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The Sino-Soviet Territorial Dispute in the Pamir Mountains Region

John W. Garver

The single largest territorial issue explicitly in dispute between China and the Soviet Union is in the region of the Pamir Mountains – just north of Afghanistan's narrow Wakhan corridor. The nature of this dispute is important because it impinges on the ease with which major sources of tension between the two countries may be eliminated. Moreover, the potential resolutions of this issue have important geo-political implications for the neighbouring countries of Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The *de facto* Sino-Soviet boundary in the Pamirs region currently runs along the crestline of the Sarikol Mountain range. This range forms the watershed between the Tarim basin to the east and the areas to the west draining into the Amu-Darya River (also known as the Oxus River and the Panji River).

Chinese maps indicate that the section of boundary from Uz Bel pass southwards to the Afghan-Soviet-Chinese tri-border intersection is “undefined national boundary” (*wei ding guojie*).¹ Indeed, this is the only section of the Sinkiang border thus designated. It is in this region that Peking has explicitly laid claim to some 20,000 square kilometres of what is currently part of the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast of the Tadzhik Soviet Socialist Republic.²

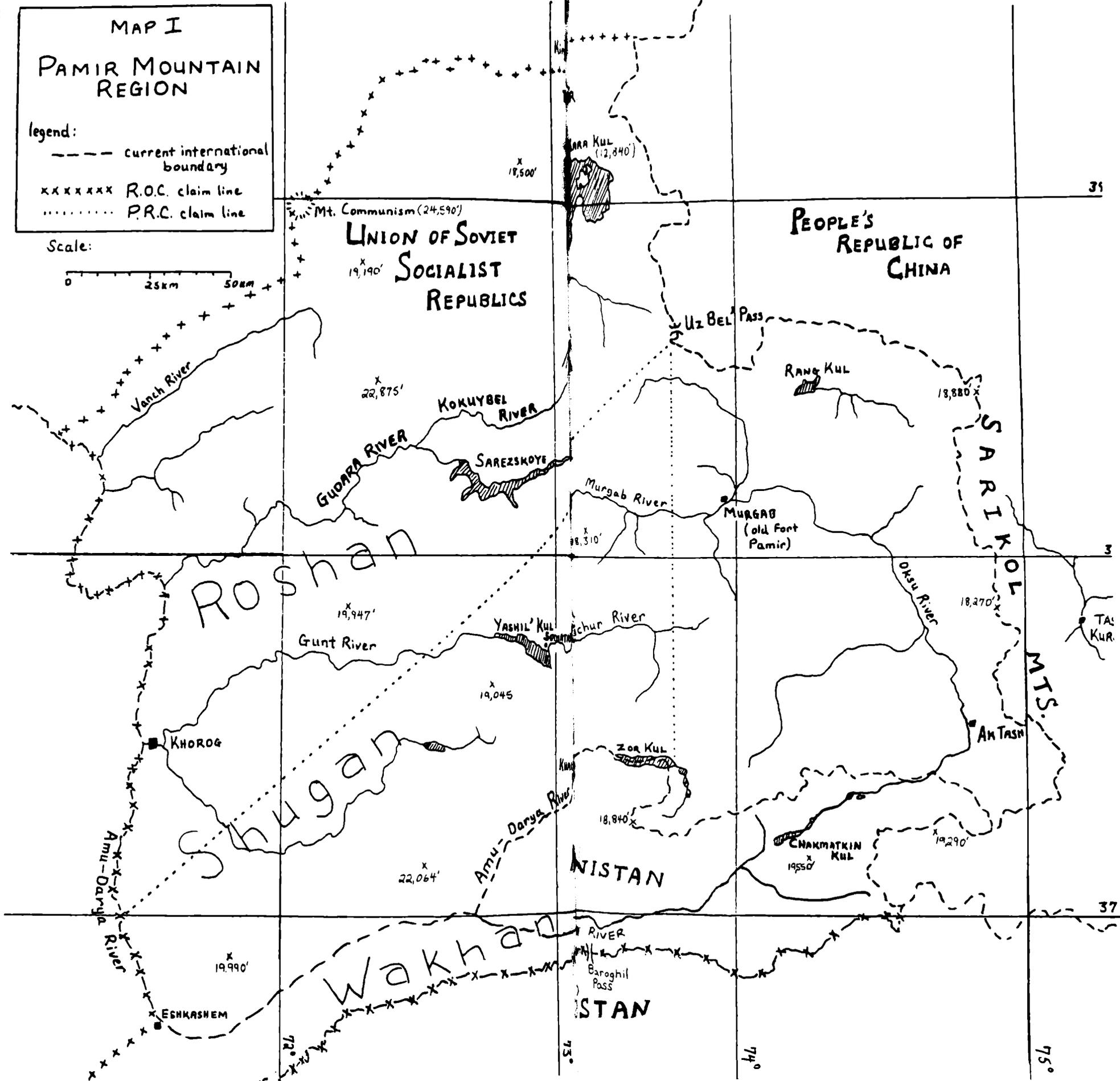
Historical Development of the Boundary

An understanding of the historical formation of the boundary in this region is essential to an understanding of the various Chinese claims.

1. *Zhonghua renmen kongheguo fensheng ditu ji* (Beijing: Map publishing company, 1974). See also the large sheet map *Zhonghua renmen kongheguo*, (Beijing: Guozi shudian, 1972).

2. The Chinese government statement of 8 October 1969 specified that Russian forces had illegally occupied more than 20,000 sq. km. of “Chinese territory” to the west of the Sarikol range. See, *Renmin ribao*, 9 October 1969, p. 2.

Source: Map reproduced from Operational Navigational Chart, 1:1 million scale sheets G-6, G-7, prepared by the Defense Mapping Agency Aerospace Center, St. Louis Air Force Station. Information added from maps cited below in footnotes number 26 and 43.



