The British Frontier Policy

In British India's northern frontier Nepal had always been an important factor to reckon with. This is due mainly to her strategic location, her foreign policy, and her armed strength.

The British policy in India's northern frontier had two aspects, political and economic. Politically, their policy consisted in the preservation of peace in the region by the maintenance, along the southern slopes of the Himalayas, of a chain of friendly "influenced states", whose internal autonomy was by and large guaranteed, but whose external relations were subordinated to the Imperial interests of the British. These states were the outworks of the British Indian Empire, needed not so much for its defense as for serving the purpose of an "outer or advanced...

(1) Militarily the Northern frontier of India stretches from the east of Jammu to the east of Bhutan. A. Vincent, The Defence of India (2 vols., London, 1923) II, 10; D.H. Cole, Imperial Military Geography (London, 1937) 374. In this chapter, however, 'northern frontier' stands for Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim only. Similarly 'British frontier policy' stands here for their policy in regard to the northern frontier in the above limited sense. The main idea here is to show Nepal as apolitical factor in this area, her relations with Sikkim, Bhutan, Tibet and China, and how these relations affected British policy in this area.
strategical frontier." Commercially, the British policy consisted in using the Himalayan States as channels of trade with the trans-Himalayan areas. The British policy in Nepal may be viewed as a part of their frontier policy in both these aspects.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries this frontier policy was largely commercial in its approach. Commerce had an important bearing on the politics in the Himalayan region; it provided the motive force to the Company's political activities in this area. The Company's policy in Nepal at this time was determined by its wider commercial interests in the Eastern Himalayas.

Nepal as a factor in this policy

The conquest of Nepal by the militant Gurkhas and their policy of jealous exclusion of the foreigners seriously affected the Company's political and economic interests in

(2) A. Lamb, Britain and Chinese Central Asia (London, 1960) 1-110; Political Missions to Tibet, Comprising the Reports of the Hon'ble Ashley Eden - 1864; Capt. R.B. Pemberton, 1837, 1838, with Dr. W. Griffith's Journal; And the Account by Baboo Kishen Kant Bose (Calcutta, 1865); C. Markham, Narratives of the Mission of George Bogle to Tibet, and of the Journey of Thomas Manning to these (London, 1879); H. Risley, ed., Gazetteer of Sikkim (Calcutta, 1894); S.K. Bhuyan, Anglo-Assamese Relations, 1771-1826 (Gauhati, 1949) 73-4, 77-82.

(3) Bogle's Memorandum on the Trade of Tibet, Select Committee Proceedings, 24 February 1775; see Chapter One for details.
the Himalayan region. Politically, the incessant wars and conquests carried on by Nepal spread alarm and disquiet in the region, particularly in Sikkim and Bhutan, bordering the British territory in India. On the Indo-Nepalese border there were frequent disputes, and at times armed clashes. This led to economic dislocation in the whole area; commerce was seriously affected. For the British, a blazing frontier was politically perilous, and the dislocation of trade economically ruinous. Security of the frontier and safeguarding the commercial interests in the Himalayan area, hence, weighed heavily with the Company to establish definite political relations with the Gurkha rulers of Nepal. The history of Indo-Nepalese relations in 1767-1816 bears this out.

Sino-Nepalese dispute (1788-92)

But the problem did not end there. The Himalayan states of Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim and Tibet were connected


(5) S. Cammann, Trade through the Himalayas (Princeton, 1951); Markham, n. 2, 127, 197; S. Turner, An Account of an Embassy to the Court of the Tsecho Lama in Tibet (London, 1806) 442; G.W. Traill, "Report on Kumaon," Asiatiek Researches (Calcutta) XVII, 40.

with one another by complex political, economic and
cultural ties, so much so that a major political event
in one had often its inevitable reverberation in the rest.
Broadly speaking, the emergence of a powerful aggressive
Nepal unsettled the political balance in the area; it posed
a constant threat to the security of her weaker neighbours,
made them restless and uneasy; the northern frontier, in
short, became a live and a sensitive frontier, following the
rise of militant Nepal under the Gurkhas. The British at
this time were interested not only in Nepal, but in her
neighbours as well; they were impelled, as in Nepal, by
political and economic motives. They realised that their
policy in any one of these Himalayan states set off
repercussions in the rest; their little knowledge of the
region necessarily made the British cautious when pursuing
their schemes in this area.

Besides, all these Himalayan states had relations
with China, of varying nature; all of them showed great
deferece to the Celestial Emperor, if not owed overt
political allegiance. They were all looked upon by the
Chinese Emperor as being within the broad framework of his
imperial interests, though few of them were under his direct
administrative control. May be, China's claim to suzerainty
over these Himalayan states was too tall. Yet, the British
for a long time had not openly challenge it, presumably for
the consideration that doing so was neither practicable nor
politic. The British policy in the northern frontier of India was thus influenced by three factors: Nepal's aggressive designs towards her weaker neighbours, the interrelation of these Himalayan states, and their relations with China. The British had realised very early that their policy in any one of these states was fraught with far-reaching possibilities; they were to reckon with not only the feelings of these states but also with the reaction of the Chinese. A political dispute with one state was likely to culminate in a Himalayan crisis when all the other states would be involved, with the active support or moral encouragement of China, a power considered by many of these states as their suzerain and protector.

(7) On the tangled relations between these states, and China's connexion and interest in them see C. Bell, Tibet Past and Present (Oxford, 1924) 8, 24-37, 40-5, 59-65, 99-106, 115, 170, 208-10, 231; J.C. White, Sikkim and Bhutan, Twenty-one years on the North-East Frontier 1887-1908 (London, 1909) 8-9, 285-93; Surgeon Rennie, Bhotan and the Story of the Door War (London, 1866) 11, 13-4, 22; Tsung-Lien Shen; and Shen-chi Liu, Tibet and the Tibetans (California, 1953) 47; E. Teichman, Travels of a Consular Officer in Eastern Tibet. Together with a history of the Relations between China, Tibet and India (Cambridge, 1922) 1-8; W.W. Rockhill, The Dalai Lamas of Lhasa and Their Relations with the Manchurian Emperors of China (Leyden, 1910) 37-42; Political Missions to Bootan, Comprising the Reports of the Hon.ble Ashley Eden - 1864; Captain R.B. Pemberton, 1837, 1838, with Dr. W. Griffith's Journal; and the Account by Baboo Kishen Kant Bose (Calcutta, 1865) 131-2, 87-90, 92; H. Risley, ed., Gazetteer of Sikkim (Calcutta, 1894) IX-XV; J.C. Gawler, Sikkim, with Hints on Mountain and Jungle Warfare (London, 1875) 8-10, 104; F.E. Youngusband, Memorandum on Our Relations with Tibet, both Past and Present (Simla, 1905) 11-14; P. Landon, Nepal (London, 1928) 1, 67.

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This is evidenced by some important political events in this area in the first half of the 19th century. The first of such events was the Sino-Nepalese war following Nepal's invasion of Tibet during 1788-92. The Sino-Nepalese war led to a Himalayan crisis. For the Company it was such an opportunity as a cause of uneasiness. Fear of China led Nepal to conclude a Commercial Treaty with the Company (1792) in the hope that an alliance with the British "might prove a powerful means of deterring the Chinese" from exacting a heavy retribution. This was a fortuitous occurrence; it animated

It is, however, difficult to establish how far the 'Suzerainty' of China was effective on all these states. Dr. Leo Rose holds, on the authority of Chinese sources, that China regarded Nepal and Bhutan, along with other adjacent states, as beyond the periphery of her empire. "Sino Indian Rivalry and the Himalayan border states," Orbis (Pennsylvania) 5:2 (Summer, 1961) 198-215. Dr. Lamb rightly holds that "... in traditional Chinese relations with China imply a recognition of Chinese Supremacy." "The Indo-Tibetan Border," The Australian Journal of Politics and History (St. Lucia, Australia) (May 1960) 23 et seq.

Without entering into the nuances of legal terms as 'overlordship', 'suzerainty', 'allegiance' and 'vassalage', it can be broadly said that there were complex knots of political, economic and cultural relations between these states. All of them were not 'Vassals' of China, many of them were decidedly outside her direct control but, nevertheless, all of them bore for her an attitude of awe, reverence and deference. The British did have an exaggerated idea of Chinese influence in the area, and it is this idea - may be misconception - which influenced their policy in this region.

the Company's commercial hopes in Nepal and the regions around her. Yet the Company could not render any armed aid to Nepal, for fear that China would take offence and injure the Company's Canton trade. Besides, "No event ... was more to be deprecated than the conquest of Nepal by the Chinese"; for the close proximity of such a great power to the Company's territories in India might lead to abiding border disputes, with explosive possibilities. The Indo-Nepalese border was then, as for many years later, militarily the most vulnerable, being the least garrisoned. The Company was extremely anxious to avert this Chinese danger by diplomatic means; Colonel Kirkpatrick was sent (in 1793) to Kathmandu to mediate in the Sino-Nepalese dispute, and to improve the Company's commercial prospects in Nepal.

The Company, however, failed to reap any harvest out of this Himalayan episode. The Chinese hold on Tibet (10) was riveted; Tibet was sealed; and the hope of trade in the region was extinguished for the future. The Chinese disfavoured the British meddlement in the Nepal-Tibet dispute; its effect was seen in the failure of Lord Macartney to

(9) Kirkpatrick, n. 2, vii; i-xv. See Chapter One for details.

persuade the Chinese to closer commercial relations

(11)
with England.

