China's South Asia Policy through a Domestic Sovereignty Perspective

by

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Abstract

China’s South Asia Policy is currently perceived mostly from realist geopolitical and to a lesser degree, commercial liberalism perspectives. These frameworks ignore China’s own vulnerabilities in its restive periphery which are significant factors in determining policy towards its neighbours. This is especially true in South Asia since Xinjiang and Tibet, the two most volatile minority areas, border this region. The ‘core-periphery structure’ offers a useful tool to fathom China’s contradictory dichotomy where it exists as a strong state at its ‘core’ while being insecure and weak in the ‘periphery’. This dichotomy is seen in dealings with its neighbours as well. As a result, the realist geopolitical analysis offers a sufficient framework to understand China’s interactions with nations bordering its ‘core’, for example in Southeast and Northeast Asia, where it projects itself as a strong, unified state. Yet such an analysis will fall short when explaining the PRC’s interactions with states neighbouring its periphery, in this case in South Asia, due to a perceived ‘insecurity dilemma’. An economics-driven commercial liberalism perspective would also fail to capture the internal complexities and perceived vulnerabilities faced by the PRC in its interaction with South Asia. Therefore it is useful to explore an alternative framework taking account of domestic sovereignty factors. The perceived ‘insecurity dilemma’ in the periphery have been addressed by the PRC since 1949 through policies that sought to assimilate these regions with the ‘core’ of the country. Initially these policies attempted assimilation through coercion but since the late 1970s, a softer approach has been applied through economic empowerment and reduction of disparities. An extension of these domestic policies in Xinxiang and Tibet are reflected in the PRC’s dealings with nations that border these regions. With regard to South Asia, a closer scrutiny reveals such interconnections in the PRC’s policies towards Afghanistan and Pakistan with relation to Xinjiang and similarly towards India, Nepal and Bhutan with relation to Tibet. Such an assessment that takes note of domestic sovereignty considerations offers a more comprehensive analysis of China’s South Asia policy and would contribute to alleviate tensions resulting from misinterpretation of these policies.

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ATPD	-	Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies
CCP	-	Chinese Communist Party
ETIM	-	East Turkistan Islamic Movement
ETIC	-	East Turkistan Information Center
EU	-	European Union
IMU	-	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
ISI	-	Inter-Services Intelligence
MoU	-	Memorandum of Understanding
NATO	-	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
PLA	-	People's Liberation Army
PRC	-	People's Republic of China
SAARC	-	South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation
SCO	-	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
US	-	United States
TAR	-	Tibet Autonomous Region
TGIE	-	Tibetan Government in Exile
TYC	-	Tibetan Youth Congress
UN	-	United Nations
WUYC	-	World Uyghur Youth Congress
XUAR	-	Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region

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Dedication

To Amrita Bastians for making this year at UBC possible.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Asia is transforming and China is the principle cause (Shambaugh, 2004, 2005). The structure of power and parameters of interactions that have characterised international relations in the Asian region over the last half century are being fundamentally affected by China's growing economic and military power, rising political influence, distinctive diplomatic voice and increasing involvement in regional multilateral institutions. As part of this growing clout, China has sought to expand its relations with South Asia through a multi-dimensional approach that encompasses advancement in military, diplomatic, economic, political and cultural interactions (Garver, 2005). In the absence of a clear articulation by the Chinese as to what their fundamental objectives are in South Asia, it has been left to non-Chinese analysts, particularly Indians to interpret these interests. As a result this policy is viewed mostly from realist, geopolitical and commercial, liberalism frameworks of analysis that assume China's actions are motivated either by its external security concerns or desire for rapid economic growth.

Recent Chinese advances in South Asia are looked on by India, the significant other Asian power, with suspicion in a region considered its natural sphere of influence. Potential for conflict, not necessarily even military, is high mostly due to the mistrust and misunderstanding of each other's intentions and objectives. It is therefore prudent to explore the fundamental interests that drive actions of China in South Asia, not only to prevent conflict but also to foster better relations that would be beneficial to the stability of the region. Why is China enhancing its footprint in South Asia? Is it to destabilize India? Is it for economic reasons? These are the usual questions that have so far been explored, mostly by Indian analysts.

This thesis explores a perspective that is seldom addressed when attempting to fathom factors driving China's South Asia policy and offers an alternative framework of analysis from the ones often used at present. It will argue that internal sovereignty considerations within China play a significant role in determining its relations with South Asia. While geopolitical and strategic studies focusing primarily on realist security perspectives and secondarily on development oriented economics offer reasonable explanations for Chinese foreign policy in general, this additional dimension of perceived domestic sovereignty threats poses an important factor for consideration, especially to explain Chinese policy towards its immediate neighbours.

Wang (2010) argues that the greater threat to the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China (PRC) comes from within, from its diverse ethnic minorities, separatist/terrorist forces and possibly economically marginalised communities, especially from those living in the more backward, peripheral regions of the country. From this perspective, Inner Mongolia, Xingjian and Tibet pose an equal if not greater threat to the PRC's sovereignty than its unresolved land and maritime border disputes, and Taiwan, with its own unique sovereignty contestation. Zhao (1996) states that interpreting China's increasingly diverse foreign relations and international conduct requires new sophisticated tools of analysis. Rather than the usual examination of diplomatic history, Zhao argues that a 'micro-macro linkage' model to Chinese foreign policy, illustrating how factors such as domestic constraints, the international environment, and individual actors combine to influence policy decisions. This thesis contributes to such a wider analysis of Chinese foreign policy, especially its approach towards its immediate neighbours in South Asia.

Initially this thesis will look at the two main imperatives that are widely believed to drive China's foreign policy; 1. A realist geopolitical perspective and 2. A commercial liberalism perspective. While these two analytical frameworks offer reasonable clarity for some of the Chinese actions in its foreign relations they fail to grasp the complexities of formulating policies towards countries that border restive regions of Xinjiang and Tibet. In order to expand on this premise this thesis will look into the perceived threat posed by Xinjiang and Tibet to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China, and then assess the central government's domestic policies that have been utilised to address these threats. Later it will attempt to correlate those domestic policies to foreign policy choices made by China, in particular with South Asian countries neighbouring these two regions. In this regard the paper will look at two groups of countries, namely: 1. Afghanistan and Pakistan and 2. India, Nepal and Bhutan, and discuss recent developments in economic, political, diplomatic and military spheres and seek to link these interactions to Chinese internal security interests in Xinjiang and Tibet respectively.

Chapter 2: Frameworks for Chinese foreign policy analysis

When interpreting reasons which drive China's foreign policy, two broad analytical frameworks currently dominate the discourse. Of these, a realist geopolitical analysis takes precedence where it assumes that China's main consideration is securing its borders from external threats and maximising its influence in the Asia Pacific region. More recently a commercial liberalism theory which perceives the PRC attempting to maximize its economic advantages through cooperation and peace has also gained credence.

2.1 Realist geopolitical narrative

This line of argument draws from the assumption that Chinese foreign policy is primarily driven to address its external security threats and to increase its strategic advantage/influence in regions of interest. Analysing Chinese foreign policy from such a security centric paradigm has its merits in certain cases. For example in Northeast and Southeast Asia, Chinese interests are greatly linked to its perceived threats from other states such as the US, Japan, Vietnam and over disputes of sovereignty, be it Taiwan or islands in the South China Sea claimed by five other nations. Chinese military doctrine and its past record also backs these assertions by focusing much of its energies towards a potential conflict concerning Taiwan or limited confrontations with other nations over disputed territories in the South China Sea (Yoshihara and Holmes, 2011). Its rapid military modernisation with headline grabbing news on building of aircraft carriers, attack submarines and stealth aircraft, burgeoning defence budget and lack of transparency have further exacerbated these assumptions. In this regard a geopolitical analysis involving classical realist viewpoints on hegemony, alliances, balancing of power, maximising the sphere of influence can be useful tools to explain China's policies in these regions.

Similar security centric objectives are identified in China's maritime and naval policy as well. China has asserted itself in the South China Sea and has ventured beyond its traditional 'home waters' into the Indian Ocean. In this regard Indian analysts in particular point to a 'string of pearls' strategy pursued by the Chinese to encircle India with strategically located naval assets in neighbouring countries in the Indian Ocean region. This concern of growing the Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean has also been shared by US analysts and policy makers. Erickson and Mikolay (2009) noted that China's deployment of two destroyers and a support ship to waters off Somalia to conduct anti-piracy operations in December 2008 was only the third recorded instance of Chinese naval ships moving into the Indian Ocean in more than six centuries. The deployment of several destroyers to Libya in 2011 to rescue stranded Chinese civilians (Godement, 2011) and a few selected statements by PLA Navy officers regarding the need to establish forward bases in the Indian Ocean to address the anti piracy operations (Raman, 2011) have also been interpreted as 'clear evidence' of Chinese desires to enhance its naval presence in the Indian Ocean region. As a result the question as to how the United States should respond to China's military modernization effort, including its naval modernization has emerged as a key issue in U.S. defence planning. Defence analysts such as O'Rourke (2011) have argued that the "Chinese navy shows signs of expanding beyond its home waters and considering deployments that seek roles beyond its primary objective of being effective in the East China Sea in case of a conflict regarding Taiwan".

2.2 Commercial liberalism narrative

While addressing external security threats to sovereignty are important considerations for the Chinese government, it does not solely base its foreign policy on such narrow objectives nor grant it priority over other considerations. Linking domestic considerations to its foreign policy, Wang (2010) argues that China's external relations are based on three fundamentals, namely; 1. development, 2. sovereignty and 3. responsibility, in the same order of priority. In essence, Chinese policy makers are expected to grant priority to the country's economic development, consolidate and protect its national sovereignty and borders against external and internal foes, and at a later point in time be prepared to take up greater responsibilities within the international system and its governance.

Since the advent of Deng Xiaoping into prominence, China's foreign policy has marked a significant deviation from its previous exhortations and propaganda grounded policies in Maoist years in the 1960s and 70s to a 'socialist modernisation' project envisioned by Deng that demanded economic investment_and a non-confrontational approach to international politics. Deng's now famous quote "Keep a cool head and maintain a low profile, ... Never take the lead - but aim to do something big" was intended to spur the Chinese people towards economic development. This policy has been a feature of Chinese foreign policy since 1978. As a result, non-ideological relations with the rest of the world, in particular the US, Western Europe and Japan based on expanding trade links and cooperation have taken a priority in China's foreign policy formulation (Taylor,1998).

Analysing external relations through this commercial liberalism framework assumes that China places greater emphasis on economic growth, energy security and stability over maximising power and influence. This fits the policy of ‘Peaceful Rise’ adopted at the 16th Communist Party Congress held in late 2002 (Li And Worm, 2011). This policy primarily seeks to economically develop China, while envisioning a peaceful co-existence with neighbours, even though it refuses to compromise on issues of sovereignty. This ‘development at any cost’ perspective offers an explanation into its increasing investments in Africa, South America, Middle East, and to some degree in Central and South Asia. In recent years these policies have expanded where China offers unconditional aid to many developing countries irrespective of their human rights records or governance structure, and diplomatic cover in global forums such as the UN Security Council. Lum *et al* (2009) states that overall, China’s foreign assistance to developing countries during the past several years has been driven primarily by Beijing’s desire to secure and transport natural resources.

Much like the realist geopolitical perspective, this commercial liberalism viewpoint often considers China as a homogenous monolithic entity driven by a singularity of interests that do not permeate to the intra- state levels within the country. The highly centralised policy making mechanism of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) also contributes to this notion. These two analytical frameworks are also often applied to interpret China’s actions in South Asia.

Chapter 3: China's South Asia policy

China shares common borders with five nations, namely Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Nepal and Pakistan – out of eight states that constitute political South Asia as members of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) -- making it an integral part of South Asia. It also has significantly close relations with two of the three other members of SAARC, namely Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, with the small island nation of Maldives being the exception. Also significantly, Beijing has sought in recent years to resolve most of its border disputes with these neighbouring nations with the exception of India.

China and South Asia are integral to each other's evolution since ancient times. The contacts between the two regions at the elite levels have existed for centuries which had impact at the mass level for example when it resulted in the spread of Buddhism among a significant section of the Chinese population (Singh,2003). Though Chinese and Indian civilisations interacted with one another during the first few centuries of the Christian era, the process of religious–cultural interaction on any significant scale ceased after about the 10th century A.D. Since then, the two countries lived, as it were, oblivious of each other's existence for over a thousand years until about the advent of the 19th century, when both came under the influence of European powers (Singh, 2003). This interaction changed significantly with the amalgamation of Tibet into the PRC 1950 which allowed China to extend its reach in South Asia beyond its traditional spheres of influence.

Considering historical memory, geographic proximity, land mass and population, current international standing and political ideology Singh (2003) argues that South Asia forms a very unique segment in the making of Chinese foreign policy. However, in the absence of a clearly articulated policy by the Chinese central government on its South Asia policy, current analysis is mostly carried out by Indian scholars and based on the two frameworks mentioned above. Of these, India centric security perspective dominates the literature while more recently an economics and development oriented viewpoint has also gained prominence.