Chinese armies briefly asserted control over the Pamirs during the Tang Dynasty (AD 618–907). Somewhat more recently, in 1759, Chinese control over the Pamirs was re-established when a Chinese army advanced as far west as Shugan and Wakhan on the right bank of the Amu-Darya River.³ These Chinese raised a fort on the shores of Yeshil Kul and erected a marker commemorating their recent conquest of the region and attesting to China's ownership of the territory.⁴ Once again Chinese control soon faded and the Pamirs became a part of the Kokand Khanate – which was itself a nominal tributary of the Chinese Empire.⁵ It seems that China did, however, retain a foothold in the upper Ak Su River valley; as late as the 1840s Chinese authority extended as far westwards as Zor Kul (also known as Lake Victoria and Wood's Lake).⁶

During the mid 19th century British and Russian Empire builders were both expanding their influence in the direction of the Pamirs. To avoid conflict, the two governments reached an agreement in 1872–73 establishing the Amu-Darya River as far east as Zor Kul as the dividing line between their respective spheres of influence.⁷ This agreement placed the right bank of the Amu-Darya within the Russian sphere. At that time, however, there seems to have been no significant Russian presence in that area. Indeed, the topography of the region was still only poorly understood.

In 1875–76 Kokand was conquered by Russia, its territory annexed into the Russian Empire as Fergana Oblast.⁸ China did not protest. Russian exploration of the Pamirs proceeded rapidly after the fall of Kokand. In 1876 a Russian expedition crossed the Alai Mountains and may have proceeded as far south as Uz Bel Pass.⁹ Two years later a Russian expedition advanced as far south as Yeshil Kul. By 1878 the Russian frontier had been established some 80 miles south of Kizil-Jik. In 1881 yet another exploratory expedition charted the Shugan area. During 1883 further expeditions explored most of the Pamirs from Tash Kurgan to the eastern approaches of Roshan and Shugan.

After the fall of Kokand the notorious Yaqub Beg, the then ruler of Kashgaria, sent troops across the Sarikol range into the Pamirs.¹⁰ Kirghiz nationals from the Pamirs were recruited into Beg's forces and fought in Kashgaria, as did the Mir of Wakhan. Beg was also married to the daughter of the Mir of Shugan. These developments formed the basis of a later Chinese claim that the Pamirs constituted part of Yaqub Beg's realm.