Lessons for the British

The British realised that the Himalayan States were
so interrelated that a stir in one was certain to be felt
in others; that political unquiet bred economic unsettlement;
that their activity in the Himalayan region affected their
commercial interests in the Chinese mainland. Even if
China did not politically intervene in defence of what were
looked upon by her as her vassals, she might place hindrances
in the Company's trade in Canton. Most important of all,
China's definite political relations with Nepal were a major
development of this Himalayan crisis, a product of Nepal's
(12)
own aggressive policy.

(11) Lord Macartney was sent to China on a commercial
mission in 1793. For the effect of the Nepal-Tibet war on his
embassy see G. Staunton, Bart, An Authentic Account of an
Embassy from Great Britain to the Emperor of China (2 vols.,
London, 1797) II, 211 et seq; G.T. Stenton, Bart, Miscellaneous
Notices Relating to China (London, 1822) 238; E.H. Fritchard,
"The Instructions of the East India Company to Lord Macartney
on his Embassy to China and Reports to the Company," J.R.A.S.,
(London) 1938, 493; Lamb, n. 2, 26-30. See also Cammann,
n. 5, 134-43.

(12) Nepal was henceforth obliged to send a quinquennial
tributary mission to China. The obligation was faithfully
carried out till 1852. Between 1852 and 1867 no mission was
sent, due to ill-treatment meted out to these missions by the
Tibetans, on their way to Peking through Eastern Tibet.
Finally, in 1911, the missions were officially discontinued
by Nepal. The Tibetans and the Chinese took care of the
mission as soon as it crossed the Nepalese boundary. In

(contd. on next page)
The effect of Sino-Nepalese relations on British policy

The Company was eager to ascertain the extent and real nature of Chinese relations with Nepal. It was comforting to find that the "people of Nepal were perfectly independent" of China, and that the latter did in no way (13) interfere in Nepal's politics. Nevertheless, for long China continued to figure large in British policy in Nepal and in her neighbourhood. For long the British policy in Nepal continued to be influenced by the consideration of Chinese reaction to it. The Company's political and commercial interests suggested that it was wise to observe "a considerable degree of caution in contracting political engagements" (14) with Nepal. No wonder,

return for the tributes Nepal received with goods from the Chinese Court. The tributary missions did not mean Nepal's subjection to Chinese political control. China never claimed direct control on Nepal's policies, although the Nepalese paid due deference to her great name and power. Nepal's relation with China was never at a par with Tibet's relation with China. Nepal's tributary status "was like that of various other dependencies of China, such as Korea, Annam, Siam and Burma." Kao-tsung, Shih-lu, chapter 1411, 14b, quoted in Tieh-Tseng Li, n. 10, 53; S. Levi, Le Nepal, 3 vols. (Paris, 1905, 1905, 1908) II, 181; B.H. Hodgson, Miscellaneous Essays Relating to Indian Subjects (2 vols., London, 1880) I, 167-73.

(15) S.C., 2 May 1805, 350. Abdul Kadir reported in 1795 that shortly after the war of 1788-92, the Chinese did try to exercise some political sway on Nepal, but the latter was wholly opposed to it. Report of Abdul Kadir, Pre-Mutiny Records, Letters Issued by the Agent to Governor General, Benares, Vol. 56 (October 1795 to December 1795).

(14) Bengal Secret Consultations, 30 June 1802, quoted in Lamb, n. 2, 56.
"the avoidance of any engagement with the Nepalese which might embroil us with or give umbrage to the Chinese," (15)
was the policy of the British in the early decades of the 19th century. The fear of China was a restraint on the forward policy of the British in the Himalayan area, and sometimes even a bogey. This is evidenced by the British policy during the war with Nepal (1814-16).

The British fought the war under the shadow of Chinese intervention. Lord Moira was particularly anxious to convince the Chinese in Tibet of the "moderation of our views and to show that they were directed to no object of aggrandisement in that quarter." This was necessary; for Nepal had appealed to China for armed aid to prevent the British from occupying Nepal and then Tibet.

(15) Quoted in Ibid., 44.


(17) Lord Moira to Secret Committee, 2 August 1815, Papers Relating to the Nepaul War (1824) 720.

In deference to China's political relations with Nepal, the latter was not annexed by the Company, nor a harsher treaty imposed on her. Lord Moira was eager to convince the Chinese that the Treaty of Segowlee (1816) would not affect China's special relations with Nepal, which the Company had recognised all the while. He was concerned over China's reaction to the British occupation of Kumaon, bordering on western Tibet, and to British relations with Sikkim, a vassal of Tibet. China frowned on the Company for establishing a Residency at Kathmandu, and politely suggested that it should be withdrawn. Lord Moira did not take it very seriously, although he was prepared to yield, if China insisted.

Peace and amity with China being

"an object of such vast consequence to the Commercial interests of the Company and indeed of the United Kingdom," (21)

Lord Hastings was naturally eager that the Company's commercial agents at Canton should disabuse the Chinese of any acquisitive designs of the British in the Himalayas.

(19) Lamb, n. 2, 43.
(20) Ibid., 45; Prinsep, n. 18.
(21) Quoted in Ibid., 44. Lord Hastings was concerned that the war might have a bad effect on the embassy of Lord Amherst, about to start for Peking for commercial negotiations. See also Papers Relating to the Nepal War, 996, 272.
The Nepal war is a landmark in the British frontier policy, in both its aspects. It resulted in their greater acquaintance with Nepal and her neighbours, as also with the fact that China disfavoured Nepal's restlessness, and that she had no inclination to pick up a quarrel with the British for the sake of the Nepalese. It was clear that Nepal could rally no allies in the area, and that the latter, particularly Sikkim, felt easy after her subdual by the British. The Nepal war gained the British important footholds in the Himalayan area. Sikkim, which had played an effective role in the war, was brought under British policy's influence, and eventually under political wardship. The Treaty of Titalya (10 February 1817) with Sikkim committed the Company to her defence against any future Nepalese invasion. It gained the Company a gateway and an important commercial route to Tibet. Nepal's expansion was effectively blocked, and Bhutan's security from the Gurkha aggression

(22) China did not help Nepal either militarily or diplomatically. On the contrary, Nepal was reproved for having provoked a war with the British. Prinsep, n. 18; Letter of Chinese Ambas' to King of Nepal, Chechin Varse 12 Mahina 3 Ka Din 8. Here the King of Nepal is addressed in an inferior title. Wang (general), Baburam Collections.

(23) C. Aitchison, Treaties, Engagements and Sandads (Calcutta, 1929) XII, 58-9. The territory between the rivers Megh and Teesta, annexed by Nepal was restored to Sikkim by the British; all disputes between Nepal and Sikkim were henceforth to be settled by British arbitration; in all wars of the British in that area Sikkim undertook to help them. In the Himalayan policy of the British Sikkim played a significant role. Risley, n. 2, iii-xvi.
insured. This restrained Nepal's martial propensities, and paved the way for the tranquillity of the northern border of British India. The Treaties of Segowlee and Titalya conferred on the Company a great responsibility for the peace and tranquillity of the region; the British assumed a permanent interest and a high stake in the political developments of the northern frontier of India. A wedge of British influence was driven into the area through political relations with Sikkim and Nepal, and through the conquest of the western districts of Nepal and the hill stations on the Himalayas. British India and China in Tibet became (24) contemporaneous for the first time. Through Kumaon and Garhwal, the British expected to secure an opening into Chinese Tartary.

The Northern Frontier in 1837-44

Restraint and isolation of Nepal were imperative for the peace in the northern frontier; it was the kingpin of British frontier policy. Nepal chafed under the yoke of this policy, yet two decades were to pass by before she could attempt to free herself from this yoke. The Himalayan region was astir during 1837-45. These six years staged two major political events, the first Anglo-Afghan war and the First Anglo-Chinese war, each having far-reaching effect on Nepal's

(24) Kumaon and Garhwal seized from Nepal,bordered on western Tibet.
policy. There was, besides, confusion in the domestic politics of Tibet and Bhutan during a part of this period; troubles were brewing in the Punjab, which too had great interest in the western Himalayan States; the hill states of Ladakh and others near her were uneasy; Sikkim was restive. In this troubled water Nepal dived in; the result was a succession of crises for the British in India, agitation on the northern frontier and great commotion. Nepal sought to exploit the British embroilment in Afghanistan and China to her own advantage. She planned to break with the British, and for this she sought to rally her neighbours to her side. Nepal promised military aid to Tibet, for the suppression of the insurrection at Pooni; and to Bhutan and Sikkim, for the recovery of the Assam Dooars and Darjeeling respectively from British hands. Attempts were made to gain political influence in Bhutan through a party contending for power. Full advantage was taken of the fear of Bhutan over the Pemberton Mission (1837) and that of Sikkim over

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(25) See Chapters Four, Five and Six.

(26) S.C., 26 December 1839, 127, 137, 140; 4 September 1839, 230-1; 26 April 1843, 40; 10 May 1843, 68.