3.1 India-centric external security threat perspective on South Asia

Since the 1950's relations between the two Asian giants, India and China have been marked by conflict, mutual suspicion, distrust, estrangement, containment and rivalry (Malik, 2001). However in the absence of an extensive historical experience of each other, these two nations have a poor understanding of the psyche and systems of each other (Sikri, 2011). Despite the heightened tensions and usual misinterpretation of each other's intentions India and China have hardly been two civilisations clashing from a historical perspective. The rivalry between them is only a recent development. For thousands of years Tibet politically, and the Himalayas geographically were the buffer that kept them separated and therefore at peace. In this light it is only in the last 60 years, since China's military intrusion in to Tibet in 1950 that the two countries have begun to share a common border and have had to address inherent issues related to that development such as border security, demarcation of boundaries, movement of trade and trans-border trade. These interactions have been further compounded since the brief but bitter war fought over the disputed territory in 1962.

Since both these countries emerged in their modern *avatars* in the late 1940s, India as an independent state and China under Communist rule, Malik (2001) argues that a key feature of Beijing's South Asia policy has been its 'India-centric' approach. In this viewpoint several Indian analysts have observed China's growing military links with India's neighbours as dominating the policy agenda. Garver in 1992 backed this assertion by stating that "All of India's neighbours have obtained much of their military arsenal from China, indeed 90 percent of China's arms sales go to countries that border India. Such military cooperation has only grown further in the last two decades (See Table 01). For its part, Beijing has justified military relations between itself and South Asian countries as legitimate and normal state-to-state relations well within the purview of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Malik, 2001). Indian realists perceived that the major objective of China's Asia policy has been to prevent the rise of a peer competitor, a real Asian rival to challenge China's status as the Asia-Pacific's sole 'Middle Kingdom'.

Today most Indian analysts continue to see Chinese policy in South Asia mainly from this security centric prism due to the assumed desire of the PRC to resolve external sovereignty disputes with neighbours by 'all means available' (Raman, 2010a, 2010b, Hariharan, 2008, Bhattacharya, 2009, Malik, 2007). In this line of argument China's growing ties with Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, along with its traditional alliances with Pakistan and Myanmar are perceived to be part of a strategy to squeeze India's sphere of influence, strategically encroach on its 'backyard' and position itself for a future military confrontation. Summing up these concerns, Chellaney (2008) states;

> *It is important to bear in mind that the India- China dissonance is rooted not only in their contrasting political ideals and quiet rivalry but also in Beijing's relentless pursuit of a classical, Sun Tzu- style balance of power strategy. While presenting itself as a see-no-evil state, Beijing is zealously working to build up China's power capabilities to engage the world on Beijing's own terms. In order to avert the rise of a peer rival in Asia, China has sought to strategically tie down India south of the Himalayas.*

Several Indian analysts (Hariharan, 2008, Kumar, 2009, Raman, 2010a, 2010b, Rama Rao, 2010) have identified a Chinese strategy, often termed the 'String of Pearls', to build a number of key naval installations in the Indian Ocean that would pose a potential challenge to Indian maritime and security interests in the region. Interestingly, this phrase was first coined in a 2004 U.S. Department of Defence contractor study entitled *Energy Futures in Asia*, to denote 'nodes' of Chinese interest in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean that are used to enhance its oil and natural gas flows into mainland China (MacDonald *et al*, 2004). Later however this theory has taken on a life of its own through selective quotations, mainly by Indian analysts, to mean 'Chinese naval assets' that are either under construction or already built in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Myanmar. It is presented as evidence of an adversarial Chinese policy in South Asia that is designed to challenge India's predominance in the region (Kumar, 2009).

In this India-centric security viewpoint Pakistan and Myanmar are perceived as a pivotal axis that is hostile to India. When Sino–Indian relations deteriorated after the 1962 war, China and Pakistan had a mutual interest to further strengthen their relations against a common foe. Cold War alignments of these two nations saw India moving closer to the Soviet sphere, while Pakistan aligning with the US also helped to exacerbate the divisions. Although Pakistan and China have not formally allied against India, both sides clearly benefit from a relationship that can tie down significant Indian military assets along multiple fronts and force Indian security planners to divide their attention (Cheng, 2010). In recent years the construction of the Gwadar port in Baluchistan Province, with Chinese aid, has drawn much attention since it is seen as a potential site for a Chinese naval presence in the Arabian

Sea and a crucial ‘pearl’ in the ‘String of Pearls’ theory (Garver, 2005). Furthermore, in the military sphere these two countries have long been partners in the development and exchange of military hardware. China has been instrumental in establishing and furthering Pakistan’s arms industry and has also supplied the Pakistani military with a range of military systems including tanks, naval vessels, combat aircraft, missiles and nuclear technology (Kronstadt, 2009). A similar military relationship is seen to develop with Myanmar where China has developed a deep-water port in Kyaukpyu in the Bay of Bengal along with the rumoured development of a submarine base in the Coco Islands, in the Andaman Sea, which are also referred to as ‘Chinese Pearls’ (Rama Rao, 2010).

Beyond this traditional axis of China- Pakistan- Myanmar, recent Chinese engagements with other South Asian nations are perceived as part of the grand strategy to reduce India’s influence in the region and further strangle it. The development of ports in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka and alleged Chinese overtures to the Maldives for enhancement of naval infrastructure, have all been speculated to be part of this strategy of encirclement. Kumar (2009) states “China’s recent strategic manoeuvres in and around the Indian Ocean threaten both India’s economic as well as security interests”. However despite almost a decade of speculation there appears to be no hard evidence that suggests China plans to base warships or permanent military bases in any of these countries (Kostecka, 2010).

In this external security centric analysis, China’s growing economic assistance to South Asian countries is also seen, again mostly by Indian analysts, as a geopolitical calculation in order to stabilise allies and earn geo-strategic favours from smaller nations. For example Malik (2007) suggests that China has stepped into provide massive economic assistance and agreed to invest heavily in Pakistan by upgrading railways, ports, highways and the agricultural sector in order to prevent an economic collapse of that country since that would derail its own geo-strategic interests.

In the short to medium term, Beijing will continue to prop up Pakistan, since it is vitally important to China’s energy security by providing access to and bases in the Persian Gulf, military security by keeping India’s military engaged on its western frontiers, geopolitics given its geostrategic location at the intersection of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East - Malik, 2007.

For their part all South Asian nations, other than India of course have welcomed the renewed Chinese attention to the region. Smaller South Asian states, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka have always resented India's hegemonic ambitions and have tried to resist the imposition of the Indian version of the Monroe Doctrine by seeking to build security links with extra regional powers, mainly China and the US, as a counterweight to India's domineering role (Malik, 2001).

3.2 China's South Asia policy through the commercial liberalism perspective

An alternative analysis of Chinese South Asian policy has been to link it to the greater strategy for economic development. Since China opted for a market economy in 1978 it has emphasized the importance of foreign trade and foreign direct investment. Consequently, its foreign relations have become increasingly governed by the imperatives of its economic necessities. As a result, China has assiduously endeavoured to place economic needs over political considerations, thus separating politics from economics in its international relations (Chishti, 2000).This would be parallel with China's burgeoning engagement with regions such as Africa, South America and the Middle East which is driven by the fundamental desire for natural resources to fuel its rapidly expanding economy. While linked to non traditional security issues that deal with energy security, securing trade routes and natural resources, this framework of analysis sees Chinese actions in a less antagonistic light and beyond the strict security paradigm of geostrategic interest but rather from the vantage point of economics as a primary motivator of actions. In South Asia this had led China to enhance cooperation and greater economic activity with all nations, including India.

Since 1978 India and China, even with their unresolved political disputes, have tried to expand trade and economic cooperation. In 1994, India displaced Pakistan to become China's largest trading partner in South Asia (Malik, 2001) and in 2008 China was the second largest trading partner of India (US, Department of State, 2010a). The two economies however have remained competitive rather than complementary, and therefore the scope of their economic cooperation has been limited.

In the last decade there have been significant increases in trade and investments between China and South Asian nations (See table 1). Of these Chinese investments and aid in energy and transportation sectors are significant. These economic relations are related to the change in Chinese policy regarding its oil dependency. In 1993 China became a net oil importer, marking a departure from its previous policy of striving to achieve self sufficiency (Jaffe and Lewis, 2002) and as a result South Asia has become an important route through which energy resources are imported into mainland China, be it from Africa, the Middle East or from South Asia itself. Economic ties with South Asia have also allowed China to establish new trade routes. Increased overland transportation links with Nepal, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Myanmar have offered such routes for China's landlocked western regions and also provided alternative energy routes to import oil. These trade developments have also contributed to enhance Chinese market penetration, foster closer bilateral economic relations with smaller South Asian nations and overall increased Chinese presence in the region. For example the Gwadar port in Pakistan is linked to Xingjian through a network of railroads, highways and an oil pipeline that is currently under construction. Similarly an oil pipeline is being constructed connecting the deep water port of Sittwe in Myanmar with Kunming, capital of China's south western Yunnan Province (Shee, 2002, Seekins, 1997). These new energy routes will ease China's dependency on oil coming through the Malacca Striates and offer greater energy security circumventing what some call the "Malacca Dilemma" (Lanteigne, 2007).

While realist geopolitical analysts of policy on South Asia see these developing economic ties as part of a grand Chinese security strategy, the development focused analysts see it as part of elaborate efforts to differentiate politics and economics. These two analytical frameworks do offer partial explanations to China's South Asia policy even though they fall short of explaining domestic forces, other than desire for securing borders and achieving economic development, that drive these interactions. Both these perspectives consider China as a singular homogenous entity with a uniformity of interests. However closer scrutiny suggests that China's external relations, particularly with its neighbours in Central and South Asia are affected by its interests and policies closer to home.

Table 1. Significant Chinese economic and military assistance to key South Asian nations since 2000

Country	Trade and investments	Military Assistance
Afghanistan	Since 2002, has given more than US $ 130 million in aid for rehabilitation. In 2009 announced an additional US $ 75 million over the next five years. Two way trade has been growing rapidly in recent years, reaching US $155 million in 2008. Since 2006, China has applied zero tariffs on 278 items from Afghanistan (*Xinhua*, 24.03.10). In 2010 Chinese invested US $ 3.5 billion, largest ever such investment in Afghanistan, for the development of the Aynak Copper Mine (China, MoFA, 2010). It has also emerged as the largest investor in the country (*The Sunday Guardian*, 30.07.2011) and has also expressed interest to explore Afghanistan's untapped reserves of oil and natural gas in northern parts of the country (Norling, 2008).	There have been several overtures by NATO countries including the US for China to play a greater military role in Afghanistan but so far these have not materialised (Pantucci, 2010).
Bangladesh	As of 2007 China is Bangladesh's largest single source of imports (*The Economic Times*, 23.07.2007) Has assisted to set up power plants, fertilizer factories, marine fisheries, infrastructure development, including six friendship bridges (Kumar, 2005). Offered to develop a strategically significant deep sea port in Chittagong at an estimated cost of US $ 8.7 billion (Krishnan, 2010).	Entered into a defence cooperation agreement in 2002, which allows the PLA Navy to use the harbour of Chittagong and gives access to refuelling stations for its aircraft (*The Washington Times*, 17.01.2005).
Nepal	Increased aid by 50 percent to 120 million Yuan after the Maoist takeover in 2008 (Hariharan 2008). A US $100 million project was launched in 2009 to broaden the highway from Lhasa to central Nepal. In 2005, announced plans to extend the Golmud-Lhasa Railway to the border with Nepal; In 2008, declared that a railroad section from Lhasa to Zhangmu on the Tibet-Nepal border had been included in the 'Medium and Long-Term Railway Network Planning' (Holslag,2010) As a result of increased connectivity, trade has steadily increased and in 2009 China agreed to provide duty free access to 497 Nepali goods market (Bhattacharya, 2009).	The largest pledge of military aid amounting to US $ 19.8 million was granted in 2011 during a visit of Chinese army chief. He is the highest ranking military officer to visit Nepal, in a decade. India is the biggest provider of military assistance to Nepal, but it stopped supplying lethal military aid since former king Gyanendra Shah's royal takeover in 2005 (*Hindustan Times*, 24.03.2011).
Pakistan	Bilateral trade that stood at US $ 1 billion in 2002 was estimated to have grown to US $ 12 billion by 2010 (Senguptha, 2010). China is now Pakistan's leading source of imports (CIA, 2011). China has invested heavily in the transportation sector actively building ports, railways, airports and roads. The construction of the Gwadar port in Baluchistan Province at a cost of US $ 198 million is expected to offer an alternative to the Karachi port which will significantly increase Pakistan's trade (Garver, 2005).	China is Pakistan's the main military partner. It has provided it with missiles and nuclear technology while the two countries have jointly produced air craft and tanks (Cheng, 2010). At Gwadar, China enjoys "sovereign guarantees" to the facilities (Niazi, 2005). Pakistani and Chinese forces conducted their first joint naval exercise in 2005 (Scott, 2008a).
Sri Lanka	In 2008 became the largest investor in Sri Lanka (Gunasekera, 2010) and it became the largest lender in 2009 providing US $ 1.2 billion (*Daily Mirror*, 04.03.2010). Bilateral trade between the two countries have doubled between 2005 and 2010 (Pant, 2010) and China is the second largest exporter to Sri Lanka after India (*Asia Times*, 13.08.2010). Since 2005 has given significant assistance for landmark projects including ports, railway lines, roads, a refinery and a power plant.	China emerged as the largest supplier of weapons to Sri Lanka in the 1990s (*The Sunday Times*, 02.05.2009) and have provided offensive weaponry including artillery, aircraft and naval vessels which were crucial in the government's victory over the Tamil Tigers.