3. Ann Sheehy, "Russia and China in the Pamirs: 18th and 19th centuries," *Central Asian Review*, Vol. XVI, No. 1 (1968), p. 7.

4. Francis E. Younghusband, *The Heart of A Continent* (London, 1897), p. 299.

5. O. Edmund Clubb, *China and Russia, the Great Game* (Columbia University Press, 1971), p. 101.

6. G. J. Alder, *British India's Northern Frontier, 1865–1895* (London, 1963), p. 222.

7. Sheehy, "Russia and China," p. 7.

8. Clubb, *China and Russia*, p. 116.

9. Regarding the post 1876 Russian explorations see, Alder, *British India*, pp. 113–14, 152, 219.

10. Sheehy, "Russia and China," p. 7.

In 1876 the Chinese Government launched its campaign to “ pacify ” Sinkiang.¹¹ By the end of 1877 Yaqub Beg was dead and Chinese forces were in control of his Kashgaria kingdom. The Chinese claimed that Beg’s realm had extended as far westwards as Shugan, Wakhan and Badakhshan, and that as successor to Beg, the Chinese emperor was the rightful ruler of this region.¹² A Chinese army entered the eastern Pamirs in 1879 to defeat a pretender to the Kashgar throne, and in the early 1880s Chinese troops were stationed at various points throughout the eastern Pamirs. In 1883 Chinese troops challenged a Russian detachment near Rang Kul and asked why they had come to China without first notifying Chinese authorities in Kashgar. In the western regions of Rushan, Shugan and Wakhan, however, Chinese authority was eliminated in 1883 by Afghan invaders.

In 1884 Russia and China signed a protocol to the Treaty of St. Petersburg, which Peking now insists is the sole legal basis for the determination of the boundary in this region.¹³ Contending Chinese and Soviet claims have been made regarding this treaty. A close comparison of these claims with the original text permits some clarification of the issues. The Chinese text of the treaty can be found in a collection of documents edited by Yuan Tung-li.¹⁴ The preamble to the protocol specifies that its purpose is to define the boundary between Russia’s Semirechensk province and China’s Kashgar along the Tien Shan range, and between Russia’s Fergana province and the western boundary of China’s Kashgar “ from Tuiun Souiok Mountain southwards to Uz Bel [here a second Chinese name is listed] Mountain where it terminates ” (*yingzi Tuyongsuyueke shanhou, wangnan zhi Wuzi youzuo Wuzai bieli shanhuo weizhi*). Article three of the protocol states that “ the boundary of the two countries terminates at this [Uz Bel] Mountain ” (*liangguo jiexian, zhici shanhuo weizhi*). However, the protocol then states that from this mountain “ the Russian boundary turns to the south-west. The Chinese boundary runs straight south.” (*Eguo jiexian, zhuanxiang xinan. Zhongguo jiexian, yizhi wangnan*). These lines were depicted on a map published in Peking in 1978 illustrating “ Czarist Russian Seizure and Occupation of Chinese Territory.”

The purpose of this rather ambiguous formulation (of specifying boundaries beyond the point where the boundary is said to end) is unclear. As Alder points out, a line running due south from Uz Bel “ corresponds to no natural features whatsoever ”;¹⁵ nor does a line running towards the south-west, for that matter. It is possible that this was not clear in 1884, however. The typography of the region may have

