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CHINA'S FOREIGN POLICY TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA

**Expanding the Concepts of National Interest and
National Security**

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Summary

The present study provides an analysis of China's foreign policy towards Central Asia to trace 'culture of China's foreign policy'. The culture of China's foreign policy approach deals with China as an identity and process rather than being static or within boundaries. The present research highlights China's multilateral and cooperative policies in Central Asia and with Russia as an outcome of evolutionary process of construction of China's identity. The complex process of building relations with Central Asian region although within a short period of time (in post-Soviet context) are analysed to make a case for China's innovative (partially) political processes of dealing with frontier security and embracing multilateralism. This is explained by studying the evolution of China's identity and interests and the role of significant events that affect its perceptions of self and that are a prescription for its policy orientations as observed in case of foreign policy towards Central Asia. The theoretical foundation of Peter Katzenstein thesis is helpful premises upon which an argument in favour of the discourse of identity and security is developed to see how culture of national security of China and 'complementarity' of Central Asian states is at work in security cooperation seen among these states. By problematizing the notion of 'national interest', the present study argues that interests of the states can be contextualized in a broader environment referred as civilization to trace the relationship between interests and identities of China as at play in Central Asian region. By placing the political state of 'China' in the broader context of civilization and as evolving, helps understand how Chinese political spectrum seeks to construct and maintain a great power identity while locating 'self' against 'others'. It further argues that the cooperative and multilateral policies of China in form of Shanghai Cooperation Organization can be understood best by studying how the configurations of identity of China has guided the policy formation process; that constructs and reconstructs interstate normative structure in form of SCO.

Acronyms

ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of South East Asian Nations
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
BTC	Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (Pipeline)
CAEC	Central Asian Economic Community
CAGP	China-Central Asia Gas Pipeline
CAP	Central Asia Petroleum Limited
CASS	Chinese Academy of Social Sciences
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CGNPG	China Guangdong Nuclear Power Group
CIIS	China Institute of International Studies
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNOOC	China National Offshore Oil Corporation
CNPC E&D	CNPC Exploration and Development Company Limited
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
CPC	Communist Party of China
CST	Collective Security Treaty
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organisation
ESPO	Eastern Siberia Pacific Ocean (Pipeline)
EU	European Union
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IEA	International Energy Agency
IR	International Relations
K2	Karshi-Khanabad Base
KMG	KazMunayGas (Kazakh National Oil Company)
KTZ	Kazakhstan Temir Zholy (Kazakh National Railway Company)

LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
MMG	Mangistaumunaigas (Kazakh Oil Company)
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NIEO	New International Economic Order
NIS	Newly Independent States
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
NTS	Non Traditional Security
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PRC	People's Republic of China
RATS	Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure
RCTS	Regional Counter Terrorism Structure
SATs	Centre-Central Asia Gas Pipelines
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SINOPEC	China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation Limited
SOEs	State Owned Enterprises
TAPI	Turkmenistan Afghanistan Pakistan India Pipeline
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UNWC	UN Convention on Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WEGP	West-East Gas Pipeline

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Chapter 1

Introduction: Expanding the Role of National Interest in Foreign Policy Behaviour of China towards Central Asia

1.1. Background

After the end of Cold War, for more than a decade, IR scholarship had been engaged with answering overwhelmingly whether China is rising or not? To put it in a more focused way, what a powerful China is going to be like for international system (Christensen 2006; de Burgh 2005; Goldstein 1997-98; Goodman and Segal 1997)? During these years, China's regional policies and its global attitude had remained focus of great power explanatory lens by analysts. The contextualization of foreign policy of China had also been heavily influenced by the theories of great power politics. To estimate the power of China, the strong criteria adopted by the mainstream IR analysts has been to measure the material capabilities of China. China's rising economy and its tendency to build military was measured to get idea about the location of China on the ladder of the great power status.

On the basis of capabilities, China's rise debates had been entertaining both views, in its favour and against the idea of China's rise.¹ A number of scholarly works show that the western powers were wary of emergence of China as a challenger to Western norms and ideology soon after the end of Cold war. Many believed that China replaced Russia as the harbinger of Communist ideology and emerged as last country with communist agenda. "The Coming Conflict with China" by Richard Bernstein and Ross H. Munro (1997b) was an open warning against the inevitable ideological and economic wars between two different world orders where expansionist and aggressive China is a definite rival to the western world order in a decade to come. Apart from this, the warning messages were arising through the works of Samuel P. Huntington's Clash of Civilizations thesis and Francis Fukuyama's End of History argument (Huntington 1993; Fukuyama 1992).

This is an important area to indicate that even when scholars were not sure if China has enough capabilities to be considered a great power or not, they seemed pretty sure that China is a

¹ For views favouring China's rise and coming threat see Thomas J. Christensen (2006) "Fostering Stability or Creating a Monster? The Rise of China and US Policy towards East Asia"; Hugo De Burgh (2005) *China and Britain: The Potential Impact of China's Development*; Avery Goldstein (1997-98) "Great Expectations: Interpreting China's Arrival"; David S. G. Goodman and Gerald Segal (1997) *China Rising: Nationalism and Interdependence*. For views against China's rise see Gordon G. Chang (2001) *The Coming Collapse of China*; Gerald Segal (1999) "Does China Matter?"

challenger to the western unipolarity and western liberal ideology. These writings where the US and western norms were presented as ‘we-ness’² and the Chinese norms were presented as ‘they-ness’ made an alarming sound not only to western democracies but also for leadership in China. On academic levels, there is growing trend in looking at the elements of clash in inter-state relations. With state as the unit of analysis, there is definitely minimal space to map how broader identities might engage or encounter each other rather than clashing.

1.1.1. Nature of the Problem

1.1.2. The ‘New Great Game’ and Representation of China as ‘Competitor’

Central Asia has been considered a vital region for which great powers struggled for influence in the past. After the collapse of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), five Central Asian states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan emerged as independent states. With the end of the Cold war and birth of Central Asian states, many scholars believed that the traditional super power struggle over the region referred as ‘Great Game’, has returned and this time the ‘game’ is even more complex (Kleveman 2004: 4; Amineh 2003: 209; Marketos 2009: 4). While the original ‘Great Game’ was a struggle for dominance, control and security between two imperial powers, Britain and Russia, over the region during 19th century, today more than one actor has joined the team as competitors. Russia has been considered old stakeholder in the region that still considers the Central Asian states as ‘Near Abroad’ and a natural habitat for influence (Rumer 2002: 58). The US has been looking for energy resources and influence. China was quick to develop diplomatic relations with the region and the relations have been growing ever since. With the addition of more players and increasing complexity of the ‘game’, there is a strong emphasis in the literature that each actor is busy increasing its power stake in the region.

In existing literature dealing with China’s developing relations with Central Asia, the emphasis on national interest is area where the whole story of China’s active engagement with Central Asia revolves around. The main argument in most of existing literature dealing with foreign policy of China towards Central Asia is to unfold the national interest of China linked with these states. The quest for energy resources fulfils such analytical works as driving force behind China’s active involvement in Central Asia. The literature considers that top priority for China is having a growing economy with growing energy needs (Friedberg 2006: 34; Liao 2006: 61;

² The term is used by a number of IR scholars with reference to common regional identity. To cite a few: Julie Gilson (2002) *Asia Meets Europe: Inter-Regionalism and the Asia-Europe Meeting*; Yuen Foong Khong (1997) “ASEAN and the Southeast Asian Security Complex”; Michael N. Barnett (1995) “Sovereignty, Nationalism, and Regional Order in the Arab States System”.

Marketos 2009). For these set of scholarly works, the proactive foreign policy on part of China towards Central Asia is with the single aim of securing the energy resources (Ikegami 2009; Rumer 2002; Bhadrakumar 2006; Garnett 2001). Russia, on the other hand is considered more interested in exercising its traditional great power role in the area by staying politically and militarily influential (Bhadrakumar 2006; Garnett 2001; Rousseau 2011: 20).

The story does not end with defining the national interest of China and other competitors with respect to their relations with Central Asia. The spirit of the analysis is that the national interest of each state is very likely to collide with other powers and that makes the stimulating and much talked about subject of the 'New Great Game'. In this competitive environment, China needs to take Russian and US involvement into account in coming up with a political strategy that can best help it to defend its interests and borders (Bassan 2011: 11). The competition between China and Russia will be a hindrance in their cooperation oriented policies and that there should be no doubt that the growing Chinese presence in the region will be met with resistance from Russia's leading energy role in Central Asia (Bhadrakumar 2006; Garnett 2001).

Scholars believed that after the disintegration of the USSR, Russia started its neo-imperialism in Central Asian states (Goble 1994: 192-193; West 1994: A23; Blank 1995: 385). Because of Russian sensitivity towards maintaining its influence in the Central Asian region, Russian policies throughout the 1990s have been seen as obstructive and confrontational (O'Hara 2004: 147). Russia was even considered to be flaring up the regional conflicts after the disintegration of the USSR to influence the politics of these states in Russian favour (Zverev 1996; Herzig 1999: 165; Heslin 1998). This sensitivity for maintaining influence in the region by Russia coincided with emerging threats regarding the rise of China and its implications for the Asian region. Aaron L. Friedberg felt that China's economic rise brings a gloomy picture for the peace and stability of Asia region, let alone multipolarity. A mighty China will be without doubt more assertive with regard to its weak neighbours (Friedberg 1993/ 94: 16). Same predictions were made regarding China's future role in Asia-Pacific region where a stronger China is likely to undermine the peace and stability. The basis for his claim is that the economic development of China will make China more assertive and less cooperative with its neighbours. Roy also refers to China's domestic characteristics that make Chinese leadership more likely to use force to achieve its political goals (Roy 1994: 150).

The nature of this competition between China and other states minimizes the role of any multilateral setting within this 'Great Game.' The multilateral organization in Central Asia comprising of China, Russia and four Central Asian states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan Tajikistan and Uzbekistan called as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (hereafter SCO) was referred as 'So-called Shanghai Cooperation Organization' soon after its establishment (Garnett 2001: 41). Even today, the soon coming collapse of SCO or irrelevant existence is confidently predicted

because of “underlying rivalry” between China and Russia (Rousseau 2011: 23). The main partner within SCO, Russia, is seeking to isolate the Central Asian states by restoring an all-encompassing control over these former Soviet Republics underpinning any possibility for co-existence with China (Rousseau 2011: 20).

These underlying dynamics are mostly the theoretical ones that have been predicted since the times the both states, Russia and China strengthened mutual ties. These theoretical speculations are less proven in policy statements and even in practice of these states. The most of literature produced regarding the ‘Great Game’ and the role of China and Russia in the light of nomothetic theories end up dealing with the identities of the states as pre-given. In these identities, it is capabilities that are the main standard for defining the identity and interests of the states. But it is not sufficient as China’s growing security presence and economic growth has different meaning for different states. A rising China is considered a threat for Japan as depicted by some analysts (Calder 2006; Sutter 2002). The meaning and implication of rising China is not similar to Central Asian region.

No theory explains and emphasises the concept of National Security as neo-realist who treat the concept a static one. The neo-classical realist come up with a different and flexible understanding while integrating the sociological elements like identity and perceptions while staying within the domain of statist analysis in order to maintain their connection with realist strand. The neo-realist and balance of power theories dominate much of the analysis regarding China’s relations with Central Asian states. In the light of Neo-realist theories, cooperation has its own limits because of the domineering logic of security competition (Mearsheimer 1994/95). Anderson while pointing out the limits of Sino-Russian strategic partnership depicts the prevailing Realists’ opinion that continued mutual mistrust is helpful in refraining both states to secure any strong partnership. This mutual mistrust between China and Russia limits Russian arms sales to China. This environment of suspicion about each other’s intentions between China and Russia also ensures that neither country can rely on a stable mainland flank as a basis for a more assertive stance in maritime or Central Asia (Anderson 1997: 11).

While talking about national security of China, a number of works refer to the rules of traditional ‘Great Game’ which today has engulfed the major powers China, Russia and the US in a strive for more power and influence. According to Anderson, the military trade relationship between China and Russia is non-working as Russia must feel reluctant to sell arms to China on the basis of avoiding the threat of China emerging as a strong military power. Even if this argument is refuted on the basis of China’s changing attitude today. The western tone is still the same. Shambaugh refutes any possibility on the part of China to compromise or show any flexible attitude. In his words, China has adopted “a new truculence” and “unwillingness” to

compromise. China has without doubt become more assertive and difficult to deal with (Shambaugh 2010).

To sum up the analysis and predictions of the above mentioned works; the reason behind China's active engagement with Central Asian region is to add another supply route to quench its growing energy thirst. The growing economy of China is likely to disturb status quo resulting in emergence of China as an assertive and exploitative power for its neighbours. Russia's sensitivity towards maintaining its influence in its 'near abroad' can more likely restrict China's active diplomacy in Central Asian region. The confrontational attitude between regional states makes any multilateral organization like SCO largely irrelevant or even might make it dysfunctional. The 'Great Game' thesis simplicity makes it an attractive description to cover the dynamics of the regional political landscape. The following paragraphs provide an overview of the trends in interstate relations as happening in the region. This overview will later help analyse if the pessimistic views regarding confrontation between China and other competitors, especially Russia, provide convincing interpretation of the complex regional realities.

1.1.3. Materialistic Assumptions Vs. Ground Realities

Scholars believe that energy makes the most important aspect of China's active engagement with Central Asian region but a careful analysis of China-Central Asia relations shows that energy deals became part of the interactions far later than whole decade of extensive security cooperation. During early 1990s, border talks started among China, Russia and newly independent Central Asian states. These border settlement acts lead all parties to establish Shanghai Five, a regional organization, with China, Russia, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as its member in 1996. This organization played an important role in enhancing cooperation in settling border disputes and in demilitarizing the borders to enhance military trust among the member states. For a whole decade, the relations among these states had been flourishing in the field of security. The proponents of the view that China has established good relations with Central Asia to get hold over its energy resources miss to cover the security related cooperation of the whole decade as well as the evolutionary process of Shanghai Five that worked as a linchpin of confidence building.

It was believed that more assertive China will be uncompromising and even imposing regarding its territorial claims towards its weaker neighbours (Kristof 1993: 68-70). An economically powerful China will be building its military and 'bullying' its neighbours that will result into corroding the environment (Kristof 1993: 68). China and the USSR carried unresolved border disputes throughout the Cold War. In 1964, *A Concise Geography of China* showed China's borders being settled with all neighbours, except the frontiers between Xinjiang and Kazakhstan and along the Amur and Ussuri rivers that was at dispute with the Soviet Union. In 1960, there

were 400 clashes over undefined border issues between Russia and Chinese troops; in 1962 more than 5000; in 1963 these clashes are claimed to be more than 4000 (Bolton 2009: 159). After 1989, China and Soviet Union have been actively engaging in border talks. In 1991, in an agreement China received approximately 52 percent of the claimed disputed areas (Fravel 2005: 76). During the demarcation process, China further offered concessions (Ibid). During border talks with Kazakhstan, in 1994, 1996 and 1997, China made significant concessions to Kazakhstan. As a result, China got hold of approximately 22 percent of previously claimed territory (Fravel 2005: 79). In subsequent talks with Kyrgyzstan, China received 32 percent of claimed territory (Ibid).

Fravel believes that it was internal threats that moved China to resolve border dispute. In 1990s sustained separatist violence in Xinjiang produced compromises with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan regarding settling disputed borders (Fravel 2005: 62). But this was not a new phenomenon, since 1980s Chinese leaders had been facing series of constantly spreading uprisings, undoubtedly inspired by the disintegrative tendencies flourishing in USSR (Blank 1995: 394). This argument can be broadened where China was joined by the weakening and internally destabilized USSR in facing the mutual threats of separatism and domestic instability. After the disintegration of the USSR, the newly independent Central Asian states and China had been threatened by the separatist tendencies in the aftermath of Soviet Afghan war and the rise of Taliban. The mutual understanding of the threat or in other words, culture of insecurity made China, Central Asian states and Russia to act more willingly to settle lingering border disputes among them. Throughout the Cold War, China and Soviet Union had been clashing over border disputes. The end of Cold War saw the disintegration of the USSR. This moment could have been an ideal moment to show Chinese assertiveness for the territorial claims. On the contrary, China was more compromising in settling border disputes with Central Asian neighbours.

It had been considered that SCO is likely to meet an ill fate on the basis of China's assertive nature, Russia's neo-imperial mentality and the potential Russo-Chinese rivalry. The SCO, on the contrary, has been growing since its creation in 2001. The organization has sought the attention of IR scholars, regional analysts and media in recent years for getting stronger and even emerging as strong enough to pose a threat to the US and its liberal democratic norms (Cohen 2006; Blank 2007). This organization is not only surviving, it is getting stronger and stronger with expanding cooperation in the fields of anti-terrorism, military and energy. Some have raised speculations that SCO is emerging as rival of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) (Weir 2005).

1.1.4. Why Practices are Different from Theories?

The dominant perspective to understand the regional dynamics and the role played by external powers including China in Central Asia is simplified perspective of Realism and Neo-realism. Due to the preoccupation of these rationalist approaches with power and material capabilities and the distribution of these capabilities along with the emphasis on unit level analysis while explaining China's foreign policy towards Central Asia has left the new dynamics of the region insufficiently explored. China's foreign policy does not receive a separate treatment and most of the scholarly works use the same theoretical lens of power politics to describe China's interaction with these states and its interests as expressed in foreign policy of China. The way power struggle is exercised is portrayed as two fold by realist framework. Firstly, the states try to enhance their military powers for their national security. Secondly, states struggle to make sure that no other state captures the competitive position against that state (Mearsheimer 1994/95: 9). This competition over security leaves little room for trust among states (Van Evera 1992: 19). Using the lens of this power politics theory, China is portrayed as revisionist power that will change the current regional or international order to suit its interests and power status (Gilpin 1981: 208-209).

These approaches while maintaining that China's interests and its security is related to its borders place the cure in strengthening its material power. The relation of national security with a state and within boundaries has originated easy and short cut understanding of the concept of security. The concept is less relational and processual. Because of the theoretical lens used for the arguments of 'New Great Game' thesis, the description of China's policies in Central Asia emphasised on the national interests of China that were meant to be 'competing' with and other states. This overemphasis on competing interest leaves the story of 'collaborating interest' at play among China, Russia and Central Asian states understudied. The present study emphasises that these cooperative dynamics tell the whole story about the spirit of interstate relations among China and Central Asian region. The meaning of security and its interpretation with reference to China's territorial identity helps China increase regional cooperation through SCO.

China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region is overtly studied as a missing piece in international power struggle. This narrow approach has resulted in regional and domestic security culture of China in the context of Central Asian region understudied. Because of the preoccupation of these theories, the overtly discussed power and distribution of power is researched to measure the status and eventually threat emanating from the changing dynamics of the region. This approach lacks multi-dimensional approach to evaluate China's foreign policy, reducing it to a unit-structure level analysis.

It is important to note that threat perceptions are not pre-given on the basis of distribution of power, perceptions are rather socially constructed. Capabilities is not a complete story behind building partnerships, if that were the case, China's increasing capabilities could trigger threat perception on the part of neighbouring states as was predicted earlier. It is pattern of social relations and state identities that are corresponding among China and Central Asian states and the political processes that seek to undermine any such perceptions on part of SCO members.

Some label China Russia growing partnership in SCO as a way to cope with unipolar world order (Norling and Swanstrom 2007). Is it an external threat that is bringing China and Russia together? The misrepresentation of the cooperative policies as a struggle to cope with unipolarity on the part of China and Russia in Central Asia can be attributed to Realist emphasis that if states are too weak for self-defence, they seek to make themselves part of an alliance system that provides additional protection (Kissinger 2011: 515). This 'self-defence' is traditional threat emanating from an 'external enemy'. The above argument cannot be refuted completely. As the presence of China and Russia in an environment of unipolarity is the constitutive element of the identities of China and Russia. To rely solely on this structural aspects of identity abolishes any chance to engage with domestic sources of security of the states or demotes that to subordinated level. The reductionist approach that considers structure as the sole determinant of foreign policy behaviour of a state does not adequately describe the strengthening relationship between China and Russia. There are three main arguments that can problematize such reductionist hypothesis. Firstly, the Shanghai Five was an organization built strictly for solving domestic and regional border and security problems. The origin of the cooperation under auspices of Shanghai Five is domestic stability of both countries (Norling 2007: 33). Or in other words, the culture of national security made cooperation inevitable for both states. Secondly, not until the 9/11 attacks, the US had presence in the region (Deyermond 2009: 161). Yet by that time China, Russia and the Central Asian states had already resolved the border disputes and consolidated cooperation regarding 'three evils'.³ Thirdly, after 9/11, Russia was more close to the US as an ally in President Bush's declared 'war of terror' than China. Scholars believed that Russia is more attracted towards its western identity than its oriental identity that has made Russia swung back to its western orbit (Blank 2002). If there were an alliance between China and Russia against US led unipolarity, this clear shift in policies of Russia is hard to address.

While claims like a rising China will be exploitative towards its weak neighbours are proving wrong in Central Asia, it is important to note why a rising China is cooperative and multilateral

³ Official term used by Shanghai Cooperation Organization to refer to three problems of "Terrorism, Separatism and Fundamentalism".

and why the “False Promise”⁴ of SCO has not come true. While expanding the natural strive for power as referred to ‘offensive realism’ on the part of member states of any regional organization, the possibility of the existence of even NATO was rejected by Mearsheimer and other realists (Mearsheimer 1994/95: 14; Kissinger 1990: A23; Krasner 1993; Santis 1991; 51-65). The same was repeated regarding Shanghai Cooperation Organization that was destined to suffer from the underlying rivalry of the member states and mainly two great powers, China and Russia. The survival and development of SCO is an indicator that the organization is not an outcome of a linear, pre-set agenda, the fields of cooperation and common practices are rather constructed and evolved. These specific normative structures as embodied in SCO can be understood better by unfolding the complex political process that are the result of the identity, core values, and the processual nature of both. The evolutionary process of these norms and their origin is a subject that cannot be dealt with adequately without studying the identity of China as “being a member in community is shaped not only by the state’s external identity and associated behaviour but also by its domestic characteristics and practices” (Barnett 1996: 412).

1.1.5. Research Objectives

To address the lacunas of the existing literature to explain the contemporary realities of China’s foreign policy and the nature of interstate relations between China and Central Asia, the present research engages with the following set of arguments.

The identity of China is not determined by the sole standards of the distribution of power and material capabilities. It is important to understand the constitutive elements of the identity of China to measure the national interest of China determining its foreign policy preferences. The aim of present research is to explain that it is inadequate to attribute any particular ‘national interest’ guiding China’s active diplomacy towards Central Asia. Analysed against the background of rise of the state of China, China’s identity, political practices, social and political processes and the geostrategic elements, the study seeks to trace the ‘Culture of China’s foreign policy’ towards Central Asia. It seeks to contextualize the two important political processes of China as visible in Central Asia; territoriality and multilateralism. By using these political processes it makes a case for China’s processual and evolving identity and different meanings attached to it. By doing so, foreign policy making of China is traced as a complex process while providing an insight into traditional practices mingling with modernity in China’s multilateral and reaching out policy towards Central Asia. The thesis is not trying to establish that all the adopted policies in Central Asian region are norms/ core values with reference to territoriality and multilateralism. It is rather seeking to suggest important policies and practices that have

⁴ The Term was used by John J. Mearsheimer in the context of irrelevance of international institutions. For details see John Mearsheimer (1994/95) “The False Promise of International Institutions.”

similarities of China's values and traditions and can be seen as a result of complex process of convergence of identity and modernity.

The study seeks to make sense of security dynamics at play in Central Asian region in form of SCO. With reference to China's political practices in the domain of frontier security and adoption of 'three evils' (Terrorism, Separatism and Religious Fundamentalism), the present study seeks to highlight the tensions faced by Chinese political elites to chart frontier security policy while treating China and its territorial identity fluid and processual concepts. In case of China's turn towards Multilateralism, the present study attempts to narrate that cooperative and multilateral policies in form of SCO cannot be reduced to target a specific external security threat; the present study by looking beyond the linear explanation of China's foreign policy objectives, seeks to make sense of the 'innovativeness' attached to China's embrace of SCO.

1.3. Motivation for Research and Selection of Case Study

William A. Callahan rightly argues that the growing interest in Chinese thought is the result of realization on the part of IR scholars that it works as an alternative to Eurocentric IR and also because as an emerging power, it will soon have the institutional power to promote its view of the world (Callahan 2008: 749). Recently, China has been the focus of international relations scholars, political economy experts and regional studies/ area specialists (discussed in details earlier). The growing role of China in international politics is an important factor for China being the focus of attention for scholarly debates in academia. On the other hand, the focus on a non-western power is providing emerging IR scholarship an ideal chance to map the lacuna the international relations theory carries because of its origin and emphasis largely on the experiences of the western states. The current study has adopted China's foreign policy towards Central Asia to add to these newly emerging critical debates.

The Central Asian region as the case study is an ideal area to test China's identity and its policy preferences, reason being that much has been written on China's foreign policy towards East Asia. Apart from that, as this region sees the inter playing policies of the three major powers, China, Russia and the US, it is an interesting case study to bring forward alternate approaches to see how the western approaches of great power politics and the balance of power theories are incomplete and even outdated in the post-Cold War scenario while explaining China's foreign policy towards Central Asia. These debates have predominantly explained the foreign policy of China towards Central Asia so far. When it comes to foreign policy, it is even more likely that states are considered unitary actors. The neoclassical realists are with common goal of defining the foreign policy preferences and behaviour of states while adding various factors to material assumptions led conclusions. This study on the contrary builds a case in favour of identity of states that is not static rather processual.

Within the regional context, as the Central Asian region is considered hub of ‘New Great Game’, the current case study provides an opportunity to deal with the elements of cooperation and competition that are not determined by the distribution of material capabilities. It also gives chance to observe the multilateralism with ‘Chinese characteristics’ and the political processes bringing normative dimension to the multilateralism. A study of Central Asian region, a hub of great powers and a ‘playground’ for ‘new great game’ can guide us how China copes with the policies of great powers while fostering its peaceful rise intentions.

1.4. Research Methods and Approaches

The theoretical approach of the present research is Constructivism and particularly the work of Peter J. Katzenstein. The study uses a chronological evaluation of Sino-Central Asian relations to review the pace of China’s involvement in Central Asia over the last two decades. The present study takes into account different debates and events to identify significant increases and decreases in activity. The present study draws correlations between these changes and shifts in Chinese foreign policy to determine if these shifts are more similar to the expectations of the Katzenstein’s model or another competing thesis.

The argument advanced by the present research starts by problematizing the general argument about China’s foreign policy in Central Asian region by criticising it for being narrowly focused or for using too simplified lens of global power politics approach. The present research develops its own line of argument in contrast with great power politics lens that has predominantly explained China’s foreign policy towards Central Asian region so far. It examines different political processes as guided by China’s identity amid China’s rise.

The study makes explanatory claims positing causal effects of identities. It also problematizes the features of national security and engages with causal effects overlooked by the analytical approaches in case of Central Asia. It also engages with the constitutive process of identity formation, while engaging with the set of processes when specific identity of China was built up or then altered rather than relying on the fixed notions of state identity.

The present study uses two main cases to unfold the foreign policy making of China towards Central Asia; the security (territoriality) and diplomacy (multilateralism). These subprocesses are discussed analytically to learn about the process of foreign policy that is complex and multi-linear in the case of China and Central Asia. For that purpose, the current study adheres to the methodology of “process tracing” where the development of interpretive frames developed by actors is recounted in historical fashion (Jepperson, Katzenstein and Wendt 1996: 67). The current study relies on the interpretive methodology.

The research uses empirical approach to study the motives and patterns of China's embrace of institutionalism by using the case of SCO. The study specifies and classifies the most crucial Chinese interests in Central Asia while placing them into a theoretical framework and the broader foreign policy strategy of China. The present researcher tests different theories to see the relevance to empirical data gathered that is placed into a broader context in order to understand the motivations of China and how multilateralism and Central Asia fit into China's regional and international strategy.

1.4.1. Document and Data Collection

Document content analysis of all available and relevant information regarding the relations of China and Central Asian region and its future trends, which includes books and journals, as well as historical documents are reviewed. The current study also uses Chinese official statements and SCO documents, to follow the commentary on the SCO. The main source of data remains archival and library research. The primary data is broadly from the official speeches, translated official documents and official website of Foreign Ministry of China and SCO. The secondary data is from library materials and other documents. The data analysis is guided by the theoretical considerations of the school of thought that is discussed in detail in the theoretical framework of this study. The study tests a number of theories in order to find the answers to research questions that can be generalized.

1.4.2. Previous Knowledge, Research Skills and Current Utilization

I will use my previously learnt skills and knowledge to conduct present research effectively. My previous research experience on the similar topic has been very helpful to further the previous research findings. It proved helpful in broadening the view regarding the availability and relevance of different Chinese and western journals and periodicals related to the current research area. During my M.Phil. degree, I also worked as Research Associate in China Study Centre at Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, Pakistan. My job as researcher was helpful in learning about the availability of contemporary media reports and a number of related news sources about China's foreign policy, SCO and regional policies of China regarding Pakistan as well as South and South-East Asia. I got chance to work at Pakistani think-tank with its focus on China's foreign, regional and global role. The meetings, workshops and conferences at that think-tank assisted me to provide a chance to talk formally and informally with scholars, experts, analysts and academicians from China.

1.5. Structure of the Thesis

The second chapter of the thesis 'Re-Conceptualising China's Foreign Policy' provides detailed analysis of existing debates related to China's rise, its foreign policy and particularly China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region. The chapter outlines the lacunas in existing literature dealing with China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region that is seriously plagued by the reductionist approaches of 'Great Game' thesis, structural realism and balance of power. These nomothetic approaches help understanding the role of material capabilities to analyse the foreign policy behaviour of China but that analysis is incomplete and leaves many questions unanswered about the foreign policy direction of China. The present research while keeping in focus, the gaps in literature, seeks to build a case in favour of role of China's identity as a prescription for its national interest and foreign policy behaviour.

The third chapter 'New Great Game in Central Asia: Different Players and Altering Game' seeks to make sense of the logic behind equating of traditional 'Great Game' with today's 'New Great Game'. The chapter argues that theoretical and on-paper debates regarding power struggle cannot adequately explain contemporary practical developments in the region. Keeping in mind the cooperative relations between China and Russia, the chapter criticizes the mainstream Realists analysis attached with 'great game' thesis. Today's 'competitors' of the 'Great Game' mainly Russia and China seem to cooperate or encounter rather than clash. This chapter concludes that the inability of competition oriented assumptions to explain the cooperative dynamics of the region outlines the necessity to look beyond the 'Great Game' thesis. The chapter mainly sets the stage to point out the distinctiveness of 'China' to explore it further in coming chapters.

As an important foreign policy objective, China's growing economic, energy and trade relations with Central Asian region are analysed in fourth chapter. These relations, as chapter emphasises are echoing China's traditional role at the centre of Intra-Asian regional economic trade. The chapter build an argument by emphasising that historically the central Asian region played an important role in China's economic and commercial activity. The security relations had also played role in developing such relations. The chapter notes that the lack of security on the north-western frontier hampered economic relations until recently. The growing security related cooperation and the border demarcation process helped revitalized economic activity after the disintegration of USSR. It also analyses the impact of various issues like water disputes and overdependence to trace the mixed results of strengthen economic relations. China has been committed to its economic power as a way to ensure regime legitimacy and that points towards Chinese commitment to establish economic and trade relations with its neighbouring countries.

The fifth chapter explains the role of the North-western frontier in constructing China's territorial identity and the way political processes related that identity are guiding China's foreign policy towards Central Asia. The political processes and security cooperation as seen in Central Asia helps understand the tensions faced by Chinese political elites to chart frontier security policy between contested identities. The study examines the role played by 'three evils' as a political practice that is guided by long historically embedded process of identity of China. It also highlights the various interpretation grounded in China's identity to govern the minority groups at its periphery. The chapter provides historical evolution of treatment of ethnic minority groups to cover suppression of minority status during Mao's era and Communist China to various alternative ways to resolve the problems. The chapter concludes that although a break from Mao's era, political elites have been playing role in contributing to the 'politicization' of the problem. Such policies as institutionalized in SCO are subjugating the issue rather than taking concrete steps to eradicate it.

The sixth chapter 'Evolving Interests' and 'Evolving Norms': the Case of Shanghai Cooperation Organization' traces the underlying dynamics of the cooperative and multilateral foreign policy of China in Central Asia. It argues that the SCO is an innovative political response to geo-strategic environment of Central Asia adopted by Chinese leaders. The organization is aimed at gaining symbolic power in the region. The Chinese elite has used it as a platform to show commitment to traditional concepts of Confucianism of harmony alongwith modern elements of territorial integrity and sovereignty. The policies of loose reign, economic development and cooperation regarding Non Traditional Security have made SCO attractive regional organization for Central Asian states. The chapter emphasises that the policy of non-interference has largely left the organization incapable to systemically respond drawing wide spread criticism.

The last chapter evaluates and compares different factors driving China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region from Energy interest, geo-political interest to security interests. The chapter questions if all the motivations behind China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region can be understood by using identity debate of Katzensteinian framework by discussing briefly how each factor is playing its role in affecting China's foreign policy preferences. The chapter provides critical analysis of weight that can be assigned to different factors playing their respective role from material and geo-political to identity related factors.

Chapter 2

(Re)-Conceptualising China's Foreign Policy

2.1. Introduction

This chapter contains review of the existing literature. Keeping in view the focus of present study as well as research questions, it deals with three broader perspectives. It deals with the existing scholarly debates firstly about China's rise, secondly about foreign policy analysis of China and finally, it deals with the focus of present study that is China's foreign Policy towards Central Asian states.

In recent years, the literature focusing on China's rise has been growing. The debate has started involving broader perspectives of whether China is rising or not with emphasis on the question; what China is aspiring for, a peaceful rise or a hegemonic status? This leads to further investigation of whether China is emerging as a disruptive power or a friendly state for its neighbours and for international system generally? Over the past few years there has been a heated debate, particularly in the West, about the potential challenge of an increasingly strong and assertive China (Christensen 2006; de Burgh 2005; Goldstein 1997-1998; Goodman and Segal 1997; Li 2004/ 2009; Yee and Storey 2002). Western scholars and analysts have raised a whole range of questions dealing with China's intensions and behaviour (Harris and Klintworth 1995; Zhao 2004). While these questions have been debated in West rigorously, Chinese leaders seem to have launched a diplomatic offensive and are actively engaged in Asia economically, politically as well as on security issues (Gill 2007; Medeiros and Fravel 2003).

While there are various debates going on about China's intensions, scholars and analysts agree on the point that China has made a conscious and substantial effort to present itself as a peaceful and constructive member of international community (Shambaugh 2004-2005). There is no doubt in saying that China's relations with its neighbouring countries have improved substantially since the early 1990s. To point out a few evidences, China's role in 1997-98 Asian Financial Crisis, participation in international and regional organizations, and its persuasion of North Korea to attend six party talks highlight China's peaceful and engaging position.

To come up with the comprehensive study based on existing literature will not only help this study to review the existing answers regarding this broader topic but will also clear the academic and literature ambiguities about China's rise, further arising some questions to answer in the coming chapters of thesis. The first section is important for present research because by

looking at the western debates about the nature of China's rise will map the lacunas left by the existing approaches and to understand the utilization of other approaches to further present study. The second section of the literature review discusses the views emerging from within the China, yet it is covering a few English language and some translated sources. The second section, although minimal in scope, will help to give idea about some of the writings as presenting China to the rest of world. The last section of this chapter covers the debates and engages with literature about China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region and places the main argument of this thesis in context.

2.2. The Rise of China and Its Implications for the International Order

The debate about the rise of China has been attracting more and more scholars in recent years. The new scholarship is trying to come up with an answer to the problem that what political implications China will be holding for the international system in years to come. If China is going to rise, will a more powerful China pursue revisionist goals or will it potentially trigger conflict with the US? Will it be more prone to resolve longstanding disputes such as Taiwan issue by using military coercion? Will China, perhaps driven by an increasing stake in existing international order, use its growing influence to help achieve cooperation outcomes, as seen for example in the six party talks over North Korea?

A number of studies dealing with China's rise are convinced that China is the future, even the studies negating the exaggeration being made in this statement, seem to be convinced that China will profoundly shape the future of global order. Its impact in shaping the coming century, whether positive or negative, is undeniable and widely accepted. The 21st century is going to see China as a significant actor, heralding a profound shift in the distribution of global power (Ikenberry 2008: 26). Although, the main point of departure is the nature of rise and its impact on the international system.

A bulk of literature states other way that China is going to be a failure in itself and these studies mainly emerge from the viewpoint of political economy. To paraphrase Chang's predictions, China is a lake of gasoline and that an individual in a small town or a large city will only have to throw a match. The spirit has gone out of Communism and the regime attacks any movement, which offers alternative worldviews. Falun Gong, a spiritual movement was viewed as greatest challenge to the Communist party since it offers to fill the ideological vacuum at the centre of the party's 'socialism with Chinese characteristics'. There is widespread resentment about party corruption and 'lawless government' and the unemployment is at rife. The state banks lend freely to the SOEs, which mount up debts that are quite unlikely to be honoured. By 2001, outstanding loans within the system amounted to 120 percent of China's GDP. Chang forecasts

far reaching and destabilizing effects of on-going economic crisis on Chinese society and politics. The author argued that the Communist government has about five years in which to overcome current crisis before economic problems will lead to a breakdown (Chang 2001).

The negation of the rise of China as an over exaggerated phenomenon is not coming solely from Chang. A similar argument is made by Gerald Segal in his article published in 1999, 'Does China Matter?' and the answer provided by Segal is that the military and economic power of 'Middle Kingdom' is over exaggerated and it should not be ranked above second-rank middle power (Segal 1999).

The International Relations literature on the subject of nature and evolution of China's rise can be divided on the levels of Rationalist approaches and Political Economy approaches. These approaches collectively can be referred as 'Materialist Approaches'. Different views about China's rise can be laid down with distinctive arguments and counter arguments with different and sometimes within same approaches. The phenomenon of rise of China has seen introduction of a number of IR theories including Realism and Liberalism and a set of political economy approaches.

2.2.1. Neo-Realism and China as Emerging Threat

For Realists, the key to the international system picture is the notion that relative power is defining attribute of interstate relations in an anarchical system. Neo-realists adopt a rather pessimistic view towards the future of international political system and the rise of China. In their perspective, the standard norm in international affairs is anarchy, in which each state tends to fear others because it is always uncertain as to how others will act. In this system all countries in the world think strategically and strive to maintain offensive capability for external survival (Morgenthau 1978; Waltz 1979). Their ultimate goal is to maximize their relative power to overwhelm others' capability, (Mearsheimer 1994-1995: 9-12). The inherent property of the world is competition among states. However, cooperation may occur sometimes but that is only to serve the logic of maximizing the self-interest.

Many Realists scholars strongly believe that China's foreign policy cannot be better explained using any framework other than the traditional realpolitik model and balance of power politics (Bernstein and Munro 1997a, 1997b; Mearsheimer 2001; Roy 2003). Although, Chinese government officials deny contentions that they seek hegemony and that China's rise must lead to a conflict, for realist scholars one only needs to look towards Wilhelmine Germany and Imperial Japan to see how rising great powers destabilize the international system and inspire conflict. In this anarchical system, there is no chance that China will emerge as an exception (Kristof 1993; Waldron 1995; Sutter 2004). The Realist literature on intentions and behaviour of China tends to focus on the relationship between structural change in the system and great

power emergence. This cluster of literature, uses the lenses of unipolar structural system and tends to infer that a rising China that will most likely challenge the predominant position of the US.

For realists, “The Rise and Fall of Great Powers” is a natural phenomenon and China’s rising power is leading the country to transform the balance of power in its own favour. Such realist argument tends to present China as a next great power by referring to power vacuum created by the disintegration of the USSR and the perceived reduction of the US military commitment to the Asian region. This power vacuum is likely to attract China to upgrade its role from powerful regional player to one challenging the status quo. In this way, China is referred to as the hegemon on the horizon (Roy 1994, 1995). Kenneth Waltz stamps this statement with great approval by claiming that it would be a structural anomaly for a country with a great power economy not to become a great power (1993: 66).

For neo-realist scholars’, international politics is all about struggle for power. With reference to this, Mearsheimer claims that struggle for power is a zero sum game, where one actor’s gain is another actor’s loss (Mearsheimer 1990: 53). In the light of same argument, realist studies claim that growth of China’s power would mean the relative decline of the power of the other countries. Gerald Segal and Denny Roy adopt the same line of argument and warn that a rising China will present the international society with an immense challenge that will not be easily managed (Segal 1995; Roy 1993). The similar view was endorsed by pessimistic picture provided by John Mearsheimer in his book, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

Seeing China as a regional rising power, John Mearsheimer in his study concludes that if China’s economy keeps on growing at the same pace as in last two decades, it will surely become the potential hegemon in the near future (Mearsheimer 2001). Many scholars share the view that China’s view of external environment is realist-oriented (Christensen 1996). China’s victimization in the history and conflicting relations with Russia and west especially in the start of twentieth century makes China feel insecure even in its own region.

Following a realist perspective that behaviour of a state is dictated by the change in the balance of power, a rising power in a certain region may take advantage of the opportunity to act aggressively in order not only to secure their frontiers but to reach out beyond them, taking steps to ensure access to markets, materials and transportation routes; to protect their citizen far from home, defend their foreign friends and allies, and promulgate their values; and in general, to have what they consider to be their legitimate say in the affairs of their region and the wider world (Friedberg 2005: 19). Based on the mistrust of other states’ intention, states will strive hard to acquire as much wealth and power as possible.

A growing number of scholarly works tend to present China as a threat and seeking hegemony. The concept of hegemony itself is used as synonymous with 'empire' administering a number of communities from one imperial centre or as a powerful state able to be adequate enough to formulate the laws for external relations of the states, leaving them independent in their domestic affairs. Warren I. Cohen, while giving a descriptive analysis of China in history, holds that 'powerful China' has always brutalized the weak. The Chinese claims about its humiliation on the part of foreign powers are justified but its simultaneous claims of innocence are misleading. China's economy is booming on fast pace and it cannot be left isolated. This world needs China more than China needs the world. Thus coming attitude of China would hardly be different from China in the past (Cohen 2009).

While talking about China's intentions and its military and diplomatic activities, Masako Ikegami, suggests that leadership in China is strategically replacing the word 'rise' with 'development', just to erase China threat theory. She contradicts with any optimistic outcome and apprehends that the strategy of multilateralism, economic diplomacy and good neighbourliness is adopted just to smooth the road of domestic development and get strong hold over world resources. The proactive foreign policy towards Africa, Latin America and Central Asia is with the single aim of securing the energy resources. Since China is interested in obtaining control over energy resources of these countries, it is using economic assistance in form of loans or aid as a weapon. China is asserting its influence over the region and by providing support to authoritarian governments; it is hindering the prospects of democratization. According to Ikegami, China's plentiful need for natural resources is compelling it to support controversial regimes in different regions. After being convinced of China's hyper interest in energy resources, Ikegami draws the case for offensive realism. History based analysis makes it clear that resource based expansion always needed hard power. Ikegami believes that China is no different and has grown keen in using coercive forces and recent procurement of system falls within offensive power projection (Ikegami 2009).

China's published White Paper presenting China as a seeker of peaceful development, leading towards a harmonious world marked with peace, states that China's peaceful development accords with the fundamental interests of the Chinese people and China will not stop adopting this road even if it gets stronger in the future (Xinhua Online 2005). As hegemony and aggression is a natural outcome for realist theory, policy statements and self-representation does not receive any consideration. For realists, the road of peaceful development exists because it is inevitable for developing China today but there is hardly any chance that China will resume the same practice after its rise (Scott 2008). From a classical and neo-realist point of view, behaviour of a great power is determined not by its intentions but by its capabilities.

The neorealist school thus provides a strict and static picture. They question this subjective judgement that why should China transform itself to maintain status quo when it can transform it in its own favour. The rise of China should make other great powers adapt to Chinese norms instead. From the viewpoint of realists, China is going to interact with the world that is attributed with power politics and China does not need idealistic basis to interact with such anarchic world. The emergence of great powers and transition from one power to another is a structurally driven phenomenon that is best described in terms of relative material power (Layne 1993). This material power is defined in military terms.

Another wave of Realists, Neoclassical realists, a term coined by Gideon Rose (1998) tried to loosen the strict clutches of Neorealist assumptions. Gilpin describes the power in a slightly different way by taking break from sticking to definition of power in strictly military terms. According to him, the states with successful economic expansion tend to become more ambitious and thus more capable of challenging the status quo in order to defend their overseas interests and commitments (Gilpin 1981). Unlike liberals, realists do not see economic interdependence as helpful to reduce conflict in this anarchic world.

Waltz's rigidly theorized structural model has been becoming less conducive for various contemporary neoclassical realists. As a result, realists inclined to add new systemic and unit level variables to relax their materialist assumption. The state intentions and perceptions in addition to state capabilities were discussed by Walt (1987) and Wohlforth (1993) respectively. Wohlforth explicitly broadens the concept of power while not downplaying the concept of power itself. He emphasises that power has central role in theory but as power cannot be tested, it is part of the problem faced by realists. Wohlforth diverges from the material assumptions related to power by adding non-material capabilities and perceptions in international anarchy. These additional variables are largely product of long theoretical contribution of non-realist international relations approaches. The Neoclassical realists try to bridge the gap between structural determinacy to domestic variables in defining state's action. The contemporary realists try to stick with idea of power while adding various domestic and structural strands, overload the concept of power and even losing its distinctiveness.

The balance of threat theory is a real departure from the role of material capabilities to the role of perceptions. Walt, in his theory, brings into consideration the role of ideological factors in determining the patterns of balancing among states. But Walt's theory comes up with restrictive definitional conditions for ideology and its role is more like an instrument guiding threat perceptions of states. In his review, Douglas J MacDonald opines that Walt underestimates the role of ideology in alignment patterns and posits such a rigid definition of ideological 'influence' that it is unlikely to be found anywhere (MacDonald 1989: 796). In the light of

Walt's theoretical understanding, the security concerns of states are likely to be treated as exogenous to the ideological adherences.

As Guzzini notes, it is equally true that:

Probably all classical realists have travelled on institutionalist or constructivism-inspired terrain. Blurring realist distinctiveness purchased better explanations, but the cost incurred has risen. When, in the wake of the Inter Paradigm Debate, realism became just one theory among others, the present identity dilemma emerged --- either realists keep a distinct and single micro-macro link through concepts of power and influence which, given the nature of the concept, provides indeterminate explanations or they improve their explanations, but must do so by relaxing their assumptions, hence losing distinctiveness (Guzzini 2004: 544).