3.3 An alternative framework for analysis

In formulating the concept of ‘insecurity dilemma’ Job (1992) argues that traditional western theories in international relations that are articulated in central premises of realist thought that deal with sovereignty, nation-statehood, non interference, separation of domestic and international policy do not offer the norm for analysing third world security studies. Similar theories about war from a western perspective that explain a state’s actions through concepts such as balance of power, hegemony and alliance building also have limited application in third world policy making. This thesis will argue that the concept of ‘insecurity dilemma’ can indeed be applicable to China, especially in its dealings with its restive minority regions despite the fact the country as a whole would not qualify as a ‘weak state’. This conceptualisation offers a deviation from the analytical frameworks that were discussed above which primarily rely on external security centric realist theories and economics based commercial liberal theories that have been used to understand China’s polices.

This thesis offers a third perspective or an analytical framework to view China’s South Asia policy, in addition to the two perspectives discussed above. South Asia is unique in its geographical location from a Chinese point of view since it borders two of the most restive regions in the country, namely Tibet and Xinjiang. Chinese scholars like Wang (2010) have articulated a security threat perception to the PRC that perceives a greater threat to sovereignty from within its borders, mainly from minority regions such as Tibet, Xinjiang and Inner Mongolia. Additionally economically marginalised regions also pose a threat of creating social unrest. In this regard Swaine (2000) states that ‘China’s Grand Strategy’ seeks to accomplish three interrelated objectives; first and foremost the preservation of the domestic order and wellbeing in the face of social strife; second, defence against persistent external threats to national sovereignty and territory; and third, the attainment and maintenance of geopolitical influence as a major and perhaps primary state in the Asia-Pacific region and possibly beyond. Swaine further elaborates that for most of its history, Chinese efforts to achieve these objectives have produced a security strategy oriented toward maintaining internal stability along the far flung geographic periphery.

Though China is often portrayed as a homogenous entity with a set of common interests these internal differences and perceived threats to sovereignty are very much an integral part of its foreign policy in the immediate neighbourhood. In order to comprehend the correlation between domestic policies focused on these regions and how these affect foreign policy, it is essential to first understand the perceived threat posed by these minority regions and the policies applied by the PRC to deal with them. In this regard, it is necessary to focus on the evolving nature of these policies. Up until the late 1970s the primary focus was on assimilation of minority regions with the rest of China through coercion, by destroying their unique histories and cultures. More recently, it has evolved into a "Go West" policy that seeks to assimilate these peoples by improving their economic conditions to bring them on par with the rest of coastal China in the hope that this would nullify notions of alienation.

When analysing developments in South Asia from this vantage point, seemingly antagonistic actions such as financially and militarily backing regimes, building ports and other transportation infrastructure that increase connectivity with mainland China, offer alternative explanations to those perceived through the previously discussed analysis. For example the PRC has incorporated connectivity with neighbouring countries as part of its 'Go West' policy. By doing so, it has improved transportation links to Xingjian and Tibet with their neighbours. This has also seen new trade routes being established. When opening up Xingjian and Tibet to neighbouring states which share close ethnic, historical and cultural affinity with peoples of these restive regions, the PRC faces the risk of anti-government groups forging better links with like-minded elements. The same transportation links that are used for trade could be utilised for smuggling weapons and personnel. In order to prevent such a situation China has attempted to make neighbouring states stakeholders in its internal security through active engagement with Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, and even India. There has been an attempt to draw the region into the greater sphere of Chinese influence. Now the PRC has greater capacity in changing state behaviour in these countries, especially towards refugee and dissident groups connected to minorities in Xingjian and Tibet. Therefore while policies of assimilation, including Han migration has continued into minority areas, the opening up of the regions has not posed a significant security threat since the onus of security is shared with neighbouring states. A related foreign policy objective has been to increase the perceived security threat posed by separatists and to portray them as a greater risk to regional stability and security, thereby obtaining international cooperation in addressing some of the domestic security concerns. This policy, which has been implemented in Xinjiang in particular, has framed Uyghur nationalism as an Islamic terrorist force that threatens Central and South Asian regions.

Chapter 4: Internal challenge to China's sovereignty

The Chinese state perceives a threat to its sovereignty from within its borders. Whether this threat is actual or not or whether it is as severe as perceived is of little consequence in the process of policy formation.

4.1 Insecurity dilemma

The minority nationalities in the PRC constitute only a little over 5 percent of the total Chinese population, but their traditional homelands occupy over 65 percent of total territory, which are not only strategically located but are also resource rich (Norbu,1991). Chinese foreign policy towards countries bordering Xingjian and Tibet can be viewed as a perpetuation of the 'insecurity dilemma' as argued by Job (1992). This concept is defined as;

> *The self-defeating strategic interaction when insecure states, mostly but not exclusively weak states, embark on state-building to mitigate their insecurities. State building provokes identity insecurity in groups that do not share the identity and interests of the state, which is often captured by a dominant group. The adversarial groups resist state building to address their insecurities through an array of internal and external and peaceful and violent measures. This action reaction cycle is exacerbated by dilemmas of interpretation and response and is paradoxical in that the search for security ends in more insecurity for both parties.*

The basic concept of a 'security dilemma' as per International Relations theory rests upon the notion that the actions of a state to enhance its security produce reactions that make it less secure via inducing insecurity in other states regarding its intentions. In essence, the "security dilemma is primarily concerned with the juxtaposition of the actors' intentions – security – and the outcome of their policies/actions – insecurity" (Clarke, 2007). Fundamentally a western concept, at the core of this theory is the presumption that a state is capable of identifying its interests and acting upon it. Therefore the security dilemma is a concept most apt to be applied to a strong state. In contrast a weak state is at the crux of an insecurity dilemma, even though that is not a prerequisite for the concept to be applicable to a particular country. At this point it is pertinent to explore whether China fits the criteria of a 'weak, insecure state' and whether it is appropriate to apply this concept to China which is seen as an emerging major power in global politics. This author argues that China offers an interesting dichotomy as a state, which may sometimes manifest in large third world nations, where they exist as a weak state due to internal strife and at the same time as a powerful nation state offering a duality in its policies both internally and externally.

In describing China's territorial disputes Fravel (2008) states that ethnic geography defines the many challenges faced by Chinese leaders in their attempts to consolidate territorial integrity since 1949. Ethnic geography refers to the density and distribution of ethnic groups within a state. With regard to China, Fravel offers a 'core-periphery' structure to describe this ethnic geography. The 'core' also known as the 'central plain', 'inner China', and 'China proper', refers to the densely populated, ethnic Han dominated regions that run north and south along the coast. This region has constituted the geographic centre of every ruling dynasty since the Qin in the 3rd century BCE until the end of imperial rule with the Qing in 1911. The periphery, sometimes called the 'frontiers' or 'outer China' in contrast is dominated by a variety of non-Han ethnic groups including Tibetans, Mongols and various Turkic groups such as those that inhabit Xinjiang (See Fig. 1). Though these groups have little in common with one another, they are defined in the eyes of China's current leaders by their cultural, social and economic differences from the Han majority. Historically these regions have come under the influence of strong Chinese rulers and have often been an integral part of their dynasties but yet have also experienced considerable periods of autonomy and unique advancements in their civilisations independent of China. Unlike the 'core', the borders and frontiers of the periphery have often been fluid and contested to this day. These ethnic minority inhabited peripheral regions happen to be the very places where China's sovereignty is challenged by internal elements including separatists.

This ethnic geography of a 'core-periphery' structure and the internal sovereignty challenges that it brings along are key to understanding China's duality postulated above. Job (1992) states that there are four key ways in which a traditional security dilemma, perceived in a realist point of view, is violated in a weak state; 1. Within the borders of the state there is no single cohesive nation but a multitude of groups, 2. As a result the regime in power does not have popular legitimacy, at least amongst some segments of the population, 3. The state lacks institutional capacity to offer peace and order to its population and 4. The sense of threat is perceived to be from internal forces rather than external factors. Except for No. 3 where one can argue that Chinese institutions remain strong even in the peripheral regions, all other factors show a dichotomy between the core and periphery.

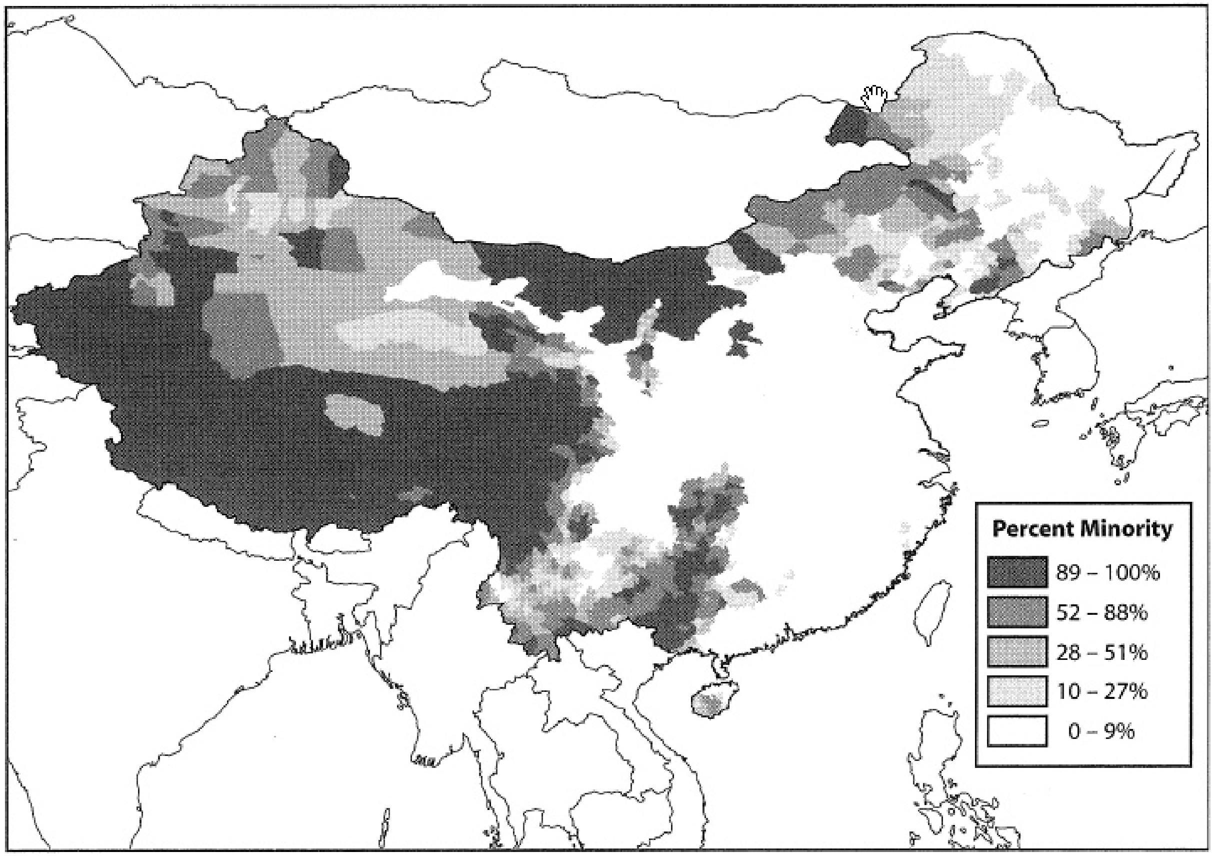

Fig. 1: China's ethnic geography in 2000 showing 'core-periphery' structure
Source: China 2000 country population census, University of Michigan 2003

This dichotomy can even be witnessed in the dealings with foreign nations. For example, as stated previously, China's Southeast Asia and Northeast Asia policies can be viewed from a realist geopolitical perspective through an external security centric paradigm. These regions which border the homogeneous ethnic Han 'core' present a strong nation state that deals with its neighbours as a singular entity. Territorial disputes in this region are primarily inter-state with an absence of an internal challenge to Chinese sovereignty. Also the application of a security dilemma between states rather than an insecurity dilemma within the state would be more appropriate. In contrast the security of China is perceived to be challenged more by internal forces in the periphery rather than other nations. Even unresolved territorial disputes with foreign nations in the periphery have an additional internal dimension to it due to the presence of minorities with perceived affinities to their ethnic brethren across international borders (See Fig. 2). As a result of the 'insecurity dilemma' being applicable to the periphery, relations with Central and South Asia have the additional consideration of domestic sovereignty challenges when formulating policy.

As seen in Xingjian and Tibet the central government has attempted to integrate these regions with the rest of China through numerous means. These in turn have created more insecurity since the nation building policies have not been received positively. When applying this concept to the periphery it can be observed that domestic policy towards nation building and attempts to assimilate these areas with rest of China are very much in line with the expected policies of a weak state dealing with a challenge of insecurity. The means by which this process has been attempted may have changed with time from an isolationist, Han migration dominated policy till the late 1970s, to one that seeks to economically integrate these regions with more affluent coastal areas in recent decades. Despite the softening of the approach, there has not been an indication of easing of hard-line stances against political groups or the offering of political solutions to the minority regions (Mukherjee, 2010).