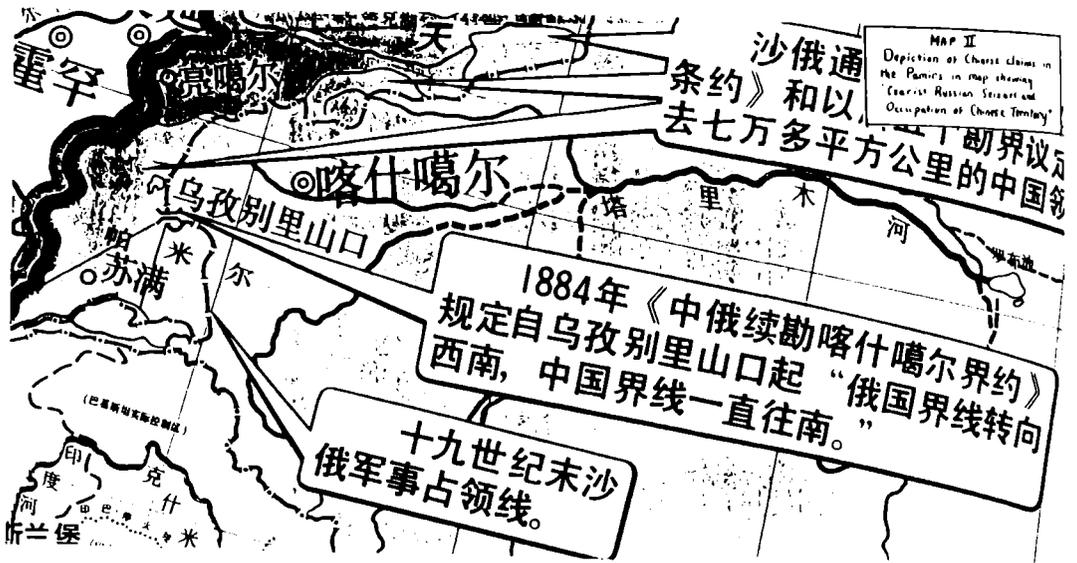
11. Immanuel C. Y. Hsu, “ The late Ch’ing reconquest of Sinkiang: a reappraisal of Fso Tung-t’ung’s role,” *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. XII, No. 1 (1968), p. 50.

12. Sheehy, “ Russia and China,” p. 7.

13. See People’s Republic of China statement of 8 October 1969.

14. Yuan Tung-li, *Russo-Chinese Treaties and Agreements Relating to Sinkiang 1851-1949*, Sinkiang Collectanea No. 4 (Hong Kong, 1963), p. 71.

15. Alder, *British India*, p. 243.



Source: *Shae gezhan Zhongguo lingtu shryi tu* (Map Illustrating Czarist Russian Seizure and Occupation of Chinese Territory), Beijing, 1978.

been only very roughly understood. Indeed, a map drawn up by a British expedition in 1874 shows a range of mountains extending due south from Uz Bel Pass almost to the Murgab River.¹⁶ But if the Russian exploratory activity of the previous few years is any indication, it seems likely that by 1884 the Russians, at least, had a more accurate idea of the topography of this region.

The last sentence of section three of the 1884 protocol specifies that all land draining to the west of the specified boundary line is Russian, while all lands draining to the east of the specified boundary line is Chinese – thus implying that the common boundary follows the watershed. If this principle were extended to the south of Uz Bel Pass, the Sarikol range could form the only such east-west watershed. It is not clear, however, whether this watershed principle was meant to apply south of Uz Bel Pass. The protocol specifies very clearly that the common Sino-Russian boundary ends at Uz Bel. From that point the boundaries of the two countries are to diverge. It thus seems likely that the watershed principle was intended to refer only to the mutual borderline *north* of Uz Bel.

The 1884 protocol in effect created a wedge of no-man's-land encompassing much of the Pamirs. This may have been precisely Russia's objective; Russian strategy during this period was to prevent delimitation of boundaries which would block her advance further south.¹⁷ As an official Russian military publication stated in 1880:

The extent of country between the most southern portion of the province of Fergana and the [Darkot] Pass lies in the Pamirs and belongs to no one. . . . This belt of no-man's-land must probably sooner or later, be included in

16. H. Trotter, *Secret and Confidential Report on the Trans-Himalayan Explorations by the Great Trigonometrical Survey of India During 1873–75* (Calcutta, 1876).