(27) Bhutan seethed with party wrangles; aggressions were committed on the British territory, with the result that the British annexed Seven Assam Dooars in 1841 and Kairapara Duar in 1844. R.B. Pemberton, Report on Bhutan (Calcutta, 1853); Aitchison, n. 24, xiv, 81.
the British occupation of Darjeeling. For a time at least, it seemed Sikkim had been won over. Bhutan's response to Nepal's overtures was "favourable but cautious". The Nepalese emissaries seemed to have gone far in spinning a league of these three states against the British; all these states seemed eager to pay off old scores against the British.

Repeated warnings of Nepal's intrigues came pouring in from the Resident; the situation was disconcerting; the paramount object was to foil Nepal's bid to form a league of Himalayan powers. Strong measures were taken to intercept the Nepalese emissaries. The Superintendent of Darjeeling was asked by his superiors to regain by "quiet dexterity" his preponderant political sway in the Sikkim Durbar.

Anglo-Chinese War (1839-42)

The bellicose spirit in Nepal and the restiveness of her neighbours received great impetus when news reached them that China had broken with the British. Many missions were

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(29) *S.G., 26 December 1839, 140; 26 April 1843, 40.*

(30) *S.G., 26 December 1839, 157, 140; 20 November 1839, 73-4. The political relations were conducted with Sikkim through the Superintendent of Darjeeling.*
sent by Nepal to Lhasa and Peking, urging them to help Nepal check the acquisitive designs of the British, who were a menace not only to Nepal but to all the states in the Himalayan region, connected with Tibet and China in many (31) ways. The British were apprehensive that China would give moral encouragement or even active military aid to Nepal, enabling her to make a sudden thrust into the British territory in India. The King of Nepal repeatedly invoked such aid; for without it he did not dare clash with the British. He professed extreme eagerness to throw off his "allegiance" to the British, and to "resume the old career of his ancestors" by strengthening his bond with the Celestial (32) Emperor. A large sum of money was asked for, or in lieu thereof, the cession of Tuglakote in western Tibet to Nepal. As the King of Ava had promised cooperation in Nepal's projects against the British, a free passage of Gikha army through Tibet and Bhutan to Ava was also prayed for. Even a mild threat was given to the Chinese Emperor that if he

(31) See Chapters Four and Five.

(32) S.C., 14 September 1842, 83; Nepal Summary of Events, 20-31 January 1840.

(33) "Jagat Bam Pande, Envoy to Pekin, goes tomorrow, secretly instructed to beg monetary aid from Pekin, and to offer to attack British territory with 20-40 thousand men according to the subsidy solicited." Resident to Government, 2 July 1842, S.C., 10 August 1842, 126; Nepal Summary, November 1840.
did not help Nepal to strike at their common enemy at this most opportune time, the King of Nepal shall be necessitated to do so against China with English aid, which he had only to ask for in order to get. (34)

The Russians at Peking were similarly approached for help.

An all-out effort was thus made by Nepal to exploit the Anglo-Chinese war. Hodgson warned that, It is supposed that if the Chinese ruler is worsted by British forces, Nepal will instigate the Kham people of Eastern Tibet to rise and attack British territories by the allies of China, Nepal included." (36)

The Chinese being plagued with war sent no help to Nepal. The Treaty of Nanking (August 1842) was a welcome relief as much to the Chinese as to the British in India.

The Sikh-Tibetan War

But the danger did not pass off. Another trouble cropped up - this time in western Tibet, where an explosive situation had been created by the ambitious Jammu Rajas of Lahore. The Sikhs had conquered Ladakh, and were carrying fire and sword into western Tibet. Since long the Jammu Rajas were eager to forge a coalition with Nepal for

(34) S.C., 14 September 1842, 83.
(35) Ibid.
(36) S.C., 10 August 1842, 126.
reciprocal advantage of the two States. There was talk of Nepal and Ladakh, now a Sikh territory, being territorially interconnected by a chain of forts. George Clerk, the British Political Agent at Ludhiana, cautioned the Government that "it can never be safe for the Government of India to allow the approximation to Nepal of any other powerful and aspiring hill state."

Excitement rose to fever heat in Nepal; she was eager to participate in the war, to grind her own axe. Ladakh appealed to Nepal for military help against the Sikhs, who too sought Nepal's aid against Tibet. Nepal was in a fix. If she helped the Sikhs, she might hope to be rewarded by them with some parts of the coveted western Tibet. But it was risky, for China might intervene in favour of Tibet. At one time Nepal was eager to lend armed assistance to Ladakh only if Tibet and China sanctioned it; for without it, she did not venture to intervene in a dispute that in no way concerned her. The sanction was not given to her. Neither the Tibetans nor the Chinese desired Nepal's unwarranted

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(37) See Chapters Four and Five; F.C., 12 June 1837, 41.


(39) S.C., 1 February 1841, 61; 11 October 41, 89-91; 19 October 1840, 55; 21 June 1841, 67-70; 12 April 1841, 143-4.
interest in the affair. Both had strong distrust of Nepal; both knew that Nepal was keen to exploit the situation in her own interest. She was hence advised to confine herself to her

"established circle of connection, cherishing peace and good faith within that circle and less heedful of novelties beyond it." (40)

The King of Nepal then sounded the Resident if he would help the Sikhs, who were allies of the British, against the Tibetans, who were the vassals of the Chinese, with whom the British were engaged in hostilities. Hodgson turned down the suggestion, and warned the King that the British disfavoured the Sikh invasion of Tibet, and that

"We had no desire to do injury to China in any quarter, and should willingly desist from our compulsory operations in China proper so soon as justice had been rendered to us." (41)

The British were concerned for three reasons. First, the Sikh-Tibet war had set off disquiet in the hill states of the Himalayas; secondly, it had given great impetus to Nepal's military spirit; thirdly, it might lead to intervention of China, the overlord of Tibet. The appearance of China in close proximity to Nepal would aggravate the latter's hostile attitude to the British; for she might

(40) S.C., 31 May 1841, 154; Nepal Diary, 1-15 May 1841, 18-29 May 1841.

(41) S.C., 3 January 1842, 128.
then hope to fall back upon China's help in the event of reverses in British hands. Besides, a Sikh-Nepal coalition against Tibet would rouse all the latter's allies in the whole area, with China at their back. Thus, there was great risk of the British being involved

"in a labyrinth of trans-Himalayan politics, the clue to which may be difficult to find, and unprofitable to use when found." (42)

In short, the ambition of Raja Golab Singh had created a situation, over which the British could have no control, yet which could prove highly prejudicial to their interests.

For a while, the British bid time as the Sikhs drove farther into western Tibet, beyond Taglakote on the Nepal border. The approach of the Sikhs set off wild excitement in the 'war-party' at Kathmandu.

Hodgson warned that if the Sikhs were not restrained China would surely intervene; besides, the situation in Nepal was getting out of control at the rumour of China being awakened to the events in western Tibet. He wrote:

"It is not the desire of Government that the attention of China should be first and needlessly drawn to this quarter ... actual invasions of districts, owing the sovereignty of the Chinese will probably have more effect at Lhasa and Pekin, particularly should other events be now drawing curiosity in this direction." (43)

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(42) S.C., 11 October 1841, 89.
(43) S.C., 16 August 1841, 41, 34-40, 42-4; Nepal Diary, 1-14 September 1841.
Besides, as the Sikhs had political relations with the British, China might misconstrue their invasion into Tibet as having the covert support of the British. Such an impression was likely to affect peace-negotiations in China.

Further,

"... the Chinese, if they suspect us (as they will) of inciting this attack on Naree or Eastern Tibet [sic] are very likely to resent it by letting loose Nepal upon us." (45), Hodgson gravely cautioned the Government.

So long as the Sikhs had not entered deep into Tibet, China had not intervened. In fact, Hodgson had confidently reported,

"I doubt if China will intervene if she can help it; and with reference solely to these events, kindle the flame of war on this frontier; and without China's or our direct instigation or aid, this Durbar [Nepal] will not certainly under its present Ministry meddle at all in the matter."

He, however, feared that if the Sikhs entered deeper into Tibet and if the Nepalese joined them, China would intervene on behalf of Tibet. But now Chinese intervention seemed very likely to take place when the Sikhs had penetrated deeper into Tibet. Such an intervention, eagerly awaited by

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(44) Clerk to Government, 4 September 1841, quoted in Lamb, n. 2, 67.

(45) S.C., 11 October 1841, 89. The English were then at war with China. S.C., 14 September 1842, 49-51.

(46) S.C., 30 August 1841, 32.
Nepal was certain to goad her to an open break with the British.

These considerations, coupled with the concern over serious impairment of the wool and borax trade in Bashahr, a Punjab Hill State, under British protection, weighed with the British to put diplomatic pressure on the Sikhs to stop their military operations in Tibet. Maharaja Sher Singh, the Ruler of Lahore, was asked to restrain Golab Singh from scheming at the British protected hill states and harming British commercial interests in these Himalayan States. Soon after, the crushing defeat of the Sikhs at the hands of a powerful Sino-Tibetan force, and the death of Zorawar Singh, brought about a speedy close of the war. Nepal's restlessness ebbed as a consequence.

The Sikh-Tibetan war could not assume greater complexity due partly to the effective restraint of Nepal by both British and Chinese diplomacy. The Chinese were

(47) S.C., 16 August 1841, 41.