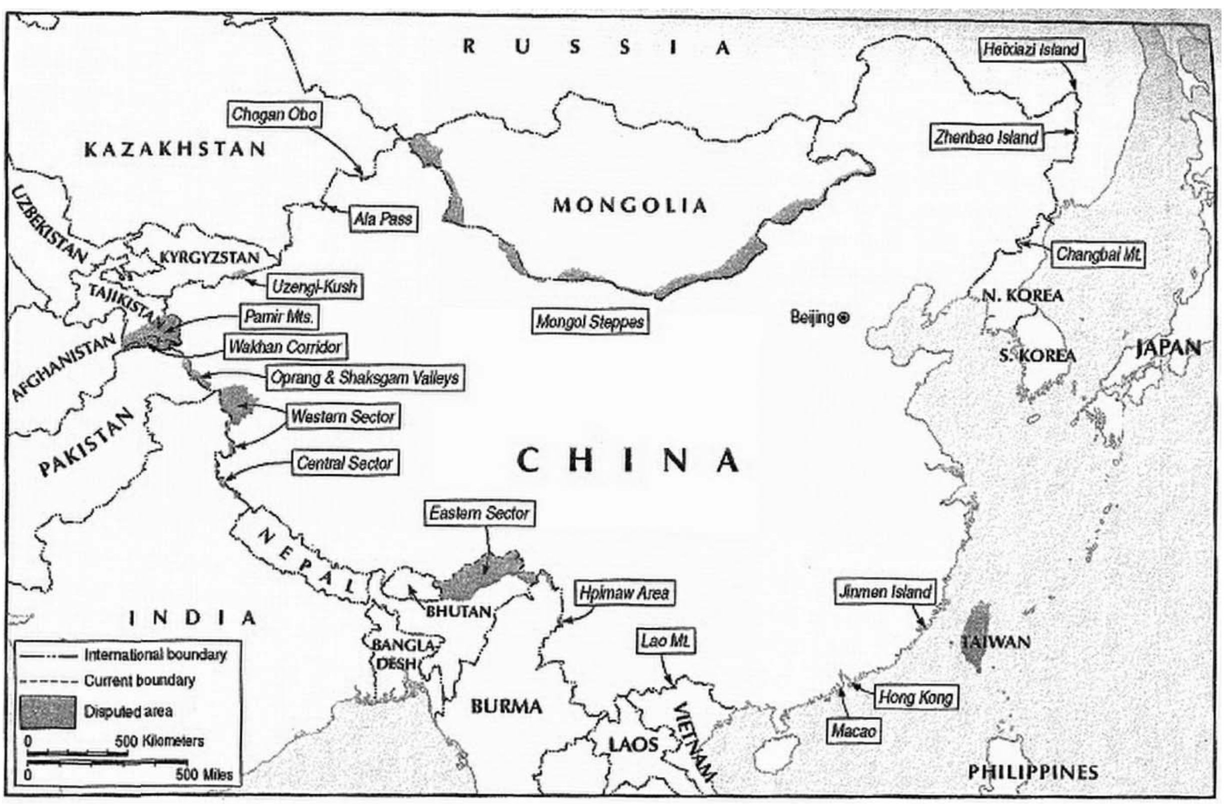

Fig. 2: China's principle frontier and homeland disputes, source - Fravel (2008)

The perceived threat posed to the Chinese state from minority regions of Xingjian and Tibet is three fold; firstly, both pose a perceived ideological threat, rising from the distinct identity of populations separate from the Han majority 'core'. This is mainly due to the ethnic differences with Turkic Muslim Xingjian and Buddhist Tibet backed by historical and cultural differences. Both regions have experienced intermittent periods of independence, autonomy or semi-autonomy from centralised rule throughout history, which has created a collective memory and a powerful desire for separation. These centripetal forces to which Jarmo Eronen applies the theory of "imperial decline" offer factors that were predicted to cause China's fragmentation, such as religion, language differences, and economic inequalities. He argued in 1998 that Xinjiang and Tibet have the highest potential for separatism, due to strong local cultural identity and Han being in the minority (Eronen, 1998). Similarly Tibetan scholar Melvyn Goldstein projected in 1997 that Tibet may experience a Middle East or Northern Ireland–style ethnic violence, initially based perhaps on militants outside Tibet, but leading to a "Tibetan-style intifada" that "may help destabilize China" (Goldstein, 1997). Although these predictions of China's disintegration after the end of the Cold War have not materialised and the objective threat of such a collapse has decreased, the periphery is still perceived to be vulnerable to secessionist forces. While the Chinese state might be stronger than before, some of the worst violence in decades has also been witnessed in the periphery in recent years, in Tibet in 2008 and in Xinjiang in 2009.

These 'uprisings' demonstrate the second form of threat which is more immediate, posed by dissident groups. Dissent can manifest in numerous intensities; from terrorists, rebels, religious groups, political and religious leaders, governments in exile to protestors on the street to mere civil disobedience of a populace that does not recognise the legitimacy of the central government's rule. Thirdly, perceived threats can arise from external sources such as links between separatist forces and ethnically and culturally similar groups in neighbouring countries and other nations that may use separatist sentiments within China as a tool to destabilise it. A closer scrutiny of the perceived threats from these two particular regions; Xinjiang and Tibet would allow for better comprehension of the PRC's policies in these regions and later draw connections between those policies and its relations with neighbouring states.

4.2 Xinjiang and Chinese sovereignty

Xinjiang is a vast territory representing one-sixth of China's total land area, and 5,600 kilometres of international frontiers with India, Afghanistan, Pakistan, three Central Asian states, Russia and Mongolia. Between 1949 and 2008, the proportion of Han in Xinjiang rose dramatically, from 6.7 percent to 40 percent (Howell & Fan, 2011). Despite this Han migration, Xinjiang remains mostly populated by Uyghurs, a Turkish-speaking Sunni Muslim people with a long history of uprising against Chinese domination, especially since the end of Qing rule in 1911 (Millward, 2004). For brief moments between 1931-34 and 1944-49, the East Turkmenistan Republic declared independence. Even though neither attempt was successful, the attempted secessions have left a lasting memory of separatism on both sides of the divide.

Separatism and resistance among Uyghurs have since 1990 emerged as a major concern for the PRC government. Not only have a number of violent incidents in Xinjiang drawn international attention, but Uyghur groups outside China have increasingly succeeded in bringing their concerns about human rights abuses and their desire for an independent state to audiences in Europe, North America, and Asia, garnering some sympathy (Dru, 1992). In July 2009, riots between Uyghurs and their Han neighbours claimed 197 lives and injured thousands in Urumqi, capital of Xinjiang (Tsuo, 2009). As recently as July 2011, 20 people were killed in clashes between protestors and police (*The Times of India*, 01.08.2011)

Millward (2004) points out that despite Chinese attempts to frame unrest in Xingjian as an Islamic terrorist problem, Uyghur nationalism has been a far more salient ideological feature than one of religious zeal. After 1949, despite some Islamic elements in the unrest in southern Xinjiang, disturbances in the region corresponded with the political and economic disruptions of the Great Leap Forward (1959-61) and Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Since the 1990s, concerns about Uyghur separatism have received increasing official and media attention. These concerns have heightened since the events of 9/11 with the advent of a more robust U.S. presence in Central Asia and Chinese attempts to link Uyghur separatism to international jihadist groups. Activities and ideology of jihadist groups in Afghanistan and former Soviet Central Asia have led the PRC to surmise that political Islamism underlies the separatist and nationalist sentiments of the Uyghur people.

Millward, (2004) cites a Chinese government White Paper published in 2003 that name several groups operating within Xingjian, including a high school student organisation and an information centre as 'terrorists'. These groups are said to have links with similar organisations in neighbouring countries, particularly Afghanistan and Pakistan. However some of these allegations are viewed by external analysts with scepticism as Chinese efforts to elevate local disgruntlements into transnational terrorism in order to gain international assistance for their quelling.

In the international arena, Uyghurs have reasonable support from Turkey, the cultural heartland of the group (*The Economist*, 16.07.2009). Secessionist leaders, both political and militant, have sought to appeal to a pan-Turkic identity in championing rights of the Uyghurs and mooting for autonomy for their traditional region of habitation. Uyghur separatists within Xinjiang drew inspiration and envy from their Central Asian neighbours' independence after the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and they increased their movement toward a separate Uyghur state. Militant Uyghur groups exploited Xinxiang's porous border with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan to establish training camps outside of China's reach (Wolfe, 2004) as well as to move explosives and small arms into China. (Davis, 2008)

4.3 Tibet and Chinese sovereignty

Tibet, according to the PRC's historical perspective has been an integral part of China since at least the 13th century, but most non-Chinese commentators contend that Tibet enjoyed intermittent periods of independence and autonomy. It was in the minimum a *de facto* independent state from 1911, since the collapse of the Qing dynasty, to 1950 when the PLA invaded the territory. The PRC characterizes this takeover as a 'peaceful liberation', while Tibetans portray it as a war of aggression against a defenceless country that had minimal military resources and a commitment to nonviolent relations with its neighbours. Samuel (1982) and Goldstein (2007), offering mostly a Chinese perspective on Tibetan sovereignty, argue that traditional Tibet can best be regarded as a stateless society. In their view the Dalai Lama at Lhasa did not rule over a strongly centralized state, and in any case most Tibetans lived outside the area of the nominal authority of the Lhasa government. In this line of scholarly argument, the Tibetan speaking societies of the Himalayas and the Tibetan plateau only occasionally and briefly experienced effective centralized control from Lhasa. Michael Franz (1984) has a different take on Tibetan sovereignty, arguing that the foundations of the politico- religious system that was laid in the 14th century, which reached its climax in the 17th century with the Dalai Lama as the head of government, remained intact till the complete Chinese takeover in 1959.

Although politically Tibet is now limited to the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR), culturally and historically its sphere of influence reaches a greater Himalayan region encompassing modern day Nepal, Bhutan, potions of northern India and north-eastern Pakistan and extending to current Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan (Franz, 1984). This ‘Greater Tibetan’ region comprises of ethnic and national groups that share common religion, history and culture with Tibet.

The current perceived threat to Chinese sovereignty in Tibet comes from several fronts. The most significant is from the Tibetan Diaspora, spread throughout the world, from refugees in neighbouring states to communities living in the West. It is significantly strengthened by the authority and legitimacy of the Dalai Lama who continues to be regarded as the political and spiritual leader of his people. In recent years, the Tibetan Government in Exile (TGIE) has transformed itself through a democratic process through which it hopes to gain international legitimacy (Ardley 2003). The TGIE’s first democratically-elected ‘Prime Minister’, Lobsang Sangay, was sworn in August 2011, officially taking over the political leadership of the Tibetan people from the Dalai Lama (*CBCNews*, 08.08.2011). The Assembly of Tibetan People’s Deputies (ATPD) is elected through a process of elections amongst Tibetan exiles and refugee communities across the world, most significantly in countries bordering it – India, Bhutan and Nepal. Along with the legitimacy of the Dalai Lama, the ATPD and the TGIE wields significant influence over the Tibetan population, less inside the TAR and to a greater degree abroad. For example it provides welfare to refugees living in northern India and Nepal (Samphel, 1988). Even though the TGIE lacks a territorial claim, it nevertheless offers a moral and legal challenge to Chinese rule within Tibet, especially in a setup where CCP appointed rulers of the TAR are not elected by its people and are significantly non – Tibetan in ethnicity. Also the spread of Tibetan Buddhism in the West has also become a source of irritation for the PRC since along with it has arisen an activism and consciousness about the plight of the Tibetan people. In the United States, many (but not most) of the eight hundred thousand converts to Buddhism adhere to Tibetan Buddhism. Well-educated and articulate, many are politically active and the Dalai Lama has urged converts to make “Tibet activism” part of their practice (Sautman, 2005).

On occasion there have also been challenges to Chinese rule from within Tibet. In March 2008, Tibetans rose up in the biggest challenge to Chinese rule since 1959. The Chinese government claimed that 18 civilians and one policeman died in the uprising, while the TGIE and rights groups claim that 220 Tibetans were killed (Topgyal, 2011). Topgyal calls the Tibetan uprising and the Chinese reaction as the "latest symptom of the Sino-Tibetan insecurity dilemma".

Internationally Tibet has been seen as China's Achilles' heel. For years since the collapse of the Soviet Union, China watchers in the west have predicted a 'China collapse' possibly due to minority secessionist forces in regions such as Tibet (Sautman, 2005). From a Chinese perspective, instability in Tibet and the actions of numerous groups in exile pose a significant threat to its sovereignty in the form of interference by external powers. The 2008 Tibetan protests and riots have been viewed by Chinese scholars and policy makers through the prism of Western, principally American, anti-China designs executed through the 'Dalai Lama clique' (Zhirong, 2008). Unlike in Xingjian where the Chinese government has successfully projected most of the dissident groups as terrorists, it has not been able to dilute the respect and legitimacy that the Dalai Lama and Tibetan exile groups command, particularly in the West. The concern of international meddling in Tibet is not entirely unfounded. The PRC claims that since its establishment in 1949 the US has either covertly or overtly supported Tibetan independence (Mackerras, 1994). The support given to rebels in eastern Tibet through the CIA in the 1950s and 60s, congressional backing to the Tibetan cause even after formalising diplomatic ties with the PRC in 1971 and the continuous high profile meetings between the Dalai Lama and US presidents have often been cited as proof of this external interference (Mackerras, 1994, Lum, 2010). These experiences have given rise to PRC concerns that Tibet's immediate neighbours, India, Nepal and to a lesser degree Bhutan, can potentially be drawn in by external forces such as the US, as staging posts for anti-Chinese activities in Tibet. Even though Cold War dynamics have changed, the possibility of these countries and their sizable Tibetan refugee populations being used to destabilise the PRC remains a considerable concern for Beijing.

