

'Hottest' Border Disputes Top Growing List Of Clashes

WASHINGTON - Borders. Half the nations of the world are arguing over them - like neighbors fighting over international back fences.

On the oil-rich Arabian Peninsula, half a dozen countries can't agree where to draw the lines between them. In a South American jungle, Venezuela claims a chunk of Guyana that would shrink it by almost two-thirds.

Along the longest militarized border in the world, the Soviet Union and China haven't straightened out all of their 4,150 miles of icy differences. In the Bay of Bengal, a new island that popped up between India and Bangladesh after a storm 11 years ago created a still-unsettled conflict. And in Europe last year, the King of Spain didn't go to the British Royal Wedding because of the 277-year-old dispute over the Rock of Gibraltar.

With 167 independent nations now competing for Earth's land, the number of border and territorial disputes has escalated steadily since World War II. "There's no escaping it," one geographer said. "There are even disputes about the disputes - and not just on land." Boundary conflicts are fast moving offshore as future rights to the sea are staked out. Many of today's border clashes are considered "dangerous" because the world's superpowers have taken sides in them.

The 10 "hottest" are scattered over three continents, according to a National Geographic News Service survey of some of the nation's leading political geographers and U. S. government authorities.

From more than 25 serious disputes cited by the experts, the 10 were judged most likely to erupt or to have far-reaching world impact. Five are in Asia, four in Africa, and one in South America. By region, they are:

ISRAEL-ARAB NEIGHBORS - War over what Israel's shape on world maps would be started the day after the Jewish state was proclaimed in 1948. Since then Israel and its Arab neighbors have fought four bitter wars.

Today's explosive situation stems specifically from the Six Day War of 1967 when Israel captured Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, the Gaza Strip, Syria's Golan Heights, and Jordan's West Bank and its sector of Jerusalem.

Israel has resisted re-treating to its pre-1967 borders and recently formally annexed the Golan Heights. Declaring its perpetual sovereignty over the Syrian land, it still holds to its schedule to evacuate the last section of the Sinai in April. On the other fronts, the Israeli-occupied territories remain powder kegs in the complex Middle East crisis.

IRAN-IRAQ - The an-

cient Tigris and Euphrates rivers meet and flow to the sea through a short stretch of waterway that separates two old enemies and has become the flash point of their border clashes.

Who should control the Shatt al Arab - Iraq's only outlet to the Persian Gulf and Iran's only sea access for its huge oil refinery at Abadan?

Iraq reopened the old dispute in 1980 by terminating a 1975 agreement that had split the Shatt al Arab down the middle, giving shared sovereignty to the two hostile nations. In the 1975 pact, Iraq had given up its sole control of the waterway, which had been secured by a 1937 boundary settlement putting the Shatt al Arab inside its borders. Iran had never accepted that ruling.

INDIA-PAKISTAN - Rivalry over treasured Kashmir has figured in three wars and countless skirmishes between India and Pakistan.

The Kashmir dispute erupted soon after British rule ended in 1947, and predominantly Hindu India and Moslem Pakistan were created.

Wedged between the two, Kashmir, with a majority Moslem population and a Hindu ruler, could have joined either of the new countries or elected independence. When the maharajah hesitated, some of the Moslems, backed by armed Pakistani tribesmen, revolted. To stop the invaders, the maharajah offered to accede to India in exchange for military aid - a move Pakistan opposed.

In 1949 the United Nations established a cease-fire line that divided the state, leaving the Vale of Kashmir and a majority of the population under Indian control.

GREECE-TURKEY - A cease-fire line cuts across the island of Cyprus, dividing its capital, Nicosia, and its population of Greeks and Turks.

With Turkish Cypriots in the north and Greek Cypriots in the south, there is still no permanent solution to the stalemate. Before Cyprus won independence from Britain in 1960, the Turks favored partitioning the Mediterranean island. The Greeks, who make up nearly 80 percent of the population, sought political union with Greece.

In 1974 Turkey invaded the island following a Greek Cypriot coup. To protest the invasion, Greece pulled out of NATO and did not rejoin until 1980. Greece is once again threatening to withdraw, a move that could make it less likely to accept the status quo on Cyprus. The two countries also are currently tangling over valuable air and sea rights in the Aegean.

CHINA-VIETNAM - Since the end of hostilities in South Vietnam, Vietnam has clashed with its neighbors, fighting battles along borders with both China and Kampuchea (Cambodia).

In early 1979 Chinese troops attacked northern provinces of Vietnam as "punishment" for Vietnamese provocations along their common border, according to Beijing. The Chinese attack was also considered a retaliation for Vietnam's overthrow of China's ally in Kampuchea.

Accusing each other of trying to change the border between them, China and Vietnam also have competing claims to the Spratly and Paracel island groups in the South China Sea, where there are prospects for oil.

ETHIOPIA-SOMALIA - Ethiopia's furnace-hot Ogaden region has been the home of countless generations of Somali nomads. And neighboring Somalia has gone to war at least twice to aid guerrillas trying to turn the desert land into a new Somali nation.

Backed by the Soviet Union and Cuba, Ethiopia has so far successfully resisted giving up the Ogaden, which represents about one-fifth of its territory and is strategically located in the Horn of Africa.

The boundary conflict has its roots in late 19th-century colonialism, which divided the Somali tribal lands into five parts, ceding the Ogaden to Ethiopia. Independent since 1960, Somalia has sought the unification of all territories traditionally occupied by Somali tribes, including about 20 percent of what is now Kenya.

LIBYA-CHAD - Plagued with internal tribal strife since its independence from France in 1960, Chad is currently torn apart by at least three bands of rebel forces, the strongest headed by its former defense minister Hissene Habre.