(48) Sikh military activities created great dislocation in commercial activity of Lehul, Spiti, Kulu and Bashahr. Golab Singh was scheming to extend his political influence over these Himalayan States under British protection. S.C., 13 December 1841, 42.

(49) S.C., 18 October 1841, 68-71; 16 August 1841, 39.

as much averse to Nepal's involvement as the British. The real intention of Nepal was not unknown to China, nor did she overlook that Nepal had since long coveted parts of western Tibet. Hodgson and the "Peace Ministry" effectively restrained the King and the 'war-party' from exploiting the situation.

The events of 1837-43 strengthened the British conviction that restraint on Nepal was essential to the preservation of peace in the area around her. The British were now all the more aware that a major political event in the Himalayan region was likely to be far-reaching in its effects. The events of 1837-43 clearly showed that China was little inclined either to back up Nepal against the British or to be diplomatically pitted against them by the Nepalese. Nepal's earnest entreaty for help against the Company was taken by China more as a political stratagem than sincere demonstration of allegiance to the Celestial Emperor. The Chinese Resident (Amban) at Lhasa cold-shouldered Nepal's entreaty, stating that the Emperor

(51) S.C., 16 August 1841, 43.
never sends troops to protect the lands of foreign barbars." Nepal was dismayed at China's attitude; of what avail it was to show deference to a so-called overlord who did not aid its vassal at the time of need, the Nepalese thought. It was difficult to wheedle China; this too the Nepalese realised.

Interrelations of the States on the frontier

The British northern frontier policy had to reckon with some other important factors, particularly when they were gradually stretching their influence in the Himalayan area. These were the geographical propinquity of the Himalayan States, their proneness to intrigue, their complexities with Tibet and, less palpably, with China, and their common distrust of the British.

The interrelations of these states acted at times as a restraint on British policy in the area. Thus, in 1835 when Darjeeling was obtained by the British from the Raja of Sikkim, a strong section in the British officialdom objected to its occupation, for fear that as Darjeeling commanded the

(53) Quoted in Rose, n. 1, 202.

"Pushkar Shah, the Nepalese Envoy to Pekin is said to have met with a stern refusal to his petition for aid and countenance regarding the hostility with the British government." Resident to Government, 26 May 1838, S.C., 13 June 1838, 10; 14 September 1842, 82.
easiest route from Sikkim to Nepal, the latter might construe its possession by the British as a preliminary step to their invasion of Nepal.

Again, in 1849-50, while dealing with Sikkim, the British had to take due note of Nepal's reactions. The British relations with Sikkim were strained following the incarceration of Drs. Hooker and Campbell by the Raja of Sikkim. The British were faced with the question whether or not to withdraw from the Raja the guarantee of security of his territory from the Nepalese invasion. This guarantee given by the British alone had hitherto saved him from his more powerful neighbours, and hence

"to cancel this engagement [i.e., Arts. I and IX of the Treaty of Titalya, 10 February 1817] is virtually an invitation to all these [Tibet, Nepal, Bhutan] to possess the remainder of Sikkim."

Nepal being the strongest of the three, it was likely that she would soon annex Sikkim and become more powerful. A huge armed force would then be necessary to keep watch on her, as also to prevent Darjeeling from "falling into the inappropriate speck in the immense mountain kingdom of Nepal." Nepal was eager to help the British against Sikkim, presumably

(54) Lamb, n. 2, 89-90.

(55) P.C., 14 June 1850, 369-554. See also Chapter Seven, page 237.

(56) Campbell's Memorandum, 1 February 1860, P.C., 14 June 1850, 433.
with the hope of some territorial reward in the area, on which she had set her heart since long. Ultimately the Raja of Sikkim was cowed by the open threat that if he did not submit to British demands he would forfeit their guarantee of protection against Nepalese invasion.

The upshot was that the British occupied the Sikkimese lands bordering on Nepal, thus cutting off the approaches from Nepal to Darjeeling. They also got possession of one of the two passes leading into Nepal, on the line of the river Rummo. The increasing British influence in Sikkim caused uneasiness in Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet, and the road building activities of the Company to further their commercial interests in the area were looked upon with suspicion and disfavour by these states.

The tangled relations of these frontier states with Tibet and China had a significant bearing on British frontier policy. When relations with Sikkim were strained it was suspected that

"Tibet and Bhutan are backing Sikkim; all three are of the same race, institution, sentiments, and all politically under the influence of China, which rules at Lhasa." (59)

(57) E.C., 14 June 1850, 369-554.

(58) Lamb, n. 2.

(59) Hodgson to Fan (his sister), 2 December 1849 (from Darjeeling), H.M.B.I.K., Vol. 16, 108.
Later, in 1861, Sikkim was not annexed outright, due partly to its close relations with her neighbours, especially with Tibet, a protectorate of China. The policy of non-annexation was justified in 1861 on the ground that,

"Had any other policy been pursued, we should, I firmly believe, have been embroiled with the whole of the Frontier, and the Indo-Chinese states, and the result would have been a long, tedious and most expensive war."

Eden gave ample assurance to the neighbouring states that the British did not intend to annex Sikkim; and this assurance, according to Eden himself, kept the neighbours of Sikkim away from active support to the latter.

This interrelation of these states was put by Eden in these words:

"Nepal is tributary to China, Tibet is tributary to China, and Sikkim and Bhutan are tributary to Tibet, and therefore secondarily to China."

(60) Quoted in Lamb, n. 2, 102. Eden expressed the same view in dealing with Bhutan, Ibid., 126-7.

The Chinese Ambassador in Tibet asked the Raja of Sikkim not to allow the English to build roads in Sikkim connecting its border with Tibet. J.W. Edgar, Report on a Visit to Sikkim and the Tibetan Frontier, (in October, November and December 1873) (Calcutta, 1874) 15-7. This book deals also with Tibet's relations with Nepal and Bhutan.

(61) "Had these states not distinctly understood that we were not advancing with any intention of annexation, it is impossible to believe but that, with such combination of interests, they would all have joined to oppose us, if not avowedly, at least, secretly." Quoted in C.B. Buckland, Bengal Under the Lieutenant-Governors (Calcutta, 1901) I, 224.

(62) Ibid.
The British northern frontier policy, for long in the 19th century, was generally speaking cautious in its approach; political troubles in the Himalayan States were not always exploited as excuses to extend their dominance in the area; they preferred to bring these states under a broad framework of their influence to a close administrative control.

II

The Decadence of China: Its bearing on Nepal's relations with her neighbours.

In the second half of the nineteenth century there was a tendency to unease and disquiet in the northern frontier, due, in part, to recrudescence of Nepal's ambitions which were whetted by her realisation of the waning of Chinese power in the area.

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed the steady decline of the Chinese Empire, and the explosion of the myth of the Celestial Emperor, brought about by factors, internal and external. Its most patent manifestation was the successive revolts and insurrections which relaxed the Emperor's authority in the outlying areas of his far-flung empire. Serious uprisings were seen in Yunnan, Chinese Turkestan and Szechuan; and the vast region of Eastern Tibet was in recurrent throes of uprisings against the Chinese authority at Lhasa.

It is the fear of Chinese power in Tibet which had partly restrained Nepal's ambitions and restlessness, and hence once the fear shrank, she was likely to be dangerous to her neighbours and, consequently, cause concern to the British in India.

Significantly enough, Nepal was now being ruled by Jang Bahadur. It was likely that he would exploit his friendly relations with the British to achieve his ambitious projects in the area. It was also likely that he would seek British help if China sought to foil his schemes by threatening armed intervention. Hitherto, when relations with the British were strained, Nepal had sought to play the Chinese off against them. Now Jang Bahadur could play the other way round; he might use his British alliance as a source of strength, as also as a shield against the Chinese.

**Nepal-Tibet Relations**

Manifestation of this development was seen in the aggravation of Nepal's warlike intentions against Tibet. Nepal-Tibet relations were far from cordial, and although no actual show-down had not taken place since 1792, a state of perpetual tension prevailed, especially in the north-western border of Nepal. A state of precarious peace

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(64) Nepal coveted some lands south of the Kerung and Kuti passes in western Tibet. These lands originally belonged to Nepal before the war of 1788-92 with Tibet, when they were ceded to the latter at the instance of the Chinese. Oldfield, n. 8, 415; E.C., 22 October 1852, 61.
reigned between the two states in the Forties of the 19th century on the disputes over the common boundary in the western sector. Domestic strifes and hostile preparations against the British were then two engaging preoccupations for Nepal; there was fear too of the Chinese in Tibet. Once Nepal was brought under a strong rule under Jang Bahadur and the Chinese power showed signs of weakening in Tibet, the Nepalese were eager to resume their martial career. Political factors apart, commercial issues too embittered Tibet-Nepal relations during this time. The Nepalese merchants at Lhasa were grossly ill-treated, the Nepalese envoys to China were subjected to detentions, harassments and insults, in spite of repeated remonstrances of Nepal to both the Lhasa and Peking governments against such activities of the Tibetans.

In 1854, the accumulated grievances of Nepal ripened into an ultimatum to Tibet, and her simmering discontent burst forth into a full-scale war a year later. The war was thus a product of the spirit of revenge and avarice, stimulated by the propitiousness of the time. The Chinese were

(65) S. C., 25 August 1854, 50; P. J. B. Rana, Life of Maharaja Sir Jang Bahadur Rana of Nepal (Allahabad, 1909) 172-4; Oldfield, n. 8, 413-4.