China's vulnerability to separatism in Tibet and Xinjiang will remain a common perception so long as there is no political solution to these disputes. However with China's growing military, economic and diplomatic power these vulnerabilities have become more diluted in the international sphere. Since the late 1990s, the governments of major countries, such as the United Kingdom and India, that previously had seemingly ambiguous positions on China's sovereignty in Tibet, have made it clear that they do not challenge it (Sautman, 2005). However from a Chinese perspective the perceived threat from the periphery to its internal stability remains a concern.

Chapter 5: Domestic policies in minority regions

Policies towards neighbouring nations on the PRC’s periphery are an extension of the domestic policies that are meant to address the perceived vulnerabilities discussed above. It is therefore necessary to briefly note these domestic policies and their evolution with time.

5.1 Nationalities policy

The Nationalities policy of the CCP can be seen as the starting point for this insecurity dilemma in the modern era. Since its establishment in 1949, this policy of the PRC has made its primary goal the integration of minority regions into the administrative structure in preparation for their ‘socialist transformation’ (Smith, 1994). This was in line with the evolution of the modern Chinese state which is characterised by the predominance of culture over ethnicity to the extent that cultural unity became the essential legitimising factor for political ideology.

China adopted the concept of nationality in the late nineteenth century. Since then, it has experienced two ethnic categorizations that served different projects of nation-state building. The ethnic landscape shifted from an obscure classification of five peoples (Han, Manchu, Mongol, Tibetan, and Muslim) in the Republican era to a politically legitimized recognition of fifty-six nationalities after the CCP took power in 1949 (Zhao, 2010). In their attempts for legitimacy both the communists and nationalists have espoused the creation of a greater Chinese identity and nationality with the recovery of the territorial borders that were lost due to the disintegration of the Qing rule in 1911 (See Fig. 3) .

Mao's conception of the ‘national minorities’ problem” was based on the idea that their salvation rested not on independence or autonomy from China but ‘liberation from oppression’ (Norbu, 2001). In fact, the basic assumption was that backward national minorities could not develop on their own and needed Han help. Thus the denial of national self determination and adoption of regional autonomy in Xingjian and Tibet in effect meant promotion of Han hegemony and Han expansionism. Based on these principles assimilation through coercion was attempted in the initial decades since the establishment of the PRC. Later, these have given way to less rigid means of persuasion.

During the Cultural Revolution, religion was especially suppressed, but so were ethnic languages, cultural cuisines and even ethnic garb. The Uyghur in Xinjiang, like other Muslim minorities throughout China, saw their religious texts and mosques destroyed, their religious leaders persecuted, and individual adherents punished (Davis, 2008). In Tibet too the Cultural Revolution was unleashed against Buddhism and traditional practices of the population which were perceived to be backward. Following the rise of Deng Xiaoping however, the situation in Xinjiang and Tibet as in rest of China became generally more stable after the ceaseless political campaigns of the Maoist years. As a result of the reforms in the nationalities policy undertaken in Tibet and Xinjiang where non Han cadres were brought back into the party and government, religion was less persecuted and minority languages were allowed as a medium of education (Millward, 2004).

Fig. 3 : China's boundaries in 1820 (Shaded in Gray) and 2000
Source : China 2000 country population census, University of Michigan 2003

Policies and attitudes towards neighbouring countries have also changed along with the easing of policy at home. While attempts were made previously to minimise interactions between minorities living in the periphery with their ethnic brethren across international borders, lately borders have been opened up for trade and commerce. These increases in trade links with Central and South Asian neighbours can also be viewed as part of the western development strategy which among other things, expects to improve economic conditions in the periphery in the hope of reducing ethnic tensions.

5.2 ‘Go West’ policy

With the easing of the nationalities policy since the demise of Mao, the PRC has adopted a policy of economic development and integration of the periphery with the more affluent ‘core’ with a policy to ‘Open up the West’ also called ‘Go West’ and the ‘Great Western Development Plan’. Yet this policy can still be seen as an extension of the nationalities policy that dominated the discourse regarding the minorities since 1949. Becquelin (2004) notes that the rhetoric of the Great Western Development Plan alludes to nation-building perspectives, including “the theme of ‘manifest destiny’; the civilizing imperative; the rich resources lying untapped that ‘wait’ for the spiritual impulse of the ‘Chinese nation’ for their exploitation; and the ambition of the Chinese nation to ‘stand up’ in the international environment” in contrast to the paternalistic approach to minorities that existed before, which sought to ‘civilize’ or ‘save’ them from their backward existence.

In the early 1980s Deng Xiaoping formulated a policy to first develop the eastern coastal regions, which already had a better economic foundation and as a secondary step to focus on the western regions that were economically backward (Lai, 2002). These Western Development Policies adopted in the late 1990s were initially meant as an economic development strategy to reduce poverty which was seen as an urgent social necessity due to the widening gap between the rich coastal provinces and impoverished interior. The policy in essence revolves around the comprehensive engineering of economic and social incentives to interior regions. It is expected to reduce ethnic conflicts by closing the economic gaps between China's prosperous eastern coastal areas and 12 of its poorer western inland regions that include the Autonomous Regions of Xinjiang and Tibet (Goodman, 2004). The ‘Go West’ policy expects to primarily increase capital inputs in infrastructure projects, enhancing the financial investment environment, and liberalizing the legal framework to attract foreign and domestic investments (Becquelin, 2004).

At the crux of the ’Go West’ strategy is the desire to increase connectivity to the peripheral regions; both from the ‘core’ and from other neighbouring countries. In 2006 the PRC announced that a total of one trillion yuan (US $125 billion) has been spent building infrastructure in western China with an annual average regional economic growth rate of 10.6 percent for six continuous years (*China Net*, 06.11 2006). In Xinjiang the government has undertaken two massive transportation infrastructure projects, where it will build 12 new highways to connect the province with Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Pakistan. The longest road will be 1,680 kilometres, from Xinjiang to Uzbekistan, Iran, Turkey, and finally Europe (*People's Daily*, 06.04 2007). Tibet too has become one of the showcases of the 'Go West' policy, especially in terms of transportation infrastructure development with neighbouring Nepal and India (Mathou, 2005).

Lai (2002) also sees a link between China's desire to develop Tibet and Xinjiang as a precaution to prevent external interference in these regions due to persistent grievances of the minorities. NATO's intervention in the ethnic conflict in Kosovo served to heighten Beijing's worries that the West might attempt to intervene if ethnic conflicts in Tibet and Xinjiang should escalate. By initiating the western development program, Beijing hopes to lift the living standards of ethnic minorities, rid separatism of its economic catalysts, and minimize the ethnic clashes and opportunities for Western interference. According to Lai "It is probably no coincidence that President Jiang Zemin spelled out the western development strategy in June 1999, shortly after NATO's bombing of the Chinese embassy in Yugoslavia".

The attempt to use economic tools to address ethnic separatism in Xinjiang and Tibet reflects the Chinese government's long-standing belief that minorities primarily want better economic prospects rather than political liberties. It therefore assumes that if Tibet and Xinjiang are sufficiently developed and greater economic opportunities provided to its people, then nationalism and separatism would be secondary to economic prosperity.

5.3 Internationalization of domestic policies

China has attempted to both internationalize threats from minority regions while at the same time tried to isolate and localise separatist violence. The internationalization has been done in a number of ways. Firstly since the 9/11terror attacks and the eventual US 'war on terror' which drew attention to Islamic terrorism, the PRC has attempted to portray sensationalist forces, particularly in Xinjiang as terrorists and anarchists who are a threat not only to the internal security of China but to the whole region. This 'securitisation' process is meant for an external audience, neighbouring states, western nations concerned about Islamic terrorism and mostly western media. With regard to the local audience in China, a policy of isolation of localising has been carried out where the violence and its perceived threat to the PRC are often downplayed.

Since 9/11 there has been a dramatic change in the PRC's 'message' to outsiders regarding Xinjiang. From a previous position of being embarrassed by the violence that led to denials of secessionist activities the message has changed 180 degrees and now seeks to exaggerate the level of violence and the threat posed by the same groups. In line with this policy, Beijing labels as 'terrorists' those who oppose Chinese rule, be it politically or militarily, in Xinjiang. Groups that were previously dismissed as mere trouble makers are now projected as part of a network of international Islamic terror, with funding from the Middle East, training in Pakistan, and combat experience in Chechnya and Afghanistan (Chung, 2002). By depicting national separatism and religious radicalism as a threat linked to universal terrorism, and not just to China, Beijing can, and does, scare potential external supporters for the Uyghur cause in the West, in Central Asia and in the Middle East (Shichor, 2005).

As part of this external securitisation process since 9/11, the PRC has worked consistently to connect issues of separatism with terrorism, even in the absence of evidence of organized terrorist opposition to the Chinese government in Xinjiang. It has emphasized, in the international arena, Xingjian's susceptibility to radicalisation due to its close proximity to the epicentre of Islamic extremism; Afghanistan-Pakistan. What had generally been described as a 'handful of separatists' in the 1990s after 9/11 were being called full-blown 'terrorist organizations'. This policy saw the PRC publishing a white paper in 2002 on 'East Turkistan Terrorism' which named several 'terrorist groups' operating in Xinjiang that also included political groups in addition to actual militant outfits (Millward 2004). A similar document in 2003 added World Uyghur Youth Congress (WUYC) and the East Turkistan Information Center (ETIC) to the 'terror list' (*Xinhuanet*, 15.12.2003).

These efforts to securitize the 'Uyghur threat' have yielded significant results in the past decade in the context of the 'war on terror'. The US State Department named the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), originally designated a terror group by the 2002 PRC white paper, as a "terrorist organization associated with al Qaeda" in 2002 (Millward 2004). In 2004 then-US Secretary of State Colin Powell confirmed the detention of 22 Uyghurs captured during the 'war on terror' to be at Guantanamo Bay (*Radio Free Asia*, 12.08.2004). The policy has been extended to Afghanistan and Pakistan as part of China's own 'war on terror'.

Secondly China has sought bilateral and multilateral cooperation to internationalize its separatist problems. With regard to Xinjiang it has rapidly expanded security cooperation with Central Asian states. Ethnic unrest in Xinjiang has been brought into a framework which Chinese leaders often call the "three evils", namely separatism, fundamentalism, and terrorism and its neighbours have been warned of these ‘evils’ destabilising their own countries. Addressing these ‘three evils’ were at the core of establishing the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In April 1996, China, along with Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, Russia, and Tajikistan, launched the first ‘Shanghai Five’ summit on regional security. The group was renamed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization after Uzbekistan joined in 2001. In fact, at its inaugural meeting the SCO decided that China may be allowed to intervene militarily in Central Asia to combat terrorist threats at the request of regional governments. The organization's purpose was strengthened at the SCO's annual meeting in 2002 as the presidents of the organization's member states legally created an SCO Anti-Terrorism Center (Becquelin, 2004).

With regard to Tibet, the PRC has not been as successful in Xinjiang, to securitize the conflict to an international audience using a multilateral platform. It is noteworthy that unlike Central Asia, China primarily deals on a bilateral basis with South Asian nations. However, it is significant that the PRC became an observer nation of SAARC in 2005 (Pandey, 2011). Though not a dedicated security organisation like the SCO, SAARC now offers China a multilateral forum for dialogue regarding Tibet.

The third tool of internationalization has been successful both in Tibet and Xinjiang. In this China has sought to make neighbouring countries stakeholders in the economic development and stability in these autonomous regions. This is an extension of the ‘Go West’ policy where the restive regions have been opened up for trade and investments with their neighbours. With regard to transportation it is far easier to link Xinjiang and Tibet with their neighbours rather than with the ‘core’ of China due their geographical isolation. This policy taken in conjunction with the second objective stated above, seeks to increase the economic development in the periphery through increased connectivity, while at the same time reducing the risks of the same openness being used by dissident elements to destabilise the region, by making neighbouring states stakeholders in regional security and prosperity. Results of this policy are clearly visible in Central Asia where most of these nations have made significant attempts to crack down on Uyghurs whom they now view as undesirable or militant (Davis, 2008).

Chapter 6: Analysing South Asia policy considering domestic sovereignty factors

As stated in the previous chapter, the PRC has sought to internationalize its perceived security problems in its minority regions of Xinjiang and Tibet by 1. a process of securitisation of its perceived insecurity whereby separatist elements have been projected as terrorists and those who pose a threat to regional security, 2. by making neighbouring states stakeholders in the security and stability of the periphery and actively engaging them through bilateral and multilateral cooperation and, 3. increasing economic interdependence between neighbouring states and the periphery. Therefore the PRC's policies regarding neighbours in Central and South Asia can be argued to be an extension of the domestic policies in its restive periphery, that continues to seek to minimise the perceived 'insecurity dilemma'.

