

**UNIVERSITY OF SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND**

**CHINA AND PERIPHERAL CONFLICTS**

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## **ABSTRACT**

China's enormous size and stature as a new hub of economic growth in tandem with its military modernisation make China a rising power. The strategic consequences of China's economic growth synergised with its military muscles are multiple and profound, especially, for the neighbours in its conflict-prone periphery. The aim of this dissertation is not only to assess the importance and complexities of conflicts in the periphery of China, but also about the necessity for the neighbours to coexist with a more powerful China. At the same time, in the Chinese geopolitical context, domestic stability and hence, the CCP's legitimacy has been perpetually paramount, and external threats or conflicts are usually perceived in the context of aggravating domestic and international stability, thereby hampering its strategic aim of achieving global economic command and power-projection military capability.

With the dawn of 21<sup>st</sup> century, China is grooving to an exuberant global beat, the intensity of conflicts along China's periphery has dimmed to such an extent that its political, economic, and social order will probably not disintegrate into chaos in the near future. Instead, China's rapidly growing economic capacity and its soaring prestige in faraway capitals like Washington and Paris has meant an expansion of Chinese "soft power", i.e., an assertive China with an ability to get what it wants by attracting and persuading others to adopt its goals, instead of blunt economic and military coercion. And, China could reasonably be expected to manage most, if not all, the conflicts in its periphery to its own advantage. These include: efforts to augment its military capabilities in a manner commensurate with its increased economic muscle and acquire new allies and underwrite the protection of others in its periphery. It is unlikely that the PRC will actually acquire new or reclaim old territory for China's resources or for symbolic reasons by penalizing, if necessary, any opponents or bystanders who resist such claims. While it may wish to redress past wrongs it believes to have suffered; or attempt to rewrite the prevailing international "rules of game" to better reflect its own geostrategic interests; or in the most extreme policy choice, perhaps even ready itself for preventive war or to launch predatory attacks on its foes on the pretext of the "cult of defence," – all of which have been seen as the bedrock of the contemporary China's strategic culture, however, it is

probable that China will not pursue these at the cost of its future economic and/or social security agenda.

## **CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION**

I certify that the ideas, research work, results, analyses, and conclusions reported in this dissertation are entirely my own effort, except where otherwise acknowledged. I also certify that the work is original and has not been previously submitted for any other award.

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Signature of Candidate

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Date

## **ENDORSEMENT**

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Signature of Supervisor/s

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Date

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Finally, I wish to acknowledge the relentless support and encouragement of my wife Manju, and daughters Malawika and Dipshika Burathoki throughout this study.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ADF	Australian Defence Force
APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEAN +3	ASEAN + China, Japan and S. Korea
CBM	confidence-building measures
CBSM	confidence-building and security measures
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CIISS	China Institute of International Strategic Studies
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CMC	Central Military Commission
CTBT	Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
CVBG	[aircraft] carrier battle group
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
DoD	Department of Defence
EMP	Electronic Magnetic Impulse
EU	European Union
FBIS	Foreign Broadcast Information Service
FBIS – CHI	Foreign Broadcast Information Service – China (Daily Report)
FEER	Far Eastern Economic Review
FISS	Foundation of International Strategic Studies
G-7	Group of Seven (US, UK, France, Germany, Italy, Canada, and Japan)
GNP	gross national product
ICBM	Intercontinental-range ballistic missile
IISS	International Institute of Strategic Studies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRBM	Intermediate-range ballistic missile
JCS	Joint Chiefs of Staff
JSDF	Japan Self-Defence Forces
KMT	Kuomintang (Nationalist Party)
LACM	Land-attack cruise missile
LAD	Jiefanguin Bao (Liberation Army Daily)
LW	limited war
LWUHTC	limited war under high technological condition
MBT	main battle tank
MIRV	multiple independent re-entry vehicles
MoD	Ministry of Defence
MR	military region
MRAF	Military Region Air Force
MRBM	medium-range ballistic missile
MTCR	Missile Technology Control Regime
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NEFA	Northeast Frontier Agency
NFU	No first Use
NMD	National Missile Defence
NPC	National People's Congress
PAP	People's Armed Police