(66) "The object of the Nepalese was not merely to have their grievances redressed or to facilitate trade, but also to make conquests." P. J. B. Rana, n. 65, 172.
then sorely plagued with the Taiping Rebellion (1850-64),
were restive under Chinese yoke; some of the parties contending for power had even solicited Jeng Bahadur's intervention in their favour. The British too were preoccupied with the Crimean War, and so were unlikely to intervene. The time was, thus, most opportune for Nepal. The ill-treatment of the Nepalese embassy to Pekin in 1852 in its course through Tibet, and the murder of a Nepalese subject at Kartope were seized by Jeng Bahadur as the casus belli, or rather as the immediate pretext.

The British attitude

In his disputes with Tibet, Jeng Bahadur had, for some time past, been trying to interest the British Resident. He had dropped some cautious feelers at the latter; he had even sounded if the British government would protect him if China backed Tibet. The British government felt that Nepa-

(67) "Puffed up with hopes of the success of the rebellion under Tientch, the Nepalese built lofty castles in the air about throwing off the galling yoke of the Chinese, and annexing a considerable portion of Tibet to their own dominion." P. J. B. Race, B. 65, 175. Jeng Bahadur exploited the unsettled state in south-western China, being motivated by personal ambition of annexing a portion of Tibet, coveted since long. S. G., 25 August 1864, 50-5.

(68) "Ill-treatment of the Mission was a pretext or at best an occasion but not the cause." P. London, Nepal (2 vols., London, 1928) 1, 144.
Tibet boundary disputes did in no way concern them; yet they disfavoured a state of tension between these two Himalayan States. Resident Ramsay advised Jang Bahadur to settle the disputes by peaceful negotiations. He refused to commit the British government to Jang Bahadur's schemes of hostility against Tibet. By the year 1854-55, Jang Bahadur had clearly seen that his opportunity had come. He only needed an assurance of British neutrality. Resident Ramsay had earlier reported to the Government:

"The Minister seems so fully to understand that the British Government will not permit itself to be mixed up in any quarrels that may occur between the Nepalese and their northern neighbours that I cannot help thinking that the real object of his visit [to the Residency] was to find out whether my own government will view with dissatisfaction the circumstance of this Durbar embroiling itself with the Tibetans, or in other words, with China, our relations with that Government being on a friendly footing." (71)

Jang Bahadur tried to conceal the real object of his vast armed preparations; the Resident was told that they were meant to help the Manchus reestablish their shaken authority in China. Resident Ramsay could not be duped. A full-scale war with Tibet, he apprehended, would.

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(69) Note of Lord Dalhousie, 18 October 1852, F.C., 22 October 1852, 62.


"materially affect the political aspect of affairs in this quarter." Besides, the bogey of China lurked in the wings. Official opinion in Calcutta too disfavoured such extensive armed preparations of Nepal; for it had released considerable stir and alarm in Bihar and Bengal, "the most exposed districts" and the "financial heart of the British Indian Empire." The Superintendent of Darjeeling and the magistrates in Bihar had a tough time to dispel the fear of the people of a Nepalese invasion. Nepal's warlike preparations, the Taiping Rebellion in China, the reported Russian advance in Chinese Turkestan, and the Crimean War in which Russia and Britain took opposite sides, were all suspicious synchronisms. The Supreme Councillors, particularly, feared that Jang Bahadur might have had some political bee in his bonnet. It was as likely that he would exploit the British embroilment in the Crimea as that he would invade Tibet when the Chinese were plagued with the Taiping Rebellion. Rumour

(72) S.G., 26 May 1854, 50.

(73) S.G., 25 August 1854, 50-3.

(74) Supreme Councillor, J.P. Grant, bore strong misgivings about Jang Bahadur's real intentions. "... I do not regard the fact of his preparation of snow shoes and the like, as elucidating his design, any better than his friendly assurances to our Resident do. But I believe we may more safely judge of what he will not do, from what is now passing in the Crimea than either from the nature of his preparations or from the explanations." S.G., 29 December 1854, 28.
of a combined army of Russia, Persia and Afghanistan
marching against the British in India floated at Kathmandu.
Even the otherwise confident Resident Ramsay smelled a rat.
He could not help feeling that

"General Jang Bahadur may possibly be making
more extensive preparations than there is occasion
for, on account of our war with Russia, and the
belief prevailing here that that power [Russia] is
more than a match for us, and that we dread an
attack from her upon our Indian frontiers. The
Nepalese have an exaggerated idea of the influence
of the Russians in Central Asia, and it has been
more than once noticed in the records of the Resi-
dency that considerable military preparations at
Kathmandu have been simultaneous with the existence
of reports of an expected Russian invasion." (75)

At any rate, the Tibeto-Nepalese dispute assumed
considerable importance in the context of other international
developments. War with Tibet, a Chinese protectorate, by
Nepal which was an ally of the British, was likely to be
exploited by Russia; it was known that China had already
made large concessions to the Russians on the Amur river
and that Russia was stretching her eyes even farther.

Lord Dalhousie was, however, less panicky. His
policy was one of keen vigilance, close interest and non-
interference. He held that although the European affairs

(75) Resident to Government, S.C., 5 August 1854, S.C.,
25 August 1854, 50.

(76) John Bowring, the British Governor of Hongkong,
infomed Lord Dalhousie on 6 July 1854 that China had made
large concessions to Russia on the left bank of the Amur
river, that a Russian depot had been established there, and
that the Russians were marching towards the islands of
Sagalien. S.C., 25 August 1854, 58.
had created some flutter at Kathmandu, there was no great fear of Jang Bahadur's exploiting the situation against the British. He admitted that his Government had "no right to interfere and ... no interest in interfering" in an issue "which is wholly between Nepal and China"; besides, it "does not appear calculated in any way to injure the interests of the British government or unduly increase the power of Nepal." (77)

Yet, keen vigilance was maintained; any further reduction of the armed forces of India was stopped, and an army was posted at Ambala as a precautionary step. Keen watch was kept on the Nepalese troop movements towards Dotée, close to Almora. Intelligence of political events in Tibet and China was collected through the British governor of Hongkong.

Jang Bahadur was allowed to purchase arms and stores from private firms in Calcutta, but opposed to do so from Government arsenals in India and England. Lord Dalhousie gave him clearly to understand that,

"The Government of India being in amicable alliance with China, cannot either directly or indirectly encourage or assist the State of Nepal in attacking a province subject to that Empire." (79)

(77) Minutes of Lord Dalhousie, Ibid., 52, 54.
(78) S.C., 25 August 1854, 52, 58.
(79) S.C., 29 September 1854, 25.
To be sure that Jang Bahadur did not mean mischief, Lord Dalhousie urged him to "tender explanations" of his military preparations to the Resident, and to keep him posted with the progress of the war he was about to embark upon. Jang Bahadur heeded this admonition, and kept the British government abreast of all his plans and movements regarding the campaign.

Nepal-Tibet War (1855-56)

With a series of successes achieved by the Nepalese in the earlier phases, and a run of reverses in the later, the war ended in March 1856 with a peace of mutual exhaustion. In fact, the extreme difficulty of the campaign, the climatic and other geographical obstacles, the enormous drain on the public coffer, the mutterings of the people and buzzing grumbles in the army, combined with the dour defence of the Tibetans, and the scare of a Chinese army at their back - all these tempered Jang Bahadur's earlier zeal to prolong the war, carried on hitherto with dubious material advantage and against enormous odds. Peace was

(20) Minute of Lord Dalhousie, 12 May 1854, S.C., 26 May 1854, 51.

(21) S.C., 30 November 1855, 81.

(22) For details of the war see Oldfield, n. 8, II, 1-17; P.J.B. Rena, n. 65, 172-91. Jang Bahadur's military arrangements for the war are detailed in a register available at Madan Puraskar Pustakalaya, Patan, Nepal. It also deals with the course of the war. A similar register is available at the Commandari Kitab Khana, Jangi Phant.

(contd. on next page)
made in March 1856, and a treaty concluded between Nepal and Tibet, which provided that both these states would continue to pay respect to the Chinese Emperor, that Tibet would pay Nepal ten thousand rupees every year, that Nepal would enjoy the privilege of trading duty-free in Tibet, and that her subjects would have the right of extra-territoriality in Tibet. Both the States entered into a mutual security agreement. A Nepalese Vakil was permanently maintained at Lhasa to safeguard the Nepalese interests in Tibet, and to adjudicate the cases involving the Nepalese.

In the later phases of the war, when the Nepalese had suffered serious reverses, and when the Chinese Resident (Amban) at Lhasa put political pressures on Jang Bahadur, the latter sought to enlist the British government's help.

"The war has been unpopular since its very commencement and all classes throughout the country have suffered by it in proportion to their means, or it would be more correct to say out of all proportion to their means. All trade has been severely interfered with, and in many parts of the country, even the cultivation of the soil has been partially interrupted. In short, the prosperity of the State has been most injuriously, though perhaps temporarily, affected." M.R., Vol. 12.