17. Alder, *British India*, pp. 239–42.

Russia's dominions, which will thus be in immediate contact with the range forming the water-parting from the Indus.¹⁸

Whatever Russian and Chinese intentions in 1884, a strict interpretation of the *text* of the 1884 protocol does substantiate Peking's claim that from the Uz Bel Pass "the Russian boundary runs to the south-west. The Chinese boundary runs straight south." The Soviet claim that the 1884 protocol "Bears no relation whatever to the Pamirs region, as anyone who takes the trouble to look at this protocol can see for himself," is more questionable, although one must agree with Moscow that "The Russian and Chinese commissioners dealt with the location of the border in the region of the Tien Shan Mountains . . . in the section from Bedel Pass to Uz Bel Pass."¹⁹

In 1884 Russia and Britain agreed to the demarcation of Afghanistan's northern border.²⁰ By 1887 the joint commission created for this purpose had completed its work, following the 1872-73 agreement in fixing the boundary along the course of the Amu-Darya River as far east as Zor Kul. East of Zor Kul the boundary was left undefined.

In the early 1890s both the British and the Russians were pushing forward their lines of control towards the Karakorum passes.²¹ Each move by one side provoked a counter-advance by the other. Russia's main objective was to achieve a common boundary with British India. From such a position it could exert pressure on a very sensitive point of the British Empire. Were London to adopt a hostile policy towards Russia elsewhere in the world, Petersburg could respond by instigating and supporting rebellions against British rule among the tribal peoples of the northern frontiers, or within India itself. It could also threaten invasion, which although unlikely, would force Britain to maintain very expensive positions in India's far north.

British strategists hoped to stop the Russian advance well north of the Karakorum passes and to keep a strip of "neutral" territory separating Russian from British lands.²² It was a matter of secondary importance to London whether this "buffer" belonged to China or Afghanistan. Great Britain desired that both China and Afghanistan assert effective control over the southern and eastern Pamirs, and that their territories touch, thus blocking Russia's southern march. In order to "close the gap" between Afghani and Chinese territory, Great Britain urged China to send troops into the Pamirs as far west as Yashil Kul - where Chinese territory would butt against Afghanistan. London embodied its plan in a formal proposal to China in 1891 that a strip of Chinese territory extend westwards along the Alichure River to Somatash.²³

18. *Ibid.* p. 220. Darkot Pass lies a short distance south of Baroghil Pass.

19. Statement by U.S.S.R. Government, 13 June 1969, in *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, 9 July 1969, Vol. xxi, No. 24, p. 9.

20. Clubb, *China and Russia*, p. 102.

21. Alder, *British India*, pp. 223-24, 303-308.

22. *Ibid.* pp. 218-25.

23. *Ibid.* pp. 233-34.

Peking was suspicious of British intentions, undoubtedly seeing British blandishments as an avenue to chronic Sino-Russian tension and conflict. Thus, although a command of Chinese troops was sent to Somatash, Peking rejected London's proposal²⁴ on the grounds, stated nine months later, in May 1892, that the proposed tongue of land would be strategically indefensible. Part of the letter from the Chinese minister in reply to the British proposal has been paraphrased as follows:

As China was not desirous of retaining this territory, and as he understood that England had no intention of advancing beyond the Hindu Kush, the only alternative seemed to be the occupation by Russia.²⁵

While Peking was deciding how far west its territory extended into the Pamirs, Russia moved to assert its rights under the 1873 and 1887 agreements with Great Britain. In the spring of 1891 a detachment of 1,000 cossacks was sent into the Pamirs and proceeded south to Baroghil pass where they clashed with Afghan forces.²⁶ The Russian force then penetrated further south, crossing the Hindu Kush, and advancing as far as the summit of Darkot Pass.²⁷ The detachment then withdrew northwards, founding Fort Pamir on the Urgab River as the focus of Russian power in the eastern Pamirs. While moving through the Pamirs the Russian expedition informed the local inhabitants (mostly Khirghiz) that they were now Russian subjects and ordered out a number of Chinese soldiers and officials (and at least one British official).²⁸ The Russians also removed the marker erected by the Chinese some years before on the shore of Yeshil Kul.²⁹ On the eastern shore of Kara Kul the local inhabitants were discovered building a fort under Chinese orders.³⁰ A garrison of 200–300 troops was left at Fort Pamir and the rest of the Russian expeditionary force withdrew to Fergana.³¹

Initially, it seems, China resisted the Russian thrust. After the Russian troops left in 1891 Chinese troops returned to the Pamirs and removed the local officials appointed by the Russians – officials who had themselves been appointed to replace Chinese-appointed officials.³² Chinese troops also were sent to repair and reinforce the forts at Rang Kul, Yashil Kul and Ak Tash. However, faced with growing Russian – and Afghani – pressure, and unsure of British plans, China decided to withdraw from the contested territory. In the spring of 1892 Chinese

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.* p. 234.