PLA	People's Liberation Army
PLAAF	PLA Air Force
PLAN	PLA Navy
PLANAF	PLA naval air force
PPP	purchasing power parity
PRC	People's Republic of China
PW	people's war
PWUMC	people's war under modern condition
RMA	revolution in military affairs
RMB	renminbi (Chinese currency)
RNA	Royal Nepalese Army
ROC	Republic of China
ROK	Republic of Korea
SAM	surface-to-air missile
SC	Security Council
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization (China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan)
SEATO	Southeast Asia Treaty Organization
SIGINT	Signal Intelligence
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SLBM	submarine-launched ballistic missile
SLOC	Sea lines of communication
SLORC	State Law and Order Restoring Council
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
SOE	state-owned enterprise
SRBM	short-range ballistic missile
SSM	surface-to-surface missile
SSN	nuclear-powered attack submarine
SSBN	nuclear ballistic missile submarine
SSP	School Support Platoon
TMD	theatre missile defence
TRA	Taiwan Relations Act
UN	United Nations
UNCLOS	UN Conference on the Law of the Sea
US	United States of America
WMD	weapons of mass destruction
XUAR	Xinjiang-Uyghur Autonomous Region

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## Chapter I: China and Peripheral Conflicts

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### Introduction

This dissertation aims to assess the generic nature and particular dimensions of interstate and intrastate conflicts on the periphery of China. Particular focus has been placed on their significance in China's strategic culture and its geostrategic interests and roles in them. In this context, the study has analysed the enduring Indo-Pakistan conflict as the central case study, and also has considered a secondary case study focused on strategic competition and potential conflict in Burma. The “**central questions**” involving China's opportunities and challenges for the containment or facilitation of the peripheral conflicts have been addressed in Chapters II-VI.

- What are China's defined strategic cultural views and future geostrategic interests vis-à-vis the conflicts in its peripheral zones?
- What are these “Peripheral Conflicts” that are of such concern to the PRC, particularly those involving itself, India, Pakistan and Burma?
- What role has China played, or will China play, in the conflicts, and to what ends?
- What resources must China marshal to play an active role in addressing these simmering tensions in its neighbourhood?

Another question that could be examined, although it is not done so here in any depth, is - How do domestic handicaps and foreign constraints limit the pace and scope of China's role in addressing the conflicts?

The PRC under CCP rule has partially filled the geopolitical vacuum left by the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 as the last major communist state in the world. This geopolitical metamorphosis has impelled world politics to shift its focus from sensitive “military strategic alignment” to open “economic development.” But, this newly popularised and politically fashionable notion that largely failed to take root in the periphery of China, in part because of Asia's

enduring volatile rivalries stemming from its colonial heritage (e.g., India-Pakistan), the carving of the newly freed territories by the WWII victors (e.g., North-South Korea), and the attrition inflicted by civil wars germinated from ideological heterodoxy (e.g., China-Taiwan). Instead, the emergence of new intra and inter-state actors with conflicting agendas, including Maoist insurgency in Nepal, the transnational Islamic radical forces in Afghanistan and Kashmir, the brutal authoritarian military junta in Burma, the political vacillation in adolescent Bangladesh, some unhealed political wounds in Indo-China, and a continuing regional friction in the South-China Sea, are new addenda to the old Cold War era rivalries and tensions.

At the same time, China has emerged as an economic powerhouse in the midst of this conflict-prone zone, meticulously interweaving the forces of globalisation into its huge population with the size of continental territory and cultural work ethics as the fountain of resources. Armed with a vibrant economy, China's new 'stealth weapon' takes the form of economic diplomacy. As China is entering a new era as a global power, it has moved from strength to strength – China a WTO member, Beijing hosting the 2008 Olympic games, China's entry after Russia and USA to the intergalactic elite in 2003, China's surpassing of the US to become the world's largest recipient of FDI (*The Economist* 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2004, pp. 3-24); and the fact that its foreign exchange reserves reached \$US 403 billion, the second largest reserves in the world after Japan (*The Economist* 28 February 2004, p.72) have provided the Chinese with a sense of confidence about the future. The six-nation multilateral talks in Beijing led by China in an effort to diffuse the North Korean nuclear arsenal crisis has lifted China's prestige as a multilateral player in the international community. This also indicates that Beijing's strategic interests are not being "isolated" or "contained" in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century environment.