Jang Bahadur levied extra imposts on all. The Sardars disliked it and the army too found little enthusiasm in the unprofitable war. The opposition of the Sardars and the army compelled Jang Bahadur to conclude peace with the Tibetans. Resident to Government, 10 August 1855, S.C., 28 December 1855, 81; 30 November 1855, 81; 27 July 1855, 65. The war cost Jang Bahadur a sum of Rupees 26,83,568. Buddhiman Vamsavali.

(83) P.J.B. Rana, n. 65, 189-90; Aitchison, n. 24, XIV, 49-50; Bell, n. 7, 278-80. By the Fourth Article of this treaty, the Tibetans surrendered to Nepal all the Sikh prisoners of the Sikh-Tibetan War (1841-42). The prisoners were duly conveyed by Nepal to the British Government.
Jang Bahadur's Counsellors urged that as Nepal had offered help to the British during the two Anglo-Sikh wars, the British should help Nepal in her need. The ex-King, Rajendra Vikram, held that if they refused to help, no communication relating to the war should in future be sent to the Resident. Resident Ramsey firmly told Jang Bahadur that "whatever emergency might occur and whatever disasters happen to his troops," the British government would not help him in any way; for

"besides involving a breach of Treaty, it would disturb mercantile transactions annually amounting to from thirty to forty times more than the gross revenues of this Kingdom." (85)

With great difficulty Jang Bahadur convinced the Court that the British would never help Nepal; for their settled policy was to prevent her from being too powerful.

(84) The ex-King stated that Hodgson had told him that if he (ex-King) lent him Nepalese soldiers, he (Hodgson) would undertake for him (ex-King) the occupation of Tibet. Resident to Government, 8 November 1855, S.E., 28 December 1855, 88.

(85) Ibid. "I hope, I need scarcely observe that upon every occasion upon which the possibility of our ever taking part in this war has been hinted at, I have deprecated it in the strongest terms, and have said that however much we may regret the occurrence of hostilities so near our frontier between the two States with which we are on terms of amicable alliance, no consideration will induce us to break through our long established line of policy or to join in a war in aid of any one state by committing a wanton breach of faith to another." Ibid.

(86) Ibid.
The British policy of non-interference in the Tibet-Nepal dispute was influenced by twofold considerations. In the first place, they had to reckon with the reaction of the Chinese to the event. Secondly, there was fear of Sikkim and Bhutan being involved. As regards China, the British were relieved to find that except exerting diplomatic pressure on both the contestants in the later stages of the war China did not intervene; evidently, her hands were too full with the Taiping rebellion. Resident Ramsay contended that so long as the Nepalese could not rout the Tibetans and enter deep into their territory, China would not make her armed appearance to defend her protectorate. Nor was it likely that Jang Bahadur would, in the face of rumbling opposition of his army, pursue the costly war for long. Even if the Chinese did intervene, Ramsay held, Nepal was now strong enough to resist them; in short, for the British, there was no fear of the unhappy incidents of the First Gurkha-Tibet war (1788-92) being repeated.

(87) In 1792, the regular Gurkha army was not more than 16-1800 men, while the Sino-Tibetan forces totalled about 10,000. The Gurkha rule had not been consolidated then, nor was their resistance to the Chinese backed by the people, who had been recently conquered by them. But now (1855-6) Nepal could muster nearly two lakh soldiers. In the present Tibetan campaign, in May 1855, 56,500 men were employed, besides a park of artillery. Ibid.
The British were keen to localise the war, which had spread great stir in the neighbouring Himalayan states. Strict vigilance was maintained on Sikkim and Bhutan, particularly when Jang Bahadur was suspected of trying to rope in both of them. The British government were approached for a free passage of the Nepalese army to Tibet through Sikkim, it being the easiest route. The British sternly refused compliance. Jang Bahadur was then suspected of seeking to win over the Raja of Sikkim by temptations of aid for the recovery of the Sikkim Morung from the British. Sometimes he affected concern that Sikkim was planning to ravage the eastern districts of Nepal, at the bidding of Tibet, her [Sikkim's] ally. Dr. Campbell, the Superintendent of Darjeeling, vigorously asserted that Jang Bahadur was playing false with the British on the score of Sikkim, and that he had either formed a defensive and offensive alliance with the Raja of Sikkim or failing to achieve that, was planning to attack his country. Chinese intervention, with "Russian intrigue and gold", he further held, was not unlikely either. But these reports carried no weight with the Government. Lord Dalhousie had full faith in Resident Ramsay's assertions that Dr. Campbell's reports were baseless, and that Jang Bahadur would never risk a war with the British on the score of Sikkim. He was well aware that the British were absolutely

(88) S.C., 30 November 1855, 81-3; 28 December 1855, 91-7.
opposed to Sikkim being involved in the war in any way. Resident Ramsay had already warned him in "courteous but very decided language" that

"the British government can never permit Nepal to possess itself of Sikkim, whether permanently or temporarily. It is resolved to act up to the treaties which were long ago framed to that effect."

It was absolutely impossible, Ramsay assured the Government, that Jang Bahadur would court trouble with the British when he was having enough of it with his northern neighbour.

The episode was not without some lessons for the British. They noted that further waning of the Chinese power in Tibet would aggravate Nepal's ambitions, and that greater restraint on Jang Bahadur by the British government themselves was needed for the preservation of peace in the area. They realised that Jang Bahadur might again seek to exploit his friendship with the British as a protection against Chinese wrath, and as a plank to defy or snipe at that power. The

(89) S.G., 30 November 1855, 81-2.

The King of Nepal assured Lord Dalhousie that he knew that the British government regarded Sikkim as their dependency, and that they were positively opposed to any step being taken against that state by any power. Kharita from King of Nepal to Governor-General, S.G., 29 December 1854, 31-2.

(90) "The affair regarding the injustice done to Newars  the Newars were a community in Nepal having trading establishments at Lhasa and other places in Tibet  could not have reached the pitch but for the decadence of Chinese power in Tibet, providing the Gurkhas to assume a threatening policy." Oldfield, n. 8, II, 21.
neutrality of the British was received with scant grace
by Jang Bahadur.

Nepal-Tibet relations did not improve after the war,
nor did the tension between them cease. The stipulated
annual tribute was paid by Tibet but once, and maltreatment
(91) of Nepalese traders and envoys to Peking went on unabated.

Nepal-Tibet dispute, a threat to
British commercial interests

The second half of the 19th century is known as the
"era of commercial optimism". The British were actively
interested in developing trade with the Himalayan and trans-
Himalayan regions, taking all means to unravel the mystery
of Tibet and her environs. Explorers, adventurers,
missionaries and officials stimulated this commercial
interest of the Government, and their reports and accounts
left a deep impression on the British trading community that
Tibet and her adjacent regions were a veritable traders'
(92) paradise.

At such a time it was natural that Tibet-Nepal dispute
should be disfavoured; for both Tibet and China were aware of
Jang Bahadur's friendly relations with the British government

(91) F.R.A. August 1874, I; May 1874, 245; J.T. Wheeler,
Summary of Affairs of the Government of India in the Foreign
Department from 1864 to 1869 (Calcutta, 1869) 217-8.

(92) Lamb, n. 2, 322-4. For the exploration of Tibet
see G. Sandburg, The Exploration of Tibet (Calcutta, 1914).
and, hence, his aggressive policies in Tibet were certain to be misconstrued as being British-inspired. It would then have harmful effects on British trade with the Chinese mainland, stepped up since the Treaty of Tientsin (1858); British commercial ventures in Tibet would also be doomed. It was not unlikely that both Tibet and China would find not only a suspicious coincidence but a causal relation between the zealous efforts of the British to open up Tibet and the aggressive instincts of Nepal, their ally.

The British had in fact no hope in Jang Bahadur's facilitating their commercial interests in Tibet, far less helping them to establish political sway there. He was jealous of British commercial ventures in Tibet,

"for our opening trade with Lhasa would be a serious blow to its (Nepal's) own commerce there of which it has now a complete and lucrative monopoly." (93)

It was even suspected that he was exerting "secret influence" on some parties at Lhasa to foil the commercial aims of the British. He filled their mind with alarm that exploratory and commercial ventures of the British were calculated to serve their political designs in Tibet. He was

(93) F.P-A, April 1862, 302. In 1921 Sir Charles Bell observed that Nepal was uneasy at the attempts of the British to establish closer relations with Tibet, for they feared that direct relations between the Governments of Tibet and British India would "lessem the importance" of Nepal as an intermediary between them. Bell, n. 7, 197.
himself seeking to establish some political influence in the Court of Lhasa by backing a party contending for power. He was suspected of having assured the party of his help if it excluded the Europeans from Tibet, and furthered Nepal's own commercial interests there. The British were worried that Jang Bahadur's influence was established in Lhasa, Tibet would be completely sealed against English travellers and English trade. Hence, they warned Jang Bahadur that

"as the British Government is always desirous to see the peaceful and civilising influence of commerce and mutual intercourse between nations as widely as possible extended, it did not fail to view with disfavour any attempt on His Excellency's part to perpetuate the policy of the exclusion of Europeans from Tibet." (95)

He was urged to afford protection and guidance to the explorers sent to Tibet and western China, as also to furnish political intelligence of inner Tibet to the Resident.