26. Sved Hedin, *Through Asia* (New York: Harper and Brother, 1899), p. 96. Hedin was a Swedish adventurer and "explorer" who spent several years wandering about Central Asia, including the Pamirs, in the early 1890s. He was apparently welcomed by British, Russian, and Chinese officials along his route. His two volume travelogue contains much useful information.

27. Alder, *British India*, pp. 225–26.

28. Sheehy, "Russia and China," p. 9.

29. Hedin, *Through Asia*, p. 390.

30. Sheehy, "Russia and China," p. 9.

31. Hedin, *Through China*, p. 96.

32. Sheehy, "Russia and China," pp. 9–10.

forces were withdrawn from Rang Kul and Somatash and attempted to secure a line running from Tash Kurgan to Ak Tash – a line which still breached the Sarikol range.³³ Ak Tash was an old Chinese outpost and then included many Chinese among its population of 15,000.³⁴

In March 1892 the Russian Government decided that south of Uz Bel Pass the Sarikol range should be established as the Sino-Russian boundary.³⁵ In June 1892 a strong Russian force was sent into the Pamirs to secure Russia's control. The Chinese garrison at Ak Tash was ordered to leave and their fort destroyed. Other Chinese forces withdrew to the east when they learned of the arrival of Russian forces. By 1893 the Sarikol range had become the *de facto* Sino-Russian boundary.

Sino-Russian talks on the Pamirs question began in 1892.³⁶ Russia insisted that the boundary follow the Sarikol range. The Chinese Government was divided over Pamirs policy. One group, initially led by Li Hung-chang, favoured maintaining Chinese claims as far west as the line running due south from Uz Bel Pass. Another faction headed by Hun Ta-jen favoured the abandonment of territory to the west of the Sarikol range. For two years little progress was made. By 1894 tension was building between China and Japan over Korea and Li Hung-chang had come to the conclusion that Russian help should be sought to resist Japan's advance.³⁷ In order to make possible such co-operation, the Pamirs issue had to be solved, or at least shelved. Petersburg, too, hoped for Sino-Russian co-operation against Japan and was willing to give guarantees that its troops would remain west of the Sarikol watershed in order to facilitate such co-operation.

Thus, notes were exchanged establishing the Sarikol range crestline as the *de facto* dividing line between Chinese and Russian jurisdiction. It is these notes which Moscow now says constitute the legitimate definition of the boundary in this region: "The demarcation in the Pamirs was accomplished by means of an exchange of notes in 1894. . . . This line exists and no other."³⁸ While the 1894 notes have apparently never been published, Peking has purportedly quoted them at length. According to China, the notes were explicitly a "provisional agreement" intended to "maintain temporarily the respective positions of the troops of the two sides pending a final settlement of the Pamir question."³⁹ The Chinese Government is said to have specified in these notes that:

In adopting the above mentioned measure, [the Sarikol range as the provisional boundary] the Chinese government does not at all mean to abandon the rights China possesses over the territories of the Pamirs which are situated beyond the possessions occupied by the Chinese troops at present. It considers that it should

33. Alder, *British India*, p. 252.

34. Hedin, *Through Asia*, p. 635.

35. Sheehy, "Russia and China," p. 10.

36. *Ibid.* p. 13. See also, Alder, *British India*, p. 254.

37. Clubb, *China and Russia*, p. 116. Sheehy, "Russia and China," p. 13.

38. U.S.S.R. statement of 13 June 1969.

39. P.R.C. statement of 8 October 1969.

maintain the rights based on the 1884 protocol until a satisfactory understanding is reached.

