



# **International Boundary Study**

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## **China – Pakistan Boundary**

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**INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY STUDY**

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# CHINA - PAKISTAN BOUNDARY

## I. BACKGROUND

The China - Pakistan boundary extends for 325 miles generally southeastward from the Afghanistan tripoint, situated at approximately 37° 03' North and 74° 34' East, to the Karakorum Pass. This provisional boundary has been delimited and demarcated by a series of Sino - Pakistani agreements, treaties and notes between 1961 and 1965. The boundary is deemed to be provisional because of the Indo - Pakistani dispute over the status of Jammu and Kashmir. Article VI of the boundary agreement provides for the renegotiation of the boundary after the settlement of the territorial dispute.

The western Sinkiang - Kashmir frontier comprises a series of high, parallel ranges which have been cut by deeply-entrenched valleys. In the north, the mighty ridges of the Kunlun mountain system radiate from the Pamir knot eastward along the Afghan - Soviet boundary, through the frontier area, and thence northeastward into China to form the northern limits of Tibet. The Kunluns have the greatest average elevation (fully 20,000 feet for hundreds of miles) and the steepest face of any Asian mountain system. The upper courses of the Yarkand River system divides the Kunlun into two main parallel ranges.

Immediately to the south, the Karakorum range extends from Afghanistan to western Tibet. The focus of the system is the Rimo - Baltoro glacier complex, situated on the boundary, about which radiate eleven peaks with elevations between 20,000 and 28,250 feet. From north to south, the Karakorums form three ranges: the Aghil, the Muztagh and the Ladakh. The strategic importance of the system centers on a limited number of vital passes (between elevations of 15,000 and 18,500 feet) through which the main routes traverse the ranges.

Human activity and settlement is very sparse and dispersed in the frontier. Only in the lower plains of the main river valleys away from the boundary does one find even limited settlement. Nevertheless, the frontier region and its continuation to the east is a zone of separation among the Muslims of the west and north, the Hindu of the south and southeast and the Buddhists of the east.

On March 14, 1899, the British described the so-called Macdonald line to China in an effort to "recognize the frontier [i.e. boundary] as laid down by its clearly marked geographical features." This delimitation, which was never acknowledged by the Chinese, commenced "...on the Little Pamir from the Peak at which the Anglo - Russian Boundary Commission of 1895 ended their work, it runs south-east, crossing the Karachikar stream at Mintaka Aghazi; thence the main ridge of the Muztagh range. It follows this to the south, passing by the Khunjerab Pass, and continuing southward to the peak just north of the Shimshal Pass. At this point the boundary leaves the crest and follows a spur running east approximately parallel to the road from the Shimshal Pass to the Hunza post at Darwaza. The line turning south through the Darwaza post crosses the road from the Shimshal pass at that point, and

then ascends the nearest high spur, and regains the main crests which the boundary will again follow, passing through the Mustagh, Gasherbrun, and Saltoro Passes by the Karakorum...".<sup>1</sup> In the west, this boundary began well north of the current boundary commencing at the northern point of the Wakhan corridor rather than the southern. From the Kharchanai Pass to the Khunjerab Pass, however, the two delimitations coincide. From the latter pass to the point south of Darband (Darwaza) where the main ridge is joined, the newly-demarcated boundary is situated a considerable distance to the east of the Macdonald line. The southern sector, however, is again identical.

From 1899 until the independence of India and Pakistan in 1947, the representation of the boundary varied greatly on both official and unofficial maps. By 1959, however, Chinese maps were published showing large areas west and south of the Macdonald line in China. In October and again in November of that year, the Government of Pakistan announced its willingness to consult on the boundary question. In January 1961, the two states agreed in principle to the demarcation of the traditional boundary. This action was made formal on May 2, 1962 when they published an exchange of notes agreeing to negotiate. A Joint Communique of December 28, 1962 announced the success of the preliminary delimitation agreement.

## **II. TREATIES AND OTHER ACTS**

The 1963 boundary agreement is the first formal, international treaty to delimit the boundary between the Indian sub-continent and Chinese Turkestan through the traditional frontier west of the Karakorum Pass. In spite of Indian efforts to discuss the region earlier with Chinese Communist authorities, the latter refused to negotiate on the boundary because the region was "beyond the scope of the conference".<sup>2</sup>

### **A. Agreement between the Government of the People's Republic of China and the Government of Pakistan on the boundary between China's Sinkiang and the contiguous areas, the defense of which is under actual control of Pakistan, signed in Peking, March 2, 1963.**

The 1963 Sino - Pakistani agreement delimited the boundary as follows:

#### **Article Two**

... (1) Commencing from its northwestern extremity at height 5,630 metres (a peak, the reference co-ordinates of which are approximately Longitude 74° 34' E and Latitude 37° 03' N), the boundary line runs generally eastward and then southeastward strictly along the main watershed<sup>3</sup> between the tributaries of the Tashkurgan River of the Tarim River system on the one hand and the tributaries of the Hunza River of the Indus River system on the

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Lamb, Alastair, The China - India Border, Oxford University Press, London, 1964, pp. 181 - 2.

<sup>2</sup> Report of the Officials of the Governments of India and the People's Republic of China on the Boundary Question, Government of India, MEA, New Delhi, 1961, p.5.

