in first instance be settled by negotiation. If within three

months of the start of negotiations no settlement is arrived at, than the matter shall be referred to the Arbitration of three arbitrators, who shall be nationals of either of India or Bhutan, chosen in the following manner :

- (1) One person nominated by the Government of India;
- (2) One person nominated by the Government of Bhutan;
- (3) A judge of the Federal Court, or of a High Court in India, to be chosen by the Government of Bhutan, who shall be Chairman.

The judgement of this Tribunal shall be final and executed without any delay by either party.

Article 10 : This treaty shall continue in force in perpetuity unless terminated or modified by mutual consent.

Done in duplicate at Darjeeling this eighth day of August, one thousand nine hundred and fort-nine, corresponding with the Bhutanese date the fifteenth day of the sixth month of the Earth-Bull Year.

Harishwar Dayal,
Political Officer in Sikkim

Deb Zimpon Sonam
Tobgye Dorji
Yang Lop Sonam
Chho-Zim Thondup

Rin-Zim Tandin
Ha Drung Jigmie Palden Dorji

INTRUMENTS OF RATIFICATION

Whereas a Treaty relating to the promotion of, and fostering the relations of friendship and neighbourliness was signed at Darjeeling on the 8th day of August 1949 by representatives of the Government of India and the Government of His Highness the Druk Gyalpo, Maharaja of Bhutan, which Treaty is word for word, as follows :

* * * * *

The Government of India, having considered the Treaty aforesaid hereby confirm and ratify the same and undertake faithfully to perform and carry out all the stipulations there in contained.

In witness whereof this instrument of ratification is signed and sealed by the Governor-General of India.

Done at New Delhi, the 22nd day of September, 1949.

C. Rajagopalachari,
Governor-General of India

Whereas a Treaty relating to the promotion of, and fostering, relations of friendship and neighbourliness was signed at Darjeeling on the eighth day of August, 1949 by Representatives of my Government and of the Government of India which Treaty is word for word, as follows:

* * * * *

My Government, having considered the Treaty aforesaid, hereby confirm and ratify the same and undertake faithfully to perform and carry out all the stipulations therein contained :

In witness where of I have signed this instrument of ratification and affixed hereto my seal

Done at Tongsa, the fifteenth day of September, 1949.

J. Wangchuk,
Druk Gyalpo.

APPENDIX - III

Bhutan-China Agreement On Maintenance Of Peace And Tranquility Along The Sino-Bhutanese Border Areas, 1998

Agreement between the Government of the people's Republic of China and the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquillity Along the Sino-Bhutanese Border Areas

The Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan, in accordance with the five principles of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, mutual non-interference in each other's internal affairs and peaceful co-existence and for the purpose of maintaining peace and tranquility along the Sino-Bhutanese border, have reached the following agreements:

Article 1

Both sides hold the view that all countries big or small, strong or weak are equal and should respect one another. The Chinese side reaffirmed that it completely respects the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Bhutan. Both sides stand ready to develop their good-neighborly and friendly cooperative relations on the basis of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence.

Article 2

Both sides are of the view that during the ten rounds of talks that have been held so far, they have reached consensus on the guiding principles on the settlement of the boundary issues and narrowed their differences on the boundary issues in the spirit of mutual accommodation, mutual trust and cooperation and through friendly consultations. The mutual understanding and traditional friendship between the two countries have been deepened. Both sides stand ready to adhere to the above-mentioned spirit and make joint efforts for an early and fair solution of the boundary issues between the two countries.

Article 3

Both sides agreed that prior to the ultimate solution of the boundary issues, peace and tranquillity along the border should be maintained and the status quo of the boundary prior to March 1959 should be upheld, and not to resort to unilateral action to alter the status quo of the border.

Article 4

Both sides reviewed the progress made after ten rounds of border talks. As

both sides have already expounded each other's stand on the disputed areas, both sides agreed to settle this issue through friendly consultations.

Article 5

This agreement will come into force on the date of signing.

This agreement was signed on December 8, 1998 in Beijing, done in two copies in the Chinese, Bhutanese and English languages, all three languages are authentic. If differences arise, the English text will be the standard text.