Schweller et al. extended the debate to domestic level constraints on state behaviour (2006). Buzan et al. (1993) integrated the systemic interaction capacity to the theory. Buzan (2010) on the other hand presupposes the existence and constancy of actor's preferences while treating structure as static and systematic. The primary institutions as treated by Buzan are not relational or prone to change.

The role of ideas even if integrated with role of material capabilities, as is presented by Thomas Christensen, the analytical concept of ideas is operating at unit level within states. In line with its realist heritage however such ideational and social variables are considered analytically subordinate to systemic factors and make Christensen analysis warn about self-assertive China (Christensen 2011). As such indications have not been new especially since the end of Cold war, many scholars still believe that China has adopted status quo oriented course, not directly challenging, the US. The rhetorical additions by contemporary realists are mainly integrated as force effects and not as "social attributions" (Beer and Hariman 1996: 21). Stephen Krasner acknowledges the concept of punctuated equilibrium and historical path dependence (Krasner 1988). The social determinants of Katzensteinian constructivism theory are realized in Krasner work but "they are banished to remote past or to a distant future" (Katzenstein 1996: 16).

The study acknowledges the accommodating theories being included to Realist strand especially the theories of Thomas Christensen and Barry Buzan. These theories provide a mixture of factors in defining security and foreign policy preferences of states by adding ideational and economic factors, domestic as well as structural factors. The baseline of such arguments is materialistic assumptions and the level of analysis is largely state. This study on the other hand emphasise that state and especially Chinese state that is an old civilization but a new republic cannot be understood within defined boundaries, carrying similar identity or objectives. Political processes as originating from centre of China (or Chinese Civilization as emphasised by Katzenstein) can be fully understood by analysing modern China in the light of long and dynamic processes of 'becoming'. When it comes to foreign policy, it is even more likely that states are considered unitary actors. Similarly, the neoclassical realists are with common goal of

defining the foreign policy preferences and behaviour of states while adding various factors to material assumptions led conclusions.

The realist school is particularly critical of the liberal assumptions that growing economic interdependence among states can reduce their chances of involvement in a military conflict (Morgenthau 1978). The possibility of cooperation on part of states, as put by realists, is only when it supports achieving their national interest and advance their international status. Therefore, unlike liberals, realists claim that international institutions are incapable of mitigating anarchy's constraining effects on interstate cooperation (Mearsheimer 1994/95; Grieco 1995: 151). On the other hand, some realists claim that increased economic interdependence can in fact increase the likelihood of armed confrontation among trading nations as they seek to gain or maintain their access to vital resources and materials essential to the pursuit of wealth and power in an anarchic world (Waltz 1979: 106). Lee, in his paper 'China's Quest for Oil Security: Oil (Wars) in the Pipeline?' supports this argument in case of China. Lee believes that the Chinese government is likely to be more assertive in defending existing oil supplies and finding new energy reserves in order to sustain its economic growth and achieve great power status in the 21st century (Lee 2005). However, liberals themselves provide a different story.

2.2.2. Liberalism

According to this theory, the independent variable comes from domestic factors rather than external ones as mainstream realists would contend. A liberal state is presumed to bear amity, as opposed to a neo-realist state which is presumed to bear enmity (Doyle 2005). China can be viewed as a liberal state with respect to its expanding economic relations with other states but keeping its political system in mind, it cannot be viewed as neo-liberal state. Liberalists hold that increased economic interdependence brings peace. One explanation focuses on its substitution factor between economic exchange and military conquest, which argues that economic exchanges with other countries will bring sufficient resources that would otherwise be acquired through military expansion. The decision to wage a war against one's trading partner will harm the aggregate economic welfare within one's own society. Private sectors, as a result, will mobilize to dissuade their leader from pursuing military conflicts with trading partners (Mansfield and Pollins 2001). Unlike the pessimistic view held by the realism, liberal institutionalism assert that through building international institutions, countries can better work together to secure more interest in the long run by reducing transaction cost, providing information and diminishing uncertainty about the future (Keohane 1984).

From a Liberal standpoint, China's gradual emergence as an influential player in world politics today is an outcome of its open door policy and economic reform introduced by Deng Xiaoping.

This economic liberalization will eventually transform China to a more open and democratic country. For Liberals, China's emerging middle class as a result of economic reform and prosperity will demand more political say and participation in decision making bringing reform to its less participatory political system as well (Conable and Lampton 1992/93; Funabashi, Oksenberg and Weiss 1994; and Lieberthal 1995). This development from authoritarian system to a democratic one leads to the further "optimist" argument of liberals that democratic countries are more peaceful (Fukuyama 1992).

According to the view point of the Liberals, every state needs to go along with the policy of partnership to develop and it needs to transform itself domestically according to the trends in the system. According to this school, the only criterion to success is successful connection with the world. In the light of this argument, Liberal scholars believe that at this time, China must strive for smooth China-US relations, and a short term compromise on self-dignity will lead towards long term economic development. Together these interests will take China to higher level. And the self-acknowledgement of defeat and backwardness will resultantly prove to be healthy for China's long term status (Jie 1999).

The present research argues that both Realist and Liberalists theories provide part of the story. The realist theories are criticized for being too state-centric. The realists believe that great power emergence is destabilizing as China will follow the footsteps of its predecessors. Such over deterministic view is based on the assumption that history repeats itself. The realist argument with such strict and narrow description ignores any domestic constraints on foreign policy, any role of decision makers' perceptions or any form of political structures. The realists' argument about power as zero sum game is also problematic, by claiming so realists reject any possibility of long term cooperation among states.

The liberal argument on the other hand over emphasizes the role of growing economy in transforming China to a peaceful and democratic country. In his study, Breslin (2007) has provided a critical examination of China's global economic role with reference to its domestic politics and economic globalization. On the basis of his analysis, Breslin concludes that role of Chinese economic power is overstated by Liberal scholars. The notion that economic interdependence alone can transform world views and foreign policy of the states is problematic. After all, European powers despite their high level of trade among them could not restrain from fighting during World War I.

Another set of theories has mushroomed to explain China's growing economic activity and its effect on its behaviour in the aftermath of China's open door policy. So, it is important to consider political economic approaches to China's power and how this power is going to impact on international order.

2.2.3. Political Economy Approaches

From the view point of political economic perspective, there exists a prevailing belief that some sort of tectonic shift in the structure of international system is underway and gathering pace. China's opening up, marketization and privatization has impacted the Capitalist economic structure and this entry has heightened the economic activity across the globe. However this shift and its impact on China's rise is viewed and analysed differently by different scholars.

If we start from positive outcomes for China, the work of Beeson is significant. According to his work, this shift has increased the US economy's reliance over its trade, transforming the relative positions of the two economies. This material shift is giving way to a long term ideational shift, where the alternative to Washington Consensus is showing its profound presence. This 'Beijing Consensus' emerging around China's pragmatic, state-centric approach to development, but the unparalleled development of the Chinese economy is dramatically reinforcing its material influence and even its ideational appeal. Beeson thus simply conclude that since the time China opened up, its development is remarkable and impressive and it carries the potential of causing a relative decline for the economy of the US and reshaping the international system (Beeson 2009).

As China performs the role of global factory after state's decisions to encourage the decentralisation, marketization and privatization of economic activity, many economists believe that China's growth has supported a successful restructuring and upgrading of regional economic activity (Fernald and Loungani 2004: 2). HartLandsberg and Paul Burkett present a very different picture of China from these mainstream debates. The authors hold that perceptions about China, as a national success story based on its increasing export prowess, and as an anchor for regional and global growth, is seriously misleading. The reality is that China and East Asia are being jointly reshaped by a larger transnational corporate restructuring dynamic that also encompasses the more developed capitalist countries in as well as outside the region. This trend is promoting both greater trade dependence and the expansion of integrated cross-border production processes, with China serving as a processor of manufactured components imported from neighbouring countries and the final production platform for the region's increasingly important extra-regional export activity.

The discussion provides with an insight that China's role as a global factory, apparently a blessing for China and in broader terms for the region of East Asia, has a fundamental problem that this extensive transnational regional economic activity is dependent upon the final trade outside the region. Yet, any disruption to this trade can affect the whole supply line and growth process. Another adverse effect of this dynamism is on the lives of workers in China, East Asia and the US. The workers are increasingly captured by a common dynamic of capitalist

restructuring, making them suffer from unemployment and worsening living and working conditions. This debate simply brings a conclusion that China is not an attractive model of development from a working class perspective. China's role in transnational capitalist restructuring has generated tensions and imbalances and these consequences carry tendency to bring even more disastrous situation in the future.

The work of Minqi Li argues that China's rise has generated a dynamic process that threatens the continued existence of the prevailing world capitalist system. Li warns of catastrophic consequences from China's rapid growth. China's rise has intensified global competition over markets, placed downward pressures on industrial wages, upward pressure on commodity prices, and threatens to destabilize the delicate balance between the core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral nations in the world capitalist system. Li further argues that changes to China's internal class structure may lead to internal destabilization. The crisis Li envisions is not only economic but ecological and therefore threatens the very survival of humanity (Li 2008).

Samuel S. Kim has traced the devastating effects of 'opening up' of Chinese economy. To paraphrase his views, this 'market-oriented' economy is 'camel's nose' that has entered 'once-fortified' tent of China's state sovereignty. This opening up has been eroding China's internal sovereignty, releasing the enormous entrepreneurial energies of 'sovereignty-free intermestic actors' that have transformed the direction, logic, and pace of social and economic development that resulted into the wearing down of the totalitarian authority of Chinese state party. The functional and normative requirements China adopted to integrate itself to global economy have created the devolution of power at home and the fragmentation of authority and decision making structures.

Thus, Kim believes that China is facing a 'silent revolution' or 'second revolution of people power' of global information and transparency, an area that was exclusively controlled by the state. This revolution tends to foster mobilization of people's needs, demands, frustrations, and intolerance contributing to destabilization and fragmentation of Chinese society. The second main threat is that as this integration with global economy and community continues, different 'intermestic' actors in order to foster their own agendas and interests, will seek to participate in the making and implementation of Chinese foreign policy, shackling the monopoly of Chinese state party. Thirdly, China is facing twin challenges, globalization and localization. As China opens up, and monopoly of Chinese part erodes, Chinese society becomes more vulnerable to the threats of destabilization. In these circumstances, Chinese government tries to get hold of globalization from above and control 'deglobalization' from below. To efficiently perform these two competing roles simultaneously is inevitable for ensuring stability in China (Kim 2009).

The work of Breslin also points out the repercussions of China's insertion into global economy. Breslin paraphrases what was told by Gerald Segal that significance of China is over exaggerated (Segal 1999). The economic growth in China is heavily dependent on foreign investment. Since most foreign investment produces goods for export to foreign markets, China has become dependent on factors outside the control of Chinese government. Another major threat is 'decentralized authoritarianism' in the Chinese political structure. The Chinese central government cannot dictate the nature of economic activity because much of the power, the central government devolved to the market has become lodged in the hands of the 'self-same local authorities' (Breslin 2005).

The political economic perspectives lighten the areas and insist that before performing a 'hegemonic rise' or at least a responsible great power, China needs to put its own house in order. The way Beijing manages its economic reforms, rising unemployment and social unrest, rampant corruption, widening inequality, and ethno-national pressures from and within may be decisive factors that will shape China's future.

Whether China, an emerging or a rising power in the East Asian region and in the world, will be a 'threat' to its neighbours and even to the United States within the next few decades is a big issue that have been widely discussed in the Western IR academic circle and among Western political elites. Most Western Realist IR scholars have already drawn a dark picture of Eastern Asia regional security with a pessimistic view about 'China threat'. In international relations, the perception of intent or threat is far more important than the intent or threat itself in shaping foreign policies of different states. The following paragraphs will look into the foreign policy of China and perceptions from within in order to enhance objectivity in our study. It will later help examining western perspectives and whether the perception of a 'China Threat' has any validity and reflects the reality of international relations either on the regional level or the global level in the coming decades.

With the onset of recent global financial crisis 2008-09, it is worth noticing that the judgements about the material bases of Chinese growth have been changed. With the economies of previous economic giants like the US, the European Union and Japan reeling from weak growth and burdensome debt levels, China has emerged as a key driver of global economic growth. China is said to be contributing along with other major emerging economies, nearly two thirds of new global economic output (Zhang 2011). The projection has taken a turn from pre global financial crisis and many believe that China has benefited and managed greatly by integrating into the world market and participating in the existing global economic system and that China will surpass the United States as the largest economy in the world by 2030.

2.2.4. Materialistic Approaches and the Problematized Notion of Fixed Identity

Steve Smith rightly argues that there are four main assumptions of positivism which have been essential to traditional IR scholarship; first, that there can be a Popperian unity of science with the same basic ontological and epistemological assumptions; secondly, that ethics and morality are distinct from facts, which can, unlike the former two, be objectively analysed. Thirdly, that there are naturalistic laws in the social world which can also be objectively observed. Fourthly, these laws can be falsified with an empirical study which is the hallmark of the positivist enquiry (Smith 1996: 16).

Although, liberalism denies three propositions by realists that state is not all in all, it is not Hobbesian world we are living in today and that there is not any division between high politics and low politics. Yet, Neo-liberalist while saying economy, indirectly support the nature of competition and confrontation between states thus believing in power struggle.

Thus the main methodological problem in realist approaches is that change and transformations are the great absentees in these theories. Andrew Hurrell in this context rightly says:

Rationalist approaches work well when identities and interests are stable and reasonably well understood. But in the periods of systemic change there is an enormous amount of “churning” and the reconfiguration of what interest are all about (2010).

Before Constructivism, the concept of identity has largely been ignored or side-lined in the discipline of international relations. This past neglect of identity can be attributed to the predominant assumption provided by the major paradigms of that time. The previous mainstream international relations theories assumed identity as kind of fixed, bounded and identifiable object. The state, as represented by these theories, carries a fixed identity. Even if identity and perception had been given space, these are put down to secondary level with state largely adhering to materialistic dimension of power politics. These states share common but limited number of traits as ‘a will to survive and a will to power’ (Wolfers 1996: 10). For instance, Neorealist theory brushed aside all attributes of states except their capabilities and the anarchic relations among states.

Although, these mainstream positivist theories ruled the theoretical arena of the discipline of international relations for a significant time, the inability to explain the end of the cold war and the subsequent transformations in international structure and inter-state relations problematizes the fixed notion of identity of states. This prompted the scholars to explore the previously ignored complexities of the inter-subjective domain of international politics. With emergence of

neo-classical realists identity and perceptions has been made part of discussion while constructivists emphasised that rather than exogenously pre-given, identities are subject to redefinition. The notion of identity involves negation or difference, thus, the process of identity construction is relational. As Peter Katzenstein argues that definitions of identity that distinguish between self and other imply definitions of threat and interest that have strong effects on national security policies. These alternative approaches to identity and international relations have been called 'constructivism' (Katzenstein 1996: 18-9).

2.2.6. Constructivism

Whereas realists view international politics as dictated by the distribution of material capabilities, constructivists see it as a factor of social relationship between and within states. Although liberalism and constructivism both argue that a state's external behaviour is influenced by domestic institution, they differ in pinpointing this institution. Unlike liberals, who argue that the calculation of individual interests is key to understanding international politics, constructivists believe that the perception of a state to international affairs is constructed socially through its international interactions with other countries. Constructivists are especially interested in understanding the structure of social relationships. For them, inter-state relations are shaped to a considerable degree by subjective factors, such as the beliefs and ideas that people carry around which influence their interpretations towards events and data in particular ways. If the 'anarchy is what states make of it,' it is possible to change institutions such as self-help and power politics via international interaction and social practice (Wendt 1999).

Social constructivism invests more energy in explaining how norms, culture, and debates about identity, influence and shape the international system rather than the fixed notions of material capabilities. This approach hence provides an avenue to specify the interests of actors, the sources of these interests, and how those interests change (Katzenstein 1996). Much constructivist inquiry looks for examples of states evolving from individualist identities of 'every state for itself,' to a collectivist identity, in which countries identify their security in a greater collective whole. In this view, states form their security identity through a process of reiterated interaction with other states and a long process of friendly interaction may lead states to not only identify each other as allies and friends, but to view their security interests as intertwined and consequently to identify with each other as belonging to the same community (Katzenstein 1996).

While this explanation is less parsimonious than those previously addressed, it does add value in the conceptualization of identity, comprising of both international and domestic factors. Stated briefly, a state's identity and interests form based on how significant events affect its

perceptions of self and work as prescription for its policy orientations. Constructivist explanations may in fact provide a complete picture of how Chinese identity and interests have influenced the creation and continuing evolution of Chinese national interest, reflect shifts in interests and how cooperation in security and economic spheres has grown to accommodate these interests.

The norms as used in Peter Katzenstein's concept of national security and used by a number of other constructivists can be defined as collective expectations for the proper behaviour of actors with a given identity. These norms can define identities and can be named as constitutive identities. On the other hand, these norms can prescribe behaviour, setting a particular set of values to regulate behaviour of the states. Thus, norms can work in either or both ways; they can be constitutive or regulatory norms. Katzenstein thus defines the role of norms in this way:

In some situations norms operate like rules that define the identity of an actor, thus having "constitutive effects" that specify what actions will cause relevant others to recognize a particular identity. In other situations norms operate as standards that specify the proper enactment of an already defined identity. (Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002: 5).

The work of Katzenstein is more focused on the analysis of regulatory norms and constitutive norms. It touches less directly on evaluative norms or practical norms. In other words, the concern of the study is attached with constitutive and regulatory norms (as defined above) and not with the norms stressing questions of morality and focusing on commonly accepted notions of 'best solutions'. He points to the Sinicization that involves numerous actors, practices and sites, and is closely related to re- and de-Sinicization. The result of these processes is to create, reinvent, and transform the meaning of "China" and "Chineseness" (Katzenstein 2012).

When it comes to foreign policy, it is even more likely that states are considered unitary actors. The neoclassical realists are with common goal of defining the foreign policy preferences and behaviour of states while adding various factors to material assumptions led conclusions. This study on the contrary builds a case in favour of identity of states that is not static rather processual. The point to emphasise is that China's territorial identity and the contested nature of that identity cannot be understood without understanding identity of China (not necessarily within boundaries) in past. This will help outline the tensions between China's modern nationalism (with emphasis on territorial boundaries) and its ability to preserve multiple civilizational traditions in past. These tensions will help reflect non-linear and contested politics that occur and spread in various directions. The study focuses on these tensions as translated in China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region.

The identity of China as hybridized and processual phenomenon further helps us understand the way China engages with Central Asian region by using SCO. SCO is an interesting mixture of Chinese traditions as translated in China led multilateral institution and its embrace of modernity. It is important case to look at how opening up and modernity in the world of interdependence is equipping China to engrain the 'new' to interpreting 'traditional'.

Constructivists view China's entry to World Trade Organization (WTO) and its active participation in International multilateral forums a representation of shared values and norms, yet with an estranged tint of China's own identity. By asserting its ownership on international standards, China affirms its national identity within globalised world. In future, multiple factors might have moderating effect on China's attitude. By using constructivist lens, there is more space to trace the inter-civilizational encounters that deserve more attention than predicting coming clash.

Imperial China is a severely understudied area in the field of international relations and especially in security studies. Johnston's merging of IR theory with the study of China can be seen as a landmark achievement to fill this existing gap. For military historians, his pioneering work provides the support for the argument that the Chinese have not been oblivious to warfare and that military force was frequently used in Chinese history. By making this argument, Johnston makes the same prediction regarding China's behaviour and that China has acted like a realist power historically. The difference of argument lies in the source of Chinese behaviour though. For cultural realism, the source of realpolitik behaviour is strategic culture, whereas for structural realism the source lies in the anarchic structure of the system.

Johnston's argument is often rejected by the followers of Confucian Pacifism, for instance Wang (2011). Wang enforces the argument that China has an antimilitarist culture and that China's strategic choice of using force has nothing to do with unit level Confucius Pacifist culture norms of benevolent statecraft but was provoked by structural imperatives to resort to military force in order to settle disputes with other political units in the system.

The constructivists agree that the rise of China's power does present a considerable challenge to the world. But they argue that the concern of a 'China Threat' is not so much a result of the PRC's growing military capabilities, but the perceived Chinese behaviour that is interpreted as a threat to the regional security or to the interest of other states. In this context, Russia's perception of China illustrates the limit of neorealist argument that state behaviour is determined by structural factors. If the realist assumption were correct, Russia would have taken measures to balance against China in classical balance of power way and seek to compete with Beijing globally. However, the reality today is different where relations between China and Russia are more pro engagement either through dialogue or interaction via multilateral

institutions in the region. This trend in emerging relations between two giant powers in the region makes clear that ideational factors such as history, identity, actor interests and intersubjective understandings among states are just as important as, if not more than, material capabilities in shaping responses to China challenge.

With reference to China threat in East Asia, David Kang argues that the rapid growth in Chinese power has in the past three decades evoked a little response from its neighbours, in terms of balancing behaviour. This is because East Asian responses to the rise of China are shaped both by interests and identities and unlike realism and liberalism oriented theories. Kang places a strong emphasis on the ideational rather than the material aspects of international politics (Kang 2007).

The domestic order helps shape the identity and then identities prescribe norms of appropriate behaviour towards those perceived as part of us as well as towards the other. As Gilbert Rozman (1999: 384) observes: 'a great power's identity focuses on the country's past, present and future in international system'. The political experience, and even status in an anarchic international system, affects norms of appropriate behaviour and conceptions of identity. Unlike realist assumption that China is an emerging hegemon with an aim to replace the US, by using the lens of identity discourse, this study suggests that identity is a unique attribute not fixed and universal as can be traced in case of China's foreign policy towards Central Asia. To understand the foreign policy of China, it is important to carefully analyse the factors and events like China's century of humiliation, Tiananmen Square incident, its fear of isolation after international response, return of Taiwan and Asian financial crisis, all that helped China constitute its identity as what we see today and it defines its interests and behaviour.

The present research by seeking to redress the imbalance between structural and rationalist styles of analysis and sociological perspectives on questions of national security as guiding China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region, uses the constructivist approach adhered by Katzenstein to introduce the sociological use of concepts such as norms, identity and culture to the traditional concept of national security. It is also relevant concerning the study of domestic structures and international institutions especially in context of China's territorial identity. The study by adopting constructivist approach, acknowledges the need of generating empirical and theoretical work to build precise relationship between the formal structure of political institutions and the ideas embedded in the political structure.

The introduction of constructivists theory further helps us bridge the sharp gap between relevance and thus credibility of domestic and international level of analysis. While not rejecting the relevance of material capabilities altogether, Constructivism rather adds consideration of the effects of ideational rather than material structures, specifically the effects

of identity on actor's interests. In the same way, to Liberalism, constructivism adds consideration of the effects identities have on both formal and informal institutions (Adler and Barnett 1998; Neumann 1999; and Acharya 2000 and 2001).

In this context, James Fearon and Alex Wendt rightly argue that thinking in terms of schools of thought at the very least can encourage scholars to be method-driven rather than problem driven in their research, which may result in important questions or answers being ignored if they are not amenable to the preferred paradigmatic fashion (Fearon and Wendt 2002). The narrow and inflexible theoretical approaches provided by both liberalism and realism are less convincing than eclectic variants that also incorporate important insights from constructivist theory (Wendt 1999; Ruggie 1998; and Katzenstein 1996; Hemmer and Katzenstein 2002).

To come up with the academic and reasonable understanding for China's foreign policy in Central Asia, the present study seeks to analyze a number of studies to make sense of China's self-perception to analyse its foreign policy towards its neighbouring countries.

2.3. China's Foreign Policy and Grand Strategy

The Chinese foreign policy actors and theorists reject both the traditional Chinese notion of universal emperorship as well as the idea of great power hegemony. They contradict China threat theory by producing and/or reproducing the discourses such as China's great power diplomacy, responsible power, China opportunity, China's peaceful rise and China's peaceful development. The Chinese literature, while referring to China as opting membership to multilateral settings like WTO and Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), considers it a sophisticated and status quo power, less confrontational and more constructive.

China threat theory thus can be referred as the other side of China's peaceful rise. Discourses, threat and opportunity, are complementary and entail each other. Thus Chinese scholarship while seemingly effacing such threats, intends to draw out identity of China and by so doing, they come up with an answer to problem regarding China's identity, important to foreign and domestic intellectuals, academics and policy makers alike. While so doing, this bulk of texts try to reconstruct China's identity as a great power.

The origin and history of the use of concept of 'peaceful rise', it is evident that the term was produced by Chinese leadership in order to cope with the 'China Threat Theory'. There has never been an authentic definition of this concept, it roughly states that positive contributions of China's rise to the world outweigh negative aspects of its growing power and role. The concept was first used by Zheng Bijian in his speech at the Bo'ao Forum as recently as November 2003 (Brookings Institute Report 2005). The concept was integrated in China's foreign policy strategy and is repeatedly used by the Chinese leaders since then. Despite the absence of any

official definition of peaceful rise, this term is widely used as a tool to describe China's foreign policy and positive engagement in international affairs.

For self-projection, the Chinese culture sometimes is referred in Chinese term as '*he-he*'. Ever since the Confucius, mainstream Chinese philosophies have emphasized the ideas of '*he*' and '*he*', which are pronounced similarly but are two different characters with two different meanings. Here, one of the '*he*' means peace, kind, together and harmony whereas the other '*he*' means join, combine, unite and inclusion.

Apart from the official use, it is widely used as the language of Chinese scholarly works. The term is used to underline the importance of regional cooperation and stability in China's domestic modernization plans. These works argue that the open confrontation of the US and accelerating regional conflict with Japan would have a destabilizing effect on China's economic development and is regarded as dysfunctional approach (Wang 2004: 3-21). The use of term 'peaceful rise' in Chinese scholarly works seem to be a pragmatic answer to China threat theory as an attempt to devalue negative interpretations of Chinese foreign policy behaviour.

China's foreign policy study is facing the challenge of introduction of China's active involvement in regional and global economic and political institutions and discourses of China's rise and China's development in the scholarly debates. China tries to represent itself as a great power and at the same time, a power that is not inclined towards balance of power strategy. China, in the official statements of fifteenth party congress focused on the word of partnership, serving the dual purpose. One, that partner of great powers must be great power itself, showing China able to be up to the criteria and secondly, it tried to erase the suspicions towards negative intensions of 'balance of power or change of status quo' on the part of China enabling China, escape from the danger of isolation and thus, promoting its domestic policy of opening up towards outside world. The same idea is put forward by Ji Zhiye but in a different way. According to Ji, the great power diplomacy is a way to distract great powers away from their disagreements, and towards a route of partnership (2000).

Deng and Wang (2005) seek to explore the forces behind China's foreign policy at the onset of 21st century. The authors are of the view that three main factors are responsible for shaping China's contemporary foreign policy; regime security, economic development and quest for great power status. They argue that in order to achieve above mentioned foreign policy goals, PRC leaders have put tremendous effort to promote their country's image as a responsible power that is ready to fulfil its international obligations.

2.3.1. Sources of Change in the Foreign Policy of China

The major shift in post-Mao China's foreign policy can be observed during mid-1990s and the foreign policy of 'New China' started unfolding during the era of Deng Xiaoping. It started

from 1970s and brought China on the track of developing power status. Although, the process of economic opening up started which brought China near international community and especially developing states from a state of economic isolation, yet it was still naive on the diplomatic path. Since the coming generation of diplomats was still uneducated to make their presence felt, its foreign policy making was still restricted to a handful of Chinese Communist Party (CCP) elites.

Since mid-1990s, foreign policy of China started adopting its present form, tinged with multilayered and sophisticated characteristics. China, this time started all dimensional opening up towards outside. As a result, the focus of policy was enhanced diplomatic activity. The policy put great emphasis on improving bilateral relations. China started changing its attitude towards multilateral organizations. China's involvement in WTO and multilateral settings as G8 is an indication of China's changed attitude. This change shows China's integrationist tendency.

International relations theory while explaining China's foreign policy attitude and the sources of change deals with the questions of what has changed in context of China's international conduct and why this change occurred. These approaches can be divided into security-led and economy/domestic led sources for explanation. Although these writings differ in the point of origin but all are convinced that China changed its policy from isolation to engagement.

The preachers of economy driven policy change state differently. According to their writings, security is not the ultimate goal behind this transformation. Most of them see, 1997-98 Asian financial crisis as launching pad for this change and they all are convinced that China by that time understood that China's economic development and its domestic stability is linked with foreign factors (Zha 1999; Wang 2004). Since China realized this need, it became clear that an engagement policy is in China's own national interest. For those who consider domestic interests are above the military and foreign interest argue that the change in policy was driven by economic instability and the main goal of CCP in changing its policy was domestic economic development (Zhao 2004: 259). Qin argues that the change was driven by internal developments in China during late 1970s and early 1980s in which the country underwent a quite profound change of national identity, strategic culture and definition of its security interests, all of which have transformed its relationship with international society (Qin 2003).

Since the late 1970s China seems to have disrupted the trajectory of use of power for the struggle of gaining great power status of Germany, Japan and Soviet Union. There are two main reasons that made China to adopt a different path. One is international environment of relative stability, openness and prosperity which has facilitated China's policy of export-led growth, and the second one is the disintegration of the Soviet Union that not only eased the security environment of China but also facilitated its empowerment in South and East Asia.

China considers itself a great power and this was evident from official statements of the fifteenth party congress. It happened for the first time in history that China talked about managing relations among great powers and it was not talked about as China's strategy towards Hegemons, Capitalist States and Third World countries, in which China was considering itself as Party A interacting with party B, belonging to any state, part of above mentioned groups. This time, China talked about managing relations among great powers rather than drafting strategy towards great powers. The tone, this time, made it clear that China was not having A and B division in mind, rather considers itself part of the group, it is planning about. But China never presented its great power status as imposed or deliberate step, rather a natural phenomenon or in the words of Shih, pursuing 'A Reluctant Rise' (2005: 1).

According to Graver, China is trying to avoid the fate, a number of rising powers met in the past like France, Germany and Japan by prematurely challenging the global hegemon of that time. The overt use of soft power by China, its advocacy of multilateralism, its establishment of strategic partnerships and its reassuring language are indeed a strategy and often referred as short term or transitory strategy to get through the tough times of early twentieth century and to stabilize its path towards long term rise. This strategy is referred as 'Law of avoidance' by Garver (2005: 2). It is important here to discuss in detail some of the components of this strategy and how this can be problematized by external actor's involvement.

2.3.2. The Role of Geo-Politics in Construction of Peaceful Rise of China

International relations scholars have been tracing a deep connection between domestic politics and international environment. For China's domestic economic stability, China needs a favourable international environment. Besides, China is interested in more and more overseas markets with its growing economy. It is interested in energy resources of its neighbouring countries. In short, China needs a peaceful regional environment for its stable economic development apart from a 'harmonious Chinese society' (Li 2009: 18). Is regional environment peaceful enough not to initiate any erosion of Chinese society from within or any conflict from outside to ensure China executes its peaceful development?

This subject is discussed by Bush and O'Hanlon, the authors have made it clear that although China and the US can come to war-like terms due to a number of reasons but the most obvious issue can be Taiwan. Since America's reaction to Tiananmen Square incident and its quick victory in first Persian Gulf War, China is feeling more sensitive and vulnerable towards Taiwan issue. This vulnerability has made China spend more on its defence sector and today's China has shifted from modest growth in military spending to accelerated military modernization and arms build-up (Bush and O'Hanlon 2007).

This topic is discussed in detail by Susan Shirk. She discusses China's foreign policy behaviour in relation to its three most important foreign relations: Taiwan, Japan and the US. Shirk writes that many of China's problems with foreign policy are due to the Party's decision to emphasize nationalism in education and the media in the post-Tiananmen era, in an effort to shore up their legitimacy. The party, after invoking the change, now finds that its responses to international events are constrained. Officials who are perceived as 'soft' on Japan, Taiwan reunification, and the United States are regularly vilified as traitors (Shirk 2007).

China's state party's hard line approach and state propaganda has brought a noteworthy change and attitudes toward Taiwan have hardened considerably in the past ten years. But Taiwan is far from the only problem where China's leaders face credibility problems. Shirk writes that Jiang Zemin reacted emotionally to the then-Japanese Prime Minister Jin Koizumi's visits to the Yasukuni shrine, where Japanese war criminals are buried with other soldiers from World War II. The Chinese government is propagating in the schools and media to present Japan as a rival in history without emitting even 'unnecessary' details, from the yearly commemorations of every seemingly insignificant historical event to the Japanese occupation, which selectively presents facts. This hatred severely constrains the Party's efforts to mediate problems and disagreements, and has backfired by pushing Japan closer to the US. Shirk also believes that Japan has moved significantly closer to the US, and believes Japan is more likely now to support its closest ally in any confrontation over Taiwan.

Chris Hughes has brought in a unique analysis by giving a break from usual and structural nature of the concept of geo-politik as playing role in case of China (Hughes 2011). Hughes traces the link between geopolitics and nationalism to find an answer for increasing assertive attitude of China especially after 2008. The 'geo-politik nationalism,' Hughes emphasis, echoes the geo-political thinking in Germany and Japan in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By citing Chinese scholars, Chris Hughes presents first hand analysis of how geopolitik concepts interact with nationalist discourse within China. The writing adds to the understanding of ongoing debates within China about future course that is contested by different intellectual circles within China.

2.3.3. The Role of Soft Power

Apart from China's material power, one cannot deny ideational factors, as put forth by Joseph Nye as 'soft power' and that is referred by Lampton as 'idea power' for China (2007: 124). The Chinese state media has learnt the value of this soft power approach and such tools of culture are reflected in newspapers explaining China's soft power that constitutes of Chinese culture, values and policy (Scott 2008: 23-4).

The most of proponents of China's rise discourse see Beijing's 'soft' power growing at similar pace. Joseph Nye while depicting China's soft power claims that China, in terms of soft power, has been performing impressively since last decades considering 'Beijing Consensus' and its inclination towards multilateral organizations (Nye 2005). Windybank warned in 2005 that the United States had underestimated China and while Washington was watching China's hard power, China had been building up its soft power (Windybank 2005: 28). The same argument is put forward by Joshua Kurlantzick in 'Charm Offensive'. Kurlantzick examines the ways China's soft power is reshaping the world (Kurlantzick 2007). Supporting China's charm offensive, the Chinese government is investing around the world in public diplomacy, aid programs and Confucius Institute for Chinese-language and cultural studies.

There are a number of scholarly works talking about China's rising soft power but there is need to critically evaluate whether this soft power of China is considerable enough to positively and effectively impact its policy choices? Beijing faces some constraints in translating these resources into desired foreign-policy outcomes. Bates Gill, while appreciating China's increasing soft power becomes suspicious of its effective use in foreign policy and fears that China's soft power is not effective enough. He brings out three major factors hindering China's efforts to project its soft power effectively, imbalance in resources, legitimacy concerns of its diplomacy, and a lack of a coherent agenda. Now, the important question is how to test external claims about China's intentions and China's claims about its peaceful rise and development?

The significant point to consider is that China's perceptions about international security environment cannot be dealt with separately from their perceptions about country's identity in terms of its historical experiences, contemporary development and its future role. The national identity of the country can be identified by the people of a particular country, developed over a very long period of time and its intrinsic values are shared by the people. William Bloom puts it: national identity describes that condition in which a mass of people have made the same identification with national symbols, have internalized the symbols of the nation, so that they may act as one psychological group when there is a threat to, or the possibility of enhancement of, these symbols of national identity' (1993: 52).

Since the establishment of the PRC in 1949, China's national identity has undergone various phases of transformations. China's identity, according to van Ness has changed from a socialist state in the 1950s to a third world state in the 1960s, then to a reforming and modernizing socialist state from the late 1970s to the late 1980s (1993: 199-203).

Yongnian Zheng rightly argues that the growth of Chinese nationalism in the 1990s should be interpreted as a response to the changes in China's external environment and its search for a new identity (1999). The conception of national identity is closely related to China's historical

legacy. Most Chinese elites are proud of their civilization and historical pre-eminence but also shamed by the century of humiliation (Callahan 2004).

Whether realist framework or liberal theory is used to explain China's responses and perceptions towards the US global strategy, it is clear that apprehensions at the part of China stand well towards the US. Although, this point is forwarded by western and Chinese scholars alike, the hypothesis stands on the basis of material and institutional factors. This study builds constructive argument to explain how people's perception of the world is socially and historically constructed. China's scepticism towards the US helps explain China's identity with reference to its strong distinction of the 'other' which here stands as the US. This identity construction is rooted in Chinese history and culture; hence, this study argues that fluid identity of today's China partially breeds itself from its fluid history and fluid culture.

The argument of present study is that it is important to make sense of China's self-perception to analyse its foreign policy towards its neighbouring countries. Or to put in different words, how does China define its own identity in relation to different actors in international system? Constructivists therefore seek to understand identity formation in terms of distinguishing between self and other (Blumer 1986). The understanding of the national identity of the China is a key to understanding the evolution of the State's foreign policy. Thus the foreign policy of a state can be defined not only part of a statecraft but as a type of communication, a state fundamentally engages in a dialogue with another state or group of states. This dialogue is therefore a way of representing in terms of identity of 'self' and the identity of 'other'.

An important critique on China's foreign relations is its support for the autocratic government system. This attitude of a rising power does not fall into the 'responsible' as explained by its western counterparts. Ma Zhengang, the Director of China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), rightly argues that the subtext of 'China responsibility theory' is that China is not a responsible power. An important point behind China's attitude as a responsible power is its support of democratic norms which is far from the reality today. The need felt at the part of western countries to get China integrated into the international system and constrained by its principles and norms. In this way, the US and the west will get to set code of conduct for a responsible power to be adopted by China. According to Ma, while China is given the status of responsible stakeholder, Washington is actively pursuing a strategy of hedging against China. On the other hand, Ma believes that to Chinese analysts, behind the 'China responsibility theory' is still the old policy of containment plus engagement (2007: 3).

What scholars and policy makers consider to be national identity is not fixed but varies over time. This helps us explain why China adopted a U-turn from an isolationist policy to a more engaging and open foreign policy. The concept of national identity as a flexible concept helps

explaining the change in foreign policy of China in a more appropriate way rather than sticking to a rigid explanation resulting in ignoring and sometimes even misrepresenting empirical data.

The identities are prescriptive representation of political actors themselves and of their relationships to each other. The important question here is what is the purpose of this 'sociological turn' (Kowert and Legro 1996: 453) in international relations theory. The answer is that international relations theory cannot afford to ignore norms. This claim can be ratified by considering the impacts of norms on the interests, beliefs, behaviour and thus on identities of actors in case of China and Central Asia engagement. Addressing the case of China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region and SCO through the lens of IR theory could help reconcile some of the diverging views of China's foreign policy which range from highly alarmist to extremely sceptical. Mapping the meaning of SCO in IR scholarship could also provide new theoretical and analytical tools to better understand the contemporary international system.

2.4. China's Foreign Policy towards Central Asia

Important thing is to take constructivism critique seriously and emphasize upon the process of building collective identity and norms and their subsequent evolution. It can be proven by explanatory and descriptive account of the specific case studies. The case study of Central Asia can help construct plausible hypothesis regarding identity reconstruction, definition of interests and origin of different political processes as getting meaning from particular identity. For grounding the argument of the study, it is important to analyse the current debates from regarding China's foreign policy towards Central Asia from Area specialists and international relations scholars.

For Avery Goldstein, Central Asia is one of the driving forces behind China's current grand strategy (Goldstein 2005). The proposition that China wants its rise to be peaceful and its increasing involvement in multilateral settings is a proof of its intentions as a responsible stakeholder. But Chung, in his work opposes this optimist picture. He compares China's involvement in ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and in SCO for making the case for China's self-interest driven multilateralism. According to Chung, China's active involvement in ARF binds China to sacrifice its national interest by adapting international regulations and that thing is missing in loose multilateral setting in form of SCO. Here, in disguise of combating three evils, China is serving its three main purposes, to reduce American influence, to get hold of energy resources and a tool for cracking down on separatist movements in Taiwan, Xinjiang and Tibet. Chung holds that excessive cohesiveness of SCO is due to the same political nature of states and common goals, a factor missing in ARF (Chung 2009).

There is a lack of any comprehensive work that is done in this context. The book of Colin Mackerras and Michael Clarke about Xinjiang and Central Asia adopts the tool of 'glocality' as

an analytical and contextual component. This concept blurs the boundaries between macro and micro affairs of actors encompassing local, national and regional to global. However, the focus of the book is narrow, and does not broaden away from the interconnectedness of Xinjiang and Central Asia (Mackerras and Clarke 2009).

It is important to analyse the present literature dealing with China's engagement with central Asian region to see the gaps and to put forward argument of our study.

2.4.1. What China is doing in Central Asia and the Focus of Existing Approaches

Most of the commentary on China's increased involvement in Central Asia points to China's quest for natural resources as the driving factor in Sino-Central Asian relations. In this neo-mercantilist argument, China seeks to exploit Central Asia's cheap production and natural resources to meet Chinese demand, and then use Central Asia as a market for its manufactured goods.

Another group of scholars view China's Central Asia policy in the context of a realist grand strategy to facilitate its rise to power. In this viewpoint, China's rush into Central Asia is intended to maximize its national power and secure valuable and strategic oil resources which it can use to challenge the US hegemony, first in the Pacific and then on a global scale. These analysts follow the theory that mighty China is rising, and as witnessed by the last several hundred years of great power conflict, its natural hegemonic desires will fuel confrontation with the United States. For support, they highlight China's rush for Central Asia's vast resources while the US is preoccupied with terrorism and its involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq.

A number of analysts share the notion that the most promising prospect of expanding and consolidating Sino-Central Asian relations, from Beijing's perspective, is the potential for gaining access to the region's vast energy resources, including oil and natural gas. China is clearly interested in tapping into this potential source of energy supplies as the country's demands and import reliance increase to keep up with rapid economic development (Bluth 2002; Andrews-Speed and Vinogradov 2000). Downs, Jaffe and Lewis emphasize the same point. According to their analysis, Beijing's growing energy needs badly demand diversification in sources and in this context; Central Asia's importance is obvious (Downs 2000; Jaffe and Lewis 2002).

There is less doubt that energy resources are one of the main China's interests in the region, there is need to explore China's ability to acquire these resources successfully. Liao considers that China is being welcomed by Central Asian states and this increased activity of China in Central Asia is carrying benefits for both parties. Central Asian states are happy with China's

presence as a customer for their energy reserves because leadership considers China as one component in breaking the almost monopoly-like status of Russia's energy ties to the region and increase the options available to them (Liao 2006).

On the other hand, some analysts are sceptic of China's future in the region in the realm of energy. Bhadrakumar is of the view that competition between China and Russia will be a hindrance in their cooperation and that there should be no doubt that the increased Chinese presence will be met with some resistance from Gazprom's dominant position in Central Asia (Bhadrakumar 2006; Garnett 2001). Here emerges the question that how China is using and intends to use SCO to secure its energy interests in the region? It is also important to examine if China is heading towards eradicating conflict by enhancing cooperation on energy matter or desiring simple monopoly.

Some scholars view Chinese economic security as the primary motive driving its Central Asian policy (Turner 2005: 77; Craig 2003: 12). They see that Chinese foreign policy has proven to be more constructive and pragmatic and will continue to be because their economic growth is heavily dependent on foreign trade and investment (Wang 2003). Some analysts foresee a new line of economic policy pursued by the Chinese leadership through close relations with Central Asian states. They have pointed towards PRC's leadership placing a special emphasis on improving infrastructure for trade and investment through multilateral treaties in the region, emphasising on the formation of a free trade zone by 2020 and showing enormous concern in reviving the transnational network of highways as evidence (Miller 2004).

There can be found media debates covering China's increasing business interests in Central Asian region, there is lack of scholarly work to evaluate this component of China's power in Central Asian region. There is need to explore the implications of the pace China is entering into markets of Central Asian region. Swanstrom, in his work, says that Beijing has restarted the classical attempts to dominate Central Asian through trade. It is China, not the US or Russia, that has begun to fill the dearth of consumption goods and provisions in Central Asia. China has, for example, granted Kyrgyzstan a loan of USD5.7 million and Tajikistan a loan of USD5 million to buy Chinese commercial goods (Swanstrom 2001). In his another work, Swanstrom is of the view that Beijing has, however, important advantages in the region, as Russian goods do not have the same quality as Chinese goods, Chinese products have lower prices than goods from the US and Japan, and neither Japan nor the US have focused on forming business contacts with Central Asia (Swanstrom 2005).

As China's rise is evident, the influential role China is playing in Central Asian region is also certain. There is need to empirically study the factors that are triggering China's interaction towards the region. What are the patterns of interactions towards Central Asian region and how

these patterns are grounded in China's culture of foreign policy. The recent concern on part of China towards military cooperation through the platform of SCO is catching the attention of analysts too. Some analysts apprehend that for China, the significance of this military exercise goes beyond SCO. These bilateral and multi-lateral military exercises reflected the enhancement of SCO anti-terrorism cooperation and ever-strengthening capability to act (Fei 2009: 5). The SCO has been compared to the Warsaw Pact and referred to as the 'NATO of the East' and there exist apprehensions among Western scholars, mostly coming from west, that China intends to expand its military influence in Central Asia, as well (Cohen 2006). The phenomenon needs to be studied with reference to SCO's security agenda in general and of China in particular.

A final viewpoint is shared by most of the Chinese scholars and officials. It views China's Central Asia foreign policy as part of a rise to great power status, but focuses on China's peaceful rise and its cooperative agenda. Rather than seeking to challenge the United States, China seeks to expand its 'soft power' influence and encourage peaceful economic development in Central Asia. These goals are central to China's ability to continue its own development and great power rise in a peaceful environment and to support its larger foreign policy goal of transforming the world order to a multi polar system. China could use the multilateral organization for leverage as well, to present itself as a natural leader of the region, or at least a regional co-leader with Russia (Kurlantzick 2007). At another place, Kurlantzick says:

After all it was only five years ago that many US scholars dismissed the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a talk shop, insisting China could not convert it into a challenge to US influence in Central Asia. Within a short time, Beijing did just that.
(2006)

French, in his work, appreciates China's power in Central Asian region and while talking about soft power, French is of the view that recently Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have followed the Kazakh example in looking toward China, rather than to Western-dominated international financial institutions, for new economic thinking. According to French, China's authoritarian politics and central planning also have a strong appeal for many of the former Soviet republics of the region (French 2004).