The insecurity of the periphery therefore is an essential element for the PRC when formulating its policies towards Central and South Asia which also offers a unique perspective of its intentions, interests and objectives in these regions. The intensity and depth of the PRC's relations will obviously differ from one country to another. The effect of each neighbouring state on the internal security of China will also be unique. Yet broadly two groups of countries in South Asia can be identified when discussing the PRC's reaction to the perceived insecurity in Xinjiang and Tibet. The first group would be Afghanistan and Pakistan, that is perceived by the PRC to have an impact on the security in Xinjiang while the second group which consists of India, Nepal and Bhutan can be argued to have a similar impact on the security of Tibet. These five nations share borders with the two restive regions under consideration and would have a greater impact on their internal security. However if one is to take note of the PRC's recent strategy to improve infrastructure links with Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka that has enabled it to open up new trade and energy routes through its western regions, then it can be argued that these nations too have a role to play in the stability of China's periphery. This thesis will however limit its analysis to the two groups mentioned above since it is argued that these would be the five states in South Asia that have the greatest bearing on the internal security of China. It will also attempt to offer alternative explanations to mostly realist geopolitical theories such as the 'string of pearls' strategy that currently dominates the security analysis.

6.1 Relations with Afghanistan-Pakistan in relation to Xinjiang

Xinjiang has eight international borders including Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. As mentioned previously, since the 9/11 attacks the PRC has attempted to securitize the issue of separatism to an external audience and engaged in a concerted effort to integrate the interest of neighbours into the economic and security policies concerning Xinjiang through the "Go West" policy. The extension of these domestic policies in Xinjiang can be witnessed in the PRC's relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan which are considered as the source of Islamic extremism and epicentre of the global Jihadist movement.

It must be reiterated that it is actually a perceived threat to internal security that is of consideration to the PRC when formulating policy. Therefore whether the threat is real or not or whether the intensity of the threat justifies the magnitude of the reactions by the PRC is of no consequence in this regard. For example Vicziany in 2003 argued that the actual threat posed by Uyghur separatists to the regional security is miniscule at best. Even though there have been popular uprisings in the last decade, the level of 'terrorist' violence has not seen a significant surge. While the magnitude of interaction and support for Xinxiang's separatists from extremist groups in Afghanistan and Pakistan are also a point of contention, many western analysts believe that China is not a major target in the global jihadist movement. Yet the PRC perceives these to be real and immediate threats to its sovereignty; and therefore, its policies are geared to address them.

Particularly after the 9/11 attacks, the PRC has actively attempted to incorporate separatists in Xinjiang into the 'War on Terror' labelling many groups 'terrorist' which even included some high school student movements (Millward 2004). This securitisation attempt has been assisted by Western media which has paid growing attention to ethnic discord in the region since 2001 and the US entry into Central Asia, first by invading Afghanistan and subsequently by establishing military bases in several countries in the region.

Furthermore, the common fight against terror has been extended to Afghanistan and Pakistan due to the perceived threat of separatists using these countries for training and smuggling weapons back into Xinjiang. With regard to Afghanistan and Pakistan, the key concerns for the PRC are that groups operating in Xinjiang would find common cause with Islamic extremist elements in these two countries that would export their terror into China as they have done with other regions such as Chechnya and Kashmir.

6.1.1 Afghanistan

The PRC claims that by 2001 over 1000 combatants from Xinjiang were trained in Afghanistan during the period that the Taliban was in power (Vicziany, 2003). China believes the Taliban in Afghanistan along with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), a *jihadi* group with ties to Al-Qaeda, recruited Uyghurs from the vast network of Pakistani *madrassas* during the 1990s (Haider, 2005). During this time, the PRC sought to reach agreements with the Taliban to prevent Uyghur groups from using Afghan territory for their training facilities. It elicited public statements of support or disavowal of intent to harm Chinese interests from representatives of the Afghan Taliban, Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin, and the Muttahida Majils-e-Amal (Small, 2010). Despite assurances Afghan trained separatists were reported to have crossed into China through the Wakhan corridor during Taliban rule which led to the area being swamped in August 2001with Chinese security forces (Gladney, 2003). Since violence broke out in Xinjiang in 2009 the perceived risk of Islamic extremists targeting China has increased. In the aftermath of the July 5, 2009 clashes, the Al-Qaeda and its formal affiliates issued statements, believed to be the first of their kind, explicitly targeting China. Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb, a North African affiliate, vowed to take revenge for the Uyghur killings by targeting Chinese engineers in North Africa (Maccartney, 2009). In the same year Abu Yahya al-Libi, a prominent member of the Al Qaeda core group in Pakistan, urged *jihad* in Xinjiang (*Bloomberg*, 08.10.2009).

Since the end of Taliban rule in Afghanistan, China has made significant inroads to increasing its influence by investing in that country’s natural resources and infrastructure development. By doing so, it has made the Kabul government a willing partner in the clampdown against Uyghur separatists. According to the Chinese Foreign Ministry, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on mineral extraction was signed for the Aynak Copper Mine development project, worth USD 3.5 billion and awarded to the consortium of Chinese companies. It is by far the largest foreign direct investment in Afghanistan’s history (Norling, 2008). China has also shown interest in exploring Afghanistan’s untapped reserves of oil and natural gas in northern parts of the country, recently estimated by the US geological survey to be 1,596 million barrels, while Afghanistan’s natural gas reserves were estimated at 15,687 trillion cubic feet (Norling, 2008). Chinese companies have interests in mineral deposits elsewhere in the country and are also active in the irrigation, infrastructure, telecommunications, and power sectors (Small, 2010). All of these resource rich areas are also situated in the relatively stable northern and north-western regions in proximity to Xingjian through the Central Asian states and is an integral part of China's Western Region Development Strategy (Lai, 2007).

Despite the outpouring of aid by western nations to Afghanistan, particularly the US and EU, China has now emerged as the largest investor (*The Sunday Guardian*, 30.07.2011), and together with Pakistan has become the main exporter to Afghanistan (Norling, 2008). The China-Afghanistan treaty of 'Friendship, cooperation and good Neighbourly Relations' that came into force in 2008 reaffirms China's commitment to assist Afghanistan's reconstruction and development in several sectors including trade, education, agriculture and healthcare (Palit, 2010). Furthermore, there is now an initiative to build a rail link that connects Xinjiang to Afghanistan through Tajikistan. The same link can be extended to the Gwader port in Pakistan (Palit, 2010).

This burgeoning relationship has enabled China to ensure that Afghanistan will not be used as a base for training Uyghur separatists as it was during the Taliban regime and therefore it is in China's own national interest to prevent the re-emergence of the Taliban into power in Kabul. From an external security centric geopolitical viewpoint these developments in the Sino-Afghan relations are seen as a strategic move by China to a). increase its influence in Central Asia, b) offer a counter weight to Indian influence into Afghanistan at the behest of Pakistan, and possibly c) undermine the US attempts to make Afghanistan a client state. While pertinent, these analyses however do not consider the PRC's interest in having a reliable and stable partner in Kabul to cooperate against radicalisation and terrorism that would affect China's own security.

6.1.2 Pakistan

Talibanisation of the Pakistani state and society during the 1990s and the resulting support for the Afghan Taliban created some friction in the otherwise warm relations between Beijing and Islamabad (Malik, 2001). In the 1990s, until Beijing exerted considerable pressure, Pakistan was viewed as a haven for Uyghur refugees, a number of whom were given training by an array of *jihadi* groups (Small, 2010). As a result the Chinese have further invested political and economic capital to ensure that the government of Pakistan would deal with its own extremist elements and prevent them causing trouble in the Central Asian region, including Xinjiang. Pakistan has been scrupulously careful in trying not to offend China, its ‘all-weather friend’. The enhanced dependency of Pakistan on Chinese economic and military assistance has ensured that it is willing to take measures to clampdown on Uyghur rebels attending terrorist training camps in Pakistan’s tribal border areas (Cheng, 2010). Irrespective of the proximity between Xinjiang and Pakistan and the historical and religious affiliations between the two populations, Pakistan has taken pains to ensure that it does not compromise Chinese national interests in Xinjiang. In December 2000, the Pakistani army closed two Uyghur community centers called Kashgarabad and Hotanabad that had provided shelter for Uyghur immigrants in Pakistan for decades (Haider,2005). In 2001, Pakistan returned a Uyghur activist to China, apprehended among hundreds of Taliban detainees, which follows a pattern of repatriations of suspected Uyghur separatists in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan (Gladney, 2003). Ismail Kadir, reported to be the third highest leader of ETIM, was returned to China in 2002 following his capture by Pakistani authorities reportedly in either Kashmir or in the city of Rawalpindi, northern Pakistan, home to a sizeable community of Uyghurs (Davis, 2008). Increasing this cooperation in 2003, China and Pakistan agreed to enter into an extradition treaty to facilitate the exchange of prisoners (Davis, 2008). Ismail Semed, allegedly another Uyghur ETIM founder, was executed in Urumqi after being deported from Pakistan where he had fled after serving two jail terms for alleged involvement in the violent Baren uprising in 1990 (*BBC News*, 09.02.2007). Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf while on a state visit to China in 2003 stated that “his country will never allow anybody, including the terrorist force of ‘East Turkestan’, to use the territory of Pakistan to carry out any form of anti-China activities” (Xinhua, 04.11.2003*).* The Pakistan government has even declared its willingness to appease China by expelling Uygur students who have been studying at Pakistani *madarsi* or Islamic religious schools (Vicziany, 2003). This cooperation has continued to the present day. As recently as July 2011 Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief, Ahmed Shuja Pasha, undertook a visit to China to quell concerns that violence that erupted in Xinjiang the same month were orchestrated by Pakistani trained militants (*The Times of India*, 01.08.2011).

Similar to Central Asian nations the PRC has engaged both Afghanistan and Pakistan through enhanced economic and security cooperation in order to guarantee willingness to clamp down on Uyghur activities in their respective territories. These enhanced economic relations with these two nations have also allowed the PRC to further another domestic policy that wishes to open up its restive periphery to trade and development. As part of the ‘Great Western Development Plan’

Xinjiang has become a trading hub for Central Asia with several links to South Asia through Afghanistan and Pakistan. In this regard these two nations have been used to open up new trade routes while they have also become a source for natural resources, including minerals and oil for the Chinese economy.

The Karakorum highway finished in 1999 connected China and Pakistan and now provides a link between Xinjiang and the Arabian Sea (Holslag 2010). This Highway gave rise to a number of trade ventures, with Uyghurs' buying wool and leather goods, clothing, cutlery, and jute bags and selling teas, hide, electrical equipment, hardware, and silk. Pakistani traders and tourists frequently traveled to Xinjiang, largely to Kashgar and the southern oases where their culture, music, and movies have left a visible mark to this day (Haider, 2005). According to Haider, a major change in recent years has been the replacement of Uyghur truck drivers with ethnic Han drivers plying the Karakorum. As of 2002, five major Han Chinese-controlled trucking companies operated in Xinjiang markedly changing the dynamics of traditional business relationships in the region. This move to minimise Uyghur interaction with its Islamic neighbours along the Karakorum also coincided with increased concerns of rebels using these trade routes to smuggle weapons into Xinjiang. This symbolises the delicate balancing act that needs to be performed by the PRC in order to achieve its goals of increased trade and connectivity for the periphery while at the same time minimising the same links being used for anti-state activities.

The construction of the Gwadar port in the Pakistani province of Baluchistan has extended this trade route from the Xinjiang to the Indian Ocean. In 2010 Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari during an official visit to China discussed with his counterpart, Hu Jintao, plans to build a railway line from Kashgar in Xinjiang to Gwadar (*Spero News*, 12.07.2010). An oil pipeline is also being constructed from this port to Xinjiang, offering the PRC a new route to bring oil into the country from the Middle East and Africa (Lin, 2011). While it would minimise freight costs, the proposed pipeline is expected to address what is called 'China's Malacca Dilemma' which sees the PRC being vulnerable to any obstruction of the Malacca Straits through which currently 80 percent of its energy requirements flow to the mainland (Lin, 2011).

Building the Gwadar port with financial aid to the tune of US $ 200 million from the PRC has drawn significant attention from security analysts who view it as a pivotal 'pearl' in the grand 'string of pearls strategy'. While the port opened in 2008 is a commercial harbour, Pakistan's defence minister Ahmed Mukhtar is reported to have requested in May 2011 that the PRC build a naval base adjoining the current port (*Financial Times*, 22.05.2011). The defence minister's request that came within days of the killing of Osama bin Laden and the subsequent souring of relations with the US was quickly dismissed by the Chinese foreign ministry refuting any intention to build military installation at Gwadar (*The Jakarta Post*, 13.06.2011). Considering the close military ties between Pakistan and China it is not beyond the realm of possibility that this port could someday be used for non commercial purposes. Such an action is obviously seen as antagonistic towards India (Raman, 2010a, 2010b, Hariharan, 2008, Bhattacharya, 2009, Malik, 2007). However, viewing these developments solely from such a geopolitical security perspective and ignoring the economic and domestic considerations that relate to Xinjiang in particular and the western regions of China in general as described above, distorts the analysis and offer limited explanations to some of the PRC's actions. For example, the Gwadar port being a Chinese 'pearl' does not explain why the PRC has not so far sought to utilise other Pakistani ports in the Arabian Sea to establish a naval presence, nor does it explain why the PRC has invested in oil pipe lines, roads and railways linking the port with Xinjiang.