Tang Jiaxuan

Jigme Thinley

(Signed)

(Signed)

Representative of the
of the People 's

Representative of the of the
Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan

Republic of China

Source:<http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjb/zzjg/yzs/gjlb/2686/2687/t15852.htm>

APPENDIX - IV

India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty

The Government of India and the Kingdom of Bhutan, signed the India-Bhutan Friendship Treaty in March 2007. While both countries agreed to refrain from allowing the use of their territory from anti-national activities against each other, free trade and commerce was identified as one of the primary areas of cooperation.

The Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan:

Reaffirming their respect for each other's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity;

Recalling the historical relations that have existed between our two countries;

Recognizing with deep satisfaction the manner in which these relations have evolved and matured over the years into a model of good neighbourly relations;

Being fully committed to further strengthening this enduring and mutually beneficial relationship based on genuine goodwill and friendship, shared interests, and close understanding and cooperation;

Desiring to clearly reflect this exemplary relationship as it stands today;

And having decided, through mutual consent, to update the 1949 Treaty relating to the promotion of, and fostering the relations of friendship and neighbourliness between India and Bhutan;

Have agreed as follows:

Article 1

There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between India and Bhutan.

Article 2

In keeping with the abiding ties of close friendship and cooperation between Bhutan and India, the Government of the Kingdom of Bhutan and the Government of the Republic of India shall cooperate closely with each other on issues relating to their national interests. Neither Government shall allow the use of its territory for activities harmful to the national security and interest of the other.

The Government of Bhutan and the Government of India agree to continue to consolidate and expand their economic cooperation for mutual and long term benefit.

Article 3

There shall, as heretofore, be free trade and commerce between the territories of the Government of Bhutan and the Government of India. Both the Governments shall provide full cooperation and assistance to each other in the matter of trade and commerce.

Article 4

The Government of India agrees that the Government of Bhutan shall be free to import, from or through India into Bhutan, whatever arms, ammunition, machinery, warlike material or stores as may be required or desired for the strength and welfare of Bhutan, and that this arrangement shall hold good for all time as long as the Government of India is satisfied that the intentions of the Government of Bhutan are friendly and that there is no danger to India from such importations. The Government of Bhutan agrees that there shall be no export of such arms, ammunition and materials outside Bhutan either by the Government of Bhutan or by private individuals.

Article 5

The Government of Bhutan and the Government of India agree that Bhutanese subjects residing in Indian territories shall have equal justice with Indian subjects, and that Indian subjects residing in Bhutan shall have equal justice with the subjects of the Government of Bhutan.

Article 6

The extradition of persons wanted by either state for crimes and for unlawful activities affecting their security shall be in keeping with the extradition agreements between the two countries.

Article 7

The Government of Bhutan and the Government of India agree to promote cultural exchanges and cooperation between the two countries. These shall be extended to such areas as education, health, sports, science and technology.

Article 8

The Government of Bhutan and the Government of India agree to continue to consolidate and expand their economic cooperation for mutual and long Term benefit.

Article 9

Any differences and disputes arising in the interpretation and application of this Treaty shall be settled bilaterally by negotiations in a spirit of trust and understanding in consonance with the historically close ties of friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation that form the bedrock of Bhutan-India relations.

Article 10

This Treaty shall come into force upon the exchange of Instruments of Ratification by the two Governments which shall take place in Thimphu within onemonth of the signing of this Treaty. The Treaty shall continue in force in perpetuity unless terminated or modified by mutual consent.

In witness whereof, the undersigned being duly authorized thereto by their respective Governments, have signed this Treaty.

Done at New Delhi on the Eighth Day of February Two Thousand and Seven, in two originals each in Hindi, Dzongkha and English languages, each text being equally authentic. However, in case of difference, the English text shall prevail.

For the Government of For the Government of
The Republic of India the Kingdom of Bhutan

Sd/-
(Pranab Mukherjee)
Minister of External Affairs

Sd/-
H.R.H. Trongsa Penlop
Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck
The Crown Prince Of Bhutan

February 5, 2016

Certificate

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Negotiations over Chumbi Valley in Sino-Bhutan Relations: Strategic Implications for India**” submitted to **Sikkim University** for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy** in International Relations, embodies the result of bonafide research work carried out by Junu Basumatary under my guidance and supervision. No part of the dissertation is submitted for any other degree, diploma, associate-ship and fellowship. All the assistance and help receiver during the course of investigation have been deeply acknowledged by her.

Dr. Manish

Supervisor

Department of International Relations

School of Social Sciences

Sikkim University

Place: Gangtok

Date: 05.02. 2016