Strictly from the standpoint of military capabilities, China's rapidly improving forces in the region certainly are significant but this perspective may not adequately account for the wide spectrum of tools Beijing is employing to enlarge its influence in Central Asia. Indeed, the strong emphasis on trade and institutional cooperation suggest that China is investing heavily in soft power to achieve its goals in Central Asia (Goldstein 2005: 18-19).

Bates Gill also has used broader version of Soft power. According to him, China's 'friendly policy towards its neighbours' is also an instrument of yielding its soft power (Gill and Huang 2006). One of the most interesting result of this 'good neighbour' policy is Beijing's willingness to settle or alleviate long-standing territorial disputes with its neighbours.

If these studies are together, it is clear that most of the studies talk about China's engagement with Central Asia with solely interest-driven lenses. The studies focus on the theme of whether China is succeeding in fulfilling these interests. But how these interests are formulated and practiced do require more focus to be explained theoretically.

2.4.2. Interests-Driven Approach vs Interests-Defining Approach

The present study of China's foreign policy in Central Asia lacks a comprehensive approach. Most of the times, it is too narrow to give an insight to general debates regarding China's grand strategy and its peaceful rise resulting into lack of broader utility. Moreover, these works fall short of placing China's relations with Central Asian region into a viable, theoretical framework.

The materialist approaches ruled the arena of international relations discipline for a long time. A quick look at existing literature especially regarding China's foreign policy towards Central Asia points out a major trend which while considering China as rising power is seeking to secure oil resources or turning Central Asia as its area of influence. Even if one agrees with this material interest driven approach, the literature does not say anything about where these interests are coming from, why China is doing what China is doing, why China is welcomed by Central Asian states, what is stopping Russia from stopping Chinese influence and why SCO is growing despite the speculations of its soon coming collapse.

This study argues that the answer to these questions is fundamental to make sense of China's foreign policy in Central Asia. It argues that the identity of the state determines the interest of the states can guide us understand China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region. The case of Central Asia is unique to further the argument of the study by problematizing the notion of national interest as a static concept by looking at the evolution of China-Central Asia relations and defining China's interests.

Increased contact with other people is likely to reinforce existing beliefs, identities and behaviour (Wendt 1992: 411). The theory of collective identity and identity responsible for defining interests and thus practices for a state is helpful in providing an adequate description to China and Central Asia relations as well as alliance between China and Russia in SCO.

The SCO has been widely targeted by realists and neo-realists to project an inevitable rivalry between two major actors in SCO that will bring forward the downfall of this budding regional

organization. Since neo-classical and balance of power theories based scholarly works have been long predicting the soon coming collapse of SCO, either derived by an emerging rivalry between China and Russia or growing power of China becoming a threat for Central Asian states rather than a possible partner. The relations among China and Central Asian states not only survived tests over the course of history, it is getting stronger mainly in the form of SCO. Despite some tensions in Sino-Russian relationship, the engagement is prevalent than clash. The eclectic theoretical approach here helps maintain that threat perceptions are tied to the questions of identity rather than the narrowed down description of relevant material power.

The SCO has not been explained using the lens of identity and norms so far, and the existing literature reveals its indeterminacy with regard to the origins of interaction patterns within SCO and the endurance of SCO. Collectively held identities not only define who we are, but they also delineate the boundaries against 'the other' (Wendt 1994).

2.5. Conclusion

The existing literature presented in this chapter tries to answer the questions related to China's rise, its foreign policy and grand strategy. But regarding China's rise views, most of the external views are tinged with the theories of realism and are more likely to end up presenting China as a threat. The realism-stricken approach that has been predominantly engaging with China's foreign policy towards Central Asia shapes analysis of these scholars as carrying attributes of reductionism. The studies dealing with China's foreign policy, on the other hand, are more about intensions and words rather than empirical findings. The present study, thus, intends to make a move from reductionism of 'China threat approach' by integrating constructivist understanding to empirically study the Chinese foreign policy and political processes in case of Central Asian region.

The theoretical lens provided by Constructivism and mainly by Peter J. Katzenstein's theory helps the study build the main argument that Chinese perceptions of the security and identity are extremely important in shaping China's foreign policy and its policy towards the Central Asian region in particular. In addition, the study aims at developing the argument that Chinese security discourse in the Central Asian states should be understood as part of a process of identity formation through which China seeks to construct and maintain a great power identity while locating itself against 'other'. The study of Katzenstein is helpful in grounding an argument in favour of culture of security where long and evolving territorial identity of China is guiding the nature of security relationship and the way it approaches SCO.

Chapter 3

‘New Great Game’ in Central Asia: Different Players and Altering Game

3.1. Introduction

This chapter deals with geopolitical aspect of China’s presence in Central Asia. The geo-strategic significance of Central Asia in China’s foreign policy, as discussed in this chapter, is conceived differently from the analysis influenced by realist debates. The chapter argues that the Central Asian region should not be seen merely as cross-roads, or a ‘heartland’, or a bridge, but as part of a vast new strategic arena capable in its own right of influencing the regional system and especially the security environment of China, Russia and other regional states like Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. The Central Asia directly incorporates Russia and China; it automatically and generally magnifies the stakes involved, whether from instances of regional instability, the development of energy resources, or the strategic interaction of great powers in and beyond Central Asia. Central Asia is transformed from a remote quarter that happens to have oil, a vulnerability to drug trafficking, and Islamic extremism into a critical link shaping the way this part of the world affects politics much further afield (Legvold 2003: 67-106).

Central Asian geopolitical affairs have become much more complex compared to the original great game between Russian and British Empires during 19th century. At that time, these two empires had been competing for the control of territory indirectly or directly. Today’s ‘Great Game’ has attracted a number of other regional and global actors towards the region for influence and to maximize their interests (Menon 2003: 188). The early 1990s witnessed a vigorous competition between Turkey and Iran for cultural influence in Central Asia (Ataee 2000; Cornell 2004). More recently, India and Pakistan have pursued a mixture of cooperative and competitive policies in the region that have influenced and been affected by their broader relationship. Now independent Central Asian countries also invariably affect the region’s international relations as they seek to manoeuvre among the major powers without compromising their independence. Although Russia, China, and the United States substantially affect regional security

issues, they cannot dictate outcomes the way imperial powers in Central Asian region frequently did a century ago for a variety of reasons.

Concerns about a renewed 'Great Game' as replica of traditional 'Great Game' cannot be accepted unchallenged. The great powers struggling for influence in the region have preferred cooperative element of inter-state relations in the 'New Great Game'. The contest for influence on part of China and Russia in the region does not directly contradict the vital national interests of China and Russia. They share substantial interests, especially in reducing terrorism, curbing drug trafficking and maintaining territorial integrity. The end of cold war has seen a new phenomenon where Central Asian states after getting independence from Russia, despite being weak and vulnerable, have been playing an influential role in providing opportunities for cooperative diplomacy in a region where traditional rivalries had remained dominant in the past.

It is significant to consider that in the past, geopolitics of Central Asian region has always been portrayed as an area attracting absolute competition on the part of great powers. The concept of 'New Great Game' is considered valid even in contemporary geopolitical situation where all the countries engaged in the Central Asian region are subscriber to it according to their geopolitical interactional patterns and dynamics. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, one theme that has become fundamental part of the analysis of the politico-military and economic situations of Central Asia has been the question of a 'New Great Game'. The concept of a 'New Great Game' has been used to describe the 'non-deviant' and natural behaviour of states in the normative structures of self-help and anarchy. The 'New Great Game' as concept is synonymous with competition, influence, power, hegemony and profits. This competition of each state for maximizing their national interests through Central Asian region are often explained with reference to their acquisition of oil and gas resources found in Central Asia. However, it is not limited to these material aspects only, as references are being made to religious, cultural and military competition with states involved like China, Turkey, India, Iran, Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan.

This chapter takes a different approach to explain the geopolitics of the region and China's involvement in this. It does not use the concept of a 'New Great Game' as a replica of traditional 'Great Game' that has traditional projection of power at play. This chapter argues that the 'game' might be the same but it cannot be understood by using the same 'chessboard' and same 'players'. The changing chessboard (security

environment) and changing players (identity of the states) has helped to change the rules of today's 'Great Game'.

This chapter deals with two main arguments. Firstly, it problematizes the abrupt use of the prism for explaining great power politics in today's complex regional situation in Central Asia as it has been used in past with reference to British and Russian empires' struggle for influence over the region. The 'New Great Game' concept has been interpreted as power politics strictly as it has been described by using the prism of western theories and has misinterpreted the clash of the interests of different actors in Central Asia.⁵ The focus of the debate in this chapter is that when the states behave in traditional manner as British and Russian empires did during the 'Great Game', their 'non-deviant' behaviour is adequately explained by the materialist and positivist approaches. But, the cooperative elements defining the interstate relations, especially among China, Russia and Central Asian states, make it clear that these structural realist and balance of power approaches are insufficient explanations and struggle with interpreting 'deviant' behaviour of states like China's cooperative foreign policy towards Central Asia.

The previous argument relates to the second argument of the chapter that China's growing influence in today's 'pivot area' (Mackinder 1904) is helping in changing the contours of relations among different actors that has been often labelled as 'great gamers' (Edwards 2003: 83-102). This study depicts that execution of China's foreign policy in Central Asia for the last two decades poses challenge to the theories of western power politics in explaining 'New Great Game'. It emphasises that the inter-subjective meaning of China's identity in Central Asia is not that of a 'competitor' or threat for other actors, especially for Russia, as it is evident by China's growing presence in Central Asia over the period of last decade. China has remained successful up till now in constructing its identity as a 'peaceful state' and a 'good neighbour'.

This chapter proposes to undertake a study of the 'New Great Game' concept, by comparing it with original 'Great Game', to see if the term and concept has any value in analysis and or can be used as an analytical tool in the context of regional dynamics of today's Central Asia. This chapter intends to narrate the realities of contemporary relations between actors in Central Asia to prove that pattern of relations between states are too complex, multi-layered and multi-faceted to compare with the 'Great Game' of

⁵ For details see Menon 2003; Kempe 2006

past. Finally, this argument can be related to China's foreign policy that is being practiced in Central Asia. It will help to understand why China's foreign policy in today's Central Asia is in alignment with China's identity and is reciprocal as well as responsive towards the Central Asian states' foreign policies.

3.2. The 'Great Game'

The term 'Great Game' is thought to have been coined by a British Artillery officer named Arthur Connolly in his papers *Narrative of an Overland Journey to the North of India* in 1830s (Siegel 2002; xv). This term became more known when it was used by Rudyard Kipling in his novel 'Kim' (Kipling 1901). Although fictional, Kipling portrayed the real struggle for political ascendancy by British and Russian empires in his novel (Hopkirk 1994). This great game refers to the struggle for influence for most of the 19th and early 20th centuries between the British and Russian empires. The key geographical areas that had been engulfed in competition struggle by these two empires or as in Peter Hopkirk's words, 'Battlefield' (Hopkirk 1990) consisted of Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet. The nature of traditional great game was entirely a struggle for political dominance, control and security, conducted by two imperial powers over land and populations whose value lay in their location between the Russian and British Empires. A careful analysis of the events during this competition shows that the 'Great Game' can be divided in three phases (Hopkirk 2002: 59-63; Fromkin 1980: 936-952).

The beginning of first phase can be marked with the expansion of the Russian empire into Central Asia during the late 18th and 19th centuries. In the early nineteenth century, Britain was a dominant political and economic power throughout most of the sub-continent through East India Company. By exercising its control through this company, by 1858, the British government assumed direct administrative control of the subcontinent (Siegel 2002: 1). India was a colony receiving massive investment from British and acting as the most important market for British manufacturers (Cain and Hopkins 1993: 333). Apart from this, Indian military men had been sent to fight for British masters in several conflicts. Siegel explains the importance of India for British leaders as a crucial colony to "Britain's sense of imperial glory" and "global might" (Siegel 2002: 1).

Russia's southward expansion towards Central Asia can be traced back to the reign of Peter the First. Tsar Peter was persistent in his activities to subjugate Central Asian

‘hordes’ as the Central Asia was a “key and gate to all the Asian countries and lands” (Donnelly 1975: 212). Peter the First, frequently organized expeditions in 1714, 1715, 1718 and 1719-20 to explore the Caspian’s coasts (Donnelly 1975: 209-212). These expansionist activities raised suspicions about Russian intentions. Frequent efforts on part of Russian Empire succeeded in a great thrust of Central Asian expansion in mid to late 1800s, when Imperial Russia extended its borders in the region close to the position of borders at the time of Russian Revolution of 1917 (Siegel 2002: 2). In response to Russian policies and to balance the expansion, the British East India Company sent officers to explore the overland approaches to the northern borders of India. During the 19th century, the involvement of the British government increased that turned the Great Game from a private venture into part of imperial defence, foreign and colonial policy. To execute these policy objectives, the methods used by the imperial powers were those of secret agents, coupled with overt military action upon occasions (Palace 2002: 64-67; Verrier 1992: 34-43). The both sides used military troops as a show of power and to deploy whenever needed to exercise power. In 1901, Russia had a regular army of over one million troops, with an extra three million troops as reserve army whereas Britain had 75,000 British soldiers and 153,000 indigenous soldiers (Siegel 2002: 3). The signing of Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907 on August 31st in St. Petersburg can be regarded as the end of the first phase of the ‘Great Game’. As a result of this convention, Russia and Britain, agreed to solidify boundaries and identified respective control in Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet (Greaves 1968: 69). This convention was certainly incomplete attempt to put full stop to Russia and Britain’s struggle to gain influence in Asia (Klein 1971: 128). The rivalry was back in full swing with Russian revolution in 1917.

The second phase consisted of the *Drang nach Osten* (Drive to the East), a plan of German Empire based on the transversal Eurasian axis from Hamburg via Prague, Budapest, Constantinople, Alexandretta to Basra on the Persian Gulf (Roucek 1946: 372). The third phase of the ‘Great Game’ can be marked following the 1917 Revolution of Russia when the Bolsheviks under Lenin set out, “by means of armed uprisings, to liberate the whole of Asia from imperialist domination” (Hopkirk 2002: 61). The result of third round was the consolidation of Bolshevik power over the old Tsarist domains (Edwards 2003: 84).

Three main conclusions can be derived about the nature of power struggle as depicted in context of traditional 'Great Game'. Firstly, the ultimate aim of the imperial struggle was the direct or indirect territorial control. It was a contest for supremacy over the region, where imperial powers fought either intelligence expeditions or short wars on the horseback using rifles (Rubin and Rashid 2008: 30). In short, the prime objective behind the 'Great Game' was imperial security and power. Due to the involvement of the means of hard power on the part of imperial powers, Rudyard Kipling depicted this pessimistic overview of the game:

“When everyone is dead the Great Game is finished. Not before” (Kipling 1909).

Secondly, great power struggle as happened during nineteenth century was all about 'competing interests'. Two contesting powers, Russia and Britain, shared an environment where maximization of advantage on the part of one great power raised the alarm bells for other great power. Thirdly, Central Asia is considered as a 'battleground' where imperial powers, Russia and Britain, fought their wars. In a way, the geographical area was considered 'no man land' (Cuthberston 1994/95: 31) or hordes (Donnelly 1975: 212). In short, Central Asia was just a place for figureheads and proxies being pulled between aggressive ambitions of imperial masters of that time. The only change considered valid and worth considering regarding the area was level of manoeuvring within the region by any of imperial powers.

It would not be wrong to say that the normative structure of anarchy was prevalent during the nineteenth century 'Great Game'. With the history of persistent plaguing of relations by great power rivalry between traditional empires, the environment of that time fits well into realist description. The imperial powers had remained busy struggling for maximizing their shares while noticing each other's move with an acute scrutiny. The maximization of interest on part of one power was considered a threat for other power. The competing interests of Britain and Russia and overt use of hard power resources, 'non-deviant' behaviour of states, makes an excellent case for realist theory. The role of Central Asian region as receiving shockwaves of the rivalry of great powers had been reduced to the structural treatment of the politics. That is why the states are considered battleground at the mercy of the 'mighty' structural distribution of power and subsequent behaviour of powerful states.

The traditional 'Great Game' between Russia and Britain constitutes an important era in international relations' history and its significance can be measured by the fact that in contemporary international relations scholarship, the concept of 'Great Game' is referred freely and frequently while discussing the major political developments in Central Asia and Afghanistan and the struggle for dominance on the part of regional and global powers even today.

3.3. The 'New Great Game'

It is often said that the 'New Great Game' has emerged out of competition for influence, power, hegemony and profits in Central Asia. It has been argued that the Central Asia, scene of the Great Game between Britain and Russia in the nineteenth century, is once more a key to the security of all Eurasia (Starr 1996: 80). In today's 'Great Game', Russia, has been engaged in complex geopolitical manoeuvres and caught in geo-economic competition in its perceived "Great Space" (Erickson 1999: 257-258) or "Near Abroad" (Rumer 2002: 58). The US and West do not want to see any structure in Eurasia that permits Russian hegemony (Tsepkalo 1998: 107). Caspian's petroleum has come to be a focal point of power in world politics, (Sariahmetoglu 2000: 68) with access to that resource and sharing in its potential wealth representing objectives that stir national ambitions, motivate corporate interests, rekindle historical claims, revive imperial aspirations and fuel international rivalries (Brzezinski 1997: 125). As the struggle for Central Asian energy resources is a multidimensional security, geopolitical and economic game, this 'Great Game' is quickly becoming a paramount challenge for the US policy making towards the year 2000 and beyond (Cohen 1996). The general theme underlying this concept is one of competition; competition for influence, whether at political, economic or cultural levels. While the term 'New Great Game' may not be used explicitly, this competitive element is one that is present in much analysis of the region, with the 'New Great Game' at the heart of such analysis.

The above analysis was part of an overall debate about Asia's future. Following the end of the Cold War in 1991, some scholars in the West began to predict that Asia was "ripe for rivalry" (Friedberg 1993: 5-33; Betts 1993/4: 60; Manning et al 1999: 43-67; Goldstein 1997/8: 36-73; Buzan and Segal 1994: 3-21; Layne 1993: 5-51; Christensen 2001: 5-40; Waltz 1993: 56-65; Kupchan 1998: 40-79). They based their prediction on the factors like widening disparities in the levels of economic and military power among

nations in the Asian region and their different political systems (while the focus of potential contention is authoritative regimes). Another potential trigger of such competition was portrayed to be historical animosities among Asian states that has plagued the region with absence of international institutions in past. Many scholars thus predicted a return of power politics after decades when conflict in Asia was dominated by the cold war tension between the US and the Soviet Union. In addition, scholars anticipated a return of arms race and the possibility of major conflict among Asian countries. Apart from these general predictions, some studies emphasised the growing possibility of Japanese rearmament that is likely to bring about more insecurities and further China's assertive attitude (Segal 1996: 107-135; Roy 1994: 164; Kristof 1993: 59-74; Friedman et al 2000) and eventually Sino-Russian rivalry that will be a serious threat to any multipolar developments in Asia.

The 'New Great Game' concept focuses on same traditional power politics concept as predicted about the future of Asia in general. Especially Russian attempts to reassert political influence over the former Soviet states (Winrow 2000). Since 1991 there has been a widespread view, that most geopolitical issues in the region could be reduced to either favouring or opposing Russian hegemony (Weisbrode 2001: 11). It is an integral part of the 'New Great Game' concept that the former Soviet states are the subject of competition between Russia and her opponents, most notably the US, with each trying to ensure that they have the greater influence; an act of what has been termed 'great-power chauvinism' (Karimov 1998: 34).

From 1994 the issue of oil and gas and the potential rewards that it could bring, dominated the analysis of Central Asia (Weisbrode 2001: 23). The overall impression was of untapped wealth that would, within a few years, literally come gushing out of the region. With the profit motive, international companies became involved, while analysts commentating that a number of energy companies are jumping on the bandwagon to Central Asia (Shammas 1993: 25; Ghorban 1993: 1-15). The question of pipeline access to reserves, what route should they take, who should be responsible for their construction and safety, who charges and profits from them, and the composition of the consortia and firms responsible for this is seen as a whole subsection of the 'New Great Game' hypothesis (Carver and Englefield 1994: 119-121; Maley 1998: 231-232; Rashid 1997: 60-61; Sariahmetoglu 2000: 67-80).

Economic security and primacy is not the only facet of the 'New Great Game'. At the beginning of the 1990s it was widely anticipated that there would be a struggle for cultural influence in Central Asia; 'by far the most fateful and fiercest competition on the soul of the emerging Central Asian Muslims is the one waged between Iran and Turkey' (Israeli 1994: 22). These two states, it was argued, had historical, religious and cultural ties with the states of Central Asia and given the weakness of the new ex-Soviet regimes it was natural that they would gravitate towards being the junior partners in a region bloc dominated by one of the regional powers (Tarock 1997: 185-200; Pasha 1997: 343-357; Ozey 2001: 83-94). A second subset of this cultural aspect of the 'New Great Game' was fought by Pakistan and India with both vying for influence in Central Asia as part of an extension of their own strategic rivalries. This, however, was perceived to be a sideshow as both are minor players with weak hands and the game is picking up as the major players are moving closer (Dietl 1997: 143). Furthermore, the 'New Great Game' was argued to spread towards the Persian Gulf (Singh 2001: 363-364) and South Asia (Lansford 2002).

While economic and cultural competitions were, and are an integral part of the 'New Great Game' hypothesis, the question of hard security gained importance especially in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the subsequent US-led military action in Afghanistan, the whole question of a 'New Great Game' was revisited (Beeman 2001). With Western troops active in Afghanistan and the US being granted basing rights in Central Asia, the question of the impact on regional political influence was raised. The idea of a challenge to the perceived Russian hegemony and Chinese influence was raised in the press and academic circles. The US presence in Central Asia, however, has in some circles been perceived as less of a military action, having a different intention. It can be inferred that anti-imperialism and Islamic fundamentalism converge their similarities in order to contain US hegemony through their opposition for US-led NATO's war and presence in Afghanistan (Prins 2001).

More recent and weighing turn in this context is the issue of China's increasing economic and military development and its potential impact on the international order has led some observers to see in contemporary China an eminent replacement for Soviet power or an equally important power in Central Asia. China's continued rise presents a challenge to the US long-held goal of not permitting any one power to exclusively dominate Central Asia. Even in the post-cold war world it is apparent that a key goal of

US international strategy is to prevent any one power from dominating either the European or Asian segments of the Eurasian continent. In Asia, China is perceived as the only power with the potential to dominate Asia in the near future. A scholar explains China's 'mighty' position in contemporary 'Great Game' as:

The emerging Chinese superstate is located in Eurasia as the eastern rim-land of the historical heartland, while its long sea coast flanks the principal sea lines of communication of the great maritime, manufacturing and trading empire of Japan. China has weight and position. Unlike the unlamented, erstwhile USSR, China is not a land locked power and she cannot be landlocked by a prudent US containment policy (Gray 1996: 258).

The above illustrates the type of actors in the 'New Great Game'. Multinational companies have been present in the oil tendering process, state governments by the diplomatic positioning of the 1990s and since September 11, transnational organisations, both governmental (Page 2001) and non-governmental organisations (Steen 2001) and substate influences, such as local factions have all allegedly been part of this 'New Great Game' (Burke and Beaumont 2002).

Therefore the perceived wisdom is that the New Great Game, emerging in the early 1990s and continuing until the present day, is multifaceted, covering a range of sectors from economic to social and cultural and questions of hard security, with a variety of actors playing the game in a number of geographical areas. The hypothesis is that while the original 'Great Game' has ended, a 'New Great Game' has taken its place where actors are busy in competing and confronting each other and one based on zero-sum game that does not carry any better picture than the one predicted by Rudyard Kipling.

The following section will discuss in detail the realities of the contemporary 'Great Game' to state that the pessimism and confrontation associated with 'New Great Game' and exaggerated by scholarly works has never took place. It further indicates the fact that much of the analysis already conducted is dubious and is subject to reinterpretation according to the newly emerging regional trends.

3.4. The Central Asian Region After 1991

The disintegration of the USSR brought a new phase in the competition for influence, resources and partnerships in Central Asia. This time, after the emergence of Newly Independent States (NIS), the competition became more complex, multifaceted, multidimensional and multi-layered (Amineh 1999: x; Ascher and Mirovitskaya 2000; Croissant and Aras 2000; Ebel and Menon 2000: 267). The possibility that the Central Asian region contains vast hydrocarbon reserves triggered a flurry of interest in the region, placing at it the heart of global energy politics. For the newly independent countries of the region, particularly energy rich, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, Central Asian energy promised a path to rapid economic development. Eager to distance themselves from Moscow, the governments of these newly independent states has to struggle under the indirect rule of the Russia and are/were eager to distance themselves from the old masters. The energy resources were a factor strong enough to attract states and international energy companies.

3.4.1. US Strategies and Interests

The Eurasian heartland is still of considerable strategic importance in the US strategic planning. As the former US National Security Advisor, Zbigniew Brzezinski, stated that:

“Eurasia is the world’s axial supercontinent. A power that dominated Eurasia would exercise decisive influence over two of the world’s three most economically productive regions, Western Europe and East Asia. A glance at the map also suggests that a country dominant in Eurasia would almost automatically control the Middle East and Africa. With Eurasia now serving as the decisive geopolitical chessboard, it no longer suffices to fashion one policy for Europe and another for Asia. What happens with the distribution of power on the Eurasian landmass will be of decisive importance to America’s global primacy and historical legacy” (Brzezinski 1997: 50-65).

In Feigenbaum’s view, Deputy Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs for the US, Central Asia is a particularly important region because it represents a microcosm of the US foreign interests, including Russia’s resurgence, China’s regional and global footprint, the role of Iran, the future of Afghanistan, terrorism, challenges posed by Islam, and the goal of democracy promotion (Feigenbaum 2007).

A number of high ranking members from the Clinton Administration stated that, even if Caspian energy will not equate to Saudi holdings, it will be a significant factor in global energy resources. Caspian energy is crucial to the security and the stability of the new states, which is a vital American interest (Carter and Deutch 1999).

The increasing presence of the US and NATO can be traced back to 1994-95. The US involvement aimed to fill the power vacuum created as result of disintegration of the USSR and as a measure to counter Russian to bring Central Asian states under its orbit (Sherwood-Randall 1998). Since then Washington has launched economic, political and military programmes to integrate Eurasia with the West in all these domains. The US struggle to maintain its influence has been a pre-emptive measure to stop any rival state to create its sphere of influence in Central Asian region (Blank 2000).

US officials viewed Eurasia as a backup to the Middle East whose volatility constantly threatened energy prices, western economies, and great power relationships (Kemp and Harkavy 1997; Blackwill and Stuermer 1997: 2). By 1995, the US, in order to keep this region away from 'monopolization' on part of Russia, decided to support pipelines running through Turkey. The US bypassed both Iran and Russia to break Russia's grip on Central Asian oil export that helped to protect US energy related interests.

Although US officials continually reiterated that they do not intend to establish permanent bases in the region, some observers commented that the scale of the military build up suggests that they are intending to establish a long term military presence in the area (Loeb 2002: 9). Indeed in a February 2002 statement, Assistant Secretary of State, Elizabeth Jones, commented that:

We do not want US bases in Central Asia, but what the US government does want is for the governments in Central Asia to continue granting us access to their bases for as long as we need them (Jones 2002).

From Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), Xing (2001: 166) openly accused the US of pursuing policies in Central Asia not only intended to check Russian influence, but also to contain China's strategic plans and as part of this to exert influence on Xinjiang. The US policymakers have all along denied these suspicions.⁶

⁶ For instance, the undersecretary of state in the Clinton Administration, Strobe Talbott, in a 1997 speech entitled "A Farewell to Flashman" (an allusion to Rudyard Kipling's character), condemned as historically anachronistic and contrary to the US interest a renewal of the nineteenth century Great Game.

The Bush administration did not begin with a clear idea of how it should recalibrate, if at all, the geopolitical conception underlying US policy in Central Asia. While doing so, the then US Administration deeply affected the dynamic along three critical axes. First, the US' military presence in Central Asia added a Central Asian dimension to the US-China relationship. After the US decision to base its military in the region, both countries were now no longer engaged only in East Asia; the new American role and the same Chinese concern created a Central Asian front in the relationship. Second, Central Asia became a far salient factor in the evolution of US-Russian relations. The interaction of the two within the region would have a good deal to do with whether the post-September 11 detente deepened or disappeared. Developments on these first two axes were closely linked to trends on a third. The arrival of the US and NATO in Central Asia drew them far more deeply into the politics of the region. At the same time, it altered that politics. Not merely did it give new strategic significance to Uzbekistan and thereby affect the balance of power within the region, it enlarged Uzbekistan's freedom of manoeuvre vis-à-vis other regional states as well as Russia and China.

The Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan and Andijan incident in Uzbekistan brought a clear shift in Central Asian states' relationships with the US. The significance of these incidents stemmed from their role in souring Central Asian perceptions of the US role in the region. Indeed Uzbekistan's Islam Karimov, but also other Central Asian leaders, severely criticised the US government's promotion of democracy and human rights as opposed to stability. Indeed, China's emphasised on common interest in economic development, security, stability and anti-terrorism through its bilateral relations with Central Asia. The SCO combined with China's emphasis on non-interference in other states' internal affairs helped in making China appear a reliable partner from the perspective of the region's remaining authoritarian leaders (Rumer 2006: 141-154). This was underlined with President Karimov's state visit to China barely two weeks after the Andijan incident, during which a Sino-Uzbek bilateral security agreement was signed (Olcott 2005: 335; Tarimi 2004).

Uzbekistan cancelled its agreement with the US regarding the US military use of Karshi-Khanabad (K2) base, with the last US air force plane flying out on November 21, 2005 (Rumer 2006: 141) in the aftermath of Andijan events. Finally, the SCO's June 2006 summit in Shanghai, which also saw the attendance of representatives of four

observer states in Iran, India, Pakistan and Mongolia, restated its commitment to combat external and internal threats while celebrating the organization's promotion of 'new security architecture'.

The US intervention in Iraq contributed to an erosion of support for the United States across the Muslim world, including Central Asia. In Kyrgyzstan, for example, a May 2007 poll by the International Republican Institute and Gallup found that just 4 percent of respondents identified the United States as the country that should receive priority in Bishkek's foreign policy (Kyrgyz National Opinion Poll 2007). According to Orozbek Moldaliyev, the director of Bishkek's Research Centre on Politics, Religion, and Security, no anti-American sentiment existed in Kyrgyzstan prior to the Iraq War (Sershen 2007).

Thus 9/11 emerged as a testing point for the US unilateralism. At first, the US not only got exceeding support from the Central Asian state, but sufficient cooperation from Russia. But soon after 2003 Iraq war, this cooperation started diminishing, making it clear in 2005, when SCO asked about the US troops withdrawal from Central Asian gaining consent from all of the SCO members. This event clearly indicated a grave pitfall in the US unilateral and high politics related policy as well as illuminated the importance of SCO as an emerging organization, aiming at projecting a different world view.

The US in post-2014 scenario is largely considered an absent party from Central Asia. The analysts and scholars have even started questioning if the US is interested in the region anymore (Blank 2013). Kyrgyzstan has asked the US to vacate Manas airbase in 2014, while emphasising that the occupation of air base has affected the state adversely (Strategic Culture Foundation 2012). Contrary to the earlier speculations that the US will seek an extension in agreement, no such action materialized. The Kyrgyz president has been more assertive in calling for the US withdrawal from its territory. The US on the other hand is ready to vacate the region militarily after the withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan by shifting its base to Romania from Kyrgyzstan. The ambitions related to TAPI have also suffered great jolt for facing apparent lack of financing from the US (Blank 2013). India's direct talks with Russia for energy transportation and pipeline are indicator of apprehensions on part of India regarding possible accomplishment of TAPI.

Uzbekistan, a long time ally of the US has been questioned for its 'reluctance' towards US troops and vehicles using Uzbek territory as transit route during withdrawal from Afghanistan. The state funding to Uzbekistan is likely to be challenged for its vitality amid Uzbeks unaccommodating policies towards the US. The role of Uzbekistan in the US proposed 'New Silk Road' project has also been receiving less optimistic comments.

3.4.2. Russia's Re-Emergence After 1991

Russia, one of the most active players in the region and one of the key player of the 'Great Game' seems convinced that western concept of global hegemony is irrelevant in today's changed world. In virtually all of his foreign policy speeches since taking office, President Medvedev has continued the line of argument of Vladimir Putin, that Russia and its allies are defending an alternative vision in accordance with UN principles and international in last two decades. In his address to the UN General Assembly on September 27, 2008, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov called for 'collective security arrangements' within the UN framework, including shared decision making among equal partners (Lavrov 2008). The Russian leadership has been emphasising the long need for multipolarization of world system. Its strategy has been to provide support for a new international system that has multiple centres. An important example of this support of multipolarization is Russia's active engagement in BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, and China, South Africa).

However, Russia still considers itself as the main and most legitimate actor in Central Asian region and the 2008 war in Georgia can be seen, at least in part, as a signal to contain competition over transit routes to consolidate Moscow's position as Europe's main energy supplier. The war between the Russian and Georgian armies was mainly triggered by disagreement over the autonomous regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, but it has significant impact on the flow of oil and gas supplies to Europe. For many years, Georgia has been considered by the EU and the US as one of the main building blocks in the formation of alternative energy routes that bypass Russian territory. Although Russian air strikes and ground forces did not hit any of the international oil and gas pipeline crossing Georgia or any oil ports, British Petroleum (BP) chose to stop oil and gas shipments through Georgia as a precautionary measure. The war has underscored Moscow's ability to destabilize the territories, once part of the 'New Abroad' (Bahgat 2009: 150). These intensions on the part of Russia often lead analysts to predict that Sino-Russian rivalry is not quite far from reality and that the current

reconciliation period is short lived and fragile. The Sino-Russian partnership is discussed below to see how these claims lack evidential support.

3.4.3. China and an ‘Altering Game’ in Central Asia

From the mid-1990s onward China became a significant player in the on-going geopolitical struggle for access to Central Asian sources of oil and gas. The Central Asian states, for a long time have been constrained in their ability to effectively exploit their hydrocarbon resources by a lack of adequate and reliable infrastructure beyond existing routes that was controlled by Russia. The oil and gas rich states of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan have since independence actively sought alternative pipeline routes to diminish Russian influence in their respective republics. Their ability to achieve this goal was, however, constrained by both the geopolitical preferences of external powers and their strong military, economic and political links to Russia (Frietag-Wirminghaus 1997; Menon 1998). The geopolitical preferences of the US have been a major factor in preventing the Central Asian states developing alternative routes. This has been especially true of Turkmenistan, given that its geographic position means that the most efficient route by which to transport Turkmen gas to international markets is via Iran. However, during the mid-1990s Turkmen and Iranian efforts to construct such a pipeline were consistently blocked by the US “dual containment” policy towards Iran and Iraq (Miles 1999: 325-347; Bahgat 2006: 1-16). This aspect of the region’s pipeline politics also impacted upon the Caspian littoral states such as Kazakhstan, in their attempts to see the development of either the US backed Baku-Ceyhan pipeline route or the Russian backed Baku-Novorossiysk route (Frietag-Wirminghaus 1997: 90-96; Miles 1999; Bahgat 2006: 7-9).

Because of the attractiveness of possible routes via Xinjiang, China enjoys several advantages for getting itself well-placed in the region. China shares border with three Central Asian states: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. This geographical proximity surely facilitates trade in hydrocarbon resources, among others. The more important being the economic growth China had experienced. During last three decades the Chinese economy has been one of the fastest growing in the world. As a result, more than many other economic powers, Beijing has the financial resources and the management efficiency to undertake business opportunities with foreign partners.

China holds very limited oil and gas indigenous deposits. China's huge contribution to global pollution is due to its heavy dependence on coal. Under domestic and international pressure, the Chinese government is seeking to diversify its energy mix and rely more on renewable sources, nuclear power and natural gas. The projected large and growing gap between the nation's oil and gas consumption and production has been filled by foreign supplies.

China's involvement in the region is not fairly depicted by counting these narrowly focused factors. The region is rather working as a field for experimenting a different world order. Neil MacFarlane describes the region as a buffer or meeting place for South Asia, East Asia, the Middle East, and Russia, rather than a buffer, however, he seems to see it more as a dynamic 'meeting place' (MacFarlane 2003: 141-142). It is here that the 'destabilizing processes linking Islam and Ethnicity' from Afghanistan to China flow together, and here that Russia, China and the Western states locate a potential new wellspring of Islamic extremism. A buffer may exist, but it is Kazakhstan, rich and comparatively stable, standing between China and Russia on the one hand, and the tumult in southern Central Asia and Afghanistan on the other (MacFarlane 2003: 141-142).

Xing Guangcheng represents Central Asia as a 'bridge' between East and West (Xing 2001: 153). The Linkage is more than geographical but also 'political and cultural,' More important, he suggests, 'if there were turbulence around that bridge, the future of political and economic cooperation in the whole Eurasian continent would be seriously affected' (Xing 2001: 153). In his chapter, he adds, a Central Asia comprised of independent states forms a crucial strategic hinterland for the northwest provinces of China. If unstable, Central Asia becomes a threat to a large and crucial part of China. On the other hand, if reliable strategic ballast, then, given Central Asia's natural wealth, it becomes a potential stimulus to the economic 'development and prosperity' of a vital part of China.

China's political processes further unfolded in the dramatically changing geopolitical contexts of breakup of USSR, China's opening up and American hegemony. Certainly, the sharing of security concerns in Central Asia fostered new alliances and transformed geopolitical rivalry such that it could no longer fit Cold War models, or the so-called 'Great Game'. It would not be justified to claim that the struggle for influence has disappeared and rather is replaced by a major alliance among regional states in Central

Asia. Russia's pragmatic turn to the West did not prevent it from cultivating economic and security ties with China, India and Iran. Since 1997, shortly after the foundation of the Shanghai Five, China and Russia issued a joint statement pledging to promote the 'multipolarisation of the world' and to establish a 'new international order'. The US hegemony and expansionism in the post-cold war period, was the object of subsequent statements and partnerships. The increased penetration of Central Asia by the US military forces, as early as 1997, has heightened the sense of 'encirclement' in China and Russia, enhanced by US support of the active 'remilitarisation of Japanese imperialism' and the shift in Japan's defence policy from a local passive strategy to a regionally oriented active defence strategy (Achcar 1998: 91–126; Shambaugh 2000: 52-79; Lee 2002: 71-123; McCormack 2004: 29-4). The projection of US military power and the readiness of the US to resort to the use of military force, which gained increasing significance with the Kosovo war in 1999, culminating in the invasion of Iraq in 2003, did nothing to alleviate concerns about US military expansion in Central Asia. Further rejection of US 'hegemony' was reiterated in a joint communique issued on the eve of the SCO summit in 2005, in which China and Russia and India, pledged, once again, cooperation towards multipolarity as they called for withdrawal of US troops from Central Asia. A more recent joint statement on US unilateral interference and military posture came out of Medvedev's first visit to China, as the new Russian president in 2008 (Wong and Cowell 2008: A8). In the meantime, economic and military ties between China and Russia have grown and the two countries have trade of USD48 billion in 2007 compared with USD10 billion in 2000.

The strategic partnership between Russia and China that developed during Yeltsin's presidency, and which Putin consolidated further in his 'multivectoral' foreign policy, did not entirely eliminate strategic competition and tensions over Central Asia. China's economic prowess in particular raises concerns in Russia about China's potential influence in the Central Asian republics (especially Kazakhstan), and about the revival of its territorial claims in the Russian Far East (Lo 2004: 295–309). Moreover, not unlike Maoist China, which provided the third world with a model of development, China today provides the Central Asian states with a viable model of economic development, its most admirable feature being the combination of economic growth with a 'tightly controlled political regime'. The concession of territory from the former Soviet republics to China, remnants of old Sino-Soviet border disputes, is an additional

indication of the willingness on the part of the Central Asian republics to recognise China's potential influence in the region (Olcott 2003: 3-17).

China's growing influence is often described as source of contention among China and Russia. Thus, Alexander Kadyrbaev of the Russian Academy of Sciences contended that in spite of its increasing commercial influence, China would not be able to challenge Russia's position in Central Asia. Local people, he said, had a traditional distrust of outsiders and with the US military knocking on its back door, Beijing now had a strong interest in working with Moscow (Holslag 2010: 90). Ajdar Kurtov, of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, has said that even when China obtained access to the region's natural resources and exported its goods, this would still contribute to Russia's interest in stabilising Central Asia (Holslag 2010: 90).

Similar issues complicate the relations between India and China. India, like China and Russia, is involved in its own war against separatist groups and Islamic fundamentalism, infecting the large, already discontent, Muslim population of India. With the 'war on terror', Central Asia thus became part of India's 'extended security horizon', especially with the decline of Russia's capacity to manage the security of the region, and has lent the US support in establishing military presence in Central Asia (Blank 2003: 139-157). India, which competes with China for Central Asian resources and markets, especially energy-rich Kazakhstan, has also offered military assistance and arms deals to Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan, mainly as a bulwark against Pakistani support of the Taliban and its influence on Islamic threats in Central Asia, a threat shared by both India and the Central Asian republics. India's support for US military presence and political influence in Central Asia did nothing to alleviate geopolitical tensions with China. Although China has not considered India to be a serious strategic threat, India's nuclear tests of 1998 changed Chinese perceptions of the military potentials of India. India perceives China's military ties with Pakistan, Myanmar, and Bangladesh and other smaller countries on the periphery of India as part of a Chinese plan to encircle India, exacerbated by China's development of its maritime capabilities and increased naval activities in the Indian Ocean, keeping in mind that a large bulk of India's trade is through sea lanes.

Despite concerns in both Russia and India about China's rearmament, which has grown in pace and scope in more recent years, Russia has in fact contributed to the build-up and development of Chinese military capabilities. This is partly due to the dependence

of Russian industry on Chinese and Indian purchases of Russian weapons, spare parts, and ammunition, which, with the transfer of defence technology and training of Chinese personnel, alleviates some of the concerns about the hypothetical possibility that China might use Russian arms to launch an offensive against Russia. Hence, if the 'strategic triangle' can potentially integrate Russia, China, and India in an alliance to counter US hegemony on one hand and to fight threats of Islamic fundamentalism on the other, it can also serve to contain suspicions of the three partners regarding each other's economic and military expansion. In such an alliance, China has been mostly focusing on its 'peaceful development strategy' and its broader economic growth; India has been more interested in curbing Islamic threats as well as Chinese hegemony, or potential expansion; Russia has strategic and economic interests in all three, but also an economic interest in keeping its military-industrial complex running.

The Sino-Russian relationship has been held up as the model partnership. Much has been made of the military dimensions of the Sino-Russian partnership, the sale of Russian fighters to China and the more recent joint military exercises under the auspices of SCO. With Moscow's machinations over whether to pipe oil from its Siberian fields to China or to a port near Japan (details in coming chapters), China's main goals of secure energy from Russia seemed to be falling short of success (Financial Times 2006). Too weak then to provide a counterweight to the US, the partnership is considered by Western commentators as 'doomed to be a failure' (Tisdall 2005).

It is beyond doubt that it is easier for political leaders to proclaim a strategic partnership than to build one in practice. However, China's efforts have undoubtedly encountered numerous setbacks, its leaders have persisted in seeking to cultivate cooperative relations, making a certain progress in all cases. Before the approach can be deemed a failure as bluntly labelled by western commentators, it is necessary to consider precisely what it is intended to achieve.

The Sino-Russian strategic cooperative partnership, which progressed initially from the settlement of border disputes, developed into an agreement of common interests. The partnership between both countries in Central Asian region flourished from Shanghai Five to the SCO with wider aims and stronger relations. Clearly China and Russia have shared security concerns since the 1990s with regard to the US expansion of its military alliance, missile defence and the US led wars in the backyard of both countries. However, the opposition of China and Russia to US hegemonism was expressed in the

Joint Declaration of 1997, not as an anti-US alliance but as an agreement to pursue dialogue and consultation with each other to promote their mutual understanding and build confidence. Their declared aim is to work together to promote disarmament, strengthen the UN and the Security Council, foster multipolarisation and seek the establishment of a just and equitable international order. Close collaboration between China and Russia can be seen in their continuing coordination at the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) over a number of issues, not least in endeavouring to limit the imposition of tougher sanctions on Iran. Both countries have been blocking attempts for tougher sanctions against Iran (Murphy 2011). Another such strong and recent example is that of Syrian crises, in October 2011 and February 2012, when both countries vetoed a resolution in UNSC denouncing Syria for human rights violation amid on-going protests against the 'norms' of the US and West. Russia and China are explicitly claiming that UNSC resolution against Syria, if approved, could open the door for the similar military action in Syria as it has happened in Libya.

In the context of the Russian-China-US triangle in Central Asia, it is increasingly apparent that Russia has clear preference for further Chinese rather than US engagement and influence in the region. While Baev observes that Russia is moving from Counter-Terrorism narrative to Counter-Revolution narrative to keep US out of the region, Baev thinks that Russia is 'bringing in' China to support his 'normative structure' (Baev 2006). One of the largest sub-sections of the 'New Great Game' thesis was the idea that there would be a cultural, historical and political struggle for influence by Turkey and Iran, each competing as to which would lead the newly independent states. However, 'the Great Game that Turkey and Iran were expected to play as regional powers never took place' (Pahlevan 1998: 79). For a combination of reasons, notably limited economic and financial resources on the part of Turkey and a lack of political will on the part of Iran, there has been no competition between the two states. While much has been written by academics and commentators in both of these countries regarding a desire for a zone of influence (Ozey 2001: 83-94), as The Economist summarised that when Soviet Central Asia suddenly found itself independent, there was much speculation about whether Turkey or Iran would win the hearts of the Muslim peoples in a New Great Game in Central Asia. The answer has been clear for some time: neither' (The Economist 1995: 64).

There is rather growing cooperation among SCO members and Iran that may lead to the rise of a new nexus between Central Asia and the wider Middle East that is likely to strengthen the influence of Russia and China at the expense of the United States.

3.4.4. New Players and Norms of Cooperation

After September 11, one of the aim of US foreign policy was to promote western liberal democratic ideals and 'Washington Consensus' to both the Greater Middle East and Greater Central Asia beginning with Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. There is a link between those two regions, and that link is of course, Iran. Part of the reason why the Bush administration was determined to bring about regime change in Iran is said to be the stabilization of Iraq and the security of Israel and the US allies in the Gulf. In addition to Iran's strategic significance, the United States was interested in bringing a friendly government in Teheran. Tehran is important for the US first, for its vast gas and oil reserves. The second reason is, it provides the shortest route for transporting hydrocarbons from Central Asia and the Caspian Sea while bypassing Russia and China.