A similar pattern can be witnessed regarding the other so called 'pearls' in the Indian Ocean. The Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka is being built with Chinese aid along with an oil refinery which is expected to provide refining facilities to oil being shipped from the Middle East and Africa. The Sittwe port in Myanmar, also built with Chinese aid, is linked with an oil pipeline and transportation infrastructure to Yunnan Province which offers a route for oil to be pumped to the mainland (Lin, 2011). The commercial Port at Chittagong in Bangladesh could be an access point for goods to and from Tibet through Nepal or to Yunnan through Myanmar.

While the 'string of pearls' theory may have merit from a geo-strategic security perspective, its inability to address some of the key Chinese domestic compulsions mentioned above make it incomplete and often misleading. There is no doubt that the Sino- Pakistan relationship is a deep rooted one which does include clear geostrategic calculations by both parties, particularly with regard to India. Yet ignoring the domestic factors, such as security and stability in Xinjiang, that drive China towards a closer relationship with Pakistan is a significant omission. Therefore having considered these concerns, the analysis of China's policies towards its Muslim neighbours in South Asia becomes much clearer.

6.2 Relations with India-Nepal-Bhutan in relation toTibet

Tibet has for decades played a key role in determining the PRC's foreign policy towards its Himalayan neighbours. These polices have been dynamic, and have often considered the evolving ground situation in Tibet, the perception of insecurity by the PRC, trans-border interactions of Tibetan populations, the need to open up new trade routes and of course the grander geo strategic manoeuvres that take place between China and India to vie for influence in the region. Although factors of tension and instability are always present in this region, a new era in regional diplomacy is emerging since the turn of the century as China takes steps to realize its priority for 'economic development in a peaceful environment' (Mathou, 2005). At the centre of these policies are Tibet's three South Asian neighbours, India, Nepal and Bhutan. All these countries have had historic, cultural, religious and trade ties with Tibet for centuries.

Fravel (2008), analysing China's border disputes with its neighbours since 1949, argues that the PRC has opted for peaceful negotiations over military expediency at times when the ruling regime has perceived itself to be insecure due to internal instability while it has taken a more hard-line stance when regime security has been favourable. According to Fravel, the gravest threats to regime insecurity were caused by the uprisings in Xinjiang and Tibet in the late 1950s and early 1960s and 1990s. In addition, periods of tension over Taiwan and the period immediately after the Tiananmen incidents were also perceived to be of particular vulnerability. The periods in which China showed the greatest willingness to negotiate its international border disputes, particularly in Central and South Asia, corresponds to these periods in which security in Tibet and Xinjiang were most challenged.

In the early 1950s when India, Nepal, Pakistan and Burma made overtures to negotiate their territorial disputes, the PRC often ignored them. The Tibetan uprising of 1959, which was the largest revolt China had faced in its periphery up to that time involving up to 87,000 rebels, threatened the control of 13 percent of the country, deepened its vulnerability and increased its cost of being in conflict with its South Asian neighbours. As the Chinese government moved to crush the rebellion, it was ever more important to have stable ties with its Himalayan neighbours. In this backdrop the PRC actively pursued negotiations with Burma, Nepal and India and offered considerable compromises from its previous positions. Fravel argues that during this period the PRC demonstrated its greatest levels of flexibility regarding its territorial disputes. While the borders with Nepal and Burma were agreed upon during this period, negotiations with India did not succeed. While in recent years the PRC has strengthened its claim on Southern Tibet (Arunachal Pradesh), prior to 1962 it was willing to accept the status quo where a land swap was proposed in which Aksai Chin would remain with the PRC and it would cease claims for Arunachal Pradesh. This is an interesting position since the PRC believed, with some reasonable evidence, that the Tibetan uprising had received external support, especially from the US and nationalist elements through India. By compromising over territorial claims and securing its borders, China sought to limit external support for the revolt in Tibet and gain recognition for its sovereignty over the disputed region.

A similar pattern is witnessed regarding Xinjiang where, in the early 1960s as violence and dissent increased, China moved swiftly to conclude border agreements with neighbours. It was generous in ceding claims over Afghanistan and Pakistan. The PRC signed boundary agreements with both these countries in 1963 ceding the Wakhan Corridor to Afghanistan (International Boundary Study, 1969) and 1942 sq. Kilometres to Pakistan (Denis, 1989). In 1962 as tensions with India and Taiwan increased and ethnic unrest spread from Tibet to Xinjiang in what was later termed the 'Yita incident', where over 60,000people fled across the border, the PRC took immediate steps to carryout border discussions with Mongolia and North Korea in addition to Pakistan and Afghanistan. Like some South Asian nations, these countries had been previously rebuffed, but due to increasing insecurity domestically, China had reached out to them in early 1962. A similar pattern can be seen regarding territorial disputes and China's approach for their resolution in the early 1990s, when once again the PRC was internally weakened due to the Tiananmen uprising and ethnic unrest in Tibet and Xinjiang. Even as the PRC emerged politically and militarily stronger and in a position to intimidate the newly independent Central Asian states, which no longer had the backing of the mighty Soviet Union, the PRC opted for peaceful negotiations and compromise, signing six boundary agreements in the 1990s.

6.2.1 India

Tibet remains a key factor in India-China relations and is a source of mutual suspicion. Most Indian analysts when interpreting China's actions in Tibet fail to fathom the PRC's own 'insecurity dilemma' in the troubled region and often interpret Chinese actions as part of a grander strategy that is fundamentally driven by its hostility towards India. While unresolved border disputes along the Sino-Indian border remains a point of contention and tension, understating China's insecurity over Tibet, policies applied domestically to address these concerns and their international dimensions, can offer a clearer view of China's policies towards India and the region.

The numerous challenges to Chinese sovereignty in Tibet, as discussed in 4.3 and the policies adopted to domestically address these, as detailed in chapter 5, entails the PRC wanting to achieve certain goals in its dealings with India. Firstly, it would want to minimise the threat posed by dissident groups that could destabilise the TAR. For years the Dalai Lama and over a 100,000 Tibetan refugees have found refuge in India and made it their principle base. While the PRC has not been successful in securitizing the threat from these Tibetan groups, as it has done with Uygur separatists, they still pose a political and ideological threat to the stability of the PRC. Also the threat of the Tibetan issue being used by foreign nations such as India and the US to destabilise the PRC, as was witnessed during the Cold war, is also of considerable concern. The increase in connectivity to Tibet as envisioned by the 'Go West' policy is easier through its Himalayan neighbours rather than from China's coastal regions. It is for this reason that for centuries its natural trading partners have been its Himalayan neighbours to the South. This trading relationship ceased with the Chinese takeover in 1959. Therefore reopening these trade routes and increasing trade have emerged as key policy objectives for the PRC in dealing with India and Nepal.

In the whole of the South Asian region, China's economic engagement has been most intense with India. While history has complicated Sino-Indian relations with several political impediments including the unresolved border dispute that continues to affect the bilateral relationship, economic interaction, especially in recent years, has been vibrant (Palit, 2010). Since the early 1990s, bilateral trade between China and India has been booming and by 2010 had reached US $ 60 billion. Both sides have pledged to increase it to US $ 100 billion by 2015 (*The Hindu*, 16.12.2010).

Similar to Xinjiang emerging as a hub for trade in the Central Asian region, the TAR is on its way to becoming a trading hub for the Himalayas. Apart from building infrastructure and adopting preferential policies to attract more funds, technology, and professionals from inland areas and other parts of the world, the TAR has been improving foreign trade and custom services and developing export oriented industries. Regional authorities are planning to establish border trade markets in 27 counties and townships. The construction of free trade zones where tariff exemptions would apply to specific goods is also under consideration (Mathou, 2005).

As part of this strategy to open up to the region, trans-border trade between India has significantly improved in recent years. During a visit of Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee to Beijing in 2003, the first in a decade, the two countries agreed to make an effort to address their relations particularly in the Himalayan region. During this meeting China and India signed a MoU to expand border trade (*Xinhuanet*, 23.06.2003). The most significant decision of the MoU was to look into the possibility of reopening the Tibet-India trade route via the Nathu La Pass, which separates the TAR from the Indian state of Sikkim. As a result in 2006 the two countries opened this historic trade route allowing trade between India and Tibet after 44 years since closing of the pass. Trade through Nathu La Pass accounted for 80 percent of the total border trade volume between China and India in the early 1900s. But following their border conflict in 1962, the two countries closed this route which then became a tightly guarded frontier. With Nathu La Pass opened, it is only 1,200 kilometres by land from Lhasa to Calcutta, a major coastal city in India and an access point to the Indian Ocean. Until 2006, 90 percent of the goods that were exported from Tibet were shipped by sea through the port of Tianjin situated 4,400 kilometres from Lhasa (*Xinhuanet*, 05.07.2006). Chinese aid to develop the Chittagong Port in Bangladesh would also further strengthen this link from the TAR to the Bay of Bengal and provide another important trading route for its goods to reach a global market.

The MoU on opening up of the Nathu La Pass also allowed the two countries to address a contentious issue regarding the status of the Indian state of Sikkim, a former protectorate that was incorporated into the Indian union in 1975, a development not recognized by the PRC. By agreeing to open up a trading route through Sikkim, Beijing took an important and symbolic step towards recognizing Sikkim as an integral part of India. While mitigating an issue of contention the PRC on this occasion also demonstrated that it was willing to compromise on its border issues for the sake of greater stability in the Himalayas, especially in Tibet. In return prime minister Vajpayee during his visit in

2003 declared that India "recognizes that the Tibet Autonomous Region is part of the territory of the People's Republic of China and reiterates that it does not allow Tibetans to engage in anti-China political activities in India" (*Xinhuanet*, 23.06.2003).

6.2.2 Nepal

Nepal and Bhutan as two nations sandwiched between the rising great powers of Asia are of particular interest in an analysis of China's South Asia policy. Due to their geo-strategic location these two countries are often featured in realist security analysis that sees both China and India vying for influence mostly as a strategic calculation to undermine the other. While these geopolitical security calculations may have validity, as was the case with Afghanistan and Pakistan, they do not offer a complete picture of China's interests and considerations when forming its external relations. Therefore once more, the consideration of domestic insecurity, particularly in Tibet, would offer a clear picture as to the main interest of the PRC.

Throughout history, Nepal's relations with China have mostly been shaped by conflicts over territory and the control of Tibet (US, Library of Congress 1991). Since the Sino-India war of 1962 until the recent ascendance of Maoists to power in 2008, China had adopted a policy of 'non-intervention' in the internal matters of Nepal. It is interesting to note here that China did not support the Maoist rebels during its bloody insurgency from 1994 to 2008. From a realist geopolitical vantage point, it is reasonable to assume that the PRC would have supported a group with which it shares a close ideological affinity and was fighting against a monarchy backed by rival India. The lack of such a development can be inferred as the PRC's desire for stability in Nepal against the mere advancement of its political influence. This would once again demonstrate the pattern witnessed in this region where the PRC has opted for cordial relations and promotion of stability with states that border its restive periphery. The demise of the monarchy and the emergence of political parties have however made China reshape its Nepal policy (Nayak, 2009). According to Hariharan (2008) Maoists since gaining power in 2008 have sought to enhance greater cooperation with Beijing, which in turn has significantly increased economic and military aid to Nepal (See Table 1).

As part of China's 'Go West' policies, it has made headway in strengthening connectivity with Nepal. In 2003 the Nepal-China Non-Governmental Forum identified three sectors for Chinese investments and development. According to this plan, priority for future joint ventures would be given to energy, infrastructure, and the building industry sectors (Mathou, 2005). China has provided Nepal with substantial amounts of financial and technical aid for infrastructure projects, especially for construction of highways and hydropower stations. Nepal is one of the very few countries to be linked to Tibet by a direct air-route and to have a consulate general in Lhasa (Mathou, 2005). In an unprecedented move, the two countries decided in 2002 that the Chinese yuan would be freely exchangeable in Nepal. A new agreement was signed in July that year to boost bilateral cooperation in the fields of border trade, tourism, and transportation (Mathou, 2005). In 2005, China announced plans to extend the Golmud-Lhasa Railway to the border with Nepal. In 2008, Chinese officials declared that a railroad section from Lhasa to Zhangmu on the Tibet-Nepal border had been included in the Medium and Long-Term Railway Network Planning, while a US$100 million project was launched in 2009 to broaden the highway from Lhasa to central Nepal (Holslag, 2010). As a result of increased transportation connectivity, trade between the two countries has steadily increased and in 2009 stood at US $ 401 million with China selling goods worth about $386 million. In 2009 China agreed to provide duty free access to 497 Nepali goods to its market in order to bridge the trade gap (Bhattacharya, 2009).