<sup>3</sup> The proper term is water divide. A water divide separates two drainage basins or watersheds. A divide is a line; watershed is an area.

other hand, passing through the Kilik Daban (Dawan), the Mintaka Daban (Pass), the Kharchanai Daban (named on the Chinese map only), the Kutejilga Daban (named on the Chinese map only), and the Parpiq Pass (named on the Pakistan map only), and reaches the Khunjerab (Yutr) Daban (Pass).

(2) After passing through the Khunjerab (Yutr) Daban (Pass), the boundary line runs generally southward along the above-mentioned main watershed up to a mountaintop south of the Daban (Pass), where it leaves the main watershed to follow the crest of a spur lying generally in a south-easterly direction, which is the watershed between the Akjilga River (a nameless corresponding river on the Pakistan map) on the one hand, and the Taghdumbash (Oprang River) and the Keliman Su (Oprang Jilga) on the other hand. According to the map of the Chinese side, the boundary line, after leaving the southeastern extremity of this spur, runs along a small section of the middle line of the bed of the Keliman Su to reach its confluence with the Kelechin River. According to the map of the Pakistan side, the boundary line, after leaving the southeastern extremity of this spur, reaches the sharp bend of the Shaksgam or Mustagh River.

(3) From the aforesaid point, the boundary line runs up the Kelechin River (Shaksgam or Muztagh River) along the middle line of its bed to its confluence (reference co-ordinates approximately Longitude 76° 02' E. and Latitude 36° 26' N.) with the Sorbulak Daria (Shimshal River or Braldu River).

(4) From the confluence of the aforesaid two rivers, the boundary line, according to the map of the Chinese side, ascends the crest of a spur and runs along it to join the Karakoram Range main watershed at a mountain-top (reference co-ordinates approximately Longitude 75° 54' E. and Latitude 36° 15' N.), which on this map is shown as belonging to the Shorbulak Mountain. According to the map of the Pakistan side, the boundary line from the confluence of the above-mentioned two rivers ascends the crest of a corresponding spur and runs along it; passing through Height 6,520 metres (21,300 feet) till it joins the Karakoram Range main watershed at a peak (reference co-ordinates approximately Longitude 75° 57' E. and Latitude 36° 03' N.).

(5) Thence, the boundary line, running generally southward and then eastward, strictly follows the Karakoram Range main watershed which separates the Tarim River drainage system from the Indus River drainage system, passing through the East Mustagh Pass (Muztagh Pass), the top of the Chogri Peak (K2), the top of the Broad Peak, the top of the Gasherbrum Mountain (8068) Indirakoli Pass (named on the Chinese map only) and the top of the Teram Kangri Peak, and reaches its southeastern extremity at the Karakoram Pass.

II. The alignment of the entire boundary line, as described in Section I of this Article, has been drawn on the 1/one million scale map of the Chinese side in Chinese and the 1/one million scale map of the Pakistan side in English, which are signed and attached to the present Agreement.

III. In view of the fact that the maps of the two sides are not fully identical in their representation of topographical features, the two Parties have agreed that the actual features on the ground shall prevail, so far as the location and alignment of the boundary

described in Section I is concerned; and that they will be determined as far as possible by Joint survey on the ground.

### Article Three

Two parties have agreed that:

- I. Wherever the boundary follows a river, the middle line of the river bed shall be the boundary line; and that
- II. Wherever the boundary passes through a Daban (Pass), the water-parting line thereof shall be the boundary line.

The final delimitation contained in Article II and III has been quoted in its entirety. Article IV created a Joint Boundary Demarcation Commission and provided for the necessary surveys to produce the demarcation and a jointly-prepared set of accurate maps. These results were to be embodied in a final protocol replacing the 1:1,000,000 maps annexed to the agreement. The inclusion in the delimitation of two differing maps, each purporting to show the same boundary, has been done by the Chinese in several recent boundary treaties. Marked differences in relief representation are the basic reasons.

Article V provided for the peaceful resolution of future disputes while Article VI stated "The two Parties have agreed that after the settlement of the Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India, the sovereign authority concerned will re-open negotiations with the Government of the People's Republic of China... so as to sign a Boundary Treaty to replace the present agreement." Article VII stated the agreement entered into force with the signature of the parties.

### **B. Protocol to the Agreement** ... signed at Rawalpindi, March 26, 1965

The text of the protocol and the large-scale maps appended to it have not been publicly released. However, the Survey of Pakistan has furnished a trace of the new boundary which is satisfactory for the alignment. Presumably, the survey crews found considerable differences in positioning of features along the boundary. For example, definite movement of places eastward is apparent in the central sector of the boundary. The Oprang Jilga is some four miles off from its position on older Survey of India maps.

Field surveys, which began in July 1963, were completed by mid-July 1964. Air photography was completed in the period June - October 1963. Four field survey teams placed the forty demarcation pillars on the boundary. It would appear from the length of the boundary and the low number of pillars that only the passes and the relatively low area east of the Shimshal Pass were physically demarcated. The high peaks and ridges elsewhere would serve as an effective boundary without demarcation.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

The boundary between the areas under Chinese Communists and Pakistan administration should be shown as a demarcated, international border. However, because of Indian claims to Jammu and Kashmir, the standard boundary disclaimer must be used to indicate the provisional nature of the present boundary delimitation.

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Government agencies may obtain additional information and copies of the study by calling the Geographer, Room 8744, Department of State, Washington, D.C. 20520 (Telephone Code 182, Extension 4508).