Perhaps more than the nuclear issue, it is those two objectives that explain US efforts to isolate the Iranian regime internationally and to reinforce cooperation with energy-rich Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan where the US is trying for substantial oil exports via the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. The BTC pipeline is one of two sources of energy supply from East to West that escapes Russia's control but that is located in the highly volatile region of the South Caucasus.

The second source is the Nabucco pipeline. Sponsored in large part by the European Commission, this pipeline aims to transport natural gas from Erzurum in eastern Turkey to Baumgarten an der March, a major natural gas hub in lower Austria. On the Erzurum side, the plan is to connect Nabucco to two existing supply systems: the Erzurum-Tabriz pipeline (from northwestern Iran to Turkey) and the South Caucasian and Trans-Caspian pipeline. The geographical triangle composed of the northern Middle East (Turkey and Iran), the Caucasus, and the Caspian Basin constitutes a key strategic corridor for Russia, China, the United States, and the European Union. In this context, it is not surprising that the destination of Dmitry Medvedev's first trip abroad as president on May 22, 2008, was the Capital of Kazakhstan, Astana. During the visit, Russia and Kazakhstan agreed to develop the Caspian gas pipeline. Both sides also agreed to

enhance the capacity of the Central Asia-Centre pipeline, a Gazprom-controlled system that runs from Turkmenistan via Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to Russia. Coupled with the Azerbaijani connection, Russia promotes the idea of a common energy policy within the framework of the SCO in order to prevent potential Sino- Russian tensions and to maximize their joint leverage. Wary of Beijing's and Moscow's trans-regional ambitions, Washington launched new diplomatic initiatives centred on creating a 'Greater Central Asia' that would revolve around treating South Asia and Central Asia as a single unit (Boucher 2006). Amid US extensive military engagement in parts of Middle East and South Asia, this policy remained far from execution. By contrast, the Kazakh, Uzbek, Tajik, and Kyrgyz leaders chose to deepen and expand ties with their Chinese and Russian counterparts as part of SCO. For instance, US favoured pipeline from Baku to Ceyhan, a Turkish Port, had been pushed since mid-1990s. In October 1998, the US announced an aid package of USD 883,000 for Turkey to plan the oil pipeline. The announcement of aid package was considered the US strategy to show its commitment to building the pipeline (Jaffe and Manning 1998-99: 113). But the project is lingering on for more than a decade.

Iran has been applying for full membership of SCO. China and Russia are reluctant to grant membership to Iran. SCO's membership for Iran will prove an entry card for a new actor in to the Central Asia. There are many obstacles to Iran's full membership in SCO. Firstly, Beijing's opposition to transforming SCO into a political-military alliance and Moscow's growing irritation with Tehran's increasingly confrontational stance over the nuclear issue. Besides, China and Russia do not want SCO to become an anti-US alliance operative in Central Asia. On the other hand, Russia, China, and Iran do have important common economic interests, especially Russian and Iranian energy exports in exchange for Chinese consumer and manufacturing goods. Together Russia and Iran control about 20 percent of the world's oil reserves and roughly half of the world's gas reserves. Both countries are trying to give reality to a long discussed gas troika with Qatar.

Moreover, it is expected that Iranian-Chinese trade will grow from USD45 billion in 2011 (Payvand Iran News 2012). Iran is obviously interested to have a pipeline built from the eastern Caspian to Bandar-e Abbas, which would be the most economical routing. Yet in view of US opposition only a small pipeline has been built from Turkmenistan to Northern Iran so far. One of Iran's strategic goals is to export more gas

to Central and South Asia via the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) Pipeline and to extend this link to China. Beyond economic cooperation, Russia, China, and Iran share broader geopolitical interests. Moscow and Beijing are willing for the complete withdrawal of US troops from Central Asian countries and a more balanced US approach to Iran.

In short, the geopolitical field of Central Asia has increasingly been filled by regional powers and trans-regional organizations such as SCO. Led by China and Russia, in contemporary times, non-Western countries have been defining the terms of political engagement and cooperation within Central Asian region.

3.5. Conclusion

The post-cold war geopolitical realities of Central Asia are complex and multi-layered. It needs to be modified to explain the realities of patterns of interaction in international system. China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region, as discussed in this chapter specifically, China's broader pattern of relations with regional powers, Russia and Iran, in this region helps this study further the debate that traditional geopolitical rivalries are absent in this area earlier considered to be the hub of great game of power politics. This closer look at Central Asia indicates that yesterday's 'Great Game' to a great extent, has been altered; high-politics is evacuating, giving space to multilateral and cooperative relations.

The great powers mostly carry different stakes in the Central Asian region, often seemingly conflicting with each other. The present complex relations and partnerships among the major powers with interests in Central Asia work against the validity of the concept of 'Great Game'. Russia and China have strong reasons to cooperate in the region. Although each country has extensive goals in Central Asia, the resources they have available to pursue them are limited, given their other priorities. As long as their general relations remain non-confrontational, Moscow and Beijing are unlikely to pursue policies in Central Asia that could disrupt their overall ties.

This aspect of China's foreign policy has been described by James Hsiung as 'an attempt to operationalize the idea of a 'collegial sharing of power among nations' (1995: 573-586). The rationale underpinning such a strategy was clear and flowed from the goals of China's strategy of 'peaceful rise'. The development of this network of regional and global relationships, although not necessarily capable of neutralizing US economic, political and military power, would provide China with alternative sources of

trade, investment, technology and international political support (Hsiung 1995: 577; Burles 1999: 15). China's development of a strategic relationship with Russia and the consolidation of its relations with the states of Central Asia can be seen as an integral part of this overall foreign policy strategy. Although the Sino-Russian partnership and Shanghai Five agreements explicitly maintain that they were not directed against any third country, (Beijing Xinhua Domestic Service 1996) they were congruent with China's goal to develop broad regional and global relationships.

A closer look at the concept of zero-sum game depicted through the applicability of great game to over exaggerate and justify the argument regarding hidden rivalries between regional powers and coming challenge from China's hegemonism in this context, represents the need for reinterpretation. It further evaluates the argument that the most international relations theory is inductively derived from the European experience of the past four centuries, during which Europe was the locus and generator of war, innovation, and wealth.

Eurocentric ideas have yielded several mistaken conclusions and predictions about conflict and alignment behaviour in Asia. For example, since the early 1990s many Western analysts have predicted dire scenarios for Central Asia, whereas many Asian experts have expressed growing optimism about the region's future (Gibney 1992; Dobb et al 1998: 5-26). This is not to criticize European-derived theories purely because they are based on the Western experience: The origins of a theory are not necessarily relevant to its applicability. Rather these theories do a poor job as they are applied to today's Central Asia; emphasising the need for more careful attention to their application.

This chapter, thus, makes three claims about the levels of conflict and types of alignment behaviour in Central Asia. First, it argues that the pessimistic predictions of Western scholars in a post-cold war world that Central Asia would experience and initiate a period of increased arms racing and power politics has largely failed to materialize. Second, contrary to the expectations of standard formulations of realism, and although US power confounds the issue, regional powers do not appear to be balancing against rising power, China. Third, the more cooperation oriented interstate relations of the regional powers are not an outcome of solely balancing against the US, the underlying reasons for cooperation needs to be explored.

Two decades have passed since the end of the Cold War, yet none of these pessimistic predictions have come to pass. Indeed there has not been a major war in Asia since the 1978-79 Vietnam-Cambodia-China conflict; and with only a few exceptions (North Korea and Taiwan). China seems no more revisionist or adventurous now than it was before the end of the Cold War. No country appears to be balancing against China. In contrast to the period 1950-1980, the past two decades have witnessed enduring regional stability and minimal conflict that can be considered an anomaly by mainstream IR debates.

China's relatively slow military modernization and limited power projection capabilities is helping diminishing the validity of China threat theories. In future, various factors may exercise moderating influence on Chinese policy. Moreover, even though many of the conditions that theorists argue can lead to conflict do already exist in Central Asia, the region has so far avoided both major and minor interstate conflict. Most significant, in less than two decades China has evolved from being a closed middle power to the most dynamic country in the region, with an economy that has recently surpassed Japan's with respect to its growth and also shows many signs of continuing growth. This dramatic power transition has evoked hardly any response from China's neighbours. By realist standards, China should be provoking balancing behaviour, merely because its overall size and projected rate of growth are so high. Without the projection of military power, many believe that China is the most successful competitor of the 'Game' (Marketos 2009).

The important thing to notice is that the building good relations is a gradual process where states test each other's intentions and move to better cooperation. The chapter thus, raises two questions to be dealt in coming chapter. Firstly, if realism and balance of power theories are insufficient to explain the regional dynamics of Central Asia, what is missing in the understandings? Secondly, why China is adopting more cooperative and multilateral policies in the region?

The reincarnation of traditional great game thesis still echoes the power politics at play in the region. The coming clash of Russia and China or China's military modernization as threatening Russia has been long predicted. The statistical analysis provided by Bennett and Stam of classical balance of power behaviour shows no support for the argument that Asian behaviour will converge on that of Europe. Their study emphasise that in fact, all the regions outside of Europe appear to diverge from the European

pattern of classical balance of power (2003: 193-194). To map the future course China's rise may take, it is important to locate China's culture of foreign policy and political processes guided by that as are seen in Central Asian region.

Chapter 4

China's Quest for Energy Resources and its Developing Economic and Transportation Connections with Central Asian States

4.1. Introduction

Recently, China has surpassed the US as the largest trading nation of goods in the world (The Guardian 10 January, 2014). East Asian region still holds the key position, thanks to both large overseas Chinese diaspora as well as the nineteenth century shift in China's global position that changed the power and trade balances in favour of East Asia. With economic rise, China's economic and trade relations are strengthening and increasing with Central Asia more than ever before. Any optimist picture depicting that Chinese might prefer to continue using their rapidly expanding domestic market and national wealth for influence rather than entering into military confrontation or translating their economic power to military power is rejected on comparative historical grounds.⁷ On the other hand, China has been observed and documented to be preferring economic wealth and domestic development as top priority (Katzenstein 2012: 48).

The regime legitimacy of contemporary leadership of PRC mainly derives from economic development of Chinese state. As for now, China's economic rise is evident and engulfing the whole Asian region. Due to its focus on economic relations, domestic growth and development, China has been successful in avoiding any military conflicts or direct confrontation. It inclines to the policy of international accommodation largely rather than international assertiveness. There are assumptions that China is economically rising to eclipse the achievements of European and American industrial capitalism. Many scholars, historians and observers believe that China's recent economic ascent had been triggered by opening of China as a result of policies adopted by Deng Xiaoping. Some attribute the economic rise and strong trade relations to China's entry to World Trade Organization. For instance Tyler Marshall (2003) notes in Los Angeles Times:

⁷ See Zbigniew Brzezinski and John J. Mearsheimer (2005), "Clash of the Titans," *Foreign Policy* (January-February), available at http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2005/01/05/clash_of_the_titans.

According to their study, impressive economic growth of Germany and Japan did not stop both from starting World War I and World War II (in case of Germany) and starting conflict in Asia (in case of Japan). For the similar view on inevitability of "violent turmoil" between China and the US, see Robert D. Kaplan (2005), "How We Would Fight China," *Atlantic Monthly* (June): 50-1.

Although China's transformation into a more open market economy has been underway for more than two decades, trade growth curves within Asia have tilted off the charts since Beijing's 2001 entry into the World Trade Organization.

The economic interactions and trade relations between China and other states, spanning for last two decades or so, are not a new phenomenon. Equally, it is important that China's increased economic activity and trade relations cannot be simplified as any some trade practice learned from west. Such analysis clearly tends to portray Asian economic relations stagnant while considering Asian region incapable of any technological or innovative change. On the contrary, past dynamics of intra-Asian trade and more specifically China-centred intra-Asian trade and economic relations are traced by a number of studies (Latham and Kawakatsu 2006; Sugihara 2005).

After nineteenth century, while China was at the heart of East Asian trade links, the economic relations with Central Asia were disrupted by security threats, at two important instances, when forces from northwest periphery occupied the whole China (Mongols and Manchus). During the Cold War, China was walled off most of the times that hampered economic and trade relations of China. It was also cut off from the global trade because of US cold war policies and because it felt threatened militarily by the USSR (Arrighi 2008: 373). After the break-up of Soviet Union, the resolution of border problems with Central Asian states and signing agreements to reduce military troops on borders help to clear the air of mistrust. The environment has since been suitable and ripe for China's enhanced economic activity.

It is widely acknowledged that Central Asia today has become the playground for 'Great Game' of major powers (as discussed in details in previous chapter). The Great Game in Central Asia has been replaced by the 'New Great Game' with new actors like China and the US alongside the traditional actors like Russia and Britain. In this great game, China's interests in Central Asian region are generally considered as China's quest for energy resources. Thus, most of the writers think energy relations to be the basis of China's interests in this region (Friedberg 2006: 34; Liao 2006: 61; Marketos 2009). Whether China's presence in Central Asia is restricted to acquire energy resources or economic interests is a broader question discussed in chapter 6 and chapter 7. This chapter focuses on the virtually strongest aspect of the relations that China and Central Asian states enjoy. This chapter critically analyses the energy relations, economic and trade links to highlight China's influential economic activity as well as to link it with parallel restructuring of the broader environment. The focus of this chapter is to analyse these activities while not missing the parallel relations to reach a careful analysis of the factors shaping China's relations with Central Asian states towards the end of this thesis.

The chapter concludes that China's interaction with Central Asian states has been motivated by long term tradition of China's focus on economic development rather than confining to availing

of short term opportunities by extracting energy resources to quench its thirst and to lubricate its running machines. China has moved gradually into the region to resume the strong role that has been disconnected because of internal dynamics and tensions for more than a century. This makes sense when we see the broader picture of China's rise in Asia as well as its rising globally.

4.2. China's Energy Security and Central Asia

China's quest for energy resources has been debated extensively in last few years due to a number of reasons. First, China's oil and gas reserves are very low compared to its consumption. Most scholars agree that by 2015-2020, China will have depleted most of their oil reserves and most of their natural gas reserves (Yergin 1997). The basis for such analysis was that China's rapid economic growth and the entrance into the WTO will lessen restrictions on the imports of oil using machinery and cars, and will grow China's dependency on oil as an energy resource. Second, because China's domestic reserves for oil and natural gas are low, China has been forced to look outside its borders to find energy resources and to gain energy security. Today, most of the Chinese oil imports are from the Middle East (International Energy Agency 2012). However, the political climate in the Middle East has forced China to look at other importers for oil and natural gas. Two most important markets are Russia and Central Asia where China is seeking to diversify its energy imports. China would enhance its energy security by adding multiple sources to its energy supply. If one of the importers stops supplying oil, China would still receive the oil needed to maintain its military and economy from other importers. Third, China is seen by many as a growing power. China is seeking to modernize their military and it is a nuclear power. Without energy security, many of the modernizations undertaken by China could be endangered. This will also influence the phenomenal economic growth seen by China in the past few years.

Because of the lack of domestic sources, China has been looking abroad for oil resources. Diversifying oil ties is one of the basic tenets of Chinese energy security policy. Since 1990, China has been seeking to diversify its oil supply by creating trade relationships with different countries throughout the world. This can be seen in the rise of Chinese oil imports over the past decade. Chinese oil imports have risen from 2.92 million tons in 1990 to net total oil imports of 5.5 million bbl/d in 2010 (US Energy information Administration 2012). They are turning to other parts of the world for their oil resources and this process of building ties in order to secure the oil supplies from these countries has become much more important to the Chinese government. One of the most important regions, China now has turned towards, is Central Asia.

The following section explains the developments China and Central Asian states have made from 1991 till today. It describes the evolution of these relations over the period of time and is

followed by the analysis indicating the international and domestic sources of change that are important to be considered for their role in strengthening economic relations. The section uncovers generalizable and observable trends between the certain types of events and the employment of certain policy tools in the context of China's growing energy relations with Central Asia.

4.2.1. Historical Evolution of China's Energy Policy and Activities in Central Asia

After 1949, the communist China under Mao, was assertive in its perception of China within defined boundaries. The western concept of sovereignty and territorial integrity were heartfully embraced. This era before opening up as a result of Deng's policies saw the militarization of north-western border regions. The insecurity elements haunted the walled China who had largely cut itself from outside world. Deng Xiaoping's policies opened China to interact with outside world. The post USSR Central Asian region transformed the security architecture and China started resuming economic relations with neighbouring regions.

China established diplomatic relations with the newly independent states of Central Asia soon after the disintegration of the USSR. It is clear that the major energy talks between China and the Central Asian Republics did not begin till 1997. As mentioned above, China did not become a net oil importer till 1996 when the Chinese government began its earnest effort to seek oil resources around the world. This led to a six month long negotiation with Kazakhstan over Chinese access to Kazak oil and gas resources. In 1997, the China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) won a tender to develop two oil fields in Akhtubinsk and an oilfield in Uzen in competition with Texaco, Amoco and Russia's Yuzhnmot. The deal entailed a significant USD4.3 billion investment spanning over twenty years, and an agreement to build a 2,800km cross-border oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to China was also reached (Andrews-Speed et al 2002: 59). Under the similar conditions, China was given exclusive rights over Kazakhstan's second largest oil field, Aktobe (Gladney 2000: 215). This began a series of successful energy deals between China and Central Asian states.

The rights and access to this first oil field in Kazakhstan was important to Chinese energy security. Chinese political elite materialized the possibility of securing energy resources from an alternative route. Following this initial venture, the Chinese government began negotiations with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to finalize the oil deals. The initial discussions with these countries were not fruitful, but China continued trade related discussions with Kazakhstan. In 1998 and early 1999, China pledged nearly USD3 billion for oil concession in Kazakhstan (Gladney 2000: 216). When the Kazak government accepted Chinese offer, the Chinese government began to raise the level of talks for Kazak oil. Till this time, most of the things

decided were just in black and white and the most significant deal with Kazakhstan was not executed till 2003 when the first section of pipeline got completed.

In early 2000, the Chinese government began preparing for a stronger energy relationship with Kazakhstan by announcing a new and important comprehensive energy plan. Before implementing China-Kazakhstan oil pipelines arrangements, China in the meantime, planned to build the West-East Gas Pipeline (WEGP) from Xinjiang to Shanghai that was first such project to carry gas from Xinjiang to mainland China. The most important part of this energy plan was the construction of a series of oil and gas pipelines throughout China. The first stage of project was the construction of two gas pipelines from Sichuan to Wuhan (Engdahl 2005: 2). The project was completed after bringing the two pipelines to Shanghai in 2002. The Chinese government then started to build a series of pipelines from Xinjiang province to the coast of China. This series of pipelines was completed in late 2005 and it has the capacity to give China nearly 25 billion cubic meters of natural gas and 25 million tons of oil per year (Ibid). The construction of these pipelines made it easier mode of transportation for energy resources than using trains and oil tankers from Xinjiang to the other cities on the Chinese coast.

After West-East Gas Pipeline started functioning, China became more confident and vigorous on Kazakh front. The most important oil deals between China and Kazakhstan occurred in 2005. The first of these was the completion of the China-Kazakh pipeline that connected China to the extensive network of Kazak oil pipelines. The pipeline is currently being expanded which would increase its capacity to 400,000 barrels per day (US Energy information Administration 2012). Before completing the construction of this pipeline, China completed USD4.18 billion takeover of Petro Kazakhstan (Engdahl 2005: 2). The construction of pipelines provided the Kazak government with money to help building their economy and to China; it gave uninterrupted access to Kazak oil. With emphasis on these projects, the Chinese government has been trying to add multiple sources to its oil import, the sources that are not vulnerable to the US aircraft carrier battle groups. In addition to Kazak oil, in 2000-2001, the Chinese government began strategic oil talks with the government of Uzbekistan. China's early negotiations for energy deals with Uzbekistan were stalled initially but remained very successful in later stage. China and Uzbek authorities began negotiations to build a pipeline from Uzbekistan to China through Kazakhstan.

The relationship between China and Central Asia over energy resources has been growing at an important pace. The Chinese government has been able to gain access to many of the oil fields in Kazakhstan, including Kashagan, the most important oil field in the country. Meanwhile, China has been successful in finalising deals regarding energy transportation with Uzbekistan in the last few years. Uzbekistan has also finalised a gas supply deal with China in 2011 (US Energy Information Administration 2012).

4.2.2. Recent Engagement of China and Quest for Energy

The global financial crisis 2008-09 helped China intensify and accelerate its strategy in obtaining multiple sources of energy resources. While the economies of other countries are in distress after financial crises of 2008-09, by using its enormous cash reserves, China, through its oil companies like China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC), CNPC, Petro China, China Petroleum and Chemical Corporation Limited (SINOPEC), or through government agencies, has been actively busy to expedite and consolidate its energy hunt in Central Asia (See Map No. 1 for details of energy pipelines connecting China and Central Asia). In June 2012, the Export-Import Bank of China granted a loan of USD1.13 billion to KazMunaiGas (KMG), Kazakhstan State Oil Company. This loan, granted by China, is for the up-gradation of oil refinery of KMG, Atyrau, to produce cleaner fuels (Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, US 2012). Earlier, the Development Bank of Kazakhstan was granted USD5 billion loan by Import-Export Bank of China (Blank 2009).

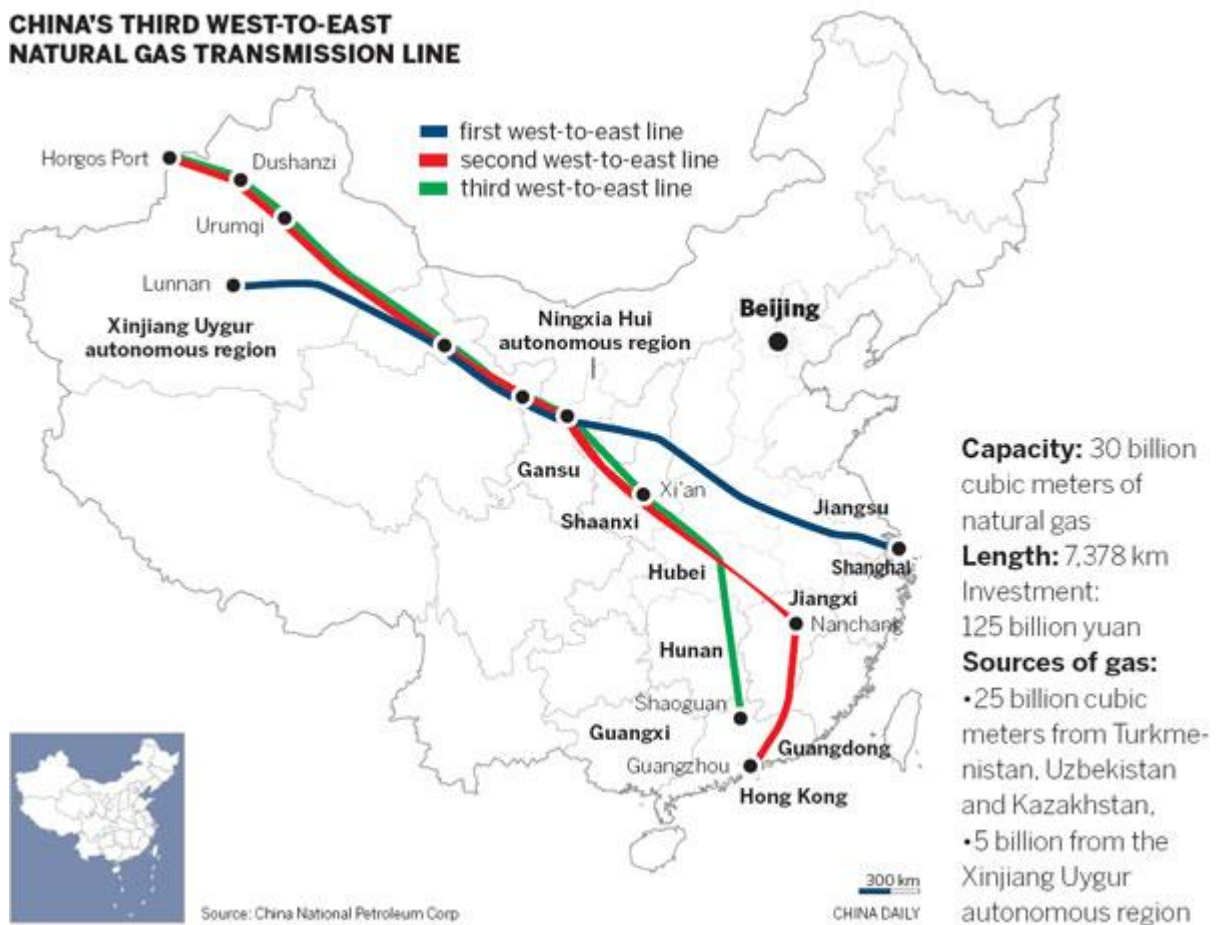
CNPC Exploration and Development Company Limited (CNPC E&D) signed an agreement with KMG, to purchase 100 percent of common shares in JSC Mangistaumunaigas (MMG) from Central Asia Petroleum Limited (CAP) in 2009 (CNPC Website 2009). Kazakh President, Nursultan Nazarbayev commented that ‘in the crisis years, our companies received access to Chinese investment of USD10 billion’ (Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan, US 2012). This deal shows how China’s growing trade relations are beneficial for Central Asian states at the time of the troubled condition of economies of Central Asian states.

Furthermore, China Guangdong Nuclear Power Group (CGNP), and Kazakhstan’s State Nuclear Company, KazAtomProm, have been cooperating on joint ventures by signing a strategic cooperation agreement on uranium supply and fuel fabrication (World Nuclear Association 2012). In 2007, the CGNP signed two agreements with KazAtomProm on Chinese participation in Kazak uranium mining joint ventures and on KazAtomProm uranium supply to China’s nuclear power industry (Ibid). In November 2010, CGNP signed a long term contract with KazAtomProm for the supply of 24,200 tonnes of Uranium till 2020 (Ibid). This is an important strategic arrangement that makes KazAtomProm main uranium and nuclear fuel supplier to CGNPC (Ibid). The most visible aspect of China’s cooperation with Central Asian states is extensive investment and finances to ensure the smooth implementation of construction projects. The PRC has pledged to lend USD10 billion to Kazakhstan in return for a stake in an oil producer in the Central Asian country. (Gorst 2009) The cooperation in infrastructure is establishing more strong energy relations that China has never enjoyed before.

On the Sino-Turkmen front, both states signed a gas export deal in December 2006 for the export of gas to the East. China resultantly proceeded to plan a pipeline through Uzbekistan and

Kazakhstan to import gas to China. The 40bcm twin lines are supported by gas volumes from CNPC's own production in Turkmenistan and from production by Turkmengaz (Chow and Hendrix 2010: 37-38). The CNPC provided most of the financing for the construction of pipeline. Initial suspicion was that China would request additional onshore blocks should Turkmengaz volumes fall short of its government's guarantee (Ibid: 38). Concerns over volume shortfall were alleviated when Russia failed to meet its volume obligation to purchase Turkmen gas in 2009 and formally reduced off take volume for 2010 (Ibid). Consequently, Turkmen gas started flowing to China at a much higher rate than was originally anticipated (Ibid). The pipeline started functioning in December 2009. The initial agreement was for 30 billion cubic meters per year for 30 years, now has increased to an additional 10 billion cubic meters per year. The China-Central Asia gas pipeline (CAGP) begins in Turkmenistan and goes through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan before connecting to a second pipeline running West to East within China (See Figure 1). In 2013, the CAGP system supplied 27 billion cubic metres (953 billion cubic feet) of gas to China's West-East Gas pipeline through Xinjiang (Radio Free Asia March 24, 2014).

CHINA'S THIRD WEST-TO-EAST NATURAL GAS TRANSMISSION LINE



Map 1. China's Third West-to-East Natural Gas Transmission Line

Source. China National Petroleum Corporation

In 2006, Turkmenistan announced the discovery of South Yolotan Field (US Energy Information Administration 2012). This gas deposit is located in the South-eastern Murgab Basin north of the Dauletabad Field. According to an estimate in October 2011, this field has potential reserves of at least 460 Tcf and is likely to be as high as 740 Tcf (Ibid). This estimate regarding the potential reserves of Yolotan Field makes it the second largest field in the world. China has been financing the development of Yolotan Field and China Development Bank has provided USD4 billion in 2009 for the first phase of its development. Later, in 2011, China pledged another USD4.1 billion for the second phase of development of this oil deposit (Ibid). CNPC is the first foreign company to develop a major onshore field under license in Turkmenistan. China is also financing a fertilizer plant that will export the field's output to China.



Map 2. China-Central Asia Oil and Gas Pipelines

Source. Petro China (US Energy Information Agency 2012)

China clearly secures the long-term access to energy and commodities by engendering a mutually profitable relationship with these energy providers and their governments. The instruments of China's energy strategy are its major energy firms, banks, and state lending agencies that clearly work together giving the size and scope of recent acquisitions across the globe. To execute the acquisition of these resources successfully, China ensures to adopt appropriate strategy for smooth and gradual entry to Central Asian energy resources. China made an entry to Central Asian region as a reluctant state compared to the rest of the global

actors, its success today is remarkable enough that even analysts and scholars are not hesitating to consider China one of the most influential actors in Central Asia. China's growing energy relations with Central Asian states go hand in hand with the intensive investment in facilitating the home countries. In the aftermath of Global Financial Crisis, China's cash flow towards Central Asia is attractive for Central Asian state leaders to rebuild the economies. China's energy deals have been successful but it will not be enough to emphasise the energy deals without having analysed the background that helped China normalize the relations with Central Asian states over a period of more than a decade.

4.2.3. A Speculative Sketch of China's Energy Strategy in Central Asian Region

China first went to other countries for importing oil search in the late 1990s. Their very focus was on the geologically less distant areas rich in energy resources, from North Africa to the Middle East, Central Asia and Russia. The driving forces behind their energy strategy varied toward different regions. In the Middle East, China had been focusing on energy security and economic cooperation but took a passive stance in political affairs, probably wished to rely on the US to guarantee regional order and stability. On the contrary, China's approach towards Central Asia was driven by national security concerns, and economic activity was added to that already established dimension of relationship later.

China's official engagement with Central Asia started immediately after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991. Despite Central Asia's well-known geopolitical significance and energy resources, China initially seemed hesitant in engaging with the region closely. It rather accepted Russia's continuing dominance with a belief that Russia would play a positive role in securing regional stability for Central Asia (Xing 1996: 62). Although Beijing offered its immediate diplomatic recognition to the five new independent states, in December 1991, to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan, no official visit was made in initial years. Then Chinese Premier, Li Peng, made the first official visit to Central Asia in April 1994. The most obvious reason for this attitude was historical hostilities between China and Central Asia and the existing border disputes. Before the eruption of this mistrust lying among the Central Asian states and China, any positive development in relations was far from reality.

The collapse of the USSR also brought collapse for centrally planned economy of the Soviet Union. The situation left newly independent Central Asian states in economically (and politically) disastrous situation. The immediate years after the independence engulfed the whole region in widespread unemployment as state-owned enterprises fell bankrupt. China had become a net importer of petroleum products by the time, but its engagement with the region was partially driven by energy concerns, and the more important issue for Beijing was to ensure

the security of its 3,300km western border with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. During Li Peng's visit, Beijing attempted to convince the Central Asian states to assist in fighting the separatist movements by signing an agreement with Kazakhstan on the demarcation of their joint border (Andrews-Speed et al 2002: 58-59). This was the start of a series of border talks, in which China and Central Asian states successfully agreed in the following few years.

The end of the Cold War brought combined outcomes for China with regard to its position in Central Asia. On one hand, the collapse of the Soviet Union removed a longstanding potential threat to China's security. After the Cold War, Beijing was in good position to pursue new possibilities for expanding relations with Central Asia while on the other hand, with the disintegration of the USSR, there was a greater risk of ending up of the anti-Soviet alliance that had held the United States and China together for around two decades. The fears were even raised when the 1989 crackdown at Tiananmen was severely criticised by the US. After crushing the international response to the crackdown on student protesters at Tiananmen Square, China looked again towards the Third World for diplomatic validation.

Thus the first phase of China-Central Asia relations covers China's steps as seeking the position of a legitimate actor in Central Asia or in other words, a 'favourable' power. Whereas Western companies signed their first oil concessions in the Caspian region immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, Chinese companies did not sign their first deal until 1997. Studying the feasibility of a pipeline to China was already a part of the original agreement, although not taken very seriously at the time even by the Chinese themselves. In other words, when Brzezinski was busy convincing the leaders of Central Asia of the wisdom of challenging Russian preferences, (Van Der Pijl 2006: 350) China had been busy solving its security related issues.

By the late 1990s, China's opening up for free markets efforts were in full swing. Relative economic success during the Asian financial crisis, growing economic relations with the US and the return of Hong Kong and Macao spurred a confident China to set out in search of new markets and resources to support its burgeoning economy (Shih 2005: 759). China acceded to the WTO in 2001 and its participation in international organizations increased dramatically, from 37 in 1988 to more than 50 in 2005 (Kim 1990: 193; Hempson-Jones 2005: 707). In 1997, People's Congress began to evaluate its 'go global' economic strategy. By this time, China was beginning to institutionalize its economic globalization.

China has been using energy agreements as a tool to construct its positive image for Central Asian countries. For instance, CNPC, reached an agreement with the Turkmen Petroleum Ministry to build a cross-border gas pipeline to China, a pipeline vigorously promoted by the Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov. Agreements on the provisions of Chinese government

loans were also signed with all the countries concerned (Lan and Paik 1998: 112-13). Despite these steps, the agreement did not see any concrete happening till April 2006.

As mentioned above, as early as 1997, CNPC won a tender to develop two oilfields and extract oil from Kazakhstan but the plan was not executed for years. At that time, Kazakh side was unable to demonstrate an ability to provide the necessary volumes, while the CNPC claimed to be unable to finance it (Kazakhstan Special Report 2003: 8). The absence of concrete execution of any agreement between these states clearly indicates that China was not interested in short term opportunities like signing a small energy deal rather it was pursuing a long term strategy like building mega projects for energy supply after solving the underlying reasons of instability and mistrust. A recent priority for China's foreign policy makers has been to establish peaceful working relationships with as many states as possible, especially neighbouring countries, so that the country can direct its efforts to economic development (Levine 1994; Naughton, Barry 1994; Yue 1998).

At that time it was also clear for China and for the world as a whole, that Central Asian countries like Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are rich in energy resources. For these countries, the economic priority was the rapid exploration, development, and export of crude oil as well as natural gas to other countries. Due to the porous borders and domestic instabilities, there had been serious hurdles in transporting these resources to the outside world. Their landlocked position means that building the infrastructure needed to export oil or natural gas is an expensive proposition. The lack of such infrastructure was a major constraint on the realization of this potential boon, an issue that was highlighted by the low oil prices in 1997 and 1998. From an economic perspective, China seemed to be a source of manufactured products and investment and was considered an attractive model of successful transition from a planned economy to a market one. Politically, for CA states, China may be used as a counterweight to Russia. As one analyst described China's strategy as:

The PRC instead must proceed with caution, assessing and where possible exploiting the "propensity of things" so as to gradually improve its own position, while weakening that of the United States and other potential opponents (Lai 2004).

The China's economic globalization has intensified greatly since 2003 and has brought about another dramatic shift in Chinese foreign policy towards Central Asia. The criticism on the US 'imperialism' (Howson and Smith 2008: 221) after the US unilateral invasion of Iraq under war on terror doctrine made this clear that China can speak the language of great powers and perceive itself as one of the great powers. In addition to the structural changes incurred by the US' neoconservative foreign policy, several other international events helped sophisticate China's Central Asia policy in 2003. After years of campaigning, China was admitted to the

WTO in 2001, granting China a formal role in international economic relations. Not to be underestimated, this move increased China's legitimacy in its economic and trade relations.

Since China started to pay more attention to Central Asia after the September 11 attacks on the United States, adequate energy engagement only appeared on the agenda after Japan emerged in 2003 as a competitor for an extension of the Siberian oil pipeline. Fearing a likely Chinese monopoly of oil supply from Russia, Japan tried to persuade Moscow in late 2002 to extend the pipeline to the Pacific coast instead. Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi reaffirmed these intentions on his first official visit to Russia in January 2003 when the two parties signed a six-point action plan calling for cooperation in economics, energy and international diplomacy. The offer provided by Japan was a financial package worth USD7 billion, including a USD5 billion investment for pipeline construction and USD2 billion in loans for the development of Siberian oilfields (Liao 2006).

Other factors that spurred Beijing's entry into Central Asia included a wish to reduce the dependency on the sea lines of communication for oil transports. In the event of conflict or a terrorist attack, these could easily be disrupted, choking Beijing's energy supply, especially at the vulnerable Malacca Straits. Considering Beijing's growing energy needs and continuous economic growth, with oil imports reaching 91 million tons in 2003 of which 75 percent originated in the Middle East and Africa, diversification of energy supplies became urgent (Tian 2004: ii). As China lacks blue water navy that can protect the sea lines of communication, Central Asia and Russia's energy reserves certainly appear as favourable options.

Another important factor, by this time, was that China realized it must seek availability of energy resources from Central Asian region without involving Russia. The PRC received a major impetus from Russian actions, which once again had unintended consequences. Numerous delays were observed on a Russian oil pipeline to China, even after president Putin made a solemn commitment to Chinese president Hu in 2003, hardened Chinese resolve to finish the oil pipeline from Kazakhstan and to extend it from central Kazakhstan to western Kazakhstan, where the big oil fields are located (Kong 2010: 130). Even more galling from a Chinese point of view was that the Russian delay was instigated by interference from Prime Minister Koizumi of Japan, who offered USD7 billion of Japanese assistance for Russia to shift its plans to build the pipeline to the Pacific coast, which made the project even more economically dubious.

The Japanese offer to Russia to build pipeline never actually materialized. After some delay the Russians finally proceeded to build ESPO (Eastern Siberia Pacific Ocean) Pipeline from Eastern Siberia with Chinese loans. The Pipeline stretches from Skovorodino in Eastern Siberia to Daqing in North-eastern China (Wall Street Journal 2010). Meanwhile, West Siberian crude is

being shipped to China by heading south and linking up with the Kazakhstan oil pipeline. Instead of a wholly Russian route, Russian oil is transported by pipe to China. Meanwhile, China started seeking direct supply from Central Asian states that resulted into Sino-Kazakh and then Sino-Turkmen pipelines.

A similar story of Russian mishandling drove China's construction of direct gas pipeline from Central Asia. An Irkutsk-to-China gas pipeline was proposed far back in Soviet times. This dream finally took shape when BP bought half of the Russian oil company TNK in 2003 and the merged company gained possession of the Kovytkha gas field in Eastern Siberia with reserves of 2 trillion cubic meters of gas. Plans were drawn to export this gas to China and South Korea, and serious talks were conducted on gas purchase terms. Unfortunately, this project was caught first in a struggle over who controls gas exports in Russia during Moscow's move to recentralize power in the oil and gas sector, and then in a contest between BP and its Russian partners for control over TNK-BP. A promising gas export project stalled for more than five years. As a result, China looked elsewhere for pipeline gas.

As these international and domestic trends unfolded, China became visibly active in gaining secure footing in the energy sector of Central Asian states. It was clear though that for gaining influence and showing China as reliable partner, China must invest heavily in infrastructure. To build strong energy relations, China is thought to sign even expensive deals and that expected transportation of energy reserves does not justify the investment on part of Chinese leaders (Marketos 2009: 106). But these investments have been making China an influential actor and an attractive partner for Central Asian states.

In 2004, China and Kazakhstan announced the building of the oil pipeline from western Kazakhstan to Xinjiang. According to an estimate in 2010, Sino-Kazak Pipeline transports 20 Million tons of oil per year to China (China Daily 2010). Initially, it was anticipated that the capacity of this pipeline would not increase more than a few hundred thousand barrels per day, and this project is hardly economically attractive. Yet China was willing to invest in this pipeline in order to establish the route. But it is not simple hunger for energy resources that Chinese government overlooks various reports that dismiss the pipeline as economically infeasible, not so much for its cost of USD3.5 billion as for fearing that the combined reserves of the Aktyubinsk and Uzen fields were not sufficient to justify it (Marketos 2009: 106).

While China's interest in developing Energy relations with Central Asian region in areas, generally considered 'expansive' shows the commitment on the part of China to get secured energy supply for its booming economy, it also indicates China's broader plans behind this heavy investment in the region. Beijing seeks to establish strong connections with Central Asia in its right as a developing economy and a key component of pan-Asian land bridge for energy

as well as other goods. Thus, the recent scholarly works consider China aspiring for the role of a guide and a kind of courier station for the Central Asian states in their dealings with other countries, trying to guide them to more economic cooperation and expanded trade contacts (Wishnick 2006). Looked at in this way, there is stronger motivation and greater scope for its economic relations with the Central Asian states.

However, these strategic motivation helps explain China's willingness to pre-invest in pipelines from Central Asia before economic volumes of oil and gas are apparent. Nevertheless, even China acquired upstream positions in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan first before it started planning pipelines. In fact, Beijing uses the encouragement of pipelines that provide diversity of export routes for Central Asian countries to help acquiring more upstream assets. This is an important difference between China's relationship with Russia and Central Asia. Given Russia's track record, China seems to have decided that its energy relationship with Russia is mainly for supply, sometimes secured by loans when Russia is desperate for cash and offer pricing terms favourable to China. In contrast, Central Asia is where China makes equity investments in oil and gas.

China's energy relations with Central Asian states without doubt mark an important area of economic activity. The trade and transportation links, alongside energy links are also of considerable importance to come up with balanced approach of China led economic activity in region and to see the responses of Central Asian states.

4.3. Trade and Transportation Links

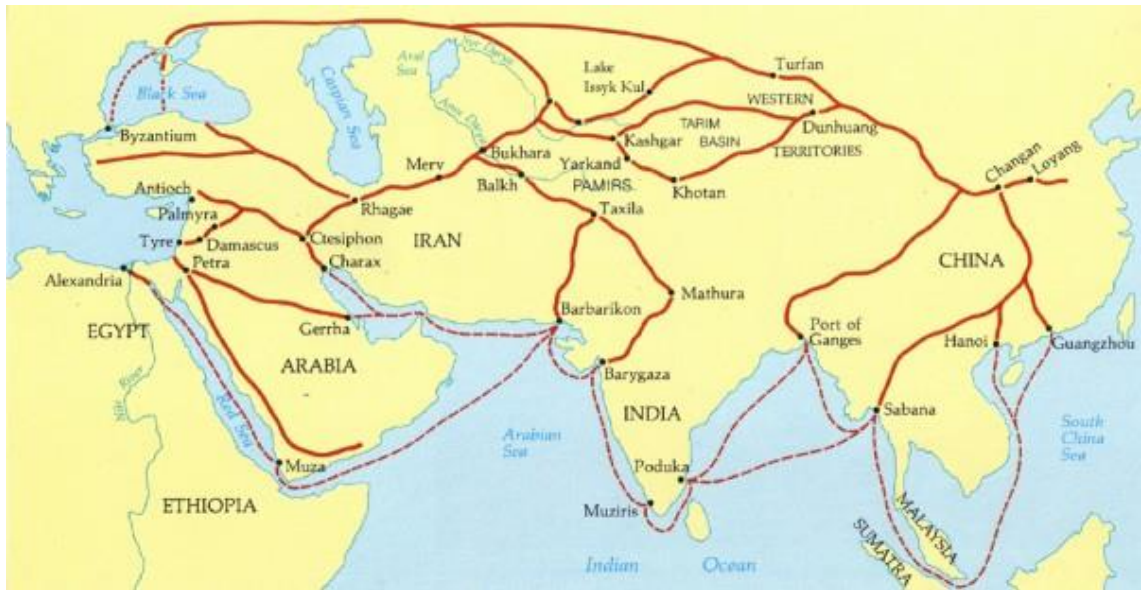
The nineteenth century shift in China's global position changed the power and trade balances in favour of South and Coastal regions as preference for China led economic activity. Before that, at least until the end of eighteenth century, imperial China's policies and institutions generally put more energies to develop security and commerce relations in the northwest than in the south and southeast (Perdue 2003: 51). The Han and Tang dynasty directed most of their commercial and military resources towards Central Asia (ibid). With changing environment and shift of economic activity, Qing Empire emphasised actions to maintain defences on their north-western frontiers.

With relative favourable security environment in post-Soviet space, the trade has been increasing between China and Central Asian states. Trade between China and five Central Asian states rose from USD527 million in 1992 to USD40 billion in 2011 (Fazilov and Chen 2013: 39). China's growing economic relations with Central Asia without considering China's 'Go West project' is incomplete. The economic integration of Xinjiang with centre and neighbouring states is working at fast pace in recent decades. 'Open Up West' in this regard is an important

policy publicized and implemented extravagantly by Chinese political spectrum. While discussing the inner motives of the ‘Open Up West’ national campaign Goodman says that:

(In West) the discourse of nation-building is part of a process to reassure these provinces of their place in the nation after twenty years of unequal development policies, and to reinforce their ties with the national government and its goals (and) the current leadership of the CCP sees the program to ‘Open Up the West’ as just such a national project that will make its mark in future history (Goodman 2002: 11).

The role of Xinjiang in economic development of Mainland China goes back to the days of Silk Road.



Map 3. Silk Road

Reference: nationalgeographic.com

The Chinese section of the Silk Road began in the city of Xi'an in Shaanxi province. It passed through the provinces of Gansu, Ningxia, Qinghai and continued westward through Xinjiang. It then got connected to Central Asia through Xinjiang. More than half of the Silk Road stretching between Xi'an (China) to Mediterranean Sea and Turkey was located in China.



Map 4. Silk Road

Reference: Silkroadencyclopedia.com

The website of Silk road encyclopaedia stresses the importance of Xinjiang in these words:

The Xinjiang region is strategically located at the junction where the most ancient branch of the famous “Silk Route” joining China and the West meets with one of the main routes from ancient India and Tibet, crossing from Central Asia to other areas of China. Xinjiang was the crossroads for not only goods, but also was home to the northern and southern routes which enabled technologies, philosophies and religions to be transmitted from one culture to another (silkroadencyclopedia.com).

The economic development of Xinjiang in recent decades is noteworthy. To achieve the ‘legitimate’ title, the Central Government struggles to justify its exercise of political authority in terms of historical claims and ‘distinctiveness’ of China. Legitimacy dynamics influence the interpretation of national policies where ‘right to development’ discourse is used to refer to Western Development Policies.