In Peking's view, the protocol of 1884 was the last authoritative definition of the Pamirs boundary. Lands held by Russia in excess of that agreement are illegally occupied and must be returned to China. Thus the illustrative map published in 1978 indicates that the Sarikol line is the "Late 19th century line of Czarist Russian military occupation."

Russian efforts to expand their influence into Sinkiang did not cease with the delineation of the Sarikol line in 1894. Indeed, Russian influence in Sinkiang was strong up to 1949.⁴⁰ It does seem, however, that there was only one subsequent Russian attempt to further modify the *de facto* boundary established in 1894. In 1901 the Russians established a military post at Tash Kurgan, east of the Sarikol watershed.⁴¹ This post was withdrawn by 1917, however. Although Russian or Soviet troops were sent into Sinkiang several times up to the 1940s, the *de facto* Sino-Soviet boundary remained along the Sarikol crestline. This line has never been demarcated by joint Russo-Chinese action.⁴²

Current Chinese Claims

There are at least three differing Chinese claims in the Pamirs region. The first encompasses the region to the east of a line running due south from Uz Bel Pass to a point on the Afghan border near the eastern end of Lake Zor Kul. The area to the east of such a line, and west of the Sarikol range crestline, is roughly 20,000 square kilometres – the area Peking has specified as being held by the Soviet Union in excess of the legitimate boundary. This is the clearest Chinese claim, and the minimum claim.

A second claim can be formulated on the basis of a line running from Uz Bel Pass towards the south-west – which Peking says is the Russian boundary as specified by the 1884 protocol. The 1978 illustrative map hints that this wedge of land might properly be Chinese territory by shading it yellow, the same colour as "China" on that map.

Maps published by the Republic of China provide the basis for a potential third Chinese claim.⁴³ These maps show the Soviet-Chinese boundary following the Amu-Darya River northwards from Ishkashim to a point just past where the Wanji River flows into the Amu-Darya, then turning towards the north-east and running along the Darwaz ridge

40. See Allen S. Whiting and Sheng Shih-ts'ai, *Sinkiang: Pawn or Pivot*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1958); and W. A. D. Jackson, *The Russo-Chinese Borderlands: Zone of Peaceful Contact or Potential Conflict?* (London: Van Nostrand, 1962).

41. Alastair Lamb, *Asian Frontiers, Studies in a Continuing Problem* (London: Pall Mall Press, 1968), p. 194.

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Atlas of the Republic of China, Vol. I, Hsitsang, (Tibet), Sinkiang, and Mongolia* (Taiwan: National War College, 1960), p. A 13. This map indicates the Sarikol line as a "special boundary," one of many such lines in the region.

line, through the peak of Mount Communism, and then following the crest of the Trans Alai range eastward to the Kizil-Jik Dawan. (This line is shown on Map 1). Excluding the Wakhan corridor of Afghanistan (which the Republic of China never recognized but which the People's Republic implicitly accepted when the Sino-Afghan boundary treaty was signed in November 1963) this claim encompasses an area of roughly 64,000 square kilometres.⁴⁴

A 1966 study of the Sino-Soviet boundary by the United States Department of State shows this large Nationalist claim, but notes that it was dropped by atlases published in the People's Republic after 1953.⁴⁵ The 1978 edition of this study, however, shows a Chinese territorial claim in the Pamirs apparently corresponding to this Nationalist claim.⁴⁶ This is somewhat misleading in implying that this "maximum" claim is in fact the People's Republic expressed claim.

The satisfaction of any one of these three Chinese claims would have geo-political consequences. In the first instance, they would substantially increase the size of the Sino-Afghan border: by 180 kilometres in the case of the first claim; by 420 kilometres with the second claim; and by a total of 675 kilometres in the case of the maximum, third claim. The current Sino-Afghan boundary ranges some 80 kilometres. The satisfaction of either the maximum Chinese claim or the cession of the south-western "wedge," would also put a strip of Chinese territory between the Soviet Union and Pakistan's port of Kashmir. This would make China's tenuous overland links with Pakistan somewhat more secure.⁴⁷ It would also lessen the ability of the Soviet Union to pressure Pakistan, China's only ally in Asia. On the other hand, the transfer of a piece of territory to the east of a line running south from Uz Bel Pass would have minimal consequences in both regards.