Neighboring Libya, under the regime of Col. Muammar Qaddafi, has had designs on the vulnerable country since 1973 when it occupied Chad's 60-mile-wide Aozou Strip along their common border. Two years later Libya announced that it was annexing the strip, which is believed to be rich in uranium.

In late 1980, Libya intervened in Chad's worsening civil war - sending in troops to back the government in power. Afterward Qaddafi announced a "merger" of the two countries, a move that angered much of Africa. Libya pulled its troops out last November, but apparently not from the disputed Aozou Strip.

MOROCCO - WESTERN SAHARA - A 9-foot-high sand wall stretches 400 miles across the desert to defend Morocco's claim to Western Sahara, a former Spanish colony on Africa's west coast.

Completed last year, the giant sand dune - reinforced with a series of forts - is a pivotal factor in the intensified war with the Algerian and Libyan-backed guerrillas who want an independent western Sahara republic. Some of the fiercest fighting in the six-year struggle between Moroccan troops and the native Polisario Front occurred last year.

Morocco has sought to absorb the territory, which is rich in phosphates, since Spain relinquished it in 1976. A large imperial state in pre-colonial times, Morocco contends the colony is its rightful heritage.

NAMIBIA - SOUTH AFRICA-ANGOLA - Outside of South Africa itself, mineral-rich Namibia stands as the last major colonial African territory dominated by whites. Although it is on the verge of independence, its northern frontier is still war-

torn. South Africa, which was given custody of neighboring Namibia (then South West Africa) under a 1920 League of Nations mandate, refused to give up control despite a 1966 United Nations order revoking the mandate.

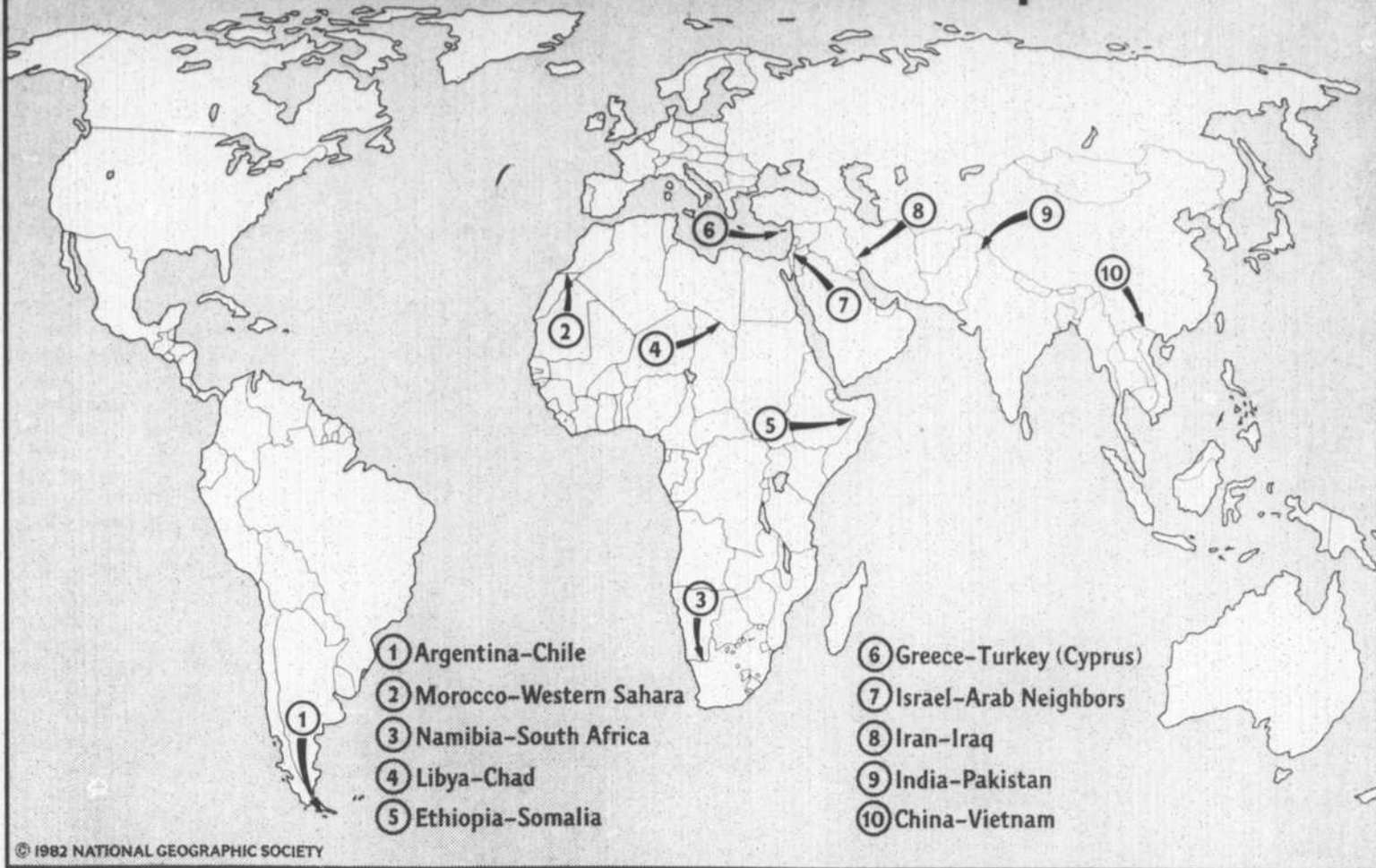
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sive raids into Angola, Namibia's northern neighbor, where Namibian guerrilla forces trying to oust South Africa are based.

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FRICITION BETWEEN NATIONS: 10 hot disputes



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