(Xinjiang)... has decided to do away with its traditional economic pattern encompassing mainly agriculture and livestock as major parts. It aims to take development opportunity to transform itself into an international trade centre in west China (Development of West China 2000).

According to the State Council, the central government has invested 386.23 billion Yuan in Xinjiang from 1950 to 2008, accounting for 25.7% of the total investment in the region. From the establishment of XUAR in 1955 up to 2008, the region received a total of 375.202 billion Yuan in subsidies from the government. As stated in 2013, financial institutions loans have increased by 23.1% (Xinjiang Ribao 2013). The per capita GDP in Xinjiang grew 28 times from 1978 to 2008 and was ranked number 15 among 31 provincial level units in China in 2008 (The Information Office of the State Council 2009) and ranked 12 in 2013 (Xinjiang Ribao 2013). Whether this economic development is good for Xinjiang and for leaders to achieve the ‘dream’

of united China will be discussed in Chapter 6. For now, it is clear that ‘Go West’ project has drawn ample economic activity to the north-western peripheral regions giving way to more transnational trade links. China, for that reason, has also frequently proposed the establishment of Free Trade Zone with Central Asian states, as adopted in East Asia.

Another important aspect of China’s growing trade and economic relations is importance of Central Asia as a transit route for China’s energy supply, as well as trade in general, from and to other important regions. Although the construction of the roads passing through Central Asia would require considerable investment, and there are signs that China is seriously considering making such investments and that is to be discussed towards the end of chapter. One of the supporting factors is the large gas deal between China and Iran, which is expected to be almost doubled in scale if on-going negotiations are successful. Moreover, China appears to be very keen to find points of entry to even some of the most inaccessible Central Asian states.

Within the plans of China’s pipeline development, a China-Arab line to the oil terminals of Persian Gulf has also been considered. These energy corridors will ultimately place China in the centre of a ‘Pan-Asian global energy bridge’ which will link existing and potential suppliers (Persian Gulf Countries, Central Asia and Russia) to the major energy consumers (China, Japan and Korea). If successful, it will not only improve the energy security of China, but also strengthen Beijing’s broader geo-political influence in the region (Fazilov and Chen 2013: 40)

China has been investing in infrastructure to utilize the region as transit route at its best. One example of such investments is Railway networks. China has become successful in materializing the plans to develop railway that starts from South-west China, Chongqing. The Chongqing-Xinjiang-Europe International Railway passes through Xi’an, Lanzhou, Urumqi and the Alataw Pass where it enters into Kazakhstan. It then continues to Russia, Belarus, Poland and finally culminates in Duisburg, Germany (*China Daily US* September 13, 2013).



Map 5. Eurasian Land Bridge Rail Link

Source: *China Daily US* September 13, 2013

To strengthen the transportation links, China has also been enjoying use of China-Kazakhstan Horgos Railway and China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan road. The Chinese political centre is committed to extend this transportation network even more as emphasised in Vice president Li Yuanchao speech at China-Eurasia Economic Development and Cooperation Forum:

The Chinese government wishes to propose that the Eurasian countries promote the building of the new grand Eurasia passage, and develop the Eurasian Land Bridge into a new growth pole that integrates transportation, oil and gas pipelines, telecommunication cables, logistics and trade, so as to boost regional cooperation. China will work with relevant countries to speed up the construction of transport projects such as the western China- Western Europe road, the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway and Tajikistan-China Road (*Xinhuanet* September 3, 2013).

China and Kyrgyz authorities are also negotiating to build an estimated USD2 Billion Trans-Asia main railway line that includes 286km of track across Kyrgyzstan. China is keen to make negotiations successful as the rail link will ensure speed delivery of Chinese exports to Europe and Middle Eastern countries. The project might be useful for Kyrgyzstan as it will help link north and south of the country. It will help Kyrgyz authorities curb isolation and access world markets. It will be a good way to earn transit fees and create jobs. For USD2 Billion investment, China in return has asked for the permission of mining the minerals on route. This is not an attractive deal so far for Kyrgyz political leadership keeping in mind the worth of the deposits China is seeking to mine.

China has increased its investment in building roads and tunnels in Tajikistan (Fazilov and Chen 2013: 39). The negotiations regarding construction of Central Asia High Speed Railway that will connect Xinjiang, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Turkey and Germany are underway. China-Central Asia rail link is also planned to establish link with Iranian railway network and through Iran to other Persian Gulf countries. It would help China integrate with international markets and forge closer international ties.

The picture has its flaws on the other hand. The Free Trade agreement between China and Kazakhstan was signed in 2004 but the slow progress on part of Kazakh leaders is attributed to the tensions on their part to let China enter more deep into Kazakh economy by bringing bulk of Chinese made goods. Tensions with Kyrgyzstan and frequent clashes between local and Chinese workers are also representation of anxiety on part of these states and their people. China has still been committed to enter these markets without any signals to slow down in near future. Kyrgyzstan is notoriously difficult environment for foreign investors and Chinese commitment is largely welcomed by state leaders to run the economy.

To examine the increasing dependency amid tensions, the plans for the establishment of Line D (fourth line) of CAGP system are noteworthy. CNPC Trans-Asia Gas Pipeline Company Limited has recently signed an agreement with Tajiktransgaz on jointly managing the

construction of Line D of CAGP (*China Daily* March 11, 2014). In September 2013, the Chinese government also signed inter-governmental agreements with Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan respectively on construction of Line D. Apart from its ambitious supplies and longer route, the significant point to note is the route adopted by this pipeline. Unlike the previous three branches of CAGP, the Line D is aimed at adopting the southern route through Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and bypassing Kazakhstan (*Radio Free Asia* March 24, 2014). China had been avoiding these states for supply routes in the past. Both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are wholly dependent on imports unlike petroleum exporting states of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. The route also covers states that have suffered through civil war (in case of Tajikistan) and two revolutions since 2005 (in case of Kyrgyzstan).

To add to this complexity of situation, the route is far more expensive than the ones already adopted. The quick answer that comes to mind is the diversification of the supplies. But the underlying reason is growing influence of China in the overall region. The two countries, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, who have previously stayed out of supply routes, are also engaged in extensive economic presence of China in Central Asia. These are clear indicators that China has been penetrating deep into the region.

The growing dependent nature of Central Asian states on Chinese economic and trade links is evident and also realized on the part of Central Asian states and masses. But a number of factors make Central Asian states comply with China's growing presence in the region. Due to land locked nature of these countries and relative monopoly of Russia in these countries in the past, despite some serious problems, China is still considered a favourable economic partner. At least for providing Central Asian states chance to loosen Russian traditional role over the economies of the region. The lack of interest on part of foreign investors due to instable political environment as in case of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and commitment of China to do business within such environment is also noticeable in this context.⁸ The Attractiveness of Chinese economic model that is combination of authoritarian government and competitive capitalism also is a source of relief from any outside pressure against authoritarian government systems within these states.

Where ongoing development and integration of Xinjiang region has been coinciding with increasing economic activity in Central Asia resulting in increased dependence of Central Asian states, the ongoing 'Develop the West' campaign has also resulted in unsustainable growth in water use. About half of Xinjiang's arable land is used for cotton cultivation, a highly water-intensive crop. Xinjiang for being leading domestic oil producing site as well as attracting large scale population from other provinces is likely to see intensification of the demand for water.

⁸ As evident by the plans of construction of CAGP, Line D. Discussed in detail in later paragraphs.

The political processes unfolding in this context need to be observed closely as the water management problem is not restricted to Xinjiang region.

4.4. Management of Hydro-Power and Sharing of Trans-boundary Waters

The water crisis in Central Asia is getting worse while the environmental problems are engulfing the whole globe. Aral lake, that was fourth great lake in the world, has reduced to about 40 percent in the level and 66 percent in the volume (Mokhtari 2012: 9002). Because of increasing consumption of Amu Darya and Syr Darya,⁹ and due to change in regional irrigation system, Aral Lake is reducing. This reduction has contributed in reducing the production of cotton and other agricultural products in the region, creating sanitary problems for residents of the region, dispersing salt and sand in surrounding land, and adding about 11000 sq km to the area of Ghareghom and Ghazalghom deserts among other problems.

In China, northern and western provinces have been chocking by water shortages for a long time. The water shortage problem is amplified by increasing economic growth and widespread environmental pollution. In December 2007 drought-fighting directive, China's State Council warned that after taking water-saving measures into account, China's water use will reach the total volume of exploitable water resources by 2030 (Zheng et al. 2010: 350).

China shares water resources with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In Central Asia, China's trans-boundary water management policies mainly involve Kazakhstan with which China shares 20 rivers. Along 1700 kilometre border shared between Xinjiang and Kazakhstan, two large rivers, Irtysh and Ili are shared with China being located upstream. The Irtysh River originates in China's Altai Mountains, crosses into Kazakhstan, and joins Ob River in Russia before flowing out into the Arctic Ocean. The Ili River originates in Xinjiang, enters Kazakhstan and terminates in Lake Balkhash (Kazakhstan), providing more than 50 percent of lake's fresh water (Biba 2014).

There is growing concern on part of leaders of Central Asian states for resolving the water problem. Last year, Kazakh president raised his concern to solve the problem by opening an open dialogue between concerned members of SCO (The Astana Times 2013). But China has not a track record of using multilateral forums to deal with hydro-power and water management problems. Some of the signs for that is China voted against UN Convention on Law of Non-Navigational Uses of International Watercourses (UNWC). China also did not become party to UNECE Convention on the Protections and Use of Trans-boundary Watercourses and

⁹ Amu Darya and Syr Darya are major sources of Aral Sea. Both rivers are fed from glacial melt-water from the high mountain ranges of the Pamir and Tien Shan in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

International Lakes. Straightaway, a glance at the agreements on water sharing, indicate the lack of political will on part of Chinese political spectrum to enter into any such agreements.

China on the other hand, has been more interested in signing bilateral treaties. China has signed multiple treaties with Russia, recent being Agreement on Rational Management and Protection of Trans-boundary Waters in 2008 (Clue 2012). With Kazakhstan, China signed three Agreements on Management and Protection of Trans-boundary Rivers. (Treaty Basin: Aral Sea, Ili/Kunes He, Ob, Po Lun To) in 2001. In 2011, both states signed Agreement on Water Quality Protection of Trans-boundary Waters (Clue 2012). This signed agreement pays specific attention to cooperation on the prevention of pollution of trans-boundary Rivers. In April 2011, China-Kazakhstan Friendship Joint Water Diversion Project on the Khorgos River¹⁰ was launched by both governments. Under this agreement, each state will be allotted 50 percent of the water diverted. The aim of the China-Kazakhstan Friendship Joint Water Diversion Project signed in 2011 is to improve irrigation, secure water supply for the ecosystem and moderate flood damage especially in Khorgos Port and China-Kazakhstan Trade Cooperation Zone (Biba 2014).

Another important hurdle in paving smooth way for cooperation on water sharing is the conflict among Central Asian neighbouring states of China over shared water resources as is seen in case of Central Asian states. For centuries, water has been the focal point of Central Asian peoples. It helped locals establish physical, economic and cultural links. The Central Asian region, during Soviet rule, largely coincided with the boundaries of the Aral Sea basin (Weinthal 2006: 3). But with independence, borders of new states transformed a large number of domestic rivers in past to international waters making water less a source of engagement and more a source of conflict. The conflicts over regional hydro power management have caused bilateral tensions among different Central Asian states. One of such disagreements is Uzbekistan's continuous opposition of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's plan of constructing hydropower stations on regional rivers. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan emphasise that severe power shortage faced by their states require an urgent action to develop hydropower resources (AsiaNews.it 2010). Uzbekistan disagrees as the move would be disadvantageous for Uzbekistan's downstream agricultural industry.

The presentation of China as 'good neighbour' and promoter of regional cooperation was important theme of 18th Communist Party of China National Congress in November 2012. The representation of promoter of the regional cooperation has been pushing Chinese political elites hard to show cooperative measures in the domain of trans-boundary water management. The cooperation on the part of China is still far from satisfying the needy neighbours. The

¹⁰ The Khorgos River is a 150 km long tributary of the Ili and a border river between China and Kazakhstan.

desperation on part of China on the other hand demands vigilant response to water management. The recent reports show that China's growing water crisis will be worsened by further economic development where already 11 of China's 31 provinces suffer from water scarcity. The issue of hydro-power politics and reluctance to join multilateral forums to cooperate on the issue is also linked with China's obsession with its perceptions of territoriality. For instance, the Chinese stance towards UNWC was presented in this statement:

A watercourse State enjoys indisputable territorial sovereignty over those parts of international watercourses that flow through its territory. It is incomprehensible and regrettable that the draft Convention does not affirm this principle (Statement by Chinese Delegate 21 May 1997).

The adherence to territorial sovereignty is also echoed in Chinese elite preference for the use of term 'trans-boundary' water rather than 'international watercourse' as defined under the UNWC (Wouters and Chen 2013: 234). Agreements with Russia and Kazakhstan all use the term 'trans-boundary' water.

On the other hand, it is evident¹¹ that China is more cooperative with Kazakhstan and Russia in trans-boundary water management than its southern neighbours.¹² The trans-boundary water management is one part of foreign policy of China and is likely to be influenced by other factors. The growing importance and engagement of China as a regional and global player, is likely to make China respond more actively and positively to complex challenge or will persuade China's political centre to at least come up with policies that innovatively deal with the contemporary and upcoming challenges.

The recent agreements and cooperation with Kazakhstan, although not sophisticated, are noteworthy in this context. The political practices demonstrate China's broader interests in case of Central Asian region, the struggle to represent itself a 'good neighbour' and adhering to the pressures from neighbours with whom the relations are not restricted to just about sharing water resources. For now, China has largely ignored the issue with the exception of very recent and very few moves with Kazakhstan. The growing relations and growing engagement, on the other hand, is likely to make China more interactive to the outside world and thus more vulnerable to respond according to the norms of broader civilization China is embedded within. The processes had always been more fluid, interactive and contingent in China's north-western periphery than in the relatively settled core regions.

¹¹ See for details Sebastian Biba (2014), "China Cooperates with Central Asia over Shared Rivers." Also see Patricia Wouters and Huiping Chen (2013), "The 'Chinese Way' to Transboundary Water Cooperation."

¹² China shares Sinquan/ Indus river with India and Pakistan, the Lancang/ Mekong River with Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam, Tsangpo/ Brahmaputra River with Bangladesh and India.

4.5. Conclusion

The tributary trade that sustained China's economic, cultural and symbolic power over Asia and beyond is hallmark in Chinese history. But the Qing could only seriously claim to be the uncontested centre of a tribute system that was focused on Beijing after they had created military alliance with Eastern Mongols, exterminated the rival Western Mongols and conquered Xinjiang (Perdue 2003: 65). The relative calmness of north-western region helped Chinese elite grab the fruits of tributary system. The economic activity towards Central Asian region today is not quite detached to regional threats and sources of instability and the nature of these threats is as embedded as ever.

In Post-1979 China, the confidence is building so is economic activity. In nearly twenty years, since the opening of Central Asian national markets, the West could not put an end to the Russian state-controlled Gazprom's monopoly over the export of Central Asian natural gas but China did just that. Kazakhstan-China pipeline completed in 2009 opened the first gas export pipeline for Kazakh gas that does not go through Russia (*Transitions* 2010).

In many instances Beijing now not only seeks to secure energy deals but also to invest in facilities for extraction and processing, as well as the pipelines, roads, and railways through which much needed commodities will ultimately reach China. These projects benefit the producer countries, while at the same time deepening the PRC's economic presence and increasing its potential to exert political and cultural influence.

While this process benefits China far more than its Central Asian partners, it does help Central Asian states loosen Russia's grip on trading with outside world. China also is a favourable economic partner for its focus on building domestic infrastructure; China has been willing to do so, realizing the important trade and transit route provided by Central Asia. The investment in infrastructure and transportation links where help regional states connect with outside markets and earn transit fees on trade activities, it is worrisome for increasing dependent nature of their economies on China.

In many ways, China is by far the most important new factor in international economic landscape. Thirty years of rapid economic growth have raised domestic prosperity and the country's international economic prominence. China has become the second-largest oil importer in the world, surpassing Japan, and increasingly needs to import pipeline gas or Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) to fuel its economy and moderate adverse environmental impact. Although it was late off the mark, nearby Central Asia was a natural place for China to look for new sources of oil and gas and to seek diversification of its own import routes.

The growing energy relations, the extensive transportation links, the growing dependence for trade and supply routes, all indicate China's strong presence in the region. The Chinese presence is not confined to Central Asian region solely but also going out to Europe and Asia through Central Asia. With the rise of Chinese state, the patterns of economic activity in Asia are transforming, that is echoing China's role in Asian trade and economic activity with China as centre in past. But to restrain the discussion to this economic activity that is the one of the most prominent feature of China's foreign policy in world order that is seeing China as rising makes the inter-linked processes of security and diplomacy minimized. The underlying dynamics of security and the way Chinese elites deal with that at home and regionally are important to consider the endurance of this activity in future and the potential political responses from Chinese political elites.

With the rise of states, the intensity of give and take among civilizations and civilizations and peripheries also get influenced. In past, with China on the centre of economic activity in Asia maintained symbolic and cultural power to sustain the whole system of Tributary trade. The powerful and influential position of China was not restricted to one aspect of economy or trade. Today, where China is embedded in universal single modern civilization, the increasing integration is bound to flow the norms in and out of civilizations bringing innovative or partially innovative policy responses. The economic activity and increased trade and transportation links as well as dependency in context of water resource sharing all hints towards China is likely to remain an influential player in Central Asian region in future. The integration is unlikely to stay single dimensional or linear. The political processes within China in terms of frontier security and diplomacy will surely affect the overall regional situation as well. The intensity and quality of such change is hard to measure and predict but to learn about these processes and the effect of such processes on China-Central Asia relations is surely a significant area to cover in coming chapters.

Chapter 5

Tensions between Contested Identities: China's Security Culture and Political Process of Institutionalization of 'Three Evils'

5.1. Introduction

The foreign policy analysts of China have largely been concerned with disputed territories and unresolved territorial borders while debating about China and its concept of territoriality. The problem of Xinjiang and the frontier security as providing context for China's foreign policies and practices has not received due consideration. This chapter emphasises that identity of China helps to map the importance attached with frontier security and the role played by the national security culture in foreign policy making of China. Any analysis without considering territoriality related perceptions, identity and norms of China are likely to be incomplete, surface level or even misleading while talking about Xinjiang region and the way China approaches SCO.

Equally important is that, no theory of international politics emphasizes security more than Classical Realism and Structural Realism, which puts national security as the foremost objective of the states, as Waltz claims that in this anarchic world, security is the highest end (1979: 126). In this narrowly focused concept of national security, these two strands of realism interpret security as largely a zero-sum concept. Mainstream IR theories talk about the determining effects of an environment on the security of states and their behaviour generally, as it is done in case of neo-realists. Yet this provides the definition of environment and its subsequent effect on the states as restricted to the distribution of material capabilities. These structural theories firstly, ignore the cultural factors of states like that of history, identity, domestic politics, past experiences and self-perception altogether. The neoclassical realists acknowledge the relevance of cultural factors as epiphenomena. In these theories, the identities and culture of the states are less detrimental and more intervening variables.

On the one hand, theorizing of the national security studies is dominated by the materialist-rationalist neo-realism; on the other hand, we find neoliberal regime theory, which to some extent adds cultural aspects to theory, but lacks clarity in exactly locating the role and importance of these factors. Because of this narrow conception of national security, China's national security policies are usually analysed within the context of great power relations. Thus, the realist analysis of post-cold war China's security policies, emphasize polarity and great

power politics as determining factors of China's security environment with its focus on state level analysis.

Peter Katzenstein in his work talks about the effects of the environment (context) on the actors and political processes. Although Katzenstein points out, three different kinds of effects, an environment might have on the actors. First, it can affect the behaviour of states. Second, Katzenstein believes that, it might affect the contingent properties like identities, interests and capabilities of actors altogether; and thirdly, actor's environments can affect the existence of the actors' altogether. But the importance in his study is shown to the first two influences that consider the existence of states as given (Katzenstein 1996: 41). This relevance of "environment" is also focus of Hurrell's study of regionalism and that is significant while analysing the dynamics of regional security of China-Central Asia. While looking at the security issues beyond war and military and insecurities of the states, Hurrell's idea of 'regionness' is important. The states of a given region are actually in the same 'regional boat' which needs cooperation from all the actors (Hurrell 1995: 37-73).

The chapter starts with its focus primarily on tracing the culture of national security and territoriality in China. It notes that what it meant to be 'China' had always been different for different dynasties and generally was considered without borders. For the first time, towards the fall of Qing Empire, China started constructing itself within defined boundaries. Yet there were still ongoing debates about; what does China mean and what is the status of people living in peripheries and how these peripheries should be governed. Since ideas and political practices of dealing with China as a statist entity, were new to Chinese people and political elite, it had gone through various different interpretations and political processes. After analysing the change and evolution of China's concept of territoriality and security and its representation in political processes, the chapter moves to discuss cooperation against 'three evils' as a policy by China, Russia and other SCO members by facing similar insecurity related elements in their respective security culture in terms of regime stability and territorial integrity. This chapter also traces the regional dynamics of culture of national security that had brought political elites of SCO member states to cooperate on security matters.

5.2. China's Security Culture, its Territorial Identity and Political Processes

Since the origin of Shanghai Five, security related cooperation among member states is noticeable. After the birth of SCO, convergence of interest among elites of China, Russia and other SCO member states institutionalized 'three evils'. The adoption of 'three evils' can be contextualized within broader Chinese culture to see the real tensions between China, its political elites and quality and intensity of Sinicization in past with reference to Chinese centre

and Xinjiang region. It is equally important to trace the realities of Uighur nationalist movement and the outlining traits of this movement before entitling ‘three evils’ a real threat to China’s security. The national identity of a state is historically contextualized and is socially constituted. It is a result of a constitutive process of bringing in imagined communities with the belief that they are naturally carrying common identities (Anderson 1991). The identity of a nation or ethnicity is constructed and in effect determines the policies and preferences of that very identity. For tracing the role of construction and presentation of ‘three evils’ and its link to Xinjiang, it is important to discuss construction and representation of territorial identity of China.

As many scholars believe that the role of these evils is mostly exaggerated and is more like a tool to put forward China’s broader regional and foreign policy goals.¹³ With an emphasis on interpretations of these evils in recent decades, the connection with historical experiences and similar and different attitudes will be traced to map China’s perceptions as linked to the periphery and north-western region and the ways to govern it. The chapter concludes that historical evolution of the usage of these problems and its relation with concurrent national identity of China has helped shaping and emphasising the discourse used to refer to these problems. The ongoing debate within China about its identity and the inherent tensions within that concept helps understand the way China approaches SCO to converge political elites to resolve ethnic minority problems in their respective states. The confusions on part of political elites have helped make issues more politicized. The embrace of modern concepts of territorial integrity, and sovereignty attached with united China and staunch promotion of these concepts in Mao’s era has resulted in assigning more political emphasis to ethnic minorities that can be referred as ‘politicization’. This politicization is an opposite political process of ‘culturalization’, a long tradition of Chinese history (Ma 2007). The institutionalized personification of this politicization is ‘three evils’.

5.2.1. How ‘Three Evils’ are interpreted

The usage of the term of ‘three evils’ is a recent phenomenon, where the first ever use of ‘three evils’ is as recent as 2001. The origin of Shanghai Cooperation organization is officially linked to combating ‘three evils’ and non-traditional security challenges. On the contrary, the way these ‘three evils’ are interpreted and guide foreign policy is result of long and varying process of policies and even making of the PRC. The policies concentrating on the eradication of these ‘three evils’ apparently link to national question, prestige and legitimacy of China’s political

¹³ For the similar argument regarding Russia, see, Pavel Baev (2006), “Turning Counter-Terrorism into Counter-Revolution: Russia Focuses on Kazakhstan and Engages Turkmenistan” for using the tool of Counter-Terrorism and Counter-Revolution as mechanism to ensure influence in Central Asian states. Also see Ambrosio, Thomas (2008), “Catching the ‘Shanghai Spirit’: How the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Promotes Authoritarian Norms in Central Asia,”

centre. The term has been widely used by China's political spectrum yet there is no concrete definition of 'three evils'.

In China and other Central Asian states, the terrorism, separatism and religious fundamentalism is mostly perceived, interpreted and presented as an inter- connected phenomenon. The reference to three evils in White Paper of 2003 can be found in these words:

(In past and) especially in the 1990s, influenced by religious extremism, separatism and international terrorism, part of "East Turkistan" forces both inside and outside China turned to splittist and sabotage activities with terrorist violence as their chief means.

It would be helpful to interpret these evils individually for careful analysis of relevance of these three evils with the security culture of China. The apparent religious threat is presented and perceived as a political force. Where religion is synonymous with 'Jihad' or 'Holy War' and radical Islam is presented as carrying political motives. Separatism and Splittist activities are referred as a motive propagated and funded by anti-China forces. The term 'terrorism' is most vague of these all. Terrorism is widely acknowledged as means of political motives and as an angry and violent demonstration of separatist and religious agendas. Another important manifestation of this perception is its attachment with 'foreign/ hostile powers'. Almost all the terrorist acts are believed to be aimed at gaining support for separatism and thus grouped as "East Turkestan Movement."

The fundamental problem while dealing with the aspects covering what defines three evils; separatism, religious fundamentalism and terrorism is that these acts are simply covered under the umbrella of term 'Non-Traditional Security Threats' which in itself is a vague and broad term. Both in China and rest of the world, there is severe tendency to lump all the security related issues not directly dealing with border security or military security into the cumulus of Non-traditional security threat. For instance, a book published by Institute of China Contemporary International Relations, *On Non-Traditional Security* lists up to 17 domains that can be dealt under the auspices of Non Traditional Security (Lu 2003).

The statistics presented by Chinese government in State Newspaper, *China Daily*, show that from 1991 to 2001, the East Turkistan terrorist forces inside and outside Chinese territory had been responsible for over 200 terrorist incidents in Xinjiang, resulting in the deaths of 162 people of all ethnic groups, including grass-roots officials and religious personnel, and injuries to more than 440 people (China Daily 2002). These terrorist incident are conducted in various forms involving explosions on the innocent people, assassinations of officials, ordinary people and patriotic religious personages of the Uighur ethnic group as well as ethnic Han people, Violent attacks on Police and Government Institutions, crimes of poison and arson, establishing secret training bases and raising money to buy and manufacture arms and ammunition (Ibid).

To define the term ‘terrorism’ has always been subject of contention. The non-state actorness of this violent act is made more problematic with tricky involvement of state actor in such acts. In the context of China and Central Asia, the separatist tendencies and the related policies and strategies adopted by minority groups are grouped as ‘terrorist factions’. The term has been used for separatist tendencies in Xinjiang and any related activities. In the aftermath of the US’s war against terrorism, Chinese political elites endorsed their view of naming separatists tendencies as ‘terrorists’ with global recognition of Chinese stance. Washington made it clear to the Chinese that nonviolent separatist activities cannot be classified as terrorism. But as pointed out by Chung:

The problem is that some of the Xinjiang activists do use violence to achieve their goals. Distinguishing between genuine counter terrorism and the repression of minority rights can thus be difficult, as can be determining which acts of terrorism are “international” and which are purely domestic. Foreign-backed militant separatism, a not uncommon phenomenon of which Uighur activism is an example, poses intellectual and legal problems as well as practical ones (Chung 2002: 11).

The terms Separatists and Terrorists are largely used interchangeably by Chinese political leaders and SCO. By grouping the separatist tendencies under the auspices of terrorism, ‘Politicization’ rather than ‘Culturalization’ of minority issues is taking place. As Ma Rong has mentioned that politicization of minority people is making differences more sharpened (Ma 2007). In this way, emphasis on three evils where is paving Sinicization by strengthening state relations, demilitarizing border and bringing close cooperation in economic field and multilaterally, at some stage it also gets counter-productive as far as internal divisions of China as well as neighbouring states are concerned.

For tracing the role of these problems in Chinese security culture, for the start (and in rather simplified terms) Religious Extremism can be described as force or in other words a political force, Separatism as purpose and Terrorism as means. In other words, any force that is threatening the territorial integrity and national unity of the state is treated as evil by Chinese political elite. These indications are highly controversial and are often challenged for misrepresentation by Chinese political elites. The politicization of the ethnic minority problems itself has been variegated during long and processual history of China.

5.2.2. Fluid and Contested Zones of Identity: China, Political Processes and Periphery

The transition of China from an empire to nation and its related identity is highly contested in nature. Perdue points out that twentieth century architects of a Chinese nation did not look to more Han-centred models of Chinese territory and polity, like the Song or Ming dynasties. Instead, nearly all of them, whether Kuomintang, Communist, Political-cum-Intellectual elites, took for granted that the boundaries and peoples included in the maximal period of the Qing

should belong to the nation (Perdue 2003). In the twentieth century, the attempt to create China's identity as a multi-nationality state and to endorse the myth of united China, political practices merged distinctive groups like the Cantonese, Hakka, Taiwanese, Hunanese and Uighurs. The political process brought an end to considering Han a distinctive identity that is different to other number of identities living within and associated with China. Both ideologies tried to resolve the conflicting claims of empire and nation, legacies of the Qing's frontier expansion, but they could not remove all contradictions (Perdue 2003: 55).

The territorial expansion of Qing Empire was significant as it laid the foundation for China emerging as a nation-state in the twentieth century. The Qing Empire did not assert a nationalist ideology straightaway. It built the social and institutional structure to form the basis for emergence of China as a multi-national nation state. Each of the peoples within the empire was assigned a single fixed identity which became the basis for turning them into 'nationalities' in twentieth century and in post-Mao era. The territorial identity as associated with the concept of China had still been contested and Qing did not start a single "civilizing mission" that classified non-Han as primitive people who needed to be trained to become civilized and meet the specific standard (Harrell 1995). In that way, Qing rulers left local elites in place, and did not try to replace local religious or cultural institutions. The Qing tried to promote standardization by bringing in institutions but that was never aimed at eradication of multiple cultures within Chinese civilization (Perdue 2003: 73)

China's perception about territoriality had never been static. China had always been plural and defined differently by Chinese and Non-Chinese. The tendencies to assimilate and integrate minority people as 'Chinese First,' intensified after the embrace of modern elements of sovereignty and territorial integrity. These assimilation policies and the related ways to govern periphery had different meanings at different times. Even when China embraced sovereignty bringing an end to the concept of Imperial China as centre of universe, the political leaders and intellectuals disagreed over how to specifically conceptualize and protect a 'sovereign China' (Carlson 2012a: 414). Towards the start of the twentieth century, Sun-Yat Sen realized that protecting the race was not as important as protecting the nation (Shimada 1990: 105). Sun Yat Sen clearly mentioned that China (wuzu gong he) is comprised of five people: the Han, Manchu, Mongolia, Tibetan, and Hui (Muslims). Sun Yat Sen emphasised that with the unity and struggle of all these people of China, it is possible to overthrow the Qing dynasty and to create a Chinese state (Bergere 1980: 352-394). His Three Principles of the people further emphasised the similar approach. After Sun Yat Sen, Chiang Kai-Shek adopted similar assimilation policy for minority people. In his *China's Destiny*, Kai-Shek refers to five people designated in China. He emphasises that division of 'Chinese' into these five groups is due to the difference in religion and geographic environment. This division does not have anything to

do with difference in race or blood of these people (Kai-Shek 1985: 165). The debates about what a new China would look like and where does periphery stand in that image continued before the establishment of PRC in 1949.

The post 1949 Mao's policies can be seen in the light of long process of identity contestation, yet it is clear that this era established a strong trend of 'politicization' of identity of ethnic minority. In the 1930s, a "national recognition" campaign was implemented which saw the entry of "nationality status" in registration of internal passport of every resident (Ma 2007). The 'politicization' got more institutionalized during Mao's era. After 1949, the communist China under Mao, was assertive in its perception of China within defined boundaries. The western concept of Sovereignty and Territorial integrity were heart fully embraced. This era before opening up as a result of Deng's policies saw the militarization of border regions because of fears of foreign invasion. The insecurity elements haunted the walled China who has largely cut itself from outside world. The Chinese had been divided in various nationalities. The western notion of nationalism where is synonymous with citizenry of a particular state, in China, the nationalism is different. The concept of 'nationality' in China is equated with the minority ethnic group.

The vibrant debate about China's identity that existed for more than half a century was brought to an end by Mao's era. Beginning in 1950s, reference to both borderlands and frontiers quickly disappeared from official statements and even from unofficial publications (Carlson 2012a: 414). The end of Mao's era saw the reform and opening up adopted as result of policies of Deng Xiaoping. The era saw transformation and implementation of new practices that provided better space for local cultural practices of minority groups. The promotion of ethnic tourism was promoted to celebrate the diversity of multi-ethnic China. The cultures, colourful rituals and cuisines of Xinjiang had been projected as attractive destinations for tourists. Parallel to these changes, the closed space for discussions and innovations opened gradually to invite new patterns of thinking. Cultural diversity not the only attribute of Post Mao era has been seeing the continuation of politicization occurring during Mao's era.

The political processes are highly linked with policies adopted by post 1949 Chinese political elite. China's political elites are referring back to China's civilizational values to find answers for China's identity. Although the White Paper in 2009 stated.¹⁴

China is a unified multi-ethnic country jointly created by the people of all its ethnic groups. In the long course of historical evolution people of all ethnic

¹⁴ More than half of the subjects of White Paper issued by the Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China in year 2009 chose Ethnic Groups of PRC either to discuss development index or general policy of PRC towards its ethnic areas. For details see subject and text of White Papers on Chinese Government's Official Web Portal available at http://english.gov.cn/official/2005-08/17/content_24165.htm.

groups in China have maintained close contacts, developed interdependently, communicated and fused with one another, and stood together through weal and woe, forming today's unified multi-ethnic Chinese nation, and promoting the development of the nation and social progress (The Information Office of the State Council 2009).

The recurrent adopted Chinese constitution emphasised the right of autonomy on part of minorities. Yet this autonomy is not anything like recognition of a separate identities living within China. This autonomy granted to the minority regions is a limited autonomy more related to the practice of language and folklore and less concerned with the deeper issues of ethnic identity like religion and historical traditions (Ghai 2000: 91).

The constitution of PRC was revised in 1982, where article 36 of the constitution dealt with religious issues in such words:

Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief. No State organ, public organization or individual may compel citizens to believe in, or not to believe in, any religion; nor may they discriminate against citizens who believe in, or do not believe in any religion. The State protects normal religious activities. No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the State. Religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination (Constitution of the People's Republic of China, Article 36).

The State implicitly emphasises its responsibility to preserve the basic right of religious freedom.

As religion is sensitive topic in China, it is hard to access accurate data on religion as practiced and followed by Chinese. The Chinese State Statistical Bureau comes up with the number of individuals practicing religion as 100 million that is about 10% of the population (Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China 2004). The figure is considered as fairly low when compared to the accurate number of individuals associating themselves with a certain religious belief (Madsen 2011: 18). According to another estimate, at least 300 million believers contribute to the population of China (Wu 2007). Even this number is low and inaccurate as it counts individuals who maintain an explicit and public style of religious practices and who are affiliated with any kind of recognized religious association (Madsen 2011: 18-19).

The perceived threat of political Islam is echoed in policy priorities underlined in 1990 regulations under which political forces were emphasised to convince and educate religious masses to build their observance of state law, to win their support for national unity and party leaders. These regulations were further enforced as part of CPC Central Committee Document No. 6 issued in 1991 that emphasised the importance of legalization of measures to control the region. The broader set of rules was introduced in 1994 local-provisional regulations. The regulations contained new references to the principle of submission to Party leadership. The

emphasis was placed on gaining the support for the socialist system to avoid any harm to national integrity and social stability. The similar regulations were adopted and emphasised in policy agenda in following years. The emphasis on stability and related suppression campaigns against separatism and unlawful religious activities continued to dominate the party policy priorities in Xinjiang till today.

5.2.3. History of Separatism and Strive for Reconciliation of State and Ethnic Identity

The name Xinjiang that means “Old territory returned to the Motherland” (History and Development of Xinjiang, May 2003) had been adopted in 1760 after Qing empire seized control of the region. The ‘dominion’ referred to the northern and southern areas of Tianshan as well as Uighuristan. Before adopting this term, Xinjiang was referred as Xiyu or Xichui, meaning “Western regions” (Newby 1996: 70). This was the first occasion when identity of Xinjiang as a distinct geographical area began to take place. The significance of the adoption of this name is also clear as achievement on part of Qing Empire is emphasised as recovering “Chinese territory” from “foreign occupiers”.

When the Qing struggled against the failures after the Opium War, political leverage in Xinjiang was idealized as ‘Promised Land’ that would provide an answer to some of the problems inflicted on China. Among which the most important were the concept of new space that was associated with the region to accommodate problem of growing population and that region would be a rich source of raw materials (Gong Zizhen 1820). The vast resources which the Qing committed to led to the suppression of the Khoja invasion from the 1820s to the 1850s, are a reflection of how strongly Xinjiang became associated with the prestige of dynasty and incurred the belief that it was an essential part of the Chinese empire (Newby 1996: 70). The reference to Qing conquest and control of Xinjiang is admired in White paper is these words:

The Qing government consolidated unified jurisdiction over the Western regions. In 1757, the Qing imperial court crushed the long standing Junggar separatist regime in the Northwest. Two years later, it quelled a rebellion launched by the Islamic Aktaglik Sect leaders Burhanidin and Hojajahan, thus consolidating its military and administrative jurisdiction over all parts of the Western region (History and Development of Xinjiang, May 2003).

China’s western borders account for two thirds of the frontiers, often situated in harsh environments including elevated plateaus, tropical forests and deserts. Such geographical conditions limit force mobility both along the border and across regions within China (Fravel 2007: 713). There is no surprise in acknowledging that in the past this region had maintained stronger economic and social ties with neighbouring countries than with many parts of rest of China (Fravel 2007: 715). In the context of geographical differences, even these differences

make up a great source of insecurity for Chinese state. The majority ethnic group, Han, is concentrated in the centre. The Han made up 90% of Chinese population but occupy roughly 40% of the landmass. The minority groups of China that constitute a mere 10% of Chinese population are spread through the rest of land. The minority groups are located in strategic area, occupying 90% of Chinese bordered shared with its neighbours. These minority groups also have kinsmen residing in bordering countries (Fravel 2007: 711).

The history of Xinjiang has been significantly influenced by its geography. Xinjiang accommodates three large social groups named Hui, Uighurs and Kazakhs. It consists of the existence of the grasslands of Zungharia in the north. These grasslands contain the current capital of Xinjiang, Urumqi. The famous Tarim Basin is in South. The majority of Uighurs are concentrated in this area. A significant part of the Tarim Basin is constituted of Taklimakan Desert. Several Oases lie across the desert, the same oases were once part of the Silk Road. It is believed that due to its tough geographical conditions causing difficulty to manoeuvre, in terms of trade and cultural exchange, the foreign contact each oasis maintained were more important than the inter-oasis contacts within Xinjiang region (Rudelson 1997: 39). It is equally understood that the cultural tilt of Xinjiang towards west brought it more close to Central Asian culture rather than Chinese culture and civilization (Rudelson 1997: 35).

In terms of demographic differences, the north-western region of China had been peripheries with shifting definitions during different dynasties of Imperial China. As mentioned earlier, Uighurs is the largest ethnic group based in Xinjiang. The geographic isolation over the span of history has made different oases carry different opinions regarding what it is meant to be a Uighur (Rudelson 1997: 96). To this day, each oasis has created its own identity, making Uighur identity itself inherently divisive (Rudelson 1997: 40). There are even historical accounts suggesting that these social groupings have had severe political conflicts among each other. For instance, Uighurs had their own empire in 744 AD in Mongolia (Benson 1999; Bhattacharya 2003). But the Kyrgyz invasion halted the survival and existence of Uighur kingdom resulting in the disintegration of the kingdom into two branches (Bhattacharya 2003: 359). Even today XUAR itself is comprised and divided into different ethnic groups making autonomous counties such as Ili Kazakh Prefecture, Kizilsu Kirgiz Prefecture, Bayingholin Mongol Prefecture and Xihanzi Hui Prefecture. Apart from Uighurs, the other nine minority Muslim nationalities do not support the Uighur case for separatism (Gladney 2004).

The argument suggesting that any inherent religious or ethnic identity had been omnipresent will severely lack evidence. Newby notes that the concept of Muslim separateness had spread from Central Asia through to Gansu and down to the south-west not before mid-nineteenth century. He emphasises that before this time, there was no attempt to take united action against Non-Muslim Chinese as Muslims had been torn and divided by varying sects within themselves.

The more serious attempts to establish an independent regime in Xinjiang took place after the establishment of Republican Period (1911-1949). An example of that is the establishing of first East Turkestan Republic in Kashgar from 1933-34. The republic could not survive because once again the unity could not be achieved because of differences and inter-tribal strife among nomadic tribes of the Kazakh and Kyrgyz Muslims. As discussed, any common identity for Xinjiang is missing in past, it is important to unfold the nature of any common identity if relevant today before determining the potential threat from the north-western border.

During Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) and Mongol's rule, a large number of Muslims from Western and Central Asia entered China. Many Muslims held high political appointments under the Yuan and in 1335 a decree of the emperor officially recognized Islam as "the Pure and True Religion" (Qing Zhen Jiao) (DeAngelis 1997: 153). For a long history China had remained plural. Gu Jiegang, points to the role of Non Han people in identity of China. According to Gu, from the earliest times, Chinese civilization had been a mixture of cultures. The northwest contributed the dynamic military elements to China's security culture. They played strong role in defending core territories and establishing China's boundaries (Perdue 2003: 64).

The idea of East Turkestan as a political movement rose to prominence after the direct rule of Chinese empire was established on Xinjiang region in 1759. Various Uighur poets, to name a few, Turdy Garibi, Shair Akhun, Khislat Kashgari, Abduraim Nizari rose to prominence (Bhattacharya 2003: 361-362). They produced a variety of literature preaching the need for social protest against Manchu and Chinese oppression (Oloson 1998: 345).

The Qing Empire established a form of 'multiculturalism' but not everyone accepted the Qing claims. Each of the North-western people, Mongols, Turkestanis and Chinese Muslims, generated repeated resistance movements. In each case the revolt was put down by force (Perdue 2003: 71). These groups were divided among themselves but that did not put an end to their protest. These separatist tendencies turned more violent and frequent towards the end of twentieth century. The decade of 1990s has seen a series of unrest and disturbances in Xinjiang. Two most significant uprisings in this context are Baren Uprising in 1990 and Yining Uprising in 1996. The recent of such series of events is riot by some Uighurs that took place on July 5, 2009 in Urumqi. During the violent activities, more than 3000 rioters went on the rampage, killing around 197 people and injuring 1721 others, as claimed by Chinese authorities (Hao et al 2009). The situation in Xinjiang during recent decades point out some interesting aspects and turns the Xinjiang Separatists activists are projected to adopt.

China's treatment of its ethnic and religious minorities in Xinjiang have long been interpreted as complying with party policy related to China's national unity, stability and development. China has also been a party to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial

Discrimination (ICERD). The convention prohibits denying human rights and freedom. The article 50 of The Common Programme of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference states that:

All nationalities within the boundaries of the People's Republic of China are equal.....(So) Greater nationalism and chauvinism shall be opposed. Acts involving discrimination, oppression, and splitting of the unity of the various nationalities shall be prohibited (Cited in Moseley 1973: 6).

The practice is not similar to theory. There is evidence that the communities whose ethnic identity is synonymous with their religious identity in practice face stigmatization and infringements of their constitutional right to religious freedom (Li 1969: 298).

On the other hand, the large number of Uighurs, that is 99.8 percent of the World's Uighur population, resides in Xinjiang. This fact gives Uighur people a sense of ownership and belonging to the land of Xinjiang (Gladney 2004: 233). This sense of ownership is coincided with absence of direct rule of China in the past. Owen Lattimore indicates four periods that have seen Chinese rule over Xinjiang region; First, the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), Second, the Tang Dynasty (618-906 AD), third, the Mongol Dynasty (1260-1368) and fourth the Manchu Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). The contemporary rule is the fifth major period. On the basis of that Lattimore concludes that the record of the Chinese in Central Asia is far from being continuous. History shows that out of 2000 years of Chinese history, China managed to rule province of Xinjiang for only about 425 years (Lattimore 1988).

The secessionist policies of Muslims had been more prominent and even politicized more after the propagation of myth of 'United China'. The first official noted incident of separatist movement can be traced back after the complete annexation of Xinjiang by Qing Empire in 1759. It was an uprising by a local chieftain named Yakub Beg in 1865. Yakub Beg fought battles against Chinese rule and in return gained trade concessions from Chinese court. He also gained diplomatic recognition from Tsarist Russia and the United Kingdom. Beg called for the Uighur independence on the basis of religion and ethnicity before finally getting defeated in 1877 (Chung 2002: 9).

The answer to the existing threat lies more in de-Sinicization of the periphery rather than any 'pre-existing ethnic identity'. The Uighurs may not be able to decisively claim who they are, but they can certainly claim who they are not. It is not intrinsic cultural attributes that made up Uighur identity today rather it is an identity that is formed in opposition to Han ethnic identity. The provisional policy of political centre of China has worked as an important catalyst in giving birth to ethnic tensions and anti-Han sentiment making identity of Uighur less intrinsic and more reactive and that is result of shifting of the core values of Chinese in the past. This is the

main source of worry and it is even more worrisome when economic integration of the region is taking place, with certain adverse effects.

The Chinese and their sense of attachment had never been similar. The recent mingling of nation state and attendant concepts has made China's treatment of ethnic minorities more political. The argument of treatment of territoriality and the roots of politicization are optimistically changing. Yet it is important to consider the immediate effect of the environment that is geographically and culturally more close to China's north-western periphery and is helping political elites endure the apparent 'politicization' by 'three evils'. The evolution of China's territorial identity and innovativeness of policy responses to frontier security might be the future. For now, the tensions between contemporary core values and absorption of the modern elements have been making Chinese elites bend on cooperation on curbing what they see as 'three evils' and that got institutionalized within a changing regional and international context.