In the past the Soviet Union has hinted a willingness to negotiate China's territorial claims – perhaps including those in the Pamir's region.⁴⁸ One can speculate that Moscow might be willing to make a concession regarding the area east of a line south from Uz Bel' pass if that were the price of reaching an overall settlement of the boundary

44. Other hypothetical Chinese claims can also be formulated. Alastair Lamb shows a line running north from a point near the confluence of the Amu-Darya and Wakhan Rivers, passing just west of Yeshil Kul and Sarezskoye, and continuing generally northwards before turning to the north-west and passing just to the north-east of Mount Communism. Alastair Lamb, *The Sino-Indian Border in Ladakh* (Canberra: Australian National University, Asian Publications Series, 1973), pp. 94–95. Alder also says that during their negotiations with Russia in the early 1890s Chinese officials tended to claim the Ak Su River as the Sino-Russian boundary. Alder, *British India*, pp. 243, 253.

45. International Boundary Study No. 64, *China-USSR Boundary*, 14 February 1966, Geographer, Office of Research in Economics and Science, Bureau of Intelligence and Research, U.S. Department of State, Washington.

46. *Ibid.* 13 February 1978 edit.

47. See, Seymour Topping, "Opening a new road to China: the Karakoram highway," *New York Times*, Magazine section, 2 December 1979, p. 37.

48. See for example, Moscow radio on 19 January 1970 and 16 January 1970 in, *Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, PRC, 19 January 1970, p. A 3–5.

question. Given the territorial disputes outstanding with a number of countries, Moscow would, of course, be hesitant to make such a move. But then, China is a "special case." In this vein, Zhores Medvedev suggested in 1979 that if the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty II were rejected by the U.S. Senate, Moscow would "move seriously to improve its relations with China."⁴⁹ A renewal of the cold war might induce Moscow to make concessions in the Pamirs if this would detach Peking from its alignment with the west and lay the basis for reduced Soviet-Chinese tension.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 significantly increased the geopolitical significance of the Pamirs issue. China sees the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan as one step in a long range Soviet drive to bring Iran and Pakistan under Soviet control in order ultimately to establish naval supremacy in the Indian Ocean area and bring the flow of oil from the Persian Gulf under Soviet control.⁵⁰ The next step in this scheme would be to support successionist and "pro-Soviet" forces within Pakistan. Indeed, the Soviet administrative "annexation" of the Wakhan corridor of Afghanistan in late 1980 was part of Moscow's plan to "penetrate into Pakistan's northern border area to gravely imperil the security of Pakistan."⁵¹ Peking believes, however, that "it is impossible for [Moscow] to exercise effective and long term control" over Afghanistan, and that the growing Afghanistan anti-Soviet guerrilla forces will inspire resistance to Soviet expansionism elsewhere. It is undoubtedly for these reasons that China is aiding the Afghani resistance forces. While Chinese concessions over the Sarikol line would not materially affect the security of the Sino-Pakistani highways through Kashmir or bring Soviet arms closer to anti-government rebels in Pakistan (since the Pamirs, the Wakhan, and Afghanistan are *already* under Soviet control) such moves would politically weaken the anti-hegemonist struggle and united front.

From the Soviet point of view, determination to consolidate the control of a friendly regime in Kabul would make folly of any lengthening of the Sino-Afghan border. The move into Afghanistan has thus made it less likely that either side will compromise on the Pamirs territorial issue. What was previously a piece of land with marginal geopolitical importance has become far more valuable.

49. Zhores Medvedev, "Russia Under Brezhnev," *New Left Review*, No. 117 (September-October 1979), p. 12.

50. *Beijing Review*, No. 1, (5 January 1981), p. 16.

51. *Ibid.* No. 48 (1 December 1980), p. 8.