In the seventies of the 19th century Nepal-Tibet relations worsened so much so that in 1872-74, a show-down seemed not unlikely. Jang Bahadur had earlier asked Lord

(94) F.P-A. August 1862, 33; September 1862, 35-6.
(95) Ibid.
(96) Jang Bahadur grudged helping the British in these matters, pleading that they would involve him in political difficulties with Tibet and China; as a result his commercial interests in Tibet would suffer. F.P-A. April 1862, 302.
(97) F.P-A. June 1873, 462-75.
Mayo, the Viceroy, if he could help Nepal against Tibet. He asked also for a loan of 5-10 lakhs of rupees, ostensibly in order to replenish his depleted exchequer. The jingo spirit ran high at Kathmandu; the Resident reported that Nepal was eager to break with Tibet if she were only "tolerably assured" of a speedy success.

The British were uneasy at the "yearly appearance of hostilities". Intelligence was collected if the Chinese had sent an army towards Tibet. The Resident advised Jang Bahadur to replace the yakil in Lhasa by another, more agreeable to the Tibetans, and to settle the disputes peacefully. No loan was given to Jang Bahadur as the Viceroy strongly felt that the "real destination of the money might be the military cash chest." In the face of British disapproval, Jang Bahadur did not dare launch his project. But his counsellors, headed by his brother Dheer Shemsher, were wholly for war, although the people and the army were not enthusiastic about it. Resident Girdlestone urged that the Viceroy should personally advise the Minister for peaceful settlement of the dispute; this would "strengthen Jang Bahadur against war-party. He is peacefully inclined and wants support." The British offered to mediate in the

(98) Ibid.

(99) Foreign Political Secret, September 1876, 129-33. For Nepal's uneasy relations with Tibet, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries see Bell, n. 7, 234-43.

(100) E.F.P.-S, September 1876, 129-33; E.F.P-A, May 1874, 243; October 1874, 97 (K.W.)
dispute, but neither Jang Bahadur nor the Tibetans showed any inclination to avail of the overture. No political pressure was, however, brought to bear upon Jang Bahadur. The Resident was clearly asked not to interfere beyond using his friendly advice to prevent hostilities and to further the restoration of friendly relations between the disputants.

Strained relations between Nepal and Tibet adversely affected British commercial interests in the area. Mr. Edgar, the agent of the Government of Bengal, was sent to assess the injury to Bengal frontier trade caused by these tensions. It was found that Bengal's trade with Tibet through Sikkim had virtually stopped, and so was that through Nepal. The Tibetans requested Mr. Edgar, through the Raja of Sikkim, to restrain the aggressive designs of Nepal. The request was rejected; the British refused to interfere "unmasked between a friendly state [Nepal] and one that refuses to have any relations with us [Tibet]."

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(101) Ibid.; October 1873, 68. The Resident privately informed the Foreign Secretary that Jang Bahadur was prepared to attack Tibet, if assured of British aid, as Tibet was of the Chinese help. Jang Bahadur wanted to be fully advised by the Governor-General to plan his course of action. F.E.A., October 1874, 97 (K.W.).

(102) Edgar, n. 60, 21.
Curiously enough, the Home Government in England regarded these Nepal-Tibet disputes as favourable developments, for

"whatever the issue, it must lead to improve our relations with Nepal and Tibet, which are now closed doors and will ever remain so long as we rely on Mr. Wade [British Minister at Peking] and Sir Jang Bahadur."

In a full scale war there lay the prospect of British government's intervention, at least of a diplomatic character, of a decisive nature. Hence,

"anything that can open to us Nepal and Tibet, which are closed doors to our influence and trade, must be better than the present state of things."

However, as the Government of India were in a better position to assess the implications of these events than the Home Government in England, their views prevailed. Thus in the later decades of the 19th century, the British were as anxious to restrain Nepal's policy in the Himalayas as they were in the earlier ones. But the fear of armed intervention of the Chinese now weighed less with the British than that of commercial loss; there was less fear now of the area being ablaze with wars than its being unresponsive to British commercial efforts. Hostile Nepal had proved dangerous for

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(103) Quoted in Lamb, n. 2, 137-8.

(104) In the context of Russian activities in Central Asia, the extreme eagerness of the British to gain a hold on the commercial and political life of the area received added interest.
British policy in the Himalayas; friendly Nepal was now little helpful for the promotion of British commercial interests in this region. Moreover, there was a chance of China and Tibet's mistaking Anglo-Nepalese friendship for Anglo-Nepalese imperialistic designs in the area.

**Change in Nepal's relation with neighbours and China**

Nepal's relations with the British had a great bearing on those with her neighbours and China. The British policy of isolation and restraint left Nepal with no scope for absorbing her weaker neighbours, Sikkim and Bhutan. Even during the rule of Jang Bahadur, when the British were convinced of his pacific policy, this restraint was not relaxed. From time to time there were floating rumours of his designs against these states. But nothing untoward happened. But for this restraint, these states would have been annexed by Nepal or the whole region would have turned into a scene of intermittent wars. Such wars would have involved Tibet, and eventually China, and the northern frontier of India would thus have remained for long highly explosive. It was also the British policy to keep the states in this region isolated from each other; this kept up their mutual jealousy and fear; they never came close. It is to be noted that all these states, Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim, disfavoured the encroaching propensities of the British; but their mutual jealousy, distrust and fear prevented the
formation of any league. Nepal’s overtures for assistance, and her projects of a confederacy were suspected by her neighbours as but camouflages of her aggrandising designs. An alliance of lambs and a lion was not only an ill-assorted union but risky too, for the lambs. In fact, the Himalayan policy of the British was based partly on their clear understanding of Nepal’s ambitions in regard to her weaker neighbours, and the latter’s fear of Nepal.

Sino-Nepalese relations

Regarding China, Nepal’s policy registered a marked change, though gradually. Nepal’s foreign policy had ever been influenced by her abiding consciousness of being sandwiched between two great neighbours, India and China. Yet, geographically India was a closer neighbour than China. Nepal’s relations with China were always through Tibet. The intimacy or otherwise of her relations with these two powers depended upon several factors, like the policy of the political authorities in India and China in regard to Nepal, the existing political condition in all these three countries and the relations between India and China themselves.

(103) Prithvi Narayan Shah, the first Gurkha King of Nepal, set the maxim of being friendly to China and watchful to British India. The policy of balancing these two powers had ever remained the guiding principle of Nepal’s foreign policy. Narhari Nath and B. Acharya, eds., Rashtrepiita Sri Panch Raja Maharaja Prithvi Narayan Shahadey Ko Divya Upadesha (The Divine Counsel of King Prithvi Narayan Shah, Nepali, Kathmandu, V.S. 2010) 15.
Nepal could hardly avoid relations with her northern neighbour any more than she could do with her southern one. Yet, the overlordship of China, though a misnomer, was irksome for Nepal: it was, for a time, deeply resented as a badge of humiliation. The proximity of Chinese power in Tibet was not so much a threat to Nepal's sovereign entity as a galling restraint on her aggressive policy towards Tibet, Bhutan and Sikkim, all of whom showed deference to China and all being in the loosest sense, under the broad framework of Chinese imperial interests.

But the value of the political relations with China was amply realised by Nepal while she had to deal with the British in India. She could now hope to play off the Chinese against the British, the latter being always distrusted as a more encroaching and dangerous neighbour than the Chinese. During troubles with the British, Nepal sought help of the Chinese Emperor as a vassal would do of

(106) Abdul Kadir reported in 1795-96 that "there is no amity between the Raja of Nepal and the Sovereign of China." Captain Knox (1802-3) corroborated it. Report of Abdul Kadir, Pre-Mutiny Records, Letters Issued by the Agent to Governor-General, Benaras, October 1795 to December 1795; S.C., 2 May 1805, 350.

(107) Hamilton says that the submission to China in 1792 was not "impolitic" on the part of Nepal, who looked to "claim the protection of the Chinese" in her disputes with the British, n. 4, 249. Hodgson says, "No importance is attached by the Chinese to their relations with Nepal and they are maintained by Nepal chiefly or solely to be played off against us [the British], if need be." Resident to Government, 9 November 1833, P.C., 21 November 1833, 36.
his overlord. The political relations with the Chinese were exploited by Nepal not only as a measure of defence against the British but as a means of scaring and, if required, offending them. Even if the Chinese behaved ill with the Nepalese in Tibet, Nepal had to put up with it. Break with China was out of the question, particularly when the British were a constant nightmare.

The rise of Jang Bahadur occasioned a change in Nepal's relations with China. He was very sore with the latter on the score of Tibet, but peaceful and generally friendly, though not uniformly cordial, with the British. Jang Bahadur could hardly overlook the fact that China had never helped Nepal in her troubles with the British. On the other hand, greater attachment to the British, he realised, had given him strength in his country and earned him recognition in a wider world. China in the latter half of the 19th century lay far away, with fading splendour and manifest

(108) See pages 483-59 above.

(109) In 1832, the Sino-Nepalese relations were strained on the score of ill-treatment of the Nepalese traders at Lhasa. Nepal waxed wrath but swallowed the overbearing conduct of the Chinese in Tibet.

"They [Nepalese] were faced with the only alternative in the event of breach with China, that is closer alliance with the British which would have enabled them to set at defiance the resentment of the Chinese ..... They must know that any closer alliance with us [British] for the purpose of their protection against China implies their political dependence upon the British Government, but to this they will never submit, but as the last resort to save their government from extinction." P.C., 27 August 1832, 18.
weakness, while the British in India were the immediate neighbours, with overwhelming power and increasing resources. The successive discomfitures of China at the hands of the British and other European powers exploded the myth of her invincibility and lowered her in the estimation of what she looked upon as her dependencies.