Burgeoning economic and military relations in recent years have given the PRC greater political clout to address some of its concerns regarding Tibetan exiles and refugees based in Nepal. As was the case in the early 1960s soon after the Tibetan revolt, China has found it expedient to cultivate the Nepali government in recent years due to the growing tensions in Tibet, particularly after the March 2008 uprising. Beijing has sought greater cooperation with Kathmandu to curb what it calls ‘underground activities’ of some 20,000 Tibetan refugees settled in Nepal (Jaiswal 2010). As a result of growing economic interdependence Nepal has opted for a less sympathetic course of action regarding its Tibetan refugee population. An example is the Nepali refusal in March 2011 to allow Tibetan refugees to vote for a prime minister and members of parliament of the TGIE, under increasing pressure from the Chinese government (*VoA*, 21.03.11).

The recent history of Sino-Nepalese relations have also been marked by growing Chinese concerns over unauthorized movement of Tibetans to Nepal along what used to be the main transit route for Tibetans heading to the Dalai Lama’s base in India. Following the spectacular escape in 2000 via Nepal of the Karmapa Lama, one of the highest-ranking Tibetan religious figures, trans-border movements between Tibet and Nepal have been closely monitored. Beijing has been keen to secure guarantees from Kathmandu that the latter would clamp down on Tibetan exile activists in Nepal. Both sides have increased their cooperative efforts to curb illegal immigration, demonstrated in May 2003 by the repatriation of 18 Tibetans to China despite international appeals (Mathou, 2005). This cooperation is to be further extended through a 'friendship treaty' that is under consideration in which China reemphasises a policy of 'non aggression' and 'non-interference' while the Nepalese accept the 'one China policy' and specifically agree not to allow 'anti-Chinese activities' within its borders (Palit, 2010).

Several Indian analysts (Jaiswal 2010, Nayak 2009, Bhattacharya 2009, Raman, 2011) see China's growing relations with the Nepali government as a strategic challenge to India's security. Raman (2011) summing up these sentiments state;

> *The principal reason for the Chinese interest in Nepal is as a passage to South Asia and as an instrument for strengthening the Chinese presence in South Asia. China has a Look South policy to counter our Look East policy. As we try to move East wards to cultivate the countries of South-East Asia, it is trying to move southwards to outflank us*.

As the country with the largest Tibetan refugee population other than India and a nation with very close historical links with Tibet, it is but natural that China seeks to strengthen ties with Nepal. Also Cold war experiences demonstrate that Nepal could be a potential staging point for anti-Chinese activities in Tibet as witnessed in the 1950s and 60s when it was used as a base for covert operations by the CIA and Indian agents (Mackerras, 1994). The nexus between stability in Tibet and closer ties with Nepal is further demonstrated by the PRC's policies in the late 1950s when it finalised a border agreement with Nepal as the internal security in Tibet deteriorated. The continuing instability in Tibet and the PRC's policies to develop the region through greater economic cooperation also presents explanations for growing ties between Beijing and Kathmandu. For centuries Nepal has been a natural trading partner for Tibet and offers easy access to the South Asian region. Despite concerns of Indian policy makers and analysts, these factors remain independent of China's rivalry with India.

6.2.3 Bhutan

Unlike Nepal, Bhutan has adopted a clearly aligned foreign policy favouring India when dealing with its two giant neighbours. It is the PRC's only neighbour that does not maintain diplomatic relations with it (US Department of State, 2010b). The establishment of official contacts between Bhutan and the PRC has been a slow and a cautious process. China is a neighbour only by virtue of its occupation of Tibet, with which Bhutan had deep cultural, familial and religious ties through Vajrayana Buddhism in the past. Bhutan, in fact, owes its origin as a nation-state to a Tibetan monk, Shabdrung Ngawang Namgyel, who arrived in the country in 1616 (Hasrat 1980). Though relations with Tibet have been close, they have often seen conflict since historically Tibet's rulers considered Bhutan as a vassal state. These traditional political ties were loosened when a hereditary royal family became established in Bhutan with British-Indian approval at the turn of the century and broken with the displacement of the Qing dynasty from China by the 1911 revolution (Mansingh, 1994). According to Mansingh traditional religious Tibet-Bhutan ties are also complicated due to the separate monastic orders, within Vajrayana Buddhist, that are established in the two countries. The traditional links between the religious orders were ruptured with the exile of the Dalai Lama from Tibet in 1959 and the victory of communist China. The deeply religious elite of Bhutan, especially the royal family, were not favourably disposed either to communism or to China and wished to disassociate Bhutan from Tibet. In 1960 Bhutan sealed its borders with Tibet, closing traditional trade routes.

The PRC has been keen to maintain good relations with Bhutan regardless of the status of Tibet has placed aside the alleged claims of Chinese historical sovereignty (by proxy of Tibet) over Bhutan and preferred to use diplomacy rather than force. In this regard China has actively engaged Bhutan to resolve their disputed border. Since the commencement of discussions in 1984 more than two dozen rounds have been held until 2010 to resolve the dispute which have been mostly been successful (Kumar, 2010). If this border dispute is viewed from purely a geopolitical perspective, one could assume that a powerful state such as the PRC could easily intimidate a smaller neighbour to achieve its desired territorial advantage. Therefore once more it can be inferred that these overtures are due to the PRC's own vulnerability in Tibet and as a result, the desire to ensure that a neighbouring state such as Bhutan remains stable and amicable rather than antagonistic.

As part of its strategy to increase access to Tibet through its 'Go West' policy China has prioritised the reopening of the Yadong area, which is in Tibet adjacent to Bhutan. According to the TAR's 10th Five-Year Plan for 2001-2005, greater access to Yadong which used to be the region's largest land port, will not only boost the economy in Tibet but will also fuel foreign trade in China's western areas, such as Qinghai and Gansu provinces and the XUAR (*China Daily*, May 23, 2010). Through Yadong, the transportation distance will be shortened from these regions to South Asia by more than 9,000 km. There are direct roads linking Yadong and India's seaport Gandhinagar, which could facilitate imports and exports from China's western provinces to Southeast Asia and European countries (Mathou, 2004). From China's point of view, resuming trade with Bhutan is part of an overall strategy in the Himalayas, which has been framed in the global context of the development of China's western provinces. The resumption of trans-Himalayan trade is a key element of that strategy in which China has already increased trade with Nepal and India (Mathou, 2004).

Increasing its engagement with Bhutan has presented several advantages for China. As a Himalayan nation with strong cultural, religious, and historical links with ancient Tibet, Bhutan retains sympathy for modern Tibet. Still, Bhutan has never advocated a proactive policy on the international scene in favour of Tibetan autonomy, nor does it maintain relations with the Dalai Lama. Interestingly the Dalai Lama has never visited Bhutan, the only Mahayana Buddhist state in the world. Also visits by Bhutanese leaders and dignitaries to Lhasa are given significant prominence by the Chinese media which views these as valuable endorsements by a country that is closely linked to the Tibetan people (Kumar, 2010). From this vantage point a relationship with Bhutan allowing cross-border movement of people is helpful in legitimising Chinese rule in Tibet. As both Tibet and Bhutan follow similar cultures, traditions and religions, Bhutanese acceptance and positive remarks on Chinese rule in Tibet are used as a vindication of Chinese policy in Tibet (Kumar, 2010).

However, this increased Chinese engagement with Bhutan, even if relatively minuscule compared to the commanding presence and influence of India, has worried some Indian analysts and policy makers. India's *Hindustan Times* reported in 2007 that Indian defence officials were concerned over Chinese involvement in Bhutan close to India's 'Chicken Neck'. This 37 kilometre wide corridor is situated 'choked' between Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan and connects the troubled north eastern region of the country with the rest of India. Chinese policies of greater cooperation with Nepal and Bhutan on one side of the corridor and Bangladesh on the other have often been interpreted as a strategic move to ‘choke’ India using this ‘vulnerability’ (Scott, 2008b). At a meeting with External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee, Defence Minister A.K. Antony, and National Security Adviser M.K. Narayanan "the Indian Army has raised an alarm at the increasing Chinese forays into Bhutan, which are close to the strategic Chumbi Valley, the tri-junction between India, Bhutan and China. While the trouble is a small stretch of China's border with Bhutan, the valley is very close to the Chicken's Neck, our gateway to the Northeast," according to the newspaper. “Army divisions east of Binaguri (in north-eastern India) would be rendered ineffective if the Chinese army manages to slice through Bhutan and cut the corridor off” said a senior MoD official from New Delhi (*Hindustan Times*, 12.12.2007). Similar concerns of India getting ‘choked’ by China using Bangladesh and Nepal have often featured in Indian military literature.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Singh (2003) in his comprehensive analysis of China-South Asia relations explains that such studies are predominantly based on English language secondary sources. Most of the primary sources are of Indian origin and even Chinese scholars are often compelled to seek them for the lack of Chinese equivalents. In such an environment where there is a serious dearth of the PRC's policy literature written in English, that detail its interests, objectives and trajectories in its engagement with South Asia it is not surprising there are voluminous quantity of analysis, often by Indians, that offer the same without much consideration for Chinese perspective. Mostly these analyses view Chinese actions in South Asia through a realist geopolitical, security centric perspective that assumes China is driven in this region, as it maybe in Southeast and Northeast Asia, by its concerns for its security mostly from external factors. As a result its actions in South Asia are interpreted to be driven primarily by the need to secure borders and guard against external aggression, significantly by India. In this India centric security perspective, most Chinese actions be it infrastructure development, increased political and diplomatic relations with other South Asian nations or even cultural intercourses are viewed as part of a grand security strategy that envisions squeezing India's sphere of influence. These have led to theories such as the 'String of Pearls' strategy and raised concerns over India's strategic vulnerability in its 'Chicken Neck'. Another framework of analysis offers an economic and trade perspective to interpret Chinese interests in South Asia. This notes the changes that have occurred since 1978 when the PRC made a conscious policy decision to differentiate between economic and political imperatives when formulating foreign policy. It also notes China's insatiable appetite for oil and mineral resources to fuel its expanding economy, its desire to increase and secure trade routes and expand bilateral trade with neighbouring nations. Both these frameworks consider the PRC has a homogenous, singular entity with a uniformity of interests.

While there are reasonable geo-political considerations that should be taken into account when interpreting Chinese foreign policy an alternative set of explanations can be offered from a perspective closer to the domestic front. As Wang (2010) suggests, greater threats to Chinese sovereignty come not from external forces but from within its own territory. In this regard the minority regions, mostly in the peripheral western parts of China pose a significant threat to Chinese sovereignty, territorial integrity and security. Therefore a third framework for analysis taking into consideration China's internal security vulnerabilities, especially in the frontiers can be a means of understanding what drives Chinese policies with its neighbours in South Asia.

It was argued that the PRC shows an interesting dichotomy in its security/ threat perception. The ‘core’ which for centuries have remained intact, homogeneous and ethnic Han dominated is secure in its identity. This region projects a forceful China, a strong centralised state with little vulnerability. Yet the periphery demonstrates many traits of an ‘insecurity dilemma’, often seen in weak third world nations where state authority is challenged by disgruntled groups usually with different historical and cultural identities to the rest of the nation. In China these have manifested in the ‘periphery’ where ethnic minorities remain un-integrated with the ‘core’.

Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949 there have been attempts to address these issues through a variety of policies ranging from forceful assimilation by diluting of minority identities to a more recent approach to offer economic incentives to reduce the disparity between the ‘core’ and ‘periphery’. Though the tools and methodologies of assimilation have changed with time, the overall objective has remained the same. A Maoist nationalities policy adopted in the early decades since 1949 has given way to a policy that lays emphasis on development and reducing economic disparities as a source of integration. These policies have been extended to the foreign policy sphere, especially when dealing with Central and South Asian states that neighbour the restive Xinjiang and Tibet Autonomous Regions. The domestic policies and perceived vulnerabilities in Xinjiang have been expressed in China’s dealings with Afghanistan and Pakistan while a similar pattern can be witnessed in relations with India, Nepal and Bhutan with regard to Tibet. Understanding these domestic factors that influence Chinese policy abroad would help better understand the driving forces behind some of its actions and also reduce tensions that could result from misconceptions.

While this thesis limited its scope to five states, the analysis can be applied to the whole South Asian region to see the numerous interconnections between perceived Chinese vulnerabilities and its foreign policy. Central Asia too would be an interesting region to apply this framework due to its geographical proximity to Xinjiang and the resulting impact on China’s internal security.

However this domestic sovereignty perspective has its limitations and may not offer a significant tool when analysing China’s foreign relations with all its neighbours. For example one could argue that even though there are domestic considerations involved in China’s Southeast Asia policy it is primarily driven by realist geopolitics. In this region classical realism of power politics is visible where the emerging great power of China interacts with a number of regional and global powers in a complex struggle to maximize power and influence. Its military doctrine, which for decades has focused on Taiwan and sovereignty disputes in the South China Sea and eventual conflicts that could result from these conflicts, also adds credence to this notion. As a result China's Southeast Asian policy would have a greater emphasis on security rather than economics or domestic sovereignty considerations. Similarly a commercial liberalist perspective primarily driven by economic interests is suitable to comprehend China's policies in regions such as Africa or South America.

The dichotomy of the 'core-periphery' structure and the resulting 'insecurity dilemma' as proposed in this thesis could offer a tool for analysis when looking at security and foreign policies of other large third world nations such as India, particularly in their dealings with neighbouring states.

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