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century unfolds, arguably one of the most important bilateral relationships internationally will be that between the US and China. A host of UN or NATO sanctioned interventions led by the US, such as the Gulf War (1991), war against Serbia and Kosovo Crisis (1999), campaign against Taliban regime in Afghanistan and Al-Queda terrorist net-work (2001-2), and the US

overthrow of the Saddam Hussain regime in Iraq (2003), has led China to perceive itself as facing the US as a rival for global dominance. The strong US military presence in Japan and South Korea and American support for Taiwan as in the Taiwan Strait Crisis (1996) are seen as US threats both global in nature and specific to China's peripheral security. Moreover, the prospect of continued US and allied military force deployed in Afghanistan, and particularly in the Central Asian republics on China's northwestern periphery (see Fig. 1.1), are unsettling and perennial sore points for China. This has already been conceived as an American strategy of encircling China. Beijing presumes that the United States' new propensity to intervene in regional conflicts under the pretext of "humanitarian intervention" is a cover for extending and consolidating American hegemony in a climate of "neo-containment" of China.

In this context, China's diplomatic patterns of amity and enmity around its geographic periphery will be a key component in the containment or continuation of proximate conflicts, and bear significant influence on China's own future development as a national, regional and global power. This is especially true in the case of India-Pakistan relations, which are fraught with potential dangers of nuclear conflict and continuing terrorist-like currents.

The contemporary leadership of China has an unswerving fidelity to the engine of economic growth – the only engine that can lift China's core aspirations simultaneously, namely: (i) the inspiration of material prosperity for China's huge population; (ii) the legitimacy of CCP rule; (iii) and the acquisition of financial resources to plug the critical gap in its military capabilities. A political upheaval or military conflict in any part of the globe in general and in China's proximity in particular may shake the foundations of China's national strategy of continued economic growth.



**Figure 1.1: China and Peripheral Conflict Zone (Source:**  
[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/asia\\_po100.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/asia_po100.jpg))

### **Definition of Key Terms:**

Some key terms used in the dissertation are elaborated here, with a view to achieve greater clarity and comprehension.

***Conflict:*** This term is used to indicate a state of disharmony between opposing actors as a result of prolonged skirmishes, battles, wars or open clashes of ideas / interests. The first salient characteristic of the conflict, which is contextual in the dissertation is the conflict between dyads of similar ethnicity or over ethnically specific stakes -whatever the objectives of the states beyond the immediate conflict, unifying the territories of common ethnicity is viewed as the primary foreign policy objective. The second salient feature of conflict is enduring patterns of objectives, and alliances and rivalries, associated with differences in regime types.

***National Interest:*** This term is invoked by realists to signify that state-survival is at the top of the list. An individual state's interests connect policies and actions adopted by the government, with want-satisfaction and possibly need fulfilment. National Interest expresses an instrumental relation between such policies and action, and its preference-attainment (Baylis & Smith 2001, p.77).

***Periphery:*** In the context of this dissertation, the "periphery" is defined as being a zone adjacent to the contemporary political boundaries of China. Any state with or without a common border with China but having conflicts of concern to the PRC is included in this periphery.

***Strategic Culture:*** Strategic Culture is an integrated set of concepts and symbols that act to establish pervasive and long-lasting grand strategic preferences by formulating notions of the role and efficacy of force in interstate political affairs (Johnston 1995, pp.32-64). Strategic Culture represents "the sum total of ideas, conditioned emotional responses and patterns of habitual behaviour that members of a national strategic community have acquired through instruction or imitation and shape with each other"(Snyder 1984, pp. 108-146).

***Strategic Frontiers:*** This concept delineates the territorial parameters of a nation's perceived national security interests- that is, territories to which it would be willing to commit military forces in pursuit of goals that it defines to be in its

national interests. Strategic frontiers are far greater than geographic boundaries, and include spheres of concern under the sea and in space (Shambaugh 2002, pp.66-69).

## **Review of Relevant Literature**

The issues raised by the dissertation's central questions have been systematically addressed in the discussion and analysis in Chapters II to VI. The research material for this dissertation has been based on the relevant literatures of primary and secondary sources such as archives, documents, newspapers, TV and radio news, Internet articles, and Internet databases.

**Primary Sources:** The Defence White Papers and Annual Budgetary Reviews of the PRC, India and Pakistan, *Jane's Intelligence Review*, document pertaining to the PLA'S defence doctrines, strategy, and security documents have been perused to cover the issues raised in this dissertation.