After the Second Anglo-Chinese War (1859-1861) Resident Ramsay reported,

"The late change in our political relations with China has caused great excitement here very favourable to our prestige, for although the Gurkhas admire our superiority as a nation to themselves, they had great doubts as to whether our power could in any way be compared with that of China - now the Sardars are asking whether we have not lately conquered and taken possession of that country." (110)

Besides, China's own policy in Nepal weakened her position there. She distrusted Nepal as a feudatory of the British in India, out to exploit the weakness of Chinese power in Tibet for her own ends. Nepal frequently grudged that the Chinese had not only failed to resolve her disputes with Tibet, but that they were deliberately lukewarm. Even the Nepalese envoys to Peking were sometimes harassed by the Chinese in Tibet, presumably, for fear that they served as spies for the British Government. On the score of Tibet,

(110) Resident to Government, 10 July 1861, F.P.A., October 1861, 44.
Nepal-China relations cooled all the more in the closing decades of the 19th century.

Thus, Nepal realised that China's position and policy made her an ineffective counterpoise to the British in India; the latter had become an irresistible imperial power; their influence was fast spreading in the Himalayan area. Alliance with this power, Jang Bahadur felt, was worthwhile not merely for his own sake, but also for subserving his designs in Tibet. His British connection gave him moral strength vis-a-vis her northern neighbour and its overlord.

Yet, the relations with China were not snapped altogether, although in the beginning of his rule, Jang Bahadur had toyed with this idea. Captain Cavenagh noted that,

"There is no doubt that Jang Bahadur would have severed the connection between Nepal and China which he evidently considered derogatory to his own country." (111)

This was in 1862, when Jang Bahadur's relations with the British were most cordial, and the weakness of the Chinese power was still to be realised by him. In fact, at this time he still had high esteem for China's power, which he dared not estrange without a guarantee of protection from (112) the British government. This guarantee the British never

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(112) Ibid.
gave him; for fear of adding to his presumptions and ambitions. Subsequently he realised too that breach of relations with China would beget him no compensatory advantage; neither the British had ever encouraged him to do so, nor were they likely to relax their opposition to his ambitious schemes in the area. Without a guarantee of protection from the British government, it was impolitic to estrange the Chinese by snapping all relations with them.

Besides, the so-called Chinese overlordship sat too lightly on Nepal. There was no control on Nepal's political affairs by China; and the quinquennial tribute was sent less as an acknowledgement of subjection than as a token of compliment, amity and deference to a time-honoured relationship and as a convenient means of making profitable commercial transactions.

The British never questioned Nepal's having maintained relations with China, let alone encouraging her to snap them. These relations, in the context of Nepal's pacific disposition under Jang Bahadur, and the policy and position of China herself in the latter half of the 19th century, were not matters of concern for the British in India. The British were

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(113) The presents sent by Nepal to China were of very trifling value, while those sent in return from China were of great value. While Nepal spent not more than six thousand rupees (including the cost of tributes) over the mission, it cost the Chinese three lakhs. Besides, Jang Bahadur used to send with the mission huge quantities of opium to Tibet and China, free of any duty and reaped heavy profit. Hunter, n. 63, 197.
convinced of the fidelity of Jang Bahadur, as they were of China's coldness towards Nepal on the score of Tibet, and her disinclination (and inability) to back up Nepal in a conflict with the British. They knew that the tributary missions of Nepal kept up an artificial importance for the Chinese throne, and that they were of no political significance, far less being a threat to the British.

"We have no reason to question the loyalty of Sir Jang Bahadur, but rather the contrary, and it appears to me in the highest degree improbable that this periodical inter-change of presents will lead to a rapprochement with China in a sense hostile to us. The fact is that Sir Jang Bahadur's cupidity is the motive spring. He sends Yak's tails and gets back gifts, plecti vantiss et auri. He gives a trout and catches a salmon. Any attempt on our part to interfere would be unwise," so noted the Under Secretary of the Foreign Department of the Government of India. (114)

They clearly admitted of having no "locus standi" for interference in this matter, as there was no fear of complications arising out of Nepal's relations with China. On the other hand, the shadowy influence of China had in a measure been conducive to British policy in Nepal. The bogey of China had earlier restrained Nepal's warlike instincts, and had facilitated the maintenance of peace in the Himalayan region. In other words, the Chinese influence in the area was once effective enough to keep Nepal checked, but was now ineffective to cause immediate concern to the British in India.

(114) Foreign Political Secret. September 1876, 129-33.
China herself was disinclined to assert her overlordship over Nepal as she had done over Tibet. Her main concern was Nepal's aggressive designs against Tibet. She at times frowned at Nepal's relations with the British; but it seems she soon came to treat her as being within the pale of British suzerainty, and without the periphery of her own empire. During the Second Anglo-Chinese War (1859-61) the Russians instigated the Chinese to goad the Nepalese against the British in India. But the Chinese Emperor rejected the scheme; for his distrust of the Russians was no less than his dread for the English. As for Nepal, he wrote to the Russians:

"Nepal is subject to the English barbarians. Were we to propose that it should place its resources at our disposal for an attack upon India, it would be certain to decline giving offence to the English, and the only result would be to open the door to their demands and reclama-
tions." (116)

From this the British Government deduced that,

"... the Chinese not only look upon Nepal as a feudatory of England, but that they regard the tie binding her to us as much stronger than that by which she is bound to them, and which latter probably consists of nothing more real than the so-called embassy." (117)

(115) Rose, n. 7.

(116) Foreign Political Secret, September 1876, 129-33 (K.W.).

(117) Ibid.
Nepal as a buffer state

As the British, in the early decades of the 19th century, avoided being too highhanded with Nepal, for fear of Chinese intervention on her behalf, she also did China, in the later decades of the century, for fear of giving the British an excuse to intervene in Tibet on behalf of Nepal. (118) China disfavoured British influence being brought in close proximity to Tibet as the British feared Chinese influence being brought nearer to Nepal. For, Tibet was regarded as an imperial outpost of the Chinese empire, and Nepal as that of the British empire in India. Both China and British India were eager to avoid a direct contact of their respective empires; for in such a contact lay the possibility of a (119) boisterous impact.

Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim were the "outer or advanced strategical frontier" of British India; and commercially they

(118) In 1848-9 when the English raised the issue of Indo-Tibetan boundary and trade relations, China urged the Tibetans on the frontier to move inwards so as to avoid a clash with the penetrating British power. Tien-Tseng Li, n. 10, 61. In Nepal-Tibet disputes, China feared the British as allies of Nepal. See also F.E. Younghusband, Memorandum on our Relations with Tibet, Past and Present (Simla, 1903) 9-10.

served as channels of trade between India and the trans-Himalayan areas. They were buffers to ward off contact with "the vast regions and intractable people of Chinese Tartary." They were frontier protectorates with varying degrees of internal autonomy. Their efficacy as buffers was regulated by the intensity of Chinese influence in Tibet and its neighbourhood. With the waning of Chinese power in Tibet and extension of British influence in the Himalayan region, the northern frontier of India became, militarily, most tranquil and safe. The myth of Chinese overlordship

(120) Government to Eden, 28 December 1860, Accounts and Papers 1862, XL, East India (Sikkim Expedition) 519. Dr. Lamb rightly says that "when dealing with the primitive peoples of Central Asia, the problem often was not how to extend one's power, but how to prevent its indefinite expansion." Lamb, n. 2, 101.

Interposition of a zone of protected country between their own virtual or actual possessions, and the territories of possible enemies was the British policy in regard to India's external frontier. C.L. Tupper, Our Indian Protectorate (London, 1893) 20.

Lord Curzon defined a buffer state as a "country possessing a national existence of its own, which is fortified by the territorial and political guarantee by either of the two powers between whose dominions it lies, and by whom it would otherwise inevitably be crushed." Frontiers (Oxford, 1905) 30-1. Nepal between British India and China-occupied Tibet could be called a buffer state in this sense. Lord Curzon regarded Nepal, Bhutan and Sikkim as frontier protectorates. Ibid., 40; A. Lyall, The Rise and Expansion of the British Dominion in India (London, 1920) 347.

(121) A. Vincent, n. 1, 10-2; Cole, n. 1, 374.
in the area lingered long after it ceased to be a menace to British interests. The British not only recognised the myth but at times even honoured it. In the Tibet-Sikkim disputes, the British accepted the mediation of China on behalf of Tibet. In their commercial schemes in this region, the British similarly showed deference to China's special interests in the area. The Anglo-Chinese Convention relating to Sikkim and Tibet (1890) and the Sikkim-Tibet trade Convention (1893) are cases in point. This myth and the efficacy of British influence together paved the way to stability, peace and order in the northern frontier of British India in the 19th century. The juxtaposition of the lingering Chinese influence and the British 'special interest' in the northern frontier of India left a tangled web of political anomaly and problems which the Governments of India and China today are finding difficult to straighten out.

(122) Aitchison, n. 23, 55-7, 66-9. By the Anglo-Chinese Convention of 1890, the Chinese formally recognised British protectorate over Sikkim. See also Younghusband, n. 7, 16-21, 26-3, 39.