



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

China foists standardized place names on “southern Tibet” to challenge India

<https://savetibet.org/china-foists-standardized-place-names-on-southern-tibet-to-challenge-india>

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For more than a century the border between Tibet and India, and now between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and India, has followed lines set by the 1913-1914 Simla Convention. The Chinese government has [maintained a claim to Tibetan areas](#) that fell on the Indian side of the border, however, and in recent years China has repeatedly sought to elevate this claim by issuing documents purporting to “standardize” the names of places in the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh.

In the wake of recent fighting between India and Pakistan, China released a fifth batch of “standardized place names” for areas in the eastern sector of the ongoing India-China border conflict. China refers to the Indian state of Arunachal Pradesh as “Zangnan,” or “south of Tibet.”

This conflict has previously escalated to armed struggle, such as during the 1962 Sino-Indian War. China's insistence on issuing new place names – neither requested by the inhabitants of Arunachal Pradesh nor used by the state government – should be understood as a provocation aimed at asserting authority over an area that has never been administered by the PRC.

New batch of names

On May 12, 2025, China's Ministry of Civil Affairs published 27 place names in standardized Tibetan, Chinese, and Pinyin. Since the first batch in 2017, China has released a total of 89 names for places in Arunachal Pradesh, which had been part of Tibet prior to the [Simla Convention](#), which was arranged among Tibet, China, and Britain in the tailwind of the “Great Game” between the British and Russian empires.

As with previous lists, the latest batch includes precise coordinates for each place and names in Chinese characters, Tibetan script, and Pinyin. Like the past lists, this batch also omits names in Romanized form.

China's move to issue names for places in Arunachal Pradesh could be part of its strategy to have the upper hand at a time when there are signs of thawing India-China relations. On April 28, 2025, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs [confirmed](#) at a press conference that Indian pilgrims will be allowed to resume their pilgrimage to Gang Rinpoche (Mount Kailash) and Mapham Yutso (Lake Manasarovar) in Tibet, sacred sites for Tibetan Buddhists, Hindus, Jains, and Bon followers. Indian pilgrims had not been allowed to visit Mount Kailash through the traditional official routes since 2020, initially due to COVID-19 restrictions and later due to strained India-China relations following the fatal Galwan Valley clash.

History of the border

The present status of Arunachal Pradesh is the result of the 1913-1914 [Simla Convention](#) during which a bilateral agreement between British India and sovereign Tibet was reached on Indo-Tibetan border [along what came to be known as the McMahon Line](#). India continues to abide by the McMahon Line. Although, Chinese representatives participated in the [conference resulting in the convention, it was not subsequently signed or ratified by China](#). However, China persists in its long-standing nationalistic efforts to challenge the historic accord.

Through cartographic aggression and territorial assertions, the Chinese Communist Party seeks to undermine the convention's legitimacy to advance its "new era" strategic objectives. This revisionist approach reflects Beijing's broader geopolitical ambitions, including consolidating control over disputed regions and reshaping historical narratives to align with its vision of national rejuvenation.

By rejecting the Simla Convention's boundaries, such as the McMahon Line, China not only contests the territorial status quo but also leverages its "century of humiliation" historical grievances to justify its expansionist policies, creating ongoing tensions with neighboring countries like India and complicating international peace and stability.

China's announcements of standardization of place names

First batch: April 13, 2017 (6 place names)

<https://archive.ph/wip/SyfVn>

Second batch: December 29, 2021 (15 place names)

<https://archive.ph/wip/gQcfG>

Third batch: April 2, 2023 (11 place names)

<https://archive.ph/wip/QT8LY>

Fourth batch: March 30, 2024 (30 place names)

<https://archive.ph/wip/mNrfu>

Fifth batch: May 12, 2025 (27 place names)

<https://archive.ph/wip/hSW9P>



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