5.3. Embedded Collective 'Evils' and National Security Environment of China-Central Asia

The hard concept of national security considers any threat involving non state actors as non-traditional or soft. The notion has its origin in the view of national security that dates back to 1648 where idea of nation state was originated. The nation state from the discourse is represented nearly homogenous unit. This homogeneity is far from a reality and more a political construction. The case of relationships between China-Central Asia and the culture of national security is an interesting case where apparently "soft" elements of security have played an important part to give way to region wide cooperation and political processes that had been blocked for a long period. The identity, which is evolving, not only defines the threat perceptions and insecurities of these states, it constructs and reconstructs the collective identities to build the security environment around them. Note that contested identities of Central Asia, that itself has not been used to divisions within itself. The overlapping nature of ethno-linguistic and religious identities along with political elite that is still unable to cope with these inherited difficulties is making Central Asian states

The identity of a state can be defined as a form of collective identity of a group of people shaped by its internal dynamics and external environment. Anthony Smith believes that national identity is perhaps the most fundamental and inclusive collective identity which provides a powerful means of defining and locating individual self in the world through the prism of the collective personality and its distinctive culture (Smith 1991: 143, 17). As Peter Katzenstein argues that 'definitions of identity that distinguish between self and other imply definitions of threat and interest that have strong effects on national security policies' (Katzenstein 1996: 18-

9). The identity does not mean unique, it is rather distinctive. It is not static or permanent. In this regard, China and Central Asia relations is distinctive case study to trace the role of evolving identities and thus evolving culture of national security carrying the “Common Evils”. It deals with history, status, and various patterns of interactions to define the identities of the states that will help understand the embedded security culture of these states and political processes initiated by the elites today. The culture of national security of states, which is by not any means, a zero sum security concept, yet interconnected enough to converge the interests and policy of these states.

5.3.1. Legacies of the Past: Contemporary (in)Security Environment

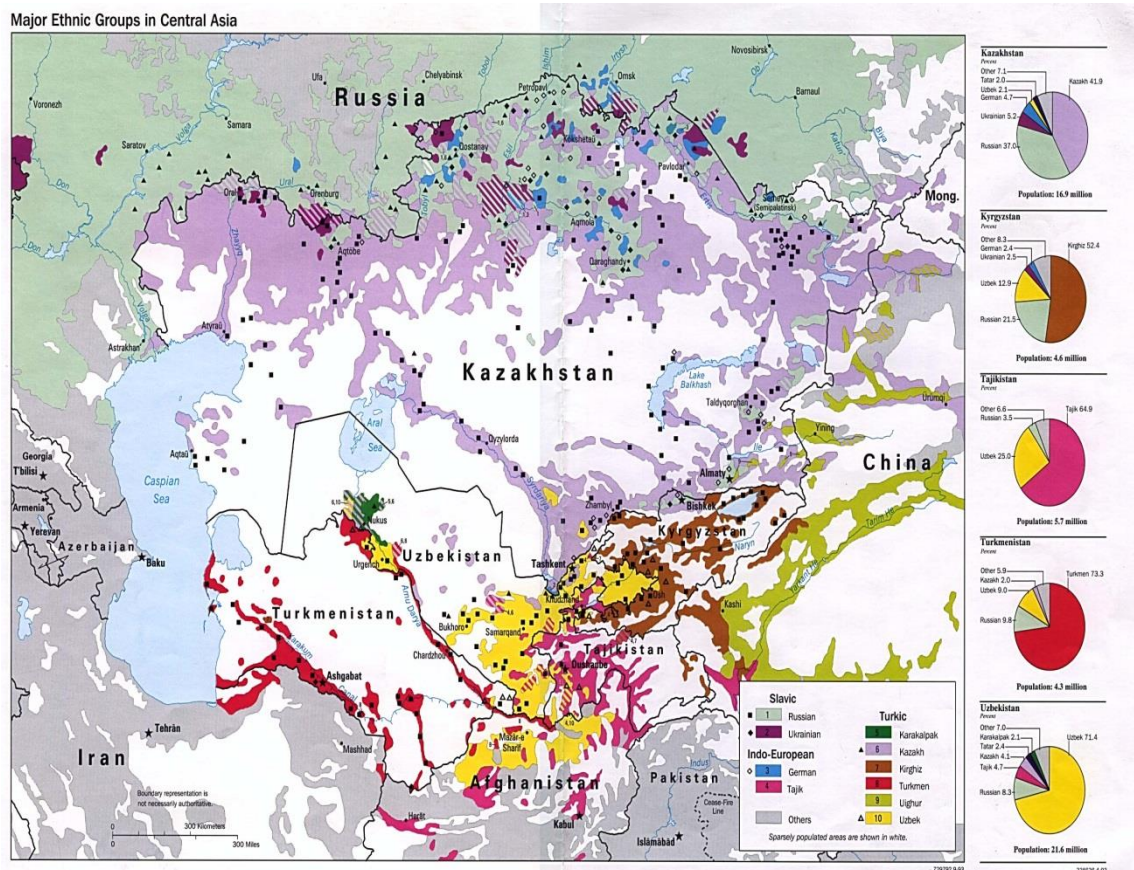
In a Chinese language account, Xing Guangcheng and Xue Zhundu, a senior scholar of Chinese foreign relations, identified shared Sino-Central Asian challenges: the problem of ethnicity, the problem of religion and the problem of borders (Xue and Xing 1999: 83-84). All these challenges identified by Xue and Xing were rooted in modern Central Asian history. While moving forward in establishing relations, Chinese policy makers were acutely aware of the legacies of the past. The problem of ethnicity, the problem of religion and the problem of borders and reconstruction of identities of China as bearing contested nature is true in case of Central Asian region as well.

The advent of Islam in Central Asia began at the hands of Arab armies at the beginning of seventh century that reshaped the religious and cultural identity of its people. Central Asia consists of the vast geographical region of Turko-Persian Islamic civilization that lies to the north of today’s Iran and extends from the Caspian Sea in the west to China’s Xinjiang province in the east.¹⁵ It did not take long and Islam was the dominant religion in the region with great Silk Road cities of Bukhara and Samarkand (present day Uzbekistan) emerging as Islam’s leading religious, spiritual and cultural centres by tenth century. From the advent of Islam till the control of Russian Empire, during the period of 1200 years, Islam as religion left an enduring impression on the lives of people. Islamic religious centres spread across Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva and other important cities of Central Asia played a dominant role in shaping the political, cultural and social identities of people and their ideals of belongingness with a faith based (imagined) global community, i.e. Muslim Ummah.

Medieval Central Asia was home to a tremendous diversity in terms of languages, peoples and cultures. The Turkic language was mainly language of masses but the dominant language of literature was Persian (Roy 2000: 4). Although, originated from Turkic language group, the vernacular Turkic as spoken in Central Asia was highly diverse and overlapping, with accents

¹⁵ Central Asian region and its geographical boundaries are defined differently by different scholars. For details see, Olivier Roy 2000: 1-2.

blending into dialects and dialects into distinct languages. Before Stalin divided Central Asia into republics, Central Asia never had experience of political and geographical divisions according to territory based on cultural, religious or ethnic identities. The ethno-linguistic communities overlapped geographically and were without clear territorial boundaries (Roy 2000: 7-12). (For demographical details, soon after independence of five Central Asian states, See Map)



Map 6. Major Ethnic Groups in Central Asia (1992)

With the establishment of Soviet Rule on the Central Asia, Russian colonial administrators for the most part allowed local peoples to preserve their right for religious practices. However, the advent of Bolshevik revolution launched an era of getting Islamic centres and culture annihilated. With the passage of time, however, Muslim clerics found ways to represent Islam as politically non-threatening and involving non-politicized practices. The Muslims in the former Soviet Union adapted Islamic beliefs according to Soviet conditions and eventually Soviet authorities and Islam reached an accommodation of sorts where Islamic establishment was legalized. Hence, Islam remained an important part of identity of greater Central Asia,

though it was the most benign form of religion. Not until the last few years of late 9th Century Russian Empire, it remained a fundamentalist form of religion.

Because of strict communist policies, presence of Islam in Soviet Russia can be referred as dormant form of religion. Elsewhere in neighbouring areas, it was emerging as threat as a political force. In 1979, the Shah of Iran was overthrown by the movement apparently at the hands of the Muslim fundamentalists and afterwards, Anwar Sadaat's policy of overturning the Nasserism resulted into his assassination again at the hands of Islamic religious fundamentalists of Egypt. These events gave birth to realization and awareness of the possibility of potential Muslim fundamentalist threat existing in China's western region and China did not turn a blind eye towards it. There was an omnipresent threat for China that Islamic fundamentalist movements and groups could be possibly manipulated from the outside, triggering the similar disruptive outcomes in Western China. Muslim fundamentalism didn't remain restricted to a country or two, and developments in Lebanon, Iran, Algeria and the Sudan made Chinese leadership realize how important the role of the religious identity is in Middle Eastern region. The role played by the Islamic religion is not confined to any territorial state that can be restricted within the national boundary; it is transnational and can threaten the groups sharing the similar supranational identities. The threat was profoundly acknowledged in Chinese leadership and policymakers.

Under the Mongols, Xinjiang was incorporated into Mongolistan. Out of the reshuffling of Turkic and Inner Asian peoples which accompanied and followed the Mongol conquests arose the ethnic groupings which characterize Central Asia today. Not until the 18th century, under the Manchu Qianlong Emperor, did China reassert control and by 1759, Xinjiang as well as the Ferghana Valley, that is shared by Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan today, had been restored to Chinese empire. This historical legacy and strong cultural links of Xinjiang persuades some scholars to consider Xinjiang as part of Central Asia (Millward 2009: 56).

As mentioned earlier, today's Central Asian states never had the experience of territorial boundaries in past as the region was tremendously overlapped in terms of ethnic, lingual and religious identities. The poor border delineation was not only a legacy Central Asian states carried when these state were born, the issue of disputed borders was at the core of Sino-Soviet clashes before independence of Central Asian states. The post 1949 China also militarized the border in order to defend borders against foreign hostile factions. Between 1964 and 1978, China and Russia held ten rounds of negotiations to settle border differences and none was successful. Although in their 1969 meeting, Chinese premier and his Russian counterpart agreed not to go to war over border disputes (Voskressenski 2003: 173-74). The border dispute remained there between two countries.

5.3.2. Afghanistan War: Sowing the Seeds of ‘Three Evils’

Before September 11, the most significant event for China, Central Asia and Russia, even more important than the disintegration of the Soviet Union in defining the present security culture of these states was Soviet War in Afghanistan. The invasion of Afghanistan by USSR was the most important factor that was going to affect the future national security of newly independent states of Central Asia and of region as a whole. The Afghanistan conflict contributed to the emergence and radicalization of Islamist organizations across the greater Central Asia. Since then these Islamic factions have threatened regional stability. Apart from religious radicalization this war gave birth to a war economy that was centred on narcotics production, gunrunning and smuggling that later appeared as a permanent dynamic of regional stability in greater Central Asia.

The year 1989 saw the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan; but it did not stop the fighting between Mujahideen factions of Afghans and pro-Soviet factions of Afghans in the country. Because of the on-going factional fighting, the war economy of the 1980s was not replaced by the peacetime economy and its presence contributed largely to instability across Central Asia and South Asia. The failure of national economy in post-Soviet Afghanistan encouraged informal/illegitimate economic activities. As a result, drug trade emerged as most lucrative trade option for people and warlords. Apart from drugs, Afghanistan also served as smuggling corridor between Central Asia, Dubai, Iran and Pakistan for luxury goods. The country remained focus of attention for Soviet Union and the US till Red Army remained present but after their withdrawal from Afghanistan, the country was left at the mercy of warlords. This instability of the state of Afghanistan did not settle rather it started radicalizing Islamist militant groups and organisations present in Afghanistan. After the collapse of Soviet Union, this instability stemming from Afghanistan started influencing Central Asia and then China as militant Islamist organisations started influencing and penetrating in the whole region including Xinjiang.

The Russian policy towards Central Asia has transformed a lot since the end of Cold war. Many analysts claim that the change occur because Russian leadership realized that their similar policy of Soviet Union times towards Central Asian states in post-cold war times was not responding to the challenges (Johnson 2004: 10). This research argues that foreign policy of Russia needed to be changed for independent Central Asian states because it was not responding correctly; however, the explanation for the failure of Russia foreign policy lies even deeper. The reconstructing identities of the Central Asian states as well as Russia were responsible for a need to change their policies.

After the Cold war, Russia was a country with nuclear weapons, and with a great power mentality, shaken but not broken. From the beginning of his rule, Putin cultivated the image of a leader concentrating on strengthening the Russian state and restoring its leadership role on former Soviet territory. He was appointed secretary of the Russian Security Council in March 1999, and thereby came to deal with Russia's major national security challenge, Chechnya. With his background in the Committee for State Security (KGB) and the Federal Security Service (FSB), he seemed well prepared to take on this task. That is why, his accession to Prime Minister post in August 1999, is seen as a result of influence of security and military interests within the presidential structures against the background of deteriorating security situation in Chechnya (Strategic Survey 1999: 120). The way, Russia related itself and behaved in Central Asia brings an interesting example of identity restructuring and reconfiguring. Throughout the 1990s, Russian policy towards Central Asian states was really different to that of the Eastern European states. The early year's policy of Russia was an outcome of traditional Russian view of Central Asia as its backyard with less economic dependency and political influence than on Eastern Europe. Another important point is that borders were not clearly demarcated between Russia and neighbouring newly independent states, which linked Russian national security directly to Central Asian states.

The current international boundaries among the five central Asian states were originally drawn as internal USSR administrative boundaries during the 1920s and 1930s and these boundaries were left intact to create nation states. This is one of the strong reasons that their national boundaries today do not follow any obvious geographical nor any ethnic or religious divisions (Soucek 2000: 222-24). For instance, the most fertile and densely populated area of the region is Ferghana Valley, is divided among Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in crazy-quilt fashion. This poor delineation makes security culture so embedded for the Central Asian states.

This socio-cultural cohesiveness and belongingness among various parts of Central Asia has its roots in history and today's porous borders of states are not a recent phenomenon. That is why Geoff Watson relates the historical bases of state formation in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Watson in his chapter "Failed States" on the "Perilous Frontier" suggests that present challenges of constructing modern states in Central Asia reflect the difficulties of seeking to impose centralized power in a region where state power has historically been indirect (Watson 2009: 88).

In past, Central Asian region had been invaded, ruled and settled by wave after wave of armies, nomads, missionaries and merchants including the pre-Islamic Sogdians, Turks, Arabs, Persians, Karakhanids, Uzbeks, Mongols, Chinese, Tatars, Russians and others (Haghighi 1996: 165-206). This overlapping interaction with various civilizations has left the population of this region in an engaging weave of ethnicities, languages and cultures. The Central Asian

region carries approximately 80 percent of population that is of mixed ethnicity. It is mixture of Turkic ethnicity, including Uzbek, Kazakh/ Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Karakalpaks, and Uighurs. The large portion of remainder 20 percent population is mainly Slavic arriving and settling in the wake of Russian invasion during nineteenth century or of Tajik ethnicity that shares roots with Persians. The demographic pattern is complex as apart from larger portions of various ethnicities, it carries numerous other small population enclaves, including Jews in Bukhara, Tashkent and Almaty as well as Koreans. Thanks to a century long rule of Russian empire, although the lingua franca of the present day elite is Russian, though the majorities of the population speak various Turkic languages including Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Turkmen as well as Farsi.

These complex ethnic and religious entities fell in the hands of vulnerable leaders who had been far from ready to tackle the growing political and economic upheaval in the Central Asian states, particularly in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Against that background, the threats emerging in the years following Afghan war tremendously affected the future security environment of Central Asian region.

5.3.3. Sophistication of Separatism, Extremism and Terrorism: Regional Context

After the independence of the Central Asian states in 1991, the restrictions on religious practices started loosening and states turned to their pre-Soviet period to find solution for their recent identity related problem. This was a time seen as opportunity by the foreign powers such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan. As none of Central Asian state follows any single strand of Islam, each foreign Muslim power started financing projects in order to influence the form of Islam that best suited their interests. The Saudi Arabia, for instance, made the first attempt to promote its own Salafi notion of Islam by building Salafi mosques throughout the region, subsidizing pilgrimage on the Hajj, distributing copies of Quran and other literature and subsidizing Salafi religious education (Olcott 1995a: 33; Safronov 2000: 86). Turkey, although officially a secular state, also subsidized religious education as a part of its effort to expand its own influence among the Turkic population of the region (Roy 2000: 160). Iran, on the other hand, initially engaged itself to promote Shi'ism sect, particularly in Turkmenistan and Tajikistan but abandoned later when it proved unfruitful (Roy 2000: 124, 160; Sagdeev 2000b: 20; Rashid 2002: 102; Jalili 1999: 1-7).

As explained above, although religion played an important role in defining the identity of Central Asian people. It was never a fundamentalist form of religion till the end of first Afghanistan war. The Islamic movements started getting radicalized after Afghanistan war while the politically instable country remained at the mercy of warlords. The fundamentalist

factions were not at all confined to any single country, and the whole region was about to receive shock waves. Separatists from Xinjiang started joining the Mujahedeen in their training camps in Afghanistan.

The Central Asian states were more than prone to receive these waves as soon after the independence, leaders of the countries were too busy bolstering with their own legitimacy and dealing with the economic challenges. The regional leaders neglected the religious affairs and abandoned the Soviet methods of control. Together with the mass unemployment in certain parts of the region, poverty increased the prospect of localized trouble.

Despite an early alliance between China and USSR in the start of Cold war, the relations between two countries worsened due to doctrinal divergences. It was not before Gorbachev coming to power in 1985 that the interest of both countries started converging more and more. Beijing was isolated after its suppression of student demonstrators on June 4, 1989. Moscow was also facing new challenges as its authority across the Eastern bloc faded. In the same year, Berlin wall came down in Germany. The fall of Berlin wall and disintegration of Soviet Union was start of the era of unipolarity where both countries were facing international isolation.

On the other hand, China started diplomatic relations with Central Asia as a cautious process as China was aware of Russia's traditional leadership role in the region. A signal to Russia about any hegemonic ambitions in the region was the last thing China wanted at this stage. Russia on the other hand was still adjusting its traditional super power role in Central Asian region. However, Russia was wary of engagement of foreign powers in its former orbit of influence. But the Russian umbrella was far from countering the transnational extremists forces referred as "extremism, terrorism and separatism". These "evil forces" are not sympathetic towards the clutches of any national boundary. The three Bs, "bonds beyond boundaries" of these "three evils" is historical legacy; China, Russia and Central Asia are coping with even today.

The region gradually got engulfed by allegedly called religious extremist organizations like Hizb-ut-Tahrir and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) after the mid 1990s. The IMU was created in 1999 by a charismatic young leader, Juma Namangani and his co-founder Tahir Yuldoshev. Namangani and Yuldoshev both acquired the reputation of a brave and skilled fighter in the Tajik Civil war. Apart from being widely accused of responsibility for bombings of government buildings in Tashkent in 1999 (ICG 2001a: 5-6), the IMU conducted a number of sensational raids and kidnappings in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan between 1999 and 2001. Between 1997 and November 2001, the IMU was based in Afghanistan and used that strategic location to traffic in drugs in order to finance its operations. Although it is widely assumed that the creator of the movement Namangani was killed in Afghanistan during US bombing raids in

November 2001, the IMU still works as a model of political and radical Islam threat present in Central Asia.

The Hizb-ut-Tahrir (Party of Liberation), on the other hand, is another most strong Islamic extremist group present in this region. But unlike IMU that originated in Central Asia, this Party was founded in Saudi Arabia and Jordan in 1953 for the political purpose of recreating a pan-Islamic caliphate operating according to Sharia Laws and it started getting strong foothold in Central Asian region only in mid 1990s. Apparently fighting for the same cause, Hizb-ut-Tahrir claims to be non-violent. A series of attack took place in Uzbekistan in Spring and Summer 2004 leaving 50 people dead. Uzbek authorities blamed Hizb ut Tahrir for these attacks and the leader of the group Furkat Kasimovich Yusupov as stated by the Uzbek authorities was arrested and charged for the attacks (RFE/RL, 27 July 2004).

While Hizb-ut-Tahrir is mainly involved in protesting and propagating the cause, IMU is responsible for a number of terrorist activities across the region. For instance, in February 1999, the president of Uzbekistan was targeted by a series of bomb attacks carried out by IMU. These attacks, although unsuccessful was beginning of a prolonged violence. Between August and November 1999, fighting broke out in Batken, Kyrgyzstan between IMU and Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan forces. This uprising at the hands of separatist forces was aimed at the creation of Islamic state. The IMU troops attacked Batken area again in 2000. They also invaded southern section of the Tajik-Uzbek border, yet they failed to fight their way through to the mainland Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. With all the blessings of porous borders, ethnic mixtures, economic instability and corrupt politicians, Central Asian region was clearly a hot spot for religious extremists.

Before these events, although in a summit in July 1998, the five states had already discussed the strengthening of regional peace, stability and economic cooperation, thereby focusing on common efforts to fight separatism, religious fundamentalism, terrorism, illegal arms trafficking and the illegal drugs trade. Soon after Batken events, Russia initiated a summit that took place in Bishkek and a declaration was adopted on fighting “three evils”, separatism, religious extremism and terrorism. For the first time, this Bishkek Summit reflected the shift in emphasis of Shanghai Five Group. Islam Karimov, the President of Uzbekistan, for the first time took part in Shanghai Five session.

The Central Asian instability has always been worrisome for China because of the brewing danger within its borders, a turbulent region, Xinjiang. The East Turkestan Movement (ETM) active in Xinjiang is another extension of separatist organizations in Central Asia. The tensions between Chinese political spectrum and indigenous groups have not been uncommon in past.

Although, ethnicity and religious polarization were the core triggering points behind the struggles to establish East Turkestan in 1933, 1944 and 1949.

Another important factor was Russian interference, which contributed to upheaval in Xinjiang after 1933. There were two main reasons of this foreign interference, firstly by the end of 1920s, Soviet Union was internally stable and on the basis of its ethnic and cultural links, it could pursue economic and political interests in Xinjiang. Secondly, within China, the Chinese leaders were too busy coping with the turmoil of political and economic adjustments that drew all the blood of the country to its heart, leaving no strength to administer its outer dominions (Lattimore 1994: 173-175).

The Soviet involvement in Xinjiang remained persistent between 1933 and 1949 albeit Chinese struggle to minimize the foreign intrusion. Soviet troops were garrisoned as deep as Hami and its economic influence on Xinjiang was fairly large. Owen Lattimore estimates that in the early 1930s trade with the Soviet Union accounted for 82.5 percent of Xinjiang's total foreign trade. The reason was that Soviet Union was the only viable trading partner for this region of Western China. There were transport and logistics related hurdles as well as lack of infrastructure for conducive trade routes with mainland China or India to establish vibrant trade links with Western Chinese region. Peter Fleming in this regard suggests that the whole city of Kashgar was in effect run by the secret police, the Russian advisors, and the Soviet Consulate, and most of the Chinese high officials were only figureheads (1936: 326).

As mentioned above, China and Xinjiang shared a turbulent past. The separatist activities were not as organized as today's separatist and extremist movements. During the disintegration times of neighbouring Soviet Union, anti-communist and nationalist demonstrations occurred in several areas of Xinjiang. With the independence of Central Asian states, series of ethnic unrest made clear that Xinjiang was not a problem with root causes just at home, it was undeniably sharing cultural, ethnic and religious 'Bond Beyond Boundaries' i.e. the three Bs. There was no doubt that independence in Central Asia has stimulated the instability in Xinjiang. As a result, Chinese authorities placed greater restrictions on contacts between Muslims in Xinjiang and Muslims abroad by tightening border control, checking of passports and other identification on entry to Xinjiang. It also put strong restrictions on Islamic education, pilgrims to Mecca and constructions of mosques and the potential break from Mao's policies faced serious restraints.

Like China, Russia has been facing separatist and extremists factions in form of Chechnya factor within its boundaries. Developments in Chechnya are crucial to Russia's policy responses and its national identity. The eruption of war in Chechnya in 1994-96 made Russia more face to face to the threat of separatism from within. The Chechnya War not only resulted into the breakdown of social, political and economic structures of Chechnya, it initiated the process of

radicalization and an ever growing threat of separatism in Russia. Thus, it deeply influenced Russian perception of a terrorist and separatist threat emanating from chaos and fuelled by radical Islam. The Chechnya conflict has ever since changed the security perceptions of the Russian leadership, making Chechnya soft underbelly of once mighty empire.

In 2002, a group of Chechen fighters, many of them women, took hostages some 800 people in the audience at the Dubrovka Theatre in Central Moscow. After a two-day siege, Russian Special Forces stormed the building and shot the hostage takers, while a large number of the hostages were killed by the gas used by the troops during the operation. This hostage-taking was branded as a serious act of terrorism and seemed as to confirm Putin's definition of terrorism as the main security threat from within the country. It was clear that terrorism is a threat that is from within and that is even larger to the threat from the west or any external power. This event demonstrated that what Russia needed most of all with regard to NIS states in general and the Central Asian states in particular were practical cooperation to fight terrorism. In this context, Central Asia seemed to be a natural area of continued concern for Russia and for security cooperation.

The Dubrovka hostage incident drew attention to the fact that the national security threat is not confined to interstate conflicts but is related to transnational forces and groups. It also drew attention of the authorities towards the porous borders among NIS and the grave consequences of people and groups travelling easily across these borders without customs and border controls. It thus gave impetus to increased cooperation on the ground between the Russian authorities and those of the NIS and especially the Central Asian states related to borders, customs and financial control services. The lack of proper border control on the transport of goods between NIS countries was being actively exploited by terrorists, and it was therefore felt necessary to create a strong system for preventive measures and warnings (Udmanstev 2002). Russia also accused ethnic Uighur for supporting Chechen separatists (Carlson 2003).

This radicalized form of Islamic separatist movements and extremist organisations and groups since 1990s is perceived as a 'common evil' for the whole region. The Central Asian leaders persistently refer to radical organizations like IMU and Hizb-ut-Tehrir for having links with Taliban and Al-Qaida. The government of China also claims ETM to have contact and logistics support from these organizations. The Chechen factor had an immense importance for Putin's Central Asian security perception and for its anti-terrorist agenda. This 'insecurity environment' played a key role in establishing cooperation among western countries and Russia, China and Central Asia, as each state expected a more understanding approach to their problems in post 9/11 scenario.

5.3.3. 9/11, Cross Border Developments and Convergence of Political Elites of SCO members

The political centre is trying to stabilize the geographical periphery. The dynamic processes of managing and regulating the periphery has various episodes of Chinese-ness (cultural Sinicization) and reversal. The tensions between China's experience and identity of modern nationalism and preserving multiple civilizational and traditional identities are reflected in contested politics of controlling north-western periphery. These tensions are also translated in the way China's political centre approached Shanghai Five setting. The frontier security had been acknowledged as an important area for policy making and implementation by political elites. The tensions within had been burdened by regional developments. The subsequent adoption of 'three evils' coincided with the establishing of Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001 and since then is an important area for bringing convergence among political centres of SCO states.

In the aftermath of September 11 terrorist attacks in the US, security tensions increased in all of Central Asia, especially in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. In Uzbekistan, most of border crossing points were closed and strict regulations were introduced on the transition of goods. Towards Tajikistan side, the effects were more grave, freight traffic was stopped at the Uzbek border and the cost of transit through was damaging Tajikistan's exports (*Biznes i Politika*, 15 March 2002). There were more restrictions and additional costs on visas and various taxes were introduced on goods. Kazakhstan suspended passenger trains going from Tajikistan to Moscow via Kazakhstan. Among the accelerating issues, were already existing energy disputes between states getting more problematic due to terrorism threats. Tajikistan and Uzbekistan had several unresolved energy issues, issues related to customs regulation for transit shipments as well as related to water use. Uzbekistan had repeatedly cut off the supply of gas to Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan demanding immediate payments of debts.

With the fall of Taliban regime in November 2001, although tensions between these states did not disappear, it lessened the external threat. The month of November also brought the news of the death of Juma Namangani, leader of IMU in Northern Afghanistan. Since, most of IMU members were fighting on the side of Taliban, organization had no chance left but to go underground and at least temporarily, the IMU group disappeared from the scene. As a result, a process of normalization started. Since Taliban's grave threat to stability in Central Asia and Western China highlighted the insecurities of the Central Asian states, these states were more active to resolve longstanding disputes among them. For instance, several issues related to Tajik-Kyrgyz borders and situation in Tajik enclaves on Kyrgyz territory were resolved in 2002. Border delineation negotiations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan started in February 2000

and ended without any result. In September 2002, the both parties moved towards concrete practical outcomes of border delineation.

For a few years after 9/11, Central Asian states, Russia and China were considering their states as victim of international terrorism and were looking more towards external powers for resolving the issues and help them ensure their national security. This is evident by analysing the immediate responses of all the regional states while official statements as well as policy responses were welcoming to the involvement of the US and NATO to eradicate the seeds of religious extremism and terrorism.

Soon after 9/11 incident, China availed the opportunity and availed the war on terror as a measure to suppress the separatist tendencies existing in XUAR. This approach was made clear in the release of a Chinese government paper that detailed alleged incidents of Uighur “terrorism” in Xinjiang since 1990 entitled “East Turkestan Terrorist Forces Cannot get Away with Impunity” (People’s Daily 2002). China remained successful in banning the movement internationally and the East Turkmenistan Movement was acknowledged as separatist struggle in Xinjiang and as an extremist Islamic movement globally. For this end, Chinese government labelled Uighur activists as part of the international terror network with funding from the Middle East, training in Pakistan and combat experience in Chechnya and Afghanistan (Ji 2004). Furthermore, according to Chinese official view, in early 1999, Bin Laden met with the ringleader of East Turkestan Movement asking him to coordinate every move with the IMU and the Taliban while promising financial aid (Asia Times Online 2002).

In the early years, Central Asian states clearly tilted towards for maintaining their national security. By August 2002, all of the Central Asian states except Turkmenistan had signed military cooperation and base access agreements with the US and in response received bulks of aid packages. Uzbekistan, for instance signed treaty of strategic partnership with the US in March 2002 and received aid package worth US\$150 million. Russia’s response was initially supportive towards the presence of the US troops in Central Asia and its declaration of the war on terror. Moscow declared itself a partner in American war on terror.

After 9/11, the initial agreement was that the US is interested in securing bases in Central Asia to transport troops, munitions and various other materials to Afghanistan. As early as 2002, the US had bases in three of the Central Asian states with an exception of Turkmenistan for its neutrality and Kazakhstan, for being geographically away from Afghanistan. The United States leased the Hanabad airfield from Uzbekistan. By 2002, it deployed 1500 troops of the 10th Mountain Division and stationed more than 30 helicopters there. After that, the US went on to lease Manas airfield in Kyrgyzstan with deployment of more than 2000 troops and 20 fighter aircrafts. The next station was Tajikistan’s Kuliab Airfield.

A few events played extremely important role in defining the priorities and interests of political elites of Central Asian states regarding the US direct involvement in the region. One of these events is the Andijan events that took place in May 2005 in Uzbekistan. On 12 May 2005, a band of armed men stormed a national jail and freed several hundred prisoners, among them were inmates local authorities had jailed on the charge of being part of “Islamist” organizations. Some sixty people were killed in this process of assault on the national jail. The next day, on 13 May, the insurgents moved on to occupy the local city council. The same day, a crowd assembled protesting against the government. The developments led to chaos and the Uzbekistan security forces used violent means to disrupt the riots allegedly arranged by IMU and Hizb ut Tahrir resulting in large number of casualties.

Another important trigger for foreign policy transformations of China and Russia was the eruption of colour revolutions and the US response. The Colour revolutions swept across CIS from 2003-2005. The important among these series were Rose Revolution in Georgia (2003), the Orange revolution in Ukraine (2004), and the Tulip revolution in Kyrgyzstan (2005). These events were characterized by mass popular uprisings and use of non-violent means. Joshua Tucker points out that the term ‘revolution’ is not meant to imply any long-term consequences of these events, but rather to identify that the anti-regime forces were in fact successful in overthrowing the current regime (Tucker 2007).¹⁶ In all of these revolutions, there is evidence of involvement by external actors, but the degree and impact of their engagement vary widely (Stewart 2009).

The regime change in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan as a result of these revolutions was a serious security threat for the neighbouring states. Indifferent to their fears, the US openly supported the revolutions. On the other hand, Russia and China clearly condemned the external support. The US response to these regime changes in Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan and Andijan events in Uzbekistan made it conducive for political elites to project US belonging to another set of countries that falls into ‘other’. It was not by any means sharing the same threat environment as the Central Asian states.

As elites of SCO member states faced the similar threats, the absence of US helped consolidate security cooperation among these states. For instance, Uzbekistan, a strong ally of the US looked back towards Russia, China and SCO for common security threats. As early as 2003, Russia had the intension to bring Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and SCO closer together. In the process of enhancing the link between the CSTO and the SCO, Uzbekistan threatened to leave the SCO as a result of its aversion of the CSTO. A second reason for the earlier resistance of Uzbekistan to link both organizations was its power struggle with

¹⁶ Although in Kyrgyzstan case, the extent to which these led to a genuine regime change has been questioned.

Kazakhstan on hegemonic role over central Asia. Apart from that, Uzbekistan spoke out against military exercises of the SCO on its territory, which it rather conducted in cooperation with NATO. That was the cause behind Uzbekistan being the absent party in joint SCO drills in Kazakhstan and China in 2003 because of a possible involvement of CSTO in these manoeuvres.

However, things did not remain same after the Colour Revolutions and Andijan events. Uzbekistan's stance towards its role in SCO and CSTO started transforming. As early as 2006, Uzbekistan returned as a member state of CSTO that increased chances of a deepening of relations between SCO and CSTO. Moscow also joined forces with Beijing and called for the withdrawal of the US military from Central Asia. Towards the end of 2005, it boldly embraced Uzbekistan as a formal ally.

While talking about the identity of the states, it is clear that environment affects the construction of the security culture. The environment of the state is important and any distinction between domestic and foreign affairs is artificial. In that context, role of regionalism is important to consider. It helps take broader approach towards the fact that states identity, security and policy responses are the factors far from pre-determined and it links with the regional political and economic stability. Wyatt-Walter refers to this point as the end of the cold war has shifted the patterns of political and economic environment of the globe. It has pushed traditional and non-traditional security threats arising from political and economic instability within regions up the agenda (Wyatt-Walter 1995: 92).

Today, the Xinjiang and Central Asia has a lot in common, including its non-Han population and they speak languages comprehensible to modern Turkish speakers. A large section of modern Xinjiang's 14 million citizens share ethnic ties with Central Asia: Uighur, Kirgiz, Tajik, Uzbek and Tatar nationalities are among its thirteen ethnic groups. Like its Central Asian counterparts, most of the indigenous people here are of Sunni Muslim and Hanafi School that look towards Turkey and Middle East rather than to China as its spiritual and cultural home.

With the passage of time, and developing collective threat perception, China started cultivating close diplomatic relationship with its neighbours. China's active diplomacy towards Central Asian states is aimed at fulfilling its integrationist project in Xinjiang. The campaign of Great Western development or Open up the West that was initiated in 2010, the efforts have been made to turn China's western provinces into an industrial and agricultural base and a trade and energy corridor. So, the security threat attached to the province is sought to be cured by ensuring economic development of Xinjiang. Important aspect of China's seriousness in integrationist project is flux of Han Chinese population's migration to Xinjiang that in the long run might change the demographic ratio.

Many experts believe that China's active diplomacy with Central Asian states is successful in tackling the problem. Central Asian states are facing the same threat and insecurity at the hands of 'Three Evils' and that makes them more sympathetic to China's plight. The states are ready to cooperate not only for the 'victim state' but to keep danger away from entering into their own state. For instance, in August 2006, Uzbekistan extradited a Canadian citizen of Uighur ethnicity to China for conviction for his alleged involvement in ETIM activities. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan has also cracked down the Uighur political parties and newspapers operating in their countries. These acts are prescribed norms that are endured due to culture of national security and similar perception of threats. The behaviour of cooperation is different in case of China and Central Asian states and is highly distinctive from anti-terrorist cooperation with the US or NATO. The Cooperation of Central Asian states with US is security focused but with China it is more than that. This can be attested with the incident when the US refused to hand over five Uighur released from Guantanamo Bay prison that were captured in Pakistan, despite China's demand. After their release from Guantanamo Bay in 2006, they were transferred to Albania rather than China. This cooperation is good for political elites of the SCO members, it is doing less to eradicate the threats faced by SCO member states. This cooperation is also drawing criticism towards the multilateral forum used as platform.

5.4. Cooperation against Three Evils, Politicization of the Minority Problems

The SCO as its junior block, Shanghai Five has largely been the result of acknowledgement on part of leaders about the transnational factors of insecurity. The cooperation is no more just attached with this objective, but initially, the cooperation against non-traditional security threats has been the primary objective of the organization. Even today, a group of analysts believe SCO's primary purpose to address internal security problems faced by SCO member states. Stephen Aris emphasises that SCO has been developing as a result of convergence of security concerns of member states and the ability of SCO to respond to such insecurity elements (Aris 2009: 462). The other studies tend to criticise the authoritarian regimes for their unbound support for stability of autocratic regimes by using this multilateral vehicle. Adopting the similar line of argument, Ambrosio notes that China and Russia while playing the leading role are using SCO to sustain undemocratic nature of governments, both, theirs and their Central Asian neighbours (Ambrosio 2008).

Katzenstein while actively manifests hope in Sinicization that is taking place at fast pace, emphasises that the cultural power is one of the very important hindrances in this process. The debate can be extended with regard to Xinjiang case where politicization of issues and the response of Chinese leadership are making Sinicization not a smooth process within the

territorial boundaries of China and outside. The issues cannot be addressed by drawing sharp boundaries of China and dealing with Frontier Security as domestic security. The area of Frontier security cannot be dealt unless treated with connection to the shape China's relations with neighbouring countries adopt.

As lack of good governance is a great hindrance in establishing China's cultural power, the use of 'three evils' discourse is largely targeted to undermine the accomplishments and potentials of SCO. The use of terrorism, extremism and separatism, is mostly projected as an instrument in the hands of Chinese or Russian state leaders to enter and maintain influence in the region. This influence is usually portrayed as keeping the US out of the region. For instance, Pavel Baev, makes the similar argument regarding Russia who has earlier used 'three evils' to distance US. (Baev 2006). The argument is compelling keeping in focus the politicization of the issue and controversial association of mass protest or any such grievances with broader concept of terrorism and separatism. The argument in favour of 'three evils' as a tool to maintain traditional influence is more structural argument. The assumption echoes the power politics theme and sidelines the complex and contested domestic processes within each state that guides their policy. Baev notes that the use of SCO and propagation of 'three evils' (and counter-revolutionary discourse afterwards) is a vehicle to legitimize Russian presence in the region. The broader argument undermines the quest and struggle for legitimacy on part of political elites to cope with contested identities within their territorial states and that is more serious and challenging. By providing power politics oriented explanation, such argument ignores the potential for change that is far from unlikely. Keeping in focus, the change and fluidity of territorial identity of China and the changing political processes related to that over different time and space does makes clear that this identity is processual and prone to change.

5.5. Conclusion

The threat posed by 'three evils' is socially constructed and can be analysed taking shape over the long history of China. The internal dynamics related to Xinjiang and China's politico-territorial identity can be concluded by noting that 'the three evils' are constructed by Chinese state on the basis of recent history and political processes. Any argument entitling religion or ethnicity as the sole factor of uniting Xinjiang region overlooks and simplifies the diverse nature of this region. It also reduces the historical evolution of such diverse region accommodating a variety of people to Islamic identity. This lack of unity among regional social groupings rather remained helpful to fail any mutual attempt to establish an independent state. This threat of Anti-Han grouping is result of modern elements of Nation-State and attendant concepts that keeps emphasising 'Chinese First'. The emphasis on 'Three Evils' helps contain

local differences and helps maintain legitimacy for hard handedness of Chinese government against any separatist and violent tendencies.

One of the primary objectives of this chapter is to depict that national security as observed in China-Central Asia case is not a static concept. The national security with reference to Xinjiang has been taking many shapes depending on intensity and quality of relations. The social relations, political discourse and political practices have been initiating Sinicization or de-Sinicization of the region in the past. The policies adopted by China and SCO member states under the auspices of curbing 'three evils' apparently is enhancing state cooperation and proving SCO to be a strong security architecture. But the underlying tensions related to minority ethnic groups, are suppressed not eliminated.

The collective 'statist' security interests of China and Central Asian region currently is helping security culture evolve as influenced by the reconstruction of identity that is dependent on historical experiences, environment and interactions between states. The realization for cooperating that had been missing for longer period among these states have made resolving border disputes. The frontier security as an important element in the discussion of national security has made Chinese leaders absorb 'alternatives' to tackle the ethnic minority related problem. China has been more open after Deng Xiaoping's reform oriented policies, enhancing inter-civilizational encounters. These civilizational interactions are more engagement and encounter oriented rather than clashing. As conceived by Allen Carlson, the innovative ways to govern frontier people is already suggested by elite writers. Their writings are looking at past identity discourses and traditions of Cultural China to solve contemporary problems of 'nationality'. Any such alternative and positive change that gives more space to societal security either budding within China or Central Asia will surely affect the environment of China-Central Asia and resultantly the leverage associated with 'three evils'.

The national security culture as discussed in case of China and Central Asia clarifies that 'Intact Nationalism' perceives nation as a homogenous society is missing in the regional context. Peter Harris explains nationalism as associated with either of the two definitions: "the process whereby a group or community that shares or at least is convinced that it shares, a common history, culture, language and territory is persuaded to assert its own affairs, usually through the creation of an independent state," or the concept can be explained as "the way that the government or other influential agents within a state already in existence, and having a sense of coherent, homogenous identity, set about creating a strong, assertive national self-awareness" (Harris 1997: 124). The nationalism, in these both definitions is a strong attribute of state or rather 'nation-state'. The force of nationalism is the basis of the formation, development and even survival of the modern state. It is also widely referred as state nationalism (Townsend 1992). That is why the security threat is posed by an enemy who is an external actor. To specify,

in case of China, the nationalism is an unshakable component of Chinese state (Fitzgerald 1995: 76). Nationalism in China, as this research argues, is a form of 'Porous Nationalism'. This study defines Porous Nationalism as contested nature of China's identity that is highlighted by processes of Sinicization in Mainland China during Deng Xiaoping's era and non-Sinicization or Delayed Sinicization of Civilizational peripheries, especially North Western region as discussed in this study. The result of such competing trends is Porous Nationalism that is quite different to the one advocated by Chinese government that is 'Nationalism with Chinese Characteristics' or 'United China'. The concept of Porous Nationalism outlines tensions between China's modern nationalism (with emphasis on territorial boundaries) and its ability to preserve multiple civilizational traditions in past. These tensions help reflect non-linear and contested politics that occur and spread in various directions.

In case of China, Russia and Central Asian states, similar threat is more linked to the tensions faced by the political elites of these states while maintaining regime legitimacy for their authoritarian governments and ensuring national unity simultaneously. This particular nature of the threat is more related to the identity of these states and thus tremendously shapes their security and foreign policy responses. After all, Islamic fundamentalist and extremist threat, also named as terrorist threat existing in African states such as Somalia is less bothering for Russia, China and Central Asian states than the similar activities going on in nearby Afghanistan and Pakistan, which makes the perception of similar threat different among China-Central Asia-Russia vis-a-vis the US and Western Europe.

While emphasising that political process of any identity takes shape within a Civilizational context, the chapter seeks to trace complex political processes. It argues that myth of united China or national China is political construction and China had always been plural in history. The difference is in the meaning of China, its boundaries and the core values perceived and practices during various time and space. With the fall of Qing Empire, China has started associating itself with the modern elements of state and attendant themes of national unity and territorial integrity. These tensions related to identity of China are highlighted in contested nature of political processes within China. For their own political benefits and purposes, governments can seek to mould civilizational and other types of identities. The long history of China with fluid and changing borders has made modern concepts of 'territorial integrity' a point of tension within China. These tensions also bring a chance for political elites to come up with 'innovative' policy responses that might or might not be effective to tackle the problem. The realization of frontier security problems and seeking regional solution to the problem is as much important to note as the way these problems are addressed.

China's changing attitude and exceeding involvement in International institutions can lead to peaceful transformative change. For now, China's changing policies from firm belief in single,

homogenous and united China to acknowledgement of security problem of frontiers and the recognition of need to resolve the problem is a break from China's practices during Communist China. The political elite discourse and conceptualization is a step ahead who are keenly looking what politicization of China's frontier policy means for regime legitimacy, social stability and national unity of China. It is against this background that China sought regional partnerships for resolving the issue. It is clear that regional environment is rather helping to endorse the politicization at the moment. With political elites fabricated between identities that are highly contested historically and within boundaries. The problem is exaggerated with one party rule and height of corruption on part of political leaders. For now, the shared threat perceptions and culture of national security has helped China and Central Asian states to develop certain practices of collective action using multilateral forum of SCO.

Chapter 6

‘Evolving Interests and Evolving Norms’: The Case of Shanghai Cooperation Organization

6.1. Introduction

This chapter picks up the case of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in order to answer the research question of how to make sense of China’s foreign policy. This thesis renders that to understand the dynamics of cooperation and multilateralism at play in the Central Asian region in form of SCO cannot be fully understood without the careful analysis of the evolving identity of China giving way to different political processes and practices. The case of the SCO helps in highlighting new trends in China’s global strategy of neither a direct confrontation nor a submissive compliance to the US global agenda, which is quite different from what has been perceived by mainstream writers. The embrace of multilateral diplomacy in the case of SCO indicates more engagement or encounter rather than clash in inter-civilization interactions.

The chapter begins by reviewing the possible interpretations of the existence of SCO in the field of International Relations Theory. It will critically evaluate the relevance of reductionist approaches in studying China’s embrace of multilateralism from reluctance to activism. It concludes that entitling SCO as a military alliance, or an energy club by using realist or liberal framework is not adequate depiction of scope of China’s role in SCO. These oversimplified and reduced arguments are extendable to the extent that through SCO, Chinese political elite is seeking to bring in an alternative world view that is associated with China and seems more engagement oriented rather than clashing. The second section will analyse the historical background and development of SCO looking into how evolution of China’s foreign policy behaviour comes into adjustment with this turn towards multilateralism. The next section will contain the debate about how SCO helps learn China’s evolving interests and how different political processes learnt while approaching Central Asian states have brought mixed results both for China and Central Asian states.

