
The Situation in Ladakh

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Introduction

Since 1947, Kashmir has been undergoing territorial dispute between India, Pakistan and China. After the end of the British rule in the Indian subcontinent, it created two states: The Dominion of Pakistan and the Union of India. Surrounding states were left to decide amongst themselves whether to be a part of Pakistan, India, or to be independent. The largest of the princely states, Jammu and Kashmir, decided to stay independent.

As violence rises between Pakistan and India, the government of Pakistan began pressuring Kashmir to join their nation. Pro- Pakistani rebels took over majority of the western Kashmir, and Pashtun tribesmen crossed the Pakistan border into Kashmir. Desperate, Singh went to India and asked for their help. In October 1947, Singh signed the Instrument of Accession which aligned Kashmir and India. The one decision to align themselves with India would later cause an increase of wars, violence and insurgency in the following years.

Ladakh ever since 1947 has been under the region of Kashmir and Jammu, but became a Union territory on 31 October 2019 after the Parliament of India passed an act regarding the territory. But in recent years, the tension in the region has heightened between China and India between where the Line of Actual Control lies which separates the Chinese-controlled and India-controlled territory.

The Line of Actual control was proposed by China to India in 1959. The boundary existed as an informal cease-fire line between India and China after the 1962 Sino-Indian War. Although both side has formally respected the line in 1993, continuous tension and dispute has persisted in which multiple cases of trespassing and changes territory sizes has been reported.



The Ladakh Conflict

Arising in 2020 was the tension between India and China regarding the length of the Ladakh Line of Actual Control. The LAC is the division that divides the Indian-controlled territory from Chinese-controlled territory. Whilst India considers the line to be 3,488 km

long, the Chinese considers it to be around 2,000 km. The line then further divides the eastern sector which range from Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, to the middle sector in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, and finally the western sector in Ladakh.

Although most sectors don't encounter controversial disputes, the western sector concerning Ladakh emerged in 1959 when Prime Minister Zhou Enlai wrote to Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru regarding a line between the two nations. In the letter, He states, "the LAC consisted of "the so-called McMahon Line in the east and the line up to which each side exercises actual control in the west." But after the 1962 war, the Chinese claimed they had withdrawn to 20 km behind the LAC of November 1959. Zhou later wrote, "To put it concretely, in the eastern sector it coincides in the main with the so-called McMahon Line, and in the western and middle sectors it coincides in the main with the traditional customary line which has consistently been pointed out by China". Although during the Doklam crisis in 2017, China urged India to abide by the "1959 LAC." India on the other hand rejected the concept of LAC in both 1959 and 1962, stating that, "There is no sense or meaning in the Chinese offer to withdraw twenty kilometres from what they call 'line of actual control'. What is this 'line of control'? Is this the line they have created by aggression since the beginning of September?" But formally accepted the concept of the LAC in 1993.

The LAC alright seemingly resolved, has underlying issues that has not been addressed. Maps regarding the LAC was exchanged, but only for the middle sector. Although maps were shared for the western sector but never formally exchanged, and the discussion for the clarification of the LAC has ceased since 2002.

Tensions regarding the border has heightened and has led to multiple encounters and situations. On May 9, In Naku La in Sikkim, the Indian patrol confronted a Chinese Patrol that was on the Indian side of the Line of Actual Control, leading to increases tension between the two nations. But prior to this, on May 5-6, soldiers from both side of China and India was injured when confrontation occurred between both nations claiming that each respective nation has trespassed the Line of Actual Control.

But the deathliest fight in 45 years resulting in atleast 20 Indian death and 17 critically injured during a physical encounter. Regarding this incident, AFP news agency reported that China has released a statement saying India had crossed the border twice on Monday, "provoking and attacking Chinese personnel, resulting in serious physical confrontation between border forces on the two sides." Both India and China has released a statement saying no shots were fired and that no bullet has been fired in four decades and reports that the physical encounter was fought with rocks and clubs.

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