This chapter of the thesis is significant in a number of ways. Firstly, no study about China’s involvement in Central Asia is complete without making SCO a part of that penning. Secondly, this study elaborates China’s stance towards active participation in SCO, that is a unique multilateral setting and the only regional organization China carried a lead in. Finally, the detailed study will help us deduce our broader argument rendering that China’s identity as a rising power and its quest for legitimacy by representing itself as ‘untraditional power’ has

evolved the SCO from a mechanism of promoting friendly relations with CA states by resolving outstanding border issues with Russia and Central Asian states in the aftermath of the disintegration of USSR to a model of harmonious multilateral organization. The plastic nature of the multilateral organization plays an important role in bringing ‘harmony’ rather than pre-defining the objectives and prescribed policies. The chapter concludes that construction of ‘self’ by discourse and political practices marks an important feature of China’s approach towards SCO. The multilateral setting possesses strong symbolic character of Chinese multilateralism. The SCO is a strong policy ‘innovation’ but the partial one as it blends with traditional ‘Chinese-ness’.

6.2. Western Theories and Partial Assessment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization

It is important to discuss China’s turn towards multilateralism in the light of mainstream IR theory specifically and more deeply. Not just for the purpose of evaluating the contemporary studies in the light of specific theoretical paradigm but also to see how by sticking to any specific theoretical lens, multilateral aspect of China’s presence in Central Asia has been made synonymous with issue-oriented, utility-driven and geographically determined interests. As mentioned above, the present study rejects this reductionist interpretation by focusing on China’s multilateral approach and tries to define the distinctiveness in this newly emerging multilateralism. The multilateralism is not unique or a break from other multilateral organization, it is having certain characteristics that make it distinctive having ‘Chinese-ness with modernity’.

The existing literature dealing with China’s global strategy shows general inability to address the realities adequately. These realities are bound to make a subtle influence on China’s global strategy like domestic and international challenges for developing such a huge country, its historical background, as well as the international space within which it needs to manoeuvre. For many realists, it is naive when a regional power stops pursuing the goal of regional hegemony. Seeing China as a regional rising power, John Mearsheimer in his study, pessimistically concludes that if China’s economy continues to grow as it has during the past two decades, it will definitely become a potential hegemon in the near future (Mearsheimer 2001: Chapter 10). Several scholars share this realist perspective by arguing that China’s view to external environment is fundamentally realist-oriented (Christensen 1996). From a realist perspective, China’s active engagement in creating SCO can be seen as a means to counter potential opposing powers in this region. Due to its critical strategic location and abundant natural resource reserve, the US government has been building its friendly relations with newly independent Central Asian countries after the collapse of Soviet Union. The number of US

military deployments in this area had gradually increased, from 124 to 251, in the end of twentieth century, but after the 9/11 incident, Washington quickly deployed more than 22,000 troops in this area (Research Report by the Heritage Foundation 2006). The US military presence in China's backyard was a cause for concern from China's strategic standpoint, which may have sensed that the balance of power in Asia might tilt to Washington, especially if it began to acquire energy resources in this region. Aside from military security concern, securing more energy from Beijing's Central Asian neighbours is critical to sustain a rising power like China. Given that a country's material and military power is based on its economic wealth, the lack of the latter would certainly affect the former (Mearsheimer 2001). In this case, without sufficient energy import, China's aim to accumulate wealth will be impeded. Since energy is of great importance as to whether or not China will achieve status of a great power, Beijing will strive to counter Washington's influence in energy abundant areas close to it. If one barrel of petroleum is shipped to places other than China, China may feel that it has lost a barrel, without sensing any types of absolute gains. With a realist perspective in mind, Beijing, as many strategic analysts (Blagov 2004; McDermott 2005; Sutter 2003) predict, may seek to create a regional organization like SCO to counter US presence in Central Asia. The variation of the external environment, in this regard, may be a reason that triggers Beijing's intention to ally further with Central Asian countries.

Many realists therefore claim that China's multilateral turn represents a traditional way of challenging the status quo. Avery Goldstein considers it a kind of 'Bismarckian reassurance' that should not be interpreted as a conversion to supranational values (Goldstein 2003: 72-73). Beijing's warmer embrace of multilateralism represents, as Iain Johnston and Paul Evans suggest, a significant shift from past practice, should not be taken for a conversion to supranational values (Johnston 2003: 5-56, Johnston and Evans 1999: 241-278). Instead it represents a component of China's grand strategy designed to advance national interests, in this case by reassuring those who might otherwise collaborate against a putative Chinese threat.

Allison claims that there is strong evidence to support the notion that regional hegemons, by their nature, avoid deep commitments to institutions that limit their freedom of action. He further argues that Russia and China have at times attempted to use the SCO as a macro-regional balancing mechanism against the US, and that this would indicate their reluctance to deepen their institutional commitment to the SCO, especially in the context of the growing threat of the US military encirclement of China in Central Asia and the prospect of a potential eastward expansion of NATO that would include more of the Central Asian states (Allison 2004: 468). Rumer points out that one of the fundamental tenets of China's military doctrine include a 'pro-Beijing orientation of contiguous states' and 'silent expansionism'. He further adds that one cannot foreclose the possibility that the strategic competition of the three powers

in Central Asia will lead to cooperation with regard to establishing common security goals or an anti-Islamist alliance (Rumer 2002: 59-60).

Another rationalist argument, based on Neoliberal expectations, is that Chinese energy relations with Central Asian states are channelled through interest-driven cooperation based on collections of interests. Neo-liberalism expresses optimism with regard to China's prospects to facilitate energy cooperation with these actors and suggests that this may lead to the establishment of institutions capable of shifting Chinese interest and preferences in energy security according to common rules. China is keen to channel its influence through a multilateral level combining it with bilateral relations to strengthen common institutions.

Those who believe in liberal institutionalism assert that through building international institutions, countries can better work together to secure more interest in the long run by reducing transaction costs, providing information and diminishing uncertainty about the future (Keohane 1984: chapter 4). In general, liberal scholars may view or predict China's current or future cooperative behaviour as a result of tighter economic relations with other countries since the late 1970s, when it first carried out economic reforms. Alastair Iain Johnston's study of China's foreign behaviour in the past decades shows, China resembles more of a status quo power, which is satisfied with current international orders, instead of a rising revisionist one as a realist would predict. China's participation in or compliance with international regimes have been increasing, which can be seen as evidence of China's willingness to become a more cooperative and responsible state in the world (Johnston 2003). Other liberal optimists further assert that although China is still far from becoming a democracy, the process of democratization is already well under way in China. Boosted by astonishing economic development, increased income of the middle classes, the prevalence and convenience of information circulation, Beijing will be forced to become more democratic (Friedberg 2005: 15-16). If China has become more involved in international economic activities and more democratic domestically, China will, according to a liberalist view, seek more cooperation with the world and eschew unnecessary conflicts.

For a different perspective, this chapter will emphasise more on engagement and the resulting new political practices that are less clashing as is seen in case of SCO. This chapter emphasises that these western theories are unable to explain the practices of Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The projections raised by mainstream theories do not portray the true spirit of idea conveyed by the formation and practices within SCO. The dilemma of these theoretical representations is lack of consideration towards China's self-representation, its historical realities and evolution of its foreign policy. To reach an objective depiction of China's embrace of multilateralism in form of SCO, the following section covers mainstream debates of Chinese

scholars about how to understand China's multilateral approach from opposition to participation and thus initiation of the structure of SCO.

The Western theories clearly focus on mapping the interest. This thesis neither denies the claims about China seeking influence in the region, nor does it challenge the realist claim that China's multilateral strategy is interest-driven. It rather tries to engage with the underlying dynamics at work in the region by firstly defining the interest of China in SCO not as pre-given but as 'evolved'. For that purpose, the coming section traces the historical trends resulting into evolution of Chinese foreign policy that will help us find how China's historical realities and contemporary strategy are different from what is perceived by mainstream western debates.

6.3. China's Foreign Policy Transition: A Move towards Multipolarity

As back as 1955, China started a journey towards multipolarity, international influence of China was at this time too weak to make much of the difference to the situation. Yet, by its support for non-aligned movement, staunch support for arms control and disarmament (in 1982 it proposed to sign a treaty by nuclear weapon states committing to the 'no-first use' of nuclear weapons and non-use against non-nuclear states), and the demand for New International Economic Order (NIEO), China sought to gain a distinct position as an untraditional power.

The end of Cold war fostered the unipolarity and the US emerged as a sole superpower bringing a collapse to its long term rival USSR and Eastern European Communist states. Now in absence of USSR as a rival, China threat rhetoric started receiving emphasis in the US (Segal 1995; Roy 1993, 1994; Christensen 1996). It was thought that China is the only country left with the Socialist ideology and with China's history pointing towards an assertive China, the future China was portrayed as quite likely to replace USSR as a challenger to the US. This challenge to the US, western liberal and democratic norms was usually represented as China emerging as a threat for global peace.

After Tiananmen Square incident on June 4, some western countries led by the US, imposed sanctions on China. China, on the other hand, clearly showed the elements of assertiveness by perceiving and presenting the isolationist policies adopted by foreign powers as repetition of Opium war humiliation. The Chinese leaders rather used this opportunity as a trigger for growing nationalism. According to People's Liberation Army (PLA) periodical referred to Western norms and ideology and its willingness to import the model to China as 'a kind of spiritual opium more misleading and deceptive than opium', it further warned that Chinese people must not relax their vigilance against the imperialist armed aggression and conspiracy at any time (Niu and Zhang 1990: 3). Chinese elite strongly realized that they must seek friendship

and support from its Asian neighbours to avoid any imperialist challenge. China adopted more Asia-oriented foreign policy and to develop good neighbourliness, restored normal relations with Singapore, Indonesia, South Korea and Thailand.

After receiving the blow of sanctions put by western Countries on China in 1989, by 1993 China managed to end much of the diplomatic isolation. Besides foreign policy of good neighbourliness, China began to integrate into the international rule based system, seeking membership of international organizations and participating in the multilateral treaty system. In this line of strategy, in 1991, China signed the Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT). In the same year, China for the first time attended the ASEAN summit. Meanwhile, relations with Russia also quickly established and the next available option was restoration of diplomatic ties with the Post-Soviet Central Asia.

By 1995-96, Taiwan Strait Crisis erupted that not only triggered the situation towards potential military conflict between China and the US, but alarmed its neighbours, putting in jeopardy one of its key goals, establishing regional calm and good neighbourliness. These crises generated a deep debate within China on the international situation and its position within it. The situation developed a realization of the need for the development of a new more active multipolar diplomacy. From about 1996, rather passive and unspecific approach towards multilateralism was replaced with an approach that was more active and was containing real policy content.

6.4. Development of Shanghai Cooperation Organization: Interests, Norms and Political Practices

On the Central Asian front, the new geopolitical realities and new borders also created new challenges. The problem of ill-defined borders was an inherited problem from the days of USSR. In 1996, to resolve this problem, China, Russia and three Central Asian states Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan signed the Shanghai Agreement on Confidence Building in the Military Field in the Border Areas. After a year, in 1997, all the members signed Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in the Border Areas. In this agreement, the states set out principles of military restraint and transparency along all five states mutual borders. This was the first multilateral bond between China and Central Asia to be called as 'Shanghai Five'.

The noticeable thing is that as soon as it was developed in 1996 as Shanghai Five, it did not have any strong institutional setting and it was more of normative character. That is why the Shanghai Five was criticised for its short life span on a number of basis including its normative character to its undemocratic members. Yet the institutionalization of SCO is result of gradual

cohesion of interest linked to Chinese identity, capabilities, core values and status in international system.

The SCO was founded in June 2001 and it is the first such international organization named after a Chinese city and where China is directly participating in its construction. The objectives and principles of SCO are highlighted by what is called ‘Shanghai Spirit’ which embodies ‘mutual trust and benefit, equality, respect for cultural diversity and a desire for common development’. The charter of SCO seems to be echoing the same rhetoric used by Chinese diplomats to present a case in favour of China’s new diplomacy. For example, in the introduction of the SCO charter, it emphasizes that the member countries desire to jointly contribute to the strengthening of security and stability in the region in the environment of developing multipolarity, and economic and information globalization (Charter of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization 2002). The official website of SCO emphasises:

The main goals of the SCO are strengthening mutual confidence and good-neighbourly relations among the member countries; promoting effective cooperation in politics, trade and economy, science and technology, culture as well as education, energy, transportation, tourism, environmental protection and other fields, making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region, moving towards the establishment of a new, democratic, just and rational political and economic international order....the SCO pursues its internal policy based on the principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equal rights, consultations, respect for the diversity of cultures and aspiration towards common development, its external policy is conducted in accordance with the principles of non-alignment, non-targeting anyone and openness (Official Website of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization).

The objective of SCO as depicted by official website is multi-directional and broad. Without doubt, China’s new diplomacy and its use in SCO charter is an interesting case to study the underlying forces working for the way China approaches SCO beyond what is depicted by its official website and media representatives. Thus these elements of cooperation and execution of ‘Shanghai Spirit’ cannot be dealt separately as related to Beijing. It also gets its meaning from the regional response and political practices of member states.

The mention of the security is reminder of the importance that China places on maintaining a secure periphery (Swaine and Tellis 2000). The multipolar ideology in Chinese rhetoric has its roots in the 1990s and early 2000s, a way to counter China threat debate (Sutter 2010). The third principle of common development fits well with Chinese leaders much emphasised ‘Common Development Doctrine’ where China tries to represent itself as developing country. These principles in charter of SCO must be analysed in relative terms with the identity of the PRC particularly. This analysis helps to build argument and to understand how these principles evolved and how it seems to be working in the Central Asian region.

6.4.1. Evolving Security Relations and Emphasis on Non-Traditional Security

The Chinese government for the first time formally proposed 'New Security Concept' during the conference on ASEAN Regional Forum held by both China and Philippines in 1997. The new security concept with universal significance was written into the Joint Declaration of Sino Russia's view on the world multipolarization and building new world order. The new security concept advocated that nations should trust each other through consultations and seek national security by means of multilateral coordination. It is mainly featured by four emphases: first, emphasis on multilateral tie, which stresses the interdependence among nations in terms of security, cooperation is indispensable; second, emphasis on cooperation, which replaces confrontation as the effective access to security; third, emphasis on comprehensiveness. Security is no longer confined to military and political fields alone, but interacts with economic, technical, social and environmental issues as well; fourth, emphasis on institutional construction, which is the legitimate way to security rather than military confrontations.

Initially, the Shanghai Five developed on the basis of building military trust and successfully resolved the border issues among China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In May 1989, Gorbachev's visit to China marked the normalization of relations between China and Soviet Union. Soon after that, in 1990, China and Soviet Union signed Agreement on mutual reduction of garrison on border regions and establish mutual trust. Although as part of improving relations strategy, in May 1991, the two nations reached agreement on eastern border but after the disintegration of Soviet Union, the border issue between China and Soviet Union evolved into disputes among China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It was not until 1996, that these states started dealing with boundary issues again.

The negotiations on disarmament and boundary demarcation started with 4 (Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) +1(China) mode. On April 26, 1996, heads of the five nations at their meetings in Shanghai signed an agreement on deepening military trust in border regions which served as important policy guarantee for the bilateral and multilateral relations among the five states.

In April 1997, the five nations signed Agreement on reduction of military forces in border regions. The two documents, which proposed the principles of equality, trust, consultation and mutual benefit in order to remove the war threats that may discourage the development of nations and regions, were fixed down as a joint statement of the five. These two documents have made historical contribution to the peaceful settlement of the border issues. China settled all its border disputes with Kazakhstan in 1998, Kyrgyzstan in 1999, Tajikistan in 2006 and Russia in 2004.

Through the Shanghai Five mechanism, the five countries dealt with the non-conventional threats together. Central Asian region is a very complicated security landscape, thanks to the history; the security threats like international terrorism, separatism and extremism have been emphasised as haunting the region. Besides, other transnational crimes such as drug trafficking, proliferation of weapons and illegal immigrants also pose threats to the security and stability of this region. Central Asia's peace and stability need international cooperation. When the border disputes were resolved on the whole in 2001, the Shanghai five member states decided to lift the mechanism of Shanghai Five to a higher level by declaring the birth of the new organization of regional cooperation- SCO.

One of the most distinctive features that made the SCO different from other regional security organizations is strong cooperation on non-traditional security threats. Based on the suggestion of China, all the member nations drew up a list of the terrorists and terrorist groups which would be cracked down by joint efforts. They also built the database of intelligence which could be shared by all. In order to cut off the terrorists' capital source, the SCO members signed an agreement on anti-drug cooperation and set up the mechanism of security meeting secretariat to help coordinate the cooperation on security issues.

In February 2000, Kyrgyzstan's president suggested establishment of a regional anti-terrorism centre in Dushanbe and gained support in the Shanghai Five summit. On June 15th 2001, both 'Declaration on establishment of Shanghai Cooperation Organization' and 'Shanghai convention on fighting terrorism, separatism and extremism' explicitly proposed establishing an anti-terrorism base in Bishkek. In June 2002, the second meeting of heads of SCO member states took place in Saint Petersburg. Heads of six states adopted 'The Agreement on Regional antiterrorist structure' and 'The Charter of Shanghai Cooperation Organization', precisely identified the structure, status and function of SCO cooperation. In May 2003, in the third meeting of heads of SCO member states in Moscow, a number of regulations and decisions regulating the functioning of the Organization's internal mechanism were passed. In the same meeting, the declaration on the establishment of SCO Secretariat in Beijing and changing the anti-terrorism branch from Bishkek to Tashkent was passed. In June 2004, during the SCO summit in Tashkent, the regional anti-terrorism branch was officially established.

The cooperation on the military front has been growing gradually as well. In 2002, China and Kyrgyzstan carried out a joint anti-terrorism exercise; in August 2003, another joint antiterrorism exercise called 'Coalition-2003' was held by the five states, the first military exercise to be held under the auspices of SCO¹⁷; in August 2005, joint anti-terrorism exercise called 'Peace Mission 2007' was conducted by China and Russia. These military exercises were

¹⁷ For Details see Xinhua (2003) http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2003-09/04/content_1063025.htm.

repeated in 2009 and 2010. And recently in June 2012, SCO members actively participated in showing the military might while conducting 'Peace Mission 2012' exercises in Tajikistan. The military exercises are repeatedly compared with NATO while Beijing has been rejecting the claims, saying that these bilateral and multi-lateral military exercises reflected the enhancement of SCO anti-terrorism cooperation and are not targeted at any third party (Xinhua 6 June 2012).

The SCO has been working on its expansion since its creation. In 2004, Mongolia became the first country to achieve observer status in the SCO. The next year, India, Iran and Pakistan were granted the observer seats. Apart from Observer seats, the SCO created the status of 'dialogue partner' in 2008 SCO summit (Yan 2009). In 2009, Sri Lanka and Belarus were accepted as dialogue partners and Turkey recently has joined the SCO team as the third Dialogue Partner (China Daily 2012).

The SCO's military field and security related dimension is of growing importance and cannot be ignored. These developments can be regarded as a process of maturing of the SCO as a security organization. It is clearly different from the multilateral organizations China joined as those were mainly political and economic in nature. The increasing cooperation with the CSTO can be a vital factor to change SCO in a full fledged security regional organization as NATO and as perceived by many political analysts.

Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the SCO still lacks a considerable number of essential elements which a mature security organization like NATO seems to carry. For instance, it does not have any integrated military-political structure with permanent operational headquarters, a rapid reaction force, and continuous political deliberations. Apart from that an essential difference between the organizational development of the SCO and NATO is the fact that NATO is primarily aimed to counter external security risks whereas even after maturing the cooperation on the security front, the SCO emphasises on security within the territory covered by its member states. China seems committed at least for the time being to maintain this situation. China is clearly more interested in making regional states feel that they can rely on this regional organization as provider of the security rather than sending images to the US that a security organization is aiming at challenging the west. Any such message is an option that is feasible not for China and not at all for the Central Asian states, all these states still maintain good relations with the US.

The maturing of the SCO as a security alliance is sometime feared as targeting at the third parties. But the evolution of the security led cooperation makes clear the motivation and need of maturing this cooperation. Earlier it was claimed that Afghanistan's absence from the SCO and the US-NATO military presence in Afghanistan do not provide enough space for the SCO to play any meaningful role in Afghanistan (Roy 2010: 545). Recently, the acceptance of

Afghanistan as Observer member is timely when US troops are about to leave Afghanistan, the SCO is coming in as guarantor of security. Some scholars are of the view that after the withdrawal of US, SCO would be more relevant to ensure peace in the region (Bhadrakumar 2011).

On the other hand, by emphasising its neutral stance against any third party, the SCO charter makes it clear that focus of SCO related security activities is on combating the three evils; 'religious extremism, separatism and international terrorism' must be combated in order to ensure a secure and stable regional environment. It is noteworthy that the cooperation on the military front is not such a new phenomenon, even in times of Shanghai Five, the states showed interest in cooperating on military levels. The member states agreed to reduce the size of their border armies (Pempel 2010). The cooperation at that time was more like a Confidence building Measure as compared to today's collaborative efforts that is a mature form of institutional alliance. This collaboration on security front came into practice when Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS), now known as Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure (RCTS) was established. RCTS is a multilateral security arrangement that establishes precise security commitments between SCO member states (Kavalski 2010). The military exercises carried out by SCO member states provides a further evidence of commitment of China and other SCO members to ensure that the organization has real power to tackle its security problems.

Kavalski is right in labelling China's active security engagement within SCO as 'highly unusual' (Kavalski 2010). Keeping in mind, China's distance from regional organizations in the past, China's active engagement in this regional organization indicates that China has got some strong national interests involved in the region. In case of security related growing cooperation, for instance, the most obvious answer is China's Xinjiang province. It is not only important for territorial integrity of China, the province is also important as it is vital to Chinese production and resource allocation (You 2008; Azarkan 2009; Kavalski 2010). Following the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989 and the rise of Taliban in Afghanistan in 1995, the rise of religious extremism and terrorism is a growing concern for the whole region.

The Chinese elite have recently started doubting the ways frontier security problems have been ignored by overemphasising the artificially constructed myth of 'united China'. The political process that led to the adoption of cooperation against 'three evils' under the auspices of SCO is more significant and not the political policy itself. China has been getting 'innovative' in this respect. The frontier security where has long been a concern for Chinese political elite guiding different political responses and discourses. The innovative turn in the context of SCO makes China being open at least to acknowledge the minority ethnic problem laying within 'united China' and to initiate a regional response to that. The political policies on the other hand have touch of 'Chinese way' to politicize the issue.

The SCO deserves acknowledgement for being a distinctive multilateral organization with emphasis on non-traditional security threats. The adoption of ‘three evils’, on the contrary, is a long process of contested identities and political response of China’s leadership to that. The politicization of the ‘three evils’ and problems of ethnic minority groups in this way makes security cooperation more concentrated to cater pre-existing identity discourse of ‘national unity’. The security cooperation still is remarkable turn on part of Chinese leaders that have opened the table for collectively coming up to resolve embedded security related threats and to address problems of ethnicity existing within the national ‘whole’. Chinese intellectual circles are exploring different approaches to tackle the minority issues by looking at traditional values in Imperial China while also getting influenced by thinking outside the state of China. It is inclined to try innovative methods to resolve the issues rather than walling off the problems within artificially constructed state boundaries. SCO is an innovative start, without doubt, but a partial one so far.

6.4.2. Evolving Economic Relations and the Norm of Common Development

To bridge the gap between vulnerabilities attached to Chinese self-perception, and the outside view of ‘rising China’, China is portrayed as a developing state. Chinese increased economic activity and growing relations with neighbouring states is projected as its sense of moral responsibility to side with developing nations. In mid 1950s, as part of this strategy, China and India agreed to set aside their differences to adopt five principles of coexistence. These principles got prominent further on the occasion of international level show up at 1955 Bandung Conference. Wright has portrayed this emerging conflict between North and South:

The despised, the insulted, the hurt, the dispossessed- in short, the underdogs of the human race were meeting (in Bandung). Here were class and racial and religious consciousness on a global scale. Who had thought of organizing such a meeting? And what had these nations in common? Nothing it seemed to me, but what their past relationship to western world had made them feel. This meeting of the rejected was in itself a kind of judgement upon the western world (Wright 1956: 12).

Since the reform and opening up, it is a long-term goal for Chinese diplomacy to focus on the central task of economic construction and to ensure a peaceful and favourable international environment for China’s domestic development. China presents its ideology of common development as the best solution to economic backwardness of developing countries. For instance, on March 3rd 2004, the CPC Central Committee held a forum discussing the work in terms of population, natural resources and the environment. During the forum, President Hu crystallized the successful experience of China’s reform; opening-up and modernization drive in the past 20 years and proposed the human-based, sustainable development approach. In the field of international relations, the new development approach protested: “all countries should aim to

achieve mutual benefit and win-win situation in their pursuit of development. They are encouraged to open up rather than close to themselves, to enjoy fair play instead of profiting oneself at the expense of others”.

These five principles proposed by Zhou Enlai and fostered at Bandung Conference were influential in shaping the nonaligned path and nurturing economic relations among developing countries. These five principles as portrayed by Zhou Enlai were based on “non-interference, mutual respect, mutual cooperation, mutual exchange and peaceful coexistence”. The support from most of the developing countries from Africa, Asia and Latin America helped China restore its UNSC seat in 1971. After securing UNSC seat, China got another platform to channel its progressive agenda. As soon as 1974, Deng Xiaoping called for an international united front against hegemonism and superpower politics in a speech to the UN (Speech at the Special Session of the UN General Assembly 1974).

Deng Xiaoping’s open door policy started an era of Chinese economic development on the one hand; it brought threats attached with the policy on the other. The opening door policy threatened the move towards westernization and Chinese leaders were well aware of that. CCP repeatedly encouraged the masses to withstand these threats from foreign powers. To construct a different image of China from exploitative ‘others’, the South-South cooperation has been emphasized to construct identity of China as a developing country.

China’s active participation in regional multilateralism helps to infuse China’s new sense of ‘shared growth’ (Clegg 2009: 121). On 14th September 2001, the heads of the six states signed memorandum among governments of SCO member states on the basic goals and directions of regional economic cooperation and launch of process on creating favourable conditions in the field of trade and investments. In 2002, the conference mechanism between economic ministers and communication ministers has been established to facilitate the cooperation in the fields of trade, investment, communication and mineral resources. During the meeting of the heads of the SCO member states in September 23, the program of multilateral trade and economic cooperation among SCO member states was signed. This program precisely determined basic goals and objectives of economic cooperation within the SCO framework, priority directions and concrete steps of cooperation. Next year, in June 2004, China declared that it would provide 900 million US dollars of preferential buyer’s credits to other SCO member states. The growing emphasis on economy led the SCO members reached an agreement to establish Inter-Bank Association in 2005. The members further agreed to create SCO Business Council in 2006.

By obtaining the energy supply lines, China is able to secure energy provision by land as opposed by sea. While doing so, China reduced its reliance on the US Navy protected waters (White and Taylor 2009). According to data from China’s Ministry of Commerce, total trade

volume of the SCO member states reached USD4.65 trillion in 2011 that indicates an increase of 25.1 percent year-on-year (Xinhua 06 June 2012). On the other hand, China's trade with other SCO member states rose from USD12.1 billion in 2001 to USD113.4 in 2011. China has become Russia's largest trading partner and second largest of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The oil imported by China from Central Asian countries mainly comes from Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan occupies the top rank in the region when it comes to oil reserves and explored yield of crude oil that brings enormous potential for oil export for the country. In 2009, China has achieved the status of second largest importing country of crude oil worldwide. In 2013, China overtook the US as the world's largest net importer of oil (*The Financial Times* 2013). China started importing oil since 1993 and became a net crude oil importer in 1996. According to data from General Administration of Customs of China, in 2010, China imported 4.7 million barrel per day of crude oil, accounting for around 53.8 percent of total demand (IEA 2012: 6). It is predicted that China's dependency on foreign crude oil reserves will increase to 65 percent by 2020. In that case, China really needs to diversify the sources for oil supply. Currently, China is able to import a volume of 10 to 20 million tons of crude oil from Kazakhstan each year through the Sino-Kazakh oil pipeline, which approximately accounts for 10 percent of the total importing volume of crude oil.

The energy resources coming from Central Asian states lubricate the machines of Chinese economy. To secure the route, Chinese money has been quickly flowing to the Central Asian energy rich states in the recent past. The foreign direct investment from China to the Central Asian region topped USD13 billion in 2007 (Yan 2009). China offered Kazakhstan a USD10 billion loan in exchange for the joint-ownership of MangistauMunai gas, one of the country's largest oil producers (*The Economist* 2010). China invested USD600 million in Uzbekistan's oil and gas industries. The PRC invested the same amount of money in Hydro-electric power plants in Tajikistan (Azarkan 2009). China also spent USD861 million on linking railways between China and Kazakhstan and China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Such investments are highly attractive for Central Asian states also as it is diversifying the export centres for Central Asian states.

For years, Russia had its monopoly over energy resource supplies from Central Asian region to the world and one such example is Russian control of Centre-Central Asia gas pipelines (SATs). The natural Gas Company of Russia, Gazprom, controls this complex of pipelines. The gas supplies from Turkmenistan via Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan reach Russia before being supplied to outer world through SATs pipeline system. The project of SATs started in 1960 and even after the collapse of the USSR in 1991, the monopoly of Gazprom over the supply line remained unchallenged for years.

Apart from diversifying the export centres, China also emerges as an attractive trade partner especially in the aftermath of 2008-2009 Global Financial Crises. China seems even more reliable to Central Asian states than any other buyer. For instance, in 2009, due to global recession and declining sales, Gazprom Company suddenly reduced its gas imports from Turkmenistan. As a result, Turkmenistan faced 90-95 percent decrease in export to Russia, a move that was not appreciated by Turkmen leaders. Eight months after the incident, in December 2009, Turkmenistan started supplying gas to China.

Another major step in this cooperation is China's grant of USD10 billion loan to the SCO Central Asian states to help the member states recover from the 2008-09 economic downturn. China and Kazakhstan have recently achieved new progress in exploration of oil and gas. In 2008, China invented enterprises led by CNPC exploited 15 million tons of crude oil from Kazakhstan, that is around 2.5 times of the total exploitation volume by Russian enterprises. China's growing economic relations with Central Asian region is an indicator that China has become able to present itself as a 'better' alternative. The growing economic activity is good for Central Asian states for providing them an alternative economic partner and the one who does not question the political system of these states. It is even more good for political elites to sustain their regimes while projecting quick economic development and sophisticating infrastructure. If critically analysed, 'common development' is not an all embraced political discourse, with mixed results even within territorial boundaries of China.

The 'Go West Project' has drawn fairly large attention towards Xinjiang region. The figures provided by China's political centre indicate that living standard of Xinjiang people is improving remarkably. The per capita income of farmers in Xinjiang as recorded in 2008 was 3,503 Yuan that is 28 times more than that of 1978 and 1.2 times more than that of 2000 figures at the time of launch of western development campaign. The proportion of food consumption against total consumption for rural residents was 60.8% in 1978, 50.0% in 2001 and 42.4% in 2008. The same ration in Urban areas was 57.3% in 1980, 36.4% in 2001 and 37.3% in 2008 (The Information Office of the State Council 2009).

The economic development, on the contrary, is not all-good news for Xinjiang. The economic development has been coinciding with large scale Han migration to the region and 'Go West Policy' of Chinese state resulting into economic integration of China. There is general understanding that these developments indicators are more linked to inflow of Han migrants in the region. These factors are contributing to increase Chinese state threat regarding any potential 'Anti-Han' Grouping. The fear of dissolution of identity of this region after religious suppression and widespread Han migration is likely to trigger Anti-Han sentiments in this region. The politicization of minority problem and the simultaneous integration of the region have resulted in more violent and disruptive activities used by people of Xinjiang region. As

economic development with wide scale Han migration is adding to the grievances of Xinjiang masses in certain ways, Chinese leadership is prone to adopt alternative policy to minimize or suppress these feelings.

The hierarchical nature of economic activity where China's cheap goods are bursting into the consumer markets of Central Asian states is clear. The heavy investment in infrastructure is making Chinese presence more deep and integrated into the region. The growing trade relations and establishing transit routes engulfing the least connected of SCO states as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is stamping the prospective dependency of the whole region on China if maintains the similar pace in future. The SCO is an innovative way to develop these relations while ensuring the neighbouring countries of the normative character of 'common development' associated with these relations. China is rising, its economy is more open to outside world and Central Asia cannot be left un-integrated. China being an important actor connecting Asian region and regions beyond is not that new but the forum diplomacy as a way to construct 'self' is.

6.4.3. A Non-Western Multilateralism and Norms of Non Interference

China's political practice of non-interference, as adopted in SCO, guides about the Chinese identity of politically constructed fears of 'exploitation and humiliation' weaved in the Chinese nationalism. China's territorial integrity is important for China since its elite embraced the concepts of sovereignty towards the middle of nineteenth century. The political construct of the hands of 'other' with respect to minority problems works two ways. It endorses the unity within China and directs the grievances towards an outside enemy. The political elite widely presents 'separatism' and other evils associated with East Turkestan Movement in Xinjiang. The dynamic of this attitude is indicated through state/ party statements regarding the role of radical Islam and the hands of foreign powers fostering division of China. Chinese State regulation of minority identity affairs reveals dynamics of perception through official responses to international standards. The international standards are labelled as particularly western in its meanings and values that has nothing to do with stability, security and development of China. The economic development is viewed as means to resolve nationalism and separatism related problems in the region.

For instance, the hands of foreign powers in backing "East Turkestan Movement" is highlighted in these words:

Since the peaceful liberation of Xinjiang, the people of all ethnic groups have united as one, worked hard and built their fine homeland with joint efforts. Xinjiang's society is stable, its economy has kept developing, the local people's living standard has rapidly improved, and the situation as a whole is good. But the "East Turkistan" forces, not to be reconciled to their failure and in defiance of the will of the people of all ethnic groups, have been on the lookout for every opportunity to conduct splittist and sabotage

activities with the backing of international anti-China forces (China Daily 2002).

The memory of century of humiliation does not only strengthen nationalism, it also imposes a culture of self-restraint on China. This culture of self-restraint and avoidance of bullying others is also reinforced by Confucianism. This perception of self-restraint is propagated by constructing 'self' and emphasising political practice of non-interference.

For western form of international cooperation and multilateral setting, 'western norm dimension' is an inevitable thing. These norms and values or to be more specific, western liberal and democratic values are a key feature of multilateral cooperation when European and North American states are involved. Since, China's embrace of multilateral settings is a new phenomenon, by looking at Russia's embrace of multilateralism, the problematic nature of the norms dimension is particularly clear. The OSCE has been levelling criticism against Russia at the human rights records of Russia. The EU's efforts to air concerns about the direction of Russia's domestic politics, particularly human rights issues relating to second war in Chechnya has seriously complicate the relationship between OSCE and Russia. For instance, in 2003, Russia and OSCE could not agree to extend the OSCE mandate in Chechnya and was subsequently closed (OSCE, 3 January 2003). The main reason behind the closure of the mandate was that the OSCE refused to accept the Russian government's insistence that the mission relinquish its human rights and political dimension.

As western states have pushed for the OSCE to tackle the human rights dimension, Russia has highlighted the OSCE's failure to respect fundamental principles as non-interference in internal affairs and respect for sovereignty of the states. For that purpose, Russia has criticizes the Organization time and again for double standards and has shown resentment by slashing the contribution to its budget (RIA Novosti 13 June 2006). The disillusionment on the part of Russia and other Central Asian states over the evolution of the OSCE and its field missions was made public in September 2003. In the report, Russia and three NIS members' states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Belarus condemned the asymmetrical distribution of the OSCE missions. It also scrutinized the over emphasis on the human dimension in the Organization's programmes, and the interference in the domestic affairs of the participating states by OSCE institutions, and Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in particular.

The same is true regarding the human rights violation on the part of the Central Asian states that has been criticized by OSCE. After the Andijan revolt in Uzbekistan in May 2005,¹⁸ the

¹⁸ The arrest of twenty three Uzbek businessmen, most of them factory and shop owners who also were members of Akramiya (splinter group of Hizb-ut-Tehrir), prompted protests in Andijan and a subsequent siege of the prison. After releasing the businessman along with hundreds of other prisoners, armed men seized control of a nearby government building. Uzbek security forces and the armed men clashed as thousands were mobilized and staged protests. Hundreds of Uzbeks were massacred. Human rights and

western participating states of OSCE called for an OSCE inquiry that was subsequently rejected by Uzbek authorities. But the ODIHR released a report based on the interviews with Uzbek refugees in Kara-Suu Kyrgyzstan, and criticized the leaders for their suppression of the revolt (OSCE 20 June 2005) and later called for the subsequent trial of the alleged leaders (OSCE 21 April 2006).

Uzbekistan was considered an important NATO ally before 2005. After 9/11, Uzbek President Islam Karimov was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the growing American presence in Central Asia and first to offer its military base to the US. The Uzbek authorities, on the other hand, seemed at uneasy terms with Moscow. For instance, Islam Karimov was strong supporter of excluding Russia from joining Central Asian Economic Community (CAEC). Although, the exclusion of Russia from the organization was justified by the member states as to keep the organization focused on the issues related to smaller Central Asian states, including Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It was perceived differently by Kremlin. Russian authorities believed that reason to keep Russia out of the organization is to counter Russian influence in the region, making a way for growing American influence (Socor 2005). Andijan events in May 2005 in Uzbekistan proved to be a breakthrough for the direction of foreign and security policy of Uzbekistan. The explicit criticism levelled against Uzbek leaders by the western member states of NATO resulted in crumbling the security relationship between Uzbekistan and NATO. In November 2005, the US lost access to military facility at Karshi Khanabad (K2) base in Uzbekistan which was used to support Operation Enduring freedom in Afghanistan. As a result of the closure of military facilities, NATO suspended most of its activities with Tashkent and EU imposed sanctions on the country.

Apart from dissatisfactory human rights record, the undemocratic nature of the governments of the region is also contentious affair between Central Asian states, Russia on one hand and OSCE on the other. The OSCE vote monitors have always criticized the Central Asian states and Russia for being below democratic standards. The leaders of Central Asian states, on the other hand, have been criticising OSCE vote monitors for their unsupportive comments. Recently, ahead of Russian presidential elections in March 2012, Kazakh President, Mr Nazarbayev criticised the OSCE vote monitors for being 'biased' and for being an instrument 'to apply pressure by one group of countries on another'. He further made it clear that other

pro-democracy groups accuse police and state agencies of shooting indiscriminately on unarmed demonstrators against government exploitation and corruption. The Uzbek government accuses the gunmen of holding the unarmed demonstrators as hostages and opening fire on them. For Uzbek government version see *Documenting Andijan*, Council on Foreign Relations (Uzbekistan) available at <http://www.cfr.org/uzbekistan/documenting-andijan/p10984>. View from Human Rights groups can be accessed through Human Rights Watch Report about massacre, available at <http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/uzbekistan0905.pdf>.

leaders in the former Soviet Union also share his opinion of OSCE election observer missions for being biased (The Telegraph 02 March 2012). This statement was made with the background of OSCE criticism of January 2012 election in Kazakhstan. OSCE clearly showed the dissatisfaction with the standards of democracy by criticising the Kazakh authorities for deregistering parties and candidates at last minute, depriving voters of choices and for evidences of fraudulent votes (The New York Times 16 January 2012).

This clash of political norms is also evident in UNSC at several points where all the members of UNSC except Russia and China are favouring the resolution to demand Bashar Al Assad to step down (The Guardian 4 February 2012); China and Russia are consistently against such resolution. Same twin block have frequently questioned the utility of the sanctions against Iran to halt its uranium enrichment programme (The Wall Street Journal 17 November 2011).

Today, SCO has gained greater formal legitimacy worldwide. The potential of the future SCO indicated by China's growing influence, the convergence of political elites to tackle 'three evils', increased economic and trade relations and so far Russia and China enjoying the co-leadership of SCO did not go unnoticed. An increasing number of countries and international organizations have proposed to establish contacts and cooperation within the SCO. In November 2002, the SCO Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs adopted Interim Scheme of relations between the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Other International Organizations and States. This step formally initiated SCO external relations. In April 2005, the SCO signed the memorandum of understanding with ASEAN and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) establishing a relationship of cooperation and partnership. Both ASEAN and CIS also attend SCO summit as guest members. Earlier in December 2004, the SCO was granted observer status in General Assembly of the UN. Before hailing the organization with its regional rapport, a critical appraisal of how discourse and practices work in SCO and how Chinese elites are experimenting to balance between 'tradition' and 'new' by using innovative means.

6.5. A Critical Appraisal

The plastic nature of SCO is the key in hands of Chinese political elite to turn innovative. The frontier security has remained a permanent feature of Shanghai Five and Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Conditions of uncertainty and change and the search for stability are politically closely linked. Since responses to change gives space to more innovative political processes, China has been using Shanghai Five and SCO as vehicle to resolve border problems, demilitarizing borders and to ensure security cooperation. The meaning and scope of SCO has been variegated since then. It is a mixture of cooperation against non-traditional security threats and to maintain China's economic and social influence in the region and to extend it beyond.

It is more important to trace political processes to achieve the objectives, that are multidirectional and fluid. The innovative way China adopts on one hand responds fairly to the demands of environment China is manoeuvring in. China has utilized this multilateral forum to ensure other members of its peaceful rise and to clear the environment of mistrust. This message is targeted at Russia most of all. To enter into Russian traditional zone of influence demanded a cautious political policy. China could have tried to pursue its national interests in the region without the involvement of Russia, or by operating behind its back, but this scenario would have involved a degree of security risk. Any attempt to limit Russia's power in Central Asia would have meant to risk confrontation between China and Russia. Russia has always tried to reassert its role in its traditional sphere of influence and to recover its geopolitical relevance (Giragosian 2006). Thus not having invited Russia to join the SCO would have jeopardized any constructive engagement by igniting the antagonism between two powers. Attempting to engage by using consensual and relatively transparent multilateral framework, on the other hand, allows China to let its economic strengths do its work with a minimum strategic cost. Secondly, the patterns of interaction within SCO are echoed in the way China approaches SCO.

China's cultural and social power is lacking at the moment. Especially in case of SCO, the diplomacy adopted by Chinese political spectrum is far from convincing. However, that does not make SCO irrelevant. Chinese innovative turn towards SCO is a way to experiment 'multilateralism with Chinese characteristics' that is flexible and has been maturing since its origin. The security related cooperation has been extended to varied fields. Above all, it has marked the influential position of China in the region. The north-western region had been focus of Chinese political elite and had frequently served as a place for experiment that later served as model for other regions and places. Perdue (2003: 63) refers to this by pointing out that Canton trade system of regulated trade was first developed on the Russian border by the Qing in 1727, then extended to the Zunghars and Kazakhs in the mid-eighteenth century, and only then applied in the South. The first treaty recognizing extraterritoriality was negotiated with the ruler of Kokand to station political and commercial representatives in Xinjiang, to levy customs duties on imports by foreigners. SCO and multilateralism is an experiment and China has still been defining its way by keeping it flexible and open to change. A specific initiative in public diplomacy like SCO, probably the most innovative one, is aimed at presenting China's peaceful intentions and project China in positive light. It might not be impossible that China sets a trend in Central Asia of its leadership in multilateral organization to be followed in other regions.

An important point linked to SCO is China's innovative policies that are a result of its engagement with modern civilizations. The idea of China was less associated with 'space' and 'boundary'. The territory played a role in imagining China but to the extent of defining 'civilized' from 'barbarians'. China and China's territorial identity has been plural throughout

history. Imperial China wanted less direct control and more symbolic power with peripheries dividing 'civilized' from 'barbarians'. The division was less territorial and more cultural. The boundaries of what is China and what it is not (not always related to territory) had always been fluid and changing.

The recent adoption of concept of China got associated with territoriality towards the end of Qing Empire. The political elites after the fall of Qing Empire have been defining differently what it means to be China and how the idea relates to territoriality. The idea of China within territory is deep rooted in self-perception and got institutionalized after Mao's era. The sovereignty and territorial integrity were adopted as unshakable attributes of China's political state. The norm of non-interference has its roots in China's recent history. China's non-intervening behaviour is not uncommon in history of Imperial China as well. It is suggested that with the exception of Tibet and Mongolia, China saw little reason to intervene in the domestic affairs and foreign policies of subordinate and vassal states (Katzenstein 2012: 49). The norm of non-interference as preached by 'Five principles of Co-existence' is adopted to interact and advance in a word that is seen and perceived without China being its centre. The principle of non-interference has territorial integrity and sovereignty as its basis. The principle of non-interference has strong relevance with construction of role of other in instability and humiliation oriented discourse of Chinese nationalism. Sinicization and the strong sense of self is a concept that appeals to many Chinese. They are more embracing and corresponding to any political construction or conceptual expression endorsing the myth of united China and its inevitability after unjustified and prolonged marginalization and humiliation (Callahan 2010). By propagating non-interference as norm and political practice, Chinese political elites seek to emphasise policy of self-restraint absent on part of 'foreign evil powers'.

China is becoming innovative to deal with frontier security problems by opening the issue for regional collaboration. While political elites are confused about contested identity of periphery as related to territoriality and the ways to govern it, the break from Mao's rigid policies is happening. In post 1979 China, leaders allowed the commercialization of ethnic relations in order to celebrate diversity and spread message of all embracing unity. Ethnic tourism also was adopted as political practice by presenting attractiveness of Xinjiang and other peripheries for their unique and ancient cultural practices. These changes were a clear diversion from previous decades but the adoption was more to experiment the new approaches to handle peripheries and less aimed at compromising on China's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Turn to multilateralism is another of such experimentations and a new approach on part of political leaders. Politicization of the issue rather than its resolution is happening at the moment, SCO has largely been attracting criticism for promoting authoritarian regimes.

The adjacent norm of non-interference has made the organization irrelevant at various security related issues that are transnational and not restricted within boundaries. For instance, in April 2010, nationwide protests led to the resignation of Kyrgyz president Kurmanbek Bakiyev. The resignation was followed by a series of nationwide riots. SCO was unable to respond to the crisis and drew extensive criticism for this. Because of norm of non-interference and its own record of governing peripheral regions, China's symbolic and social power is faced with inherent limitations. Good governance, responsible environmental politics, human security and protection of economic and social rights of workers are adversely influencing the appeal of Chinese values and norms. While China is making adequate advances in the field of security and economy, China's symbolic and social power is largely missing. Chinese political elites are trying to fill the gap by constructing a favourable image of China. The embrace of the regional organization for channelizing the political policy of drawing China as an attractive model as is functional in SCO case. The turn to multilateralism is a process of self-innovation by Chinese political leaders and policy makers.

Since the social and symbolic power is far from achieved by SCO, so far, the organization has largely been successful in minimizing China threat theory by making alliances and spreading peaceful rise intentions. Shifting balances of policies produce and reproduce behavioural and symbolic boundaries within and between civilizations. The geo-political environment of Central Asia and the threat perceptions attached with China has seen partial innovations in Chinese diplomacy. The most durable element in Central Asian security architecture is Russian presence that has played strong role in bringing innovative turn in Chinese diplomacy.

Despite being cooperative on SCO platform so far, Russia is compromising to allow Chinese advancements in its traditional zone of influence which is a China's achievement. The growing economic relations especially after financial crisis 2008-2009 has seen China entering Central Asian markets and signing energy deals at fast pace. The Russians confronting response to China is less in practice and more as part of long portrayal of coming rivalry between China and Russia by analysts and observers. The debate of Sino-Russian rivalry is not new but the recent added dimension is the assumption that China will threaten Russia by increasing its military presence in the region (Blank and Kim 2013). Chinese leaders have emphasised that resolution of non-traditional security problems can happen by using non-conventional ways. Chinese leaders widely emphasise the role of economic development in combating the threat of 'three evils'. Apart from discourse, 'Go West Project' is indicative of China's interest for domestic development. Although the policy has been bringing mixed results. The more economic oriented discourse and practice has not yielded any Chinese intentions to engage with Central Asia militarily. Russia has still been enjoying the role of traditional security provider. The increasing engagement of China might be worrisome for Russia, but it has not brought any clash

so far. On the contrary, from the very start, Sinic and Russian civilizations are either engaging or encountering. The clash is predicted, not happening and it might not happen in near future, keeping in focus complementarity and engaging of Chinese and Russians intentions and political processes.

China is opening up to the world after a break up for half a century that saw China largely walled off. Post 1979 China, where is debating about its own identity searching for cure in imperial traditions and ideologies as revived Confucianism, China is experimenting innovation in its foreign policy. While China is rising and becoming more open to outside world, the civilizational interactions are a natural outcome. At least in case of China, it is clear that these interactions are bringing more engagement than confrontation. The single modern civilization integrating different civilizations channelizes various political processes carrying blend of 'traditional' and new. Since civilizations are unable to think, the give and take of civilizational values and norms is largely not in need of consent (Katzenstein 2012); but political elites do. While China is more interactive amid its rise, intensity of changes and transformations is more likely. China is becoming more exposed to modes of thinking that are developed outside of China. The budding debates within China to bring in elements of human security and societal security in the domain of security and the more open nature of its economy has initiated a natural process of innovative political practices. The on-going transformation calls for a required political practice of emphasising 'self' against 'other' by emphasising association with certain traditional norms in order to politically construct the identity that is artificially 'unique'. The discourse and practices go hand in hand while China engages with Central Asia practicing and experimenting traditional and new.

6.6. Conclusion

China's prominent role in SCO is clearly atypical of its historical foreign policy. Yet the establishment of this regional organization and its growing nature ever since can be understood by focusing on the evolving interests and interactions in this region. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is helping in China to drive its multidimensional perception as an untraditional power and 'not a threat'. Since it is primarily concerned with its own domestic political and economic affairs, China is trying to act as a promoter favouring a partnership approach (Cheng 2005). Through regional partnerships, the focus is on addressing common problems, looking at how these might be tackled through collaborative efforts. With China's opening up and interacting with different civilizations, the Chinese political processes are experimenting and absorbing various modes of thinking that are naïve to China's tradition. Chinese political elite, on the contrary, experimenting to use multilateral forums to construct strong sense of China against others. It is also aimed at achieving symbolic power that China lacks at the moment. The

discourse related to 'self' is without doubt more concentrated within speeches and words of political leaders.

This normative and 'flexible multilateralism' that is being criticized by western scholars is so far the spirit of SCO. Yet, it is equally true that China is pursuing its own strategic and domestic agenda within SCO but this is precisely the point of interest-based organization to provide a vehicle for multilateral relations where each member can pursue their own national goals but without imposing on others and without creating friction with their neighbours (Guang 2007: 45-58). China through its engagement by SCO has become able to find ways to strengthen the position of Central Asian powers in Shanghai Cooperation Organization rather than initiating a feeling of becoming appendages on the part of SCO member states. The success of Shanghai Cooperation Organization has been gradual and steady, that is why scholarly debates today has moved the focus from 'does this regional organization matter' to 'how far this will go?'. The flexible and plastic nature of SCO helps China to move cautiously and constructively.

The emphasis of Chinese political elites on 'self' seeks to provide a firmer foundation for cooperation between China and Central Asian states. By chanting the slogans of 'Common Development,' China is seeking to represent itself as a guarantor of win-win economic relations. This economic model although has its own weaknesses and is not perfect for developing countries, it still has its charms keeping in mind the money flowing from Chinese pockets to these developing countries in form of investment. Even more significant is the realization on the part of developing countries that investment from China comes without any strings attached. China's non-interference attitude is emphasises as a signal that China is more aware of the problems and realities of the developing states.

It is evident that apart from its weaknesses, SCO has had a strong 'demonstration effect' in the formation of new normative structures at the turn of the 21st century. In sum, the establishment of SCO can be seen as a demonstration of China's attempt to improve relations with Russia and Central Asian region. Through SCO, China is using institutional building and regional cooperation as instruments to strengthen its security, develop its economy and to portray itself in positive light to attain symbolic power.

Chapter 7

Factors Shaping China's Foreign Policy: Issues in China-Central Asia Relations

7.1. Introduction

With emphasis on what this study calls 'Culture of Foreign Policy' of China towards Central Asia, China's political processes as seen in Central Asia are contextualized within Chinese Imperial history (traditions), perceptions and processes, Chinese state rise, inter-civilizational encounters, and embracing and experimenting the new. Various studies map the interaction of China towards Central Asia from quest for energy resources to balancing or even challenging the US. Since Sinicization is multi-directional and non-linear process, the economic, security and social cannot be disentangled.

China's developing relations with Central Asian region is a one of the most important area in China's post-cold war diplomacy. In past, positive relations had been largely absent and were greatly marked by instability along Chinese Northern and North-western periphery. The situation has changed tremendously in recent decades, while China has developed multifaceted relations not confined to any single area of cooperation. The present study examines how China's foreign policy towards Central Asia can be traced to carry processual elements of continuity and change. China's identity with certain core values is not walled and is continuously interacting with various embedded civilizations. Foreign policy process of China towards Central Asia carries the elements of 'traditional and 'modernity' and is represented in political practices as well as political rhetoric.

The previous chapters have discussed a number of factors shaping China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region. The factors combine traditional geo-political considerations that are ultimately leading much of the debate towards New Great Game. The domestic considerations that can be labelled as 'Pure Interests Debate' is another strand covered in the thesis. The last one and an important contribution is the 'Identity Debate' that is dealing with the identity and norms put forward by Katzensteinian framework.

The geo-political debate is older. It is the subject of a group of scholarly articles. Yet the text seems to rhyme generally. The interest based debate is part of empirical studies and is much discussed as well. The identity debate in context of China's foreign policy towards Central Asia is new. It does not mean that it is relevant recently or it has emerged recently. The important point to add is that it was not part of discussion of China's foreign policy towards Central Asia.

The constructivist understanding of China's foreign policy towards Central Asia provides an insight to various underlying processes and practices linking geopolitical, material, security and diplomatic interests.

By looking at economic relations (energy and trade), the study learns that over the period of time, China presented itself as a favourable economic partner. By unfolding the processual elements of building these relations provide an insight to the potential China's economic relations with Central Asian region have. The most important manifestation of China's identity today is the way it deals with the concept of territoriality. The Xinjiang is an important example to explain the handling of territorial issues and its relation with the identity of China. The third area related to political practice is China's turn towards multilateralism. While unfolding the blend of modern and traditional, this political process of turning to multilateral organization helps analyse the innovative policy turn to meet the needs of regional security architecture and China's self-perception and construction. The debate also concludes that China while building its relations with Central Asian region seem to echo various traditions of Imperial China. Now the question that arises is which factors are working as main drivers for China's foreign policy making. If answered in black and white, as is also discussed previously will not be a fair treatment of the complex process of foreign policy making of China. For this reason, the chapter is dedicated to weigh different factors discussed in empirical chapters to contextualize China's political practices in Central Asian region.

7.2. Geopolitical Debate

The Geopolitical debate is important while looking at the way China approaches Central Asian region. The debate is perhaps the oldest one with reference to China and Central Asian region. With the change in environment and context in which states are operating, the rules of the game change as well. The New Great Game is the new face of the traditional great game. The new patterns of the great game and new actors in which China is one of the most important actors (if discussed in pure geopolitical jargons, the proximity of the actor and the overall stature in international politics) has twisted the game in recent decades. China has played an important role to give soft touch to the hard rules of the game. The relevance of geo politics cannot be denied and will still be relevant in the time to come. So the rules of the game might change over the period of time, the geo-political initiator of foreign policy preferences is there to exist.

The difference between the priorities of China and Russia is often made basis of the comment that cooperation between these states is destined to be doomed. From the very start till today, it has been widely predicted that the main cause of the conflict between China and Russia is that they want to pursue different agendas in Central Asia through SCO. China wants SCO to

operate as economic organization and Russia sees it as a security organization (McDermott 2012a: 60).

It is in favour of China to erase or minimize Russian presence in Central Asia is not an objective answer even from the realpolitik point of view. It greatly disturbs the balance in the region of different powers operating. It is feared that China is developing military capabilities to match or eventually surpass Russian capabilities for action in the region (Kim and Blank 2013: 776). China is reorienting Central Asian states away from other powers including Russia (Hancock 2006). An important clue that Beijing has different priorities in Central Asia that do not clash with Russian politico-military influence in the region is the fact that Beijing has not sought any military bases in region (Blank 2011; Indeo 2010). Beijing is more interested in bringing forward its economic agenda in the region whereas for sure, Russia is interested in maintaining its military-security influence in the region. The dual role where works as balancing for each other. This balancing is very different from classical balance of power. Bennett and Stam emphasise this notion by noting that all other regions seem to divert from European pattern of classical balance of power (2003: 193-194).

The balancing between China and Russia works in favour of both actors' and their subsequent interests. China would want Russia to carry on with an adequate military influence in the region where Russia would not mind China as an economic partner of Central Asian regimes that can be in more dangerous and instable situation if economic backwardness wraps the states along with several other problems existing already.

For the first time, in 2009-2010, China's net trade with Central Asian region exceeded the net trade of the region with Russia. Russia had been the largest importer of Turkmen gas until 2008-2009. China's growing primacy in gas sector of Central Asian region has dropped Russia to being the third-largest importer in 2010. These indicators happen to give birth to a pile of speculations that even if military component is discarded, China's rising economic clout in Central Asia would bother Russia. It is also comprehended that Russia is inclined to make an alliance with the US to counterbalance its neighbouring giant in its 'soft underbelly'. The speculations are part of a long narrative predicting China-Russia rivalry. Any such development is not seemed to be happening even after it is clear that China has overwhelmingly presented itself as a favourable economic partner for Central Asian states.

Some authors have started pointing towards the US initiative New Silk Road as recent form of Northern Distribution Network (NDN). The program is without any success as the previous policies from NDN to TAPI. China on the other hand is getting success in each rival program from establishing SCO, starting energy club and building and expanding gas pipelines. Even the studies that are against the durability of the partnership of China and Russia within SCO cannot

deny its relevance today where Russia accepts that SCO is a useful mechanism for advancing Moscow's priorities (Wilhelmsen and Flikke 2011). In 2009-2010 Russia followed Chinese Central Asian economic agenda (Dittmer 2007; Nadkarni 2011). The worries of Russia attached with China's presence will be more aggravated by seeing Central Asia without Chinese presence. The overall success story of China in Central Asia is undeniable fact as discussed in the present study. China's success in developing strong relations over relatively short period also points out that China's political centre is systematically dealing with its foreign policy goals. The new great game discussion helps to point out the distinctiveness of China's foreign policy that has avoided threats or direct challenges to its advancement in the region. The debate also helps understand that history never repeats itself, the change of players is causing different inter-civilizational encounters and variegated patterns of engagement.

7.3. Domestic Considerations/ Material Interests

The material interests, strong economic relations and quest for energy resources within China-Central Asia relationship context are recurrently subsumed under the auspices of China enjoying the taste of internationalization and globalization. Yet the material interest based debate is the most slippery. The multi-faceted energy relations between China and Central Asian region are the recent phenomenon. The transportation was important from the days of Silk Road to New Silk Road today. But it is ever changing in nature and weight. The debate although important is narrow to describe the foreign policy preferences of China as discussed in existing works. The material aspect of China's foreign policy cannot be ignored as it is important in two aspects. 1) It is already discussed and emphasised with reference to China's foreign policy but it is important to update the version with reference to China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region in recent decades. 2) The material interests' debate is relevant as China's foreign policy is actively seeking to develop economic relations by seeking access to markets and developing energy transportation projects.

Chinese leaders have emphasised development as first priority ever since the adoption of opening up of China in late 1970s. This preference for development inarguably guides foreign policy of China. A sufficient amount of weight is entitled to neighbouring regions for executing this policy of development. The emphasis of Chinese leaders on 'good neighbour, good friend and good partner' as policy indicates the significance attached to building relations with neighbouring states. This domestic development as preference has been strong norm of Sinic tradition. Even when China and Japan were at the centre of economic transactions and Asian trade links, the main priority for these states was domestic development (Katzenstein 2012: 48).

For development of China, material interests occupy a strong presence in China's foreign policy making towards Central Asian region. It demands foreign policy to be multi-faceted to tackle

water issues, invest in and maintain transport links, ensure bountiful access to markets through trade agreements and develop energy routes. The material interests make up the basis of analysis with relation to New Great Game, Pipeline politics, Resource Wars and Silk Road/New Silk Road initiative. Without doubt, China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region is overwhelmingly analysed through these lens. The reason behind this emphasis on material interest is attractiveness of the argument and abundance of facts and figures to support this pure realpolitik argument.

The utilization of Central Asia as a transit route had been major preference of China in history. Apart from Central Asia as consumer market, the transportation link it provides to European markets make China committed to avail opportunity by establishing smooth relations. The Silk Road that brought economic gains to China with Xinjiang as central region in the past is helping add to China's economic development again. Natural resources as facing gradual depletion are cause of concern for every state that is part of globe. China's ever increasing energy relations with SCO members and Turkmenistan are indicator of how desperately China needs to diversify its supply routes. The lesser cost of transport of energy resources adds to the attractiveness of region for China.

In this way, the material interest debate helps this study raise two important trends in China's economic relations with Central Asian region. First with discussion of different phases of development of relations between China and Central Asia that is covered in fourth chapter, it is evident that material interests, an important policy derive is not detached and is rather processual. China has been building relations with Central Asia through testing the phases of legitimacy, solidarity and advancement. China by entering into Central Asia through multilateral alliance, SCO, has sought to reassure its neighbours that they have little to fear and much to gain from a stable and rising China.

The second important aspect current study looks at with regard to Materialist dimension of China's interaction and pattern of trade relations with Central Asian region is that it not a break from China's past. It is the continuity of China's historical trade relations with Asian states. For explaining China's economic and energy relations while sticking to the statist analysis misleadingly leads to simplified assumptions. The cash carrying China is attractive for land locked Central Asian states and energy rich Central Asian states and their growing markets are veritably appealing for China. But it is not just the cash, Central Asian states are enjoying. China's economic system and the way that 'cash' is used is adding to China's advancement. These complex economic processes are undermined by applying theoretical and analytical shortcuts. The strengthening economic relations and revival of China as key economic engine can be seen as continuity of long historical process that was badly interrupted due to Communist Revolution in China in 1949 (Sugihara 2005). With opening up of China, trade and economic

exchanges with Central Asia holds similar pattern of China's intra-Asia trade relations in past. The economic relations are more hierarchical and dependence oriented, still China constructs its presence as a favourable economic partner. Equally important is that, in past, commercial activity with north-western periphery became possible only when overall security situation was clam. Keeping in focus, the relational element, economic and trade relations provide an incomplete picture without considering the broader Sinicization patterns and how these patterns affect China's identity, its concept of territoriality and political practices.

7.4. Bringing in the Role of Identity: Xinjiang Case

The 'three evils' apparently a recent term has its roots in politico-territorial identity of modern Chinese civilization. If analysed by using constructivist tool, the relevance, adoption and utility of these evils unfolds in real sense. The term is concerned mainly with the security of China's north-western region that can have repercussions for whole China and Central Asian states facing similar threat. The narrative of territoriality with reference to Xinjiang region is deep-rooted and is historically institutionalized in China's identity. The way China represents and emphasises the threat cannot be understood without holistically looking at how China recollects and reproduce its territorial identity while fabricated between tradition and modern.

Keeping in view, China's absence from multilateral settings in the past and proactive involvement in SCO helps understand how much integrated China's security culture is with Central Asian region. The elements like transnational connections and Uyghur diaspora makes it inevitable for China to address its security problem without engaging adjacent states of Central Asia and addressing overlapping security problems as shared threats. It also emphasises the strong place Xinjiang region carries in Chinese security architecture and China's self-perception.

The case of Xinjiang is not only affecting China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region but also attributing it to a certain normative character. Norms help understand identity of actors and to trace source of their behaviour preferences. The pattern of interaction between China and Central Asian region is determined by Chinese shared knowledge and the collective meaning attached to the region of Xinjiang. China's norms in this security architecture address to preserve its territorial identity and integrity. Chinese leaders promote the idea of 'One China' as homogenous identity glued together with 'Chinese First' without any strings attached. These norms are central to the understanding of power of Chinese leadership to mobilize, to justify and to legitimize actions. The point to emphasise is that the homogeneity of 'Chinese nation' is more a political construct of China's political centre rather than a social construct. China's history, fractured among multifarious regional identities and divergent historical trajectories,

does not provide a smooth foundation for consistent nationalist ideology either (Perdue 2003: 56).

The classification and grouping of different ethnic groups as nationalities has historical basis in China.¹⁹ The situation is illustrated by Wallerstein in these words:

The concept of “ethnic group” is therefore as linked in practice to state boundaries as is the concept “nation”, despite the fact that this is never included in the definition. The difference is only that a state tends to have one nation and many ethnic groups (1987: 385).

The two important reasons for threat: One is Islamic identity of the region that can be easily politicized especially when Chinese government is forcefully assimilating to threaten the ethno-linguistic and religious identity. ‘Terrorism’ as labelled by Chinese and SCO member states and such violent acts are manifestations of grievances and/ or protests that cannot be attributed to Chinese leaders’ suppression alone. For that purpose, a second factor is noteworthy. It is the indirect or cultural rule of China on Xinjiang region that makes it closer to across border ethnicities and thus more vulnerable to the developments in those subsequent regions. These grievances are even increasing when Xinjiang region is getting more and more integrated with mainland China in the wake of ‘Open Door Policy’ and ‘Western development Project’ adopted by Chinese leaders. The terrorism in China and Central Asia cannot be understood in isolation or a side effect of any particular policy response from political elite.

The Xinjiang case points towards nonlinear Chineseness that is not homogenous and omnipresent. This line of argument unfolds how the policies apparently helpful in integrating the region are largely creating problems, keeping states away from what political elites aspire for; national unity.

7.5. China’s Turn to Multilateralism and Changing Regional Architecture

China’s foreign policy by embracing multilateralism is trying to construct unique form of ‘self’ against ‘other’. This seeking of projecting ‘self’ does not necessarily mean rivalry towards the perceived ‘other’. At the same time, this projection of self is a political construct. China’s turn towards multilateralism is happening when all the civilizations are embedded in a universal civilization of modernity. These elements of China as well as international can be traced in the way China approaches SCO. By looking at how China is innovatively stepping into the region while presenting itself as a favourable partner, the spirit of SCO can be traced. The advancing and practicing of norms suitable for member states of SCO as opposed to western

¹⁹ For Details see, Mulaney, Thomas (2010), *Coming to Terms with the Nation: Ethnic Classification in Modern China*, University of California Press

institutionalism again does not mean that SCO is committed to the objective of creating an anti-American or Anti-Western block.

The organization had been facing criticism for carrying an 'autocratic cadre'. It is undeniable fact that none of SCO member states meets the standard criteria for entitlement of western liberal democracy. The states are often portrayed as stabilizing their regimes as opposed to giving space to any pro-democracy movements. This portrayal is on the basis of reducing the concept of 'three evils' to a static national interest of regime survival. The basis of cooperation regarding extremists and terrorists forces is undeniably regime security and gaining legitimacy for struggling regimes in most of cases. The two arguments can be interpreted for highlighting the difference the way regime survival is approached.

The first argument preaches SCO to be autocratic club that is countering the liberal democratic norms. It is a platform that supports member countries by maintaining relations with respective elites to maintain rule over suppressed masses. This view is mostly presented by Western analysts. The organization and its members are criticised for using "Shanghai Spirit" as an instrument to utilize conservative norms to block any democratic trends (Ambrosio 2008). China is far from being a liberal democratic state and with help of Russia and SCO member states, it blocks any representation of such norms and values. While talking about security, the regime survival is an important policy drive, but it is sought to be achieved by gaining legitimacy for Chinese leadership.

The SCO had been attracting a number of scholars with an institutional analytical perspective. Their study specifies the institutions that led to its formation as well as the procedural issues related to its functioning. These structures of the SCO is mostly emphasised as the 'Shanghai Spirit' principle of decision making and voting by consensus as the decisive elements in effective functioning of this organisation. While institutional analysis is a useful tool for explaining and describing the emergence of cooperation schemes, it has some limitations. The problem with the application of institutional framework is that it describes these schemes in a static manner. It is not justifiable to treat the formation of any International Organization, and for the same reason, SCO as a static event. The purpose behind origin and functioning of any such multilateral setting cannot be a motionless event that could be ceased and elaborated as needed.

The post USSR Central Asian region provided China a space to actively formulate its foreign policy. By looking at the security architecture, China is entering through political innovations (multilateralism) not to threaten the civilizational processes and identities of Central Asian states. Without SCO, the region would be more uncertain and volatile. The organization has passed the test of post 9/11 scenario where the US dominated war on terror gripped the whole

region. After the launch of 'war on terror' by President Bush administration, the 'war on terror' alliance invited and involved not only Central Asian states but also Russia and China. The relevance of local/ regional struggle against terrorism seemed to be overshadowed by global war on terror with the US entering the region. The re-emergence and consolidation of SCO as security organization after initial years of Bush war on terror is noteworthy to claim that SCO members had been more interested in finding regional solution to their problems that have not been levelled on them immediately but are part of pre-existing and prolonged threats.

The context is always important for an identity to expand its norms. SCO in context of China-Russia-Central Asia is an instrument in hands of China by using which China is not only catering its national question but is also projecting a distinctive normative structure. The abrupt indication of 'three evils' or in one word, challenges to the Chinese ideas of territoriality is a natural response to fight legitimacy problems faced by Chinese leadership. These increasing legitimacy problems in the wake of transformation of 'Cultural China' to 'National China' demand rigid nationalism that is carrying Chinese characteristics to meet the demands put forward by distinctiveness of China as state. The normative character of the member states of SCO is similar as all the members states are in a way or other facing legitimacy issues in their respective states.

By putting a restriction to propagating any universal norms, the SCO charter limits itself to pick what suits you. The organization has been questioned for having any clear agenda, but over the period of time, the organization has proven itself to be one of most durable multilateral settings operating in the region. This loose institutionalism is more attractive multilateral setting for a region like Central Asia that had been inflicted with feeling of mistrust towards each other. This multilateralism also picturises the 'greatness' associated with China in this setting which does not believe in asking do as I say.

The SCO is criticised for its incapacity to fight 'three evils'. It is widely objected for its non-operational stance towards a wave of uprisings in 2004 and 2005 in Central Asian region. That 'incapacity to intervene' is labelled as non-intervention in the charter of SCO. The absence of direct involvement from the members of SCO is what is preached and prescribed (Aris 2009). The US was criticised for its intervention in domestic affairs of Uzbekistan by criticising the oppression of current regime. SCO on the other hand perceived and responded in a different way by emphasising non-intervention in domestic affairs of Uzbekistan.

The SCO, on contrary, emphasises non-traditional methods to combat non-traditional security threats including terrorist and separatist tendencies (Aris 2009). The knowledge and information sharing constitute a strong practice on part of SCO members to help each other to combat non-traditional security threats in their respective territories. The states also follow the practice of

extraditing individuals suspected for carrying out disruptive and violent activities. These norms of 'non-intervention' have its roots in the territorial identity and the preaching of such norms legitimizes the rule of Chinese political elite not only on Xinjiang, but on other peripheries and even on Mainland China.

It might not be before that China's political elites themselves solve the confusion of their territorial identity and status of China's minority people that political process of assimilation of minority groups rather than politicization takes place through SCO. It is viable for political elites of SCO member states and Chinese leadership to stick to the policy of non-interference and non-traditional methods to combat 'three evils'. As for now, China is more interested in using SCO for gaining a legitimate position in the region and to spread its normative message enveloped by more symbolic political discourse. Equally important is that, SCO has been used as flexible multilateral process that can be moulded in the time of need.

7.6. How identity Debate Adds to Understanding of China's Foreign Policy towards Central Asian Region

Is it enough to conclude that China has emerged as one of the most influential and decisive actor in New Great Game and Russia-China cooperation is directed against the US as indicated abundantly in existing literature. The recent indicators that show China more deeply integrated in the region are not worrisome for the Russian leadership as presence of military bases of the US had been in the past. If Russia can keep the US out of Central Asia, it certainly can try to do the same for China. Any balancing act against China coming from Russia is hardly located as is does with reference to the US. Kyrgyz government's recent emphasis on demand of withdrawal of the US bases after the inclination towards Russia is an example from long list comprised of such evidences. The Geopolitical debate designates an important transformation underlying the 'New Great Game'. This great transformation is indicator of the different nature and different motives of one of the prominent players that is China.

The much discussed material interests of China's foreign policy are portrayed as getting fulfilled and the conclusion of such statement is simplistic understanding of attractiveness of China's economic success for Central Asian states. Why Central Asia is getting attracted towards China? Does the answer lie just in pockets full of cash of China? The US had been offering the same cash while possessing military bases but it was shut out of the region in 2005. Recently, Kyrgyz government has asked the US to vacate its last military base in Manas even after the US is paying what was demanded from Kyrgyz government as rent. The missing puzzle is the identity factor and multi-directional political processes that are guiding Chinese interaction with the region.

The identity factor had not been receiving due consideration while talking about China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region. It matters strongly to define the patterns of relations between China and Central Asian neighbours. The present study emphasises that material interests matter but provide incomplete picture if treated separately from identity factor. The norms of territoriality and the way China approaches Central Asian region are the one that make China more trustworthy partner. The confidence building measures that reduced the size of troops along borders was not a loss in this context.

In China's case, the discourse of Humiliation is not merely a jargon or narrative, it is political practice emphasised by leadership. This discourse works for Chinese leaders to justify a particular policy adoption, and as means to an aspired outcome. As Katzenstein emphasises that to demonstrate the superiority of civilization is a political act to acquire prestige and power (Katzenstein 2012: 8). The foreign policy of China towards Central Asia and the case of Xinjiang denote the particular role of 'others' in constructing, surviving and thriving of 'self'. It is always seen or at least represented as 'immorality' rather than a mere political problem or threat. If the case of Xinjiang is set aside, Bombing of Chinese Embassy in 1999 and 2001 spy plane incident are among many examples. In other words, Chinese leaders by emphasising or celebrating National Humiliation Discourse, try to 'other' the 'self'. This lamenting self is personified time and again in National Days and Chinese Leadership Speeches. The jargon of National Humiliation is accompanied by more emphasised jargons of 'Civilizational China' or 'Chinese First' to signify the meaning of being Chinese.

If it is just interest debate, the pattern could have been similar to China's relations with African or Latin American countries keeping in focus China's resource diplomacy, Chinese aid and China's soft power. But it is different in Central Asia. The primary interest as proven by history was security interest (and in past as well). The official founding declaration of SCO asserted that organization's primary objective was to combat non-traditional security threats. The material interests became more prominent in China-Central Asia relations at later stage.

The lack of rigid boundaries defining the extension of China's 'legitimate' rule made policy of loose reign prevalent in past. The conceptual flexibility that With the fall of Qing empire, China's road towards modernity and attached practices of territorial integrity and nationalism started getting absorbed in China's self-perception and practices.

The long standing 'integration' and 'Go West' debate vs parallel operating and extending 'separatist tendencies' is the example of that. The identity of Xinjiang and that of China has been struggling hard to reconcile with each other. Both identities have clashed more often than to assimilate. As is case of Scots and others have got attached to British national conscious developed in nineteenth century. The wave of being 'British' has not replaced the lower level

attachments of different nationalities that made up 'British' (Knight 1982: 518). In case of China and Xinjiang, the upper level identity and lower level identity has faced problem mixing up. Nationalism in China is synonymous with rigid historical-cultural identity that is generously traced back to 'Civilizational China' and only emphasises PRC as a modern form of a long historical procedure. Chinese leadership by presenting their regime capable enough to securing and preserving China as an identity struggle for legitimacy. The economic development linked with material interests as part of 'Western Development project' also adds to broader legitimacy goals.

As discussed earlier, the use of three evils is criticised for being a tool in the hands of the oppressive regimes of Central Asia to extract benefits related to regime security and acquisition of energy resources. The West is withdrawing (Blank 2013). Blank portrays that the cost of staying in Central Asian region is not attractive as compared to benefits the US is getting. This cost benefit analysis is viable approach keeping in mind the minimal role this region plays in affecting security and territorial integrity of the US directly as compared to affecting security of China. Such recurring episodes are making regional multilateral settings like SCO more relevant. The inter-subjective meaning of the role different players are performing in Central Asian region is making China a more trust worthy and serious partner for Central Asian region.

The broader Chinese identity without the restriction of territorial borders, referred as Civilization, does not necessarily challenges national identity. The reference to civilizational identity is adopted to let loose China and the attendant themes of identity, norms and political responses within strict territorial boundaries. China also refers to contested nature of ethnic, national and other identities with forever changing boundaries of these identities. The boundaries of presence and change in these identities depend on the quality, intensity, and homogeneity of interaction patterns. The similar view is portrayed by Huang:

What is *Chinese* about Chinese civilization is not so much of a *Chinese* imaginary signification, a *Chinese* breakthrough, a *Chinese* religion or a *Chinese* vision. What has made Chinese Civilization *Chinese* is the habits formed among the Chinese and the rules effective on them that have accumulated over time in response to their initial and subsequent conditions (2002: 222)

Where civilizations appear to cohere around uncontested core values, this study seeks to locate political and intellectual innovations created for particular purposes. By opening the foreign policy analysis to looking at political innovations provide better tool to analyse foreign policy making of China rather than relying on inherent cultural traits of unchanging collective identities and practices. With reference to Xinjiang issue, the changing norms related to territoriality embedded in China's identity are must to trace. The processual analysis helps to study beyond what security policies China is adopting to why China is adopting those security policies. It adds to the understanding beyond the simplified analysis that China is approaching

Central Asian markets and establishing energy relations by providing an analytical space to trace the blend of historical trends. It also gives chance to critically analyse the 'Shanghai Spirit' (for really being Shanghaied?) by looking at innovation taking place in China's foreign policy attitude. The process of foreign policy making of China as formulated and practiced in Central Asian context needs to consider China as a process while acknowledging its nonlinear, multi-sited and multidirectional nature.

Economics is good for Central Asia, the State market capitalism is favourable for Central Asian states as well as capitalism along with authoritarian political system is viable option. Russia is bringing in. Yet chances are not clear. In past European powers used Chinese tributary trade and China centred trade network for trading Asian states. The trade as adopted by China emphasised domestic development more than exploitative measures. Even when China had power to control, building canals was preferred rather than occupying waterways unlike European colonisers. It is likely that China-Central Asia trade and economic relations apart from problems like water dispute and dependency element will flourish in future.

The foreign policy making in the field of security, on the other hand, has been more political working on abstract ideas. The contested identity of frontiers in China has been politicised by using three evils and by integrating region to China politically. The culturalization as was seen in the past is rarely seen in China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region. The reason again lies in the fact that China is an old civilization but a new republic. China's political centre is fabricated regarding China's identity with reference to its territorial boundaries. Allen Carlson emphasises that in China's elite writings, there is budding awareness for the need to culturalize rather than politicise ethnic minorities (Carlson 2012). At the moment, the political processes has been doing more to suppress the problem rather than eliminating it. Parallel to that, growing awareness and conceptual innovations among China's political elite are taking place. China cannot cut itself from the concepts and norms outside China that are learned as a result of interaction with other civilizational structures. Political processes and policies are likely to follow the change in political debate. It is to be seen if the change in political practices occur or continuity in domestic repression stays.

On the diplomatic front, China is using SCO. SCO falls in the category of a handful of multilateral institutions China is actively engaged with. This organization thus provides a platform for experimentation of China's active engaging with outside world. The Chinese system generates experimentation and improvisation as seen in China's foreign policy towards Central Asia.

7.7. Conclusion

The comparison of several factors that are at play in formulating China's foreign policy sheds light on various political practices for making Central Asia suitable for Chinese.

Material factors matter and the relevance cannot be denied. The importance of energy resources for a country having recognition as world factory with exceeding demand to feed its industrial sector is unquestioned. China's emphasis on improving economic relations bilaterally and multilaterally is evident. The booming SCO is considered the supreme instrument through which China is bringing forward its agenda of securing and dominating markets of Central Asian states to sell Chinese products. Without doubt China's assiduous support for developing Free Trade Zone demonstrates China's ever present urge to enter Central Asian markets. The quest for accessing markets and securing energy resources work bilaterally and multilaterally through SCO. Turkmenistan is the only Central Asian state that is not party of SCO. The establishment of energy club under auspices of SCO has been concluded. The Central Asia-China gas pipeline that became operational is the result of bilateral negotiations. The economic relations while are creating dependency on part of Central Asian states, China's economic activity is good news keeping in focus the incapacity of governments to ensure economic development, lack of inter connectedness with global economy, lack of attraction on part of foreign investors as related to domestic instabilities of these states. These relations are echoing the broader pattern of economic relations and China-Centred intra-Asia trade before the fall of Qing Empire. The security relations hampered trade with Central Asian region in the past. The change and novel experience blended with the traditional characteristics is making Chinese political elite more aware of the frontier security problem, the regional cooperation being one among such change in response from political elites.

China as an identity and civilization cannot act. Civilizations on the contrary, provide context in which actors encounter and engage one another. All the civilizations are embedded in Civilization of modernity in recent times. China's foreign policy can be represented as carrying a rich mixture of traditions with innovative acts to adapt to broader social context of modernity. The multi directional Chinese political processes and policies can be traced in the relations with Central Asian region. The identity and more specifically politico-territorial identity of China is a long process in this context. It took centuries to construct that identity and it is not easily changeable in near future. The identity debate will stay relevant and illuminating to trace motives of China's foreign policy and specific policy instruments China adopts towards Central Asia. An emphasis on China's identity and role of Xinjiang region in constructing this identity and specific norms makes Chinese approach towards SCO more understandable. The study unleashes complex processes behind apparently simple materialist or national interests guiding

China's foreign policy towards Central Asia. While doing so, the study acknowledges that recognition of complex processes and an insistence on the existence of core values are two aspects of the same political dynamic (Katzenstein 2012: 3). It is not justified to generalize China as a whole. Perdue emphasises that by drawing a sharp line between "tradition" and "modernity" and between China and other nations, the practice artificially fixes the essence of complex cultural ensembles. Perdue illustrates that here is no more true description of China, ofcourse, but today, many people are more likely to look for signs of dynamic evolution and creative mixing than to oppose two static entities of "tradition" and "modernity" (2003: 53).

As far the SCO is concerned, it is a platform that helps in representing China's normative standing. The SCO is an attractive multilateral setting for Central Asian states for gaining the 'profits' of entering into a multilateral alliance along with costing nothing (Apparently enjoying free hand in their respective polities). Identity debate makes it feasible and more understandable why China has become able to flourish relations over the past two decades while its identity and normative structure makes Central Asian states at ease to do business with China. China is continuously developing economic trade and energy relations while the US is busy in battling over its clash of norms. The symbolic power and symbolic balance of power is instrument of multilateralism as observed in case of SCO. It has a strong taste of other symbolic instruments used by China like New Confucianism. The way China approaches SCO also carries modern and traditional elements from China. Non-interference as a political response and choice is adopted and is guiding SCO charter. The policy of non-interference has deep roots in China's issues of territoriality and the same policy of non-interference has profound impact on China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region. The loose reign policy of China in the past can be seen as nearer to non-interference and interactions largely on the basis of informal consent. Chineseness exists and guides policies and practices while Chineseness is never a static notion. It is a complex context for certain political actions.

To trace the foreign policy process while looking at complex processes of China, not as a state but carrying distinctive features help conclude that foreign policy is not that 'foreign'. Only by dealing with identity of China as a non-linear and multi sited process rather than relying on preordained set of defining and intervening variables can unfold the process of foreign policy making towards Central Asian region. The complex identity unable to be confined within set of borders guides the policy making of political centre of today's China. The multi directional identity in fields of territoriality, economics and international behaviour unfolds trends of past continuities while engaging with present circumstances and its effect on China's identity and policies.

By looking at the dimensions of China's identity in above mentioned areas, the study seeks to engrave cultural context of foreign policy making of China towards Central Asia. The interstate

relations have been easily dragged to be lumped under the auspices of globalization or internationalization in recent time. The area of foreign policy is even more vulnerable to getting linked up with concept of 'internationalization' as is done in most of studies covering China's foreign policy towards Central Asian region.

China's internal debates, the give and take from single modern civilization, regional dynamics and patterns of interactions within that is likely to alter the regional context, as is evident by history. The growing energy deals and dependence on Xinjiang region apart from other reasons to resolve the issue might emphasise to resolve the problem in a way that not only challenges 'Sinicization' of region but let Chinese cultural power rise that is hampered by Chinese political elites suppression of Xinjiang region. For now, by illustrating the presence of various connections within and between processes, policies and practices, the 'Innovative Chinese Way' can be observed in foreign policy. The innovation in China's foreign policy is outcome of adapting to change occurring due to interaction with other civilizations as well as absorbing other civilizational policies and practices intentionally or unintentionally. The 'innovative' does not mean unique, but it definitely is distinctive and Chinese.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

The understanding of the foreign policy of a state is without doubt one of the key areas to make sense of the nature of the interstate relations of a specific state and to understand the role any state is performing in the international politics. Apart from that, the methodology to analyse the foreign and security policy of a state is to analyse how the actors and influences shape the foreign policy behaviour of a state. This study acknowledges another area that is left unexplored in previous studies with reference to Central Asia region and that tries to come up with a deeper understanding of the underlying factors behind the foreign policy behaviour of China. The current study, thus, makes the case in favour of the role of identity of China and political processes as guided by this identity. By so doing, it provides a careful analysis of the previously understudied areas that contribute in defining identity of a state e.g; historical evolution of its self-perception, its experiences and memories and construction of those experiences by leadership, to trace China's 'Culture of Foreign Policy' in case of Central Asian region.

China's culture of national security and its territorial identity works as prescription for China's foreign policy towards Central Asia while corresponding with maintaining domestic legitimacy for Chinese leaders and ensuring international prestige for China. The foreign policy of China towards Central Asia guides about two important political processes; frontier security and innovative diplomacy as at play in Central Asian region. The fluid territorial identity, absorption of new elements and struggle on part of political elites to address the tensions related to contested identity of Xinjiang makes Chinese elite explore 'innovative' and 'alternative' political processes. The common threat perceptions due to embedded and similar threats, the security cooperation between China and Central Asian states is institutionalized in form of SCO. The political construction of identity by Chinese political elite as an innovative turn towards multilateralism is a way to maintain the static and politically crafted image of 'self' against 'other'.

On the basis of research objectives, put forward in the introduction section, this study brings forward set of concluding remarks:

With regard to the first argument, this study concludes that while making sense of the foreign policy of China, material capabilities play an important role but ideational factors, if not more, are equally important. The first empirical chapter by studying the dynamics of the 'new great game' comes up with an alternative narration of great power politics, the main guiding lens used for describing the new great game thesis. The 'New Great Game' is even more complex where

Russia and the Britain, two competing actors are replaced by several actors. The normative structure as is seen today in the 'new chessboard' of 'New Great Game' is not striving for influence by using hard power or direct control of territory. The 'Great Game', this chapter concludes is more cooperation and engagement oriented. This conclusion raises questions about the pre-set and much emphasised normative structures of anarchy and self-help. It also emphasises that the threat is rooted not solely in the difference of material capabilities but in the perception of states towards each other. It concludes that the normative structures are not pre-set but are evolved as a result of evolving perceptions of states and inter-civilizational encounters where all entities are embedded in single universal civilization. In this case, China and Russia, the major competitors today are not balancing in classical balance of power way. The political processes as adopted by Chinese political elites through SCO are interpreted as causing more complementarity and engagement rather than clash. The chapter concludes that any interstate interaction pattern is a result of perceived notions of identity of states. In this case, China must have been successful in constructing its identity as an 'opportunity' rather than 'threat'. The chapter sets the stage to explore specific political processes associated with construction of China's identity and developed to successfully engage with Central Asian region.

While understanding the foreign policy preferences of China, the evolution of China's identity from being the centre of universe to the national China is important. The end of Cold War and China's open door policy has added to already multi-fold identity of the state and that has its impacts on China's foreign policy objectives today. The understanding the foreign policy of contemporary China, that is either dealt with a rising power or a perspective challenger, is misleading unless we keep in focus the domestic sources of China's identity as evolved in history. The contemporary analysis of the foreign policy of China thus engages with the identity paradigm to conclude how China's self-perception moves back and forth between imperial China and a great civilization to a fragile power and political processes initiated to address the gap between the two identities.

With the process of Sinicization, China is determined to ensure an influential role for itself in the international politics. The civilizations are less unique; the political elites are determined to present their civilizations for being unique. This assumption does not refute that civilizations are distinct entities. The representation of 'self' against 'other' is a political construct that is questionable. Careful observation makes it clear that this role on part of China, today, is more focused on 'peaceful development paradigm' and the concept of 'harmonious world'. While, talking about China's rise, many scholars refer to its assertive past but those studies ignore the reality that identity of the state is not static and it carries the elements of continuity and change. In case of China, the Middle Kingdom mentality had been shattered by the intervention of western powers and China's century of humiliation resulting from the weakening and falling of

the Qing Empire. For a whole century afterwards, Chinese leaders remained preoccupied with the restructuring and strengthening process. Parallel to that a vibrant environment of discussion and political processes accompanied to search meaning of being Chinese, its status in the world and the appropriate ways to govern it. Soon after the open door policy of Deng Xiaoping near the end of the Cold War, the pragmatic approaches of Chinese leaders towards maintaining territorial identity and the alternative practices to resolve the minority ethnic problems initiated regional cooperation on the issue.

As an important foreign policy objective, China's growing economic, energy and trade relations with Central Asian region, as depicted in chapter four, are echoing China's traditional role at the centre of Asian regional economic trade. Whenever security relations were smooth in past, the economic links with north-western region established and flourished. The lack of security on the north-western frontier hampered economic relations until recently. The border demarcation process and enhanced security cooperation revitalized economic activity. Despite various issues like Water Disputes and overdependence, the factors like China's heavy investment, strong economy and less integrated position of Central Asian states to globalized world are likely to strengthen economic relations. China has largely been considered economic power and economic development plays an important role in ensuring Chinese regime stability and legitimacy. With reference to Central Asian region, the economic relations are growing amid better security environment in post 1991 Central Asia. The underlying tensions faced by China's political centre related to China's territorial identity and contested political processes on the other hand are not promising.

The North-western frontier had remained a volatile region in terms of security for China. China's political practices in the domain of frontier security and adoption of 'three evils' (Terrorism, Separatism and Religious Fundamentalism) are highlighted in chapter five, to trace the tensions faced by Chinese political elites. The confusion on part of Chinese leaders to chart frontier security policy between two contested identities of cultural China (without defined peripheries or direct control) and national China (Territorially integrated nation state) have largely been seeing politicization of the issue. The study examines the 'three evils' as a political practice adopted in response to long historically embedded process of identity of China and status of minority groups at its periphery. From suppression of minority status during Mao's era and Communist China to urgent need to solve border problems up till the joining of global war on terrorism, the problem of frontier security is more politicized in China and then through SCO in Central Asian region. The politicization of the problem (Three Evils) of frontier minority groups along with forced integration (Go West Development Project, Han Migration, Suppression of Ethnic Religion and Identities) has made the problem and minority groups more subjugated rather than taking concrete steps to eradicate the problem.

The sixth chapter, by using the case of SCO presents a case in favour of China's adoption of alternative and innovative political response to geo-strategic environment of Central Asia with traditional influence of Russia. The organization is an important foreign policy drive for China to gain symbolic power in the region. Chinese elite has used projection of traditional concepts of Confucianism of harmony and humanism alongwith modern elements of territorial integrity and sovereignty. The latter political process and preference has made China and other SCO member states emphasise policy of non-interference. Where policies of loose reign, economic development and cooperation regarding Non Traditional Security has made SCO attractive regional organization for Central Asian states, the policy of non-interference has largely left the organization incapable to systemically respond to regional security challenges leaving China's power more symbolic and based on political rhetoric.

While building the above mentioned course of argument, the study focuses on following arguments in order to develop coherent understanding of China's foreign policy process towards Central Asian region. The study emphasises blending of traditional elements with modern are making China's economic relations with Central Asia expand. The same mingling and innovative trend of multilateralism is making China adopt political process of leading a multilateral organization and at least till recently being successful in gaining legitimacy to act as an important actor in region without being challenged by any state or Russia. But the contested nature of China's territorial identity due to intermingling of 'traditional' and 'modern' has been translated more clearly in China's political practices within SCO. While considering China located within broader regional and global civilizational context of modernity (western notions of nation state and attached themes), the causal power of political practices adopted in Central Asian region determine the course of China's foreign policy towards Central Asia in future and might inform about 'Chineseness' in political processes and practices elsewhere. China's foreign policy towards Central Asia is a multi directional, non linear and complex process. The study acknowledges the role of China's identity and process of Sinicization that provides context for formulating China's Central Asia policy. The foreign policy of China and its political practices as bound to be guided by broader process of Sinicization are therefore not linear rather multi-directional.

The present research assumes that there is a space and indication for further research about how the political processes as unfolding in Central Asian case might be compared to political processes in other regions. It would have been an ambitious task for a PhD thesis to cover more than one region, to trace the traditional and innovative as practiced by China's foreign policy. By providing the understanding of China's foreign policy towards Central Asia, this research provides a baseline contribution for a new and comprehensive approach to help further studies

to come up with holistic understanding of China's foreign policy in comparative regional perspective.

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