**Secondary Sources:** (i) ***Published Books:*** China has always occupied a special niche in the world community – a model to some, a mystery to others. From the early 1990s, there has been a dominant theme in the literature regarding the “China-Threat” in terms of its booming economy in general, and the PLA's parallel modernisation in particular. The recently published books covering the regional geo-politics and geo-economics provide a firm source base to support the analytical dimensions of this dissertation.

The book *The Nature of Chinese Politics: From Mao to Jiang* (2002), edited by Jonathan Unger, represents a “state of the art” analysis of elite politics in China. Outstanding contributions by eleven China scholars illuminate the complex interplay of structure, culture, and personality in shaping the dynamics of Chinese politics at the top. The authors grapple with the role of the informal political network, the influence of the military, and the difficult transition from a leader-dominated political system to one based on evolving but uncertain institutionalised norms and procedures. The writings in this book help to address the *raison d'être* of the role China plays in regional geo-political conflicts.

*China's New Rulers: The Secret Files* (2002), a book edited by Andrew J. Nathan and Bruce Gilley, is based on confidential Party files leaked to a Chinese writer abroad. It offers an unprecedented glimpse into the most orderly succession in the turbulent history of the People's Republic. It provides detailed descriptions of the men who will rule China for the next five years – their backgrounds, their characters and their vision for the future. This book contains insights into matters of great importance to the West, such as who will lead China, what changes they may bring in terms of economic reform, China's integration into a global economy, pressures for political liberalization and human rights, ethnic unrest in Tibet and Xinjiang, the status of Taiwan, peripheral conflicts, and relations with the US.

Field Marshal Lord Carver's historical chronology *War since 1945* (1990) largely concentrates on the conflicts in the Asian theatre. This book covers the Korean War (1950-1953), the Indo-Pakistan War (1948,1965,1971), the Sino-Indian War (1962), and the Vietnam War (1954-1975) in a lucid, comprehensive, and critical way, thus assisting in the determination of contextual factors shaping the conflicts that this dissertation raises as the "raison d' guerre".

The volume entitled *South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balances and Alliances*, (2002), edited by Michael R. Chambers, consists of seventeen papers presented at the cosponsored conference by the Asia/Pacific Research Centre, the Centre for International Security and Cooperation at Stanford University, and the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Program on January 4-5, 2002. The papers focus on the future of strategic balances and alliances in the South Asian region, with 2020 as the target date. This book not only talks about the pattern of amity and enmity in the triangular equation of the Sino-Indian-Pakistan relationship, but also provides information about the role of extra regional powers and issues such as economic trends, domestic political conditions, strategic culture, and, above all, the role of nuclear weapons.

The volume *The China Threat: Perceptions, Myths and Reality* (2002), edited by Herbert Yee and Ian Storey incorporates sixteen essays that constitute a balanced view on the idea that the PRC as a rising power represents a source of regional and international instability, the so-called 'China threat'. The chapter authored by



Andrew Nathan and Robert Ross argues that China remains a vulnerable power, crowded on all sides by powerful rivals and potential foes. In any event, China's long-term prospects to successfully modernise its small and dated strategic nuclear force depend on its success at modernising the country's economy, infrastructure, technology and human capital. Therefore, China is not likely to pose a challenge to US strategic primacy in the first two decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. On the other hand, some contributors point out that the PRC has an aspiration to become a hegemonic power because of its authoritarian socialist political system, rapid economic growth and historical role as a great power. The 'China threat' has thus become an "open excuse" as well as a "latent factor" affecting many countries' policies towards the PRC. The arguments presented in this book are thus very pertinent to the analytical questions addressed in the dissertation.

David Shambaugh's *Modernising China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects* (2002), analyses China's evolving military power. It is comprehensive, meticulously researched, and enriched by many years of personal interviews in Beijing with top military/ security specialists. He includes an insightful summary of the Chinese military and explains many of the problems the PLA has had, and will continue to have, in its course of modernisation. This book is rich in data, and will be extensively used in the dissertation, as the role of the Chinese military will be a critical determining factor not only in the containment or conflagration of conflicts in the periphery of China, but also in how China relates to the outside world, especially to the US.

**(ii) Journals and Periodicals.** There exists a wide range of scholarly journals and periodicals that focus on the economic, political, and security affairs of contemporary China. *The China Quarterly*, *The China Journal*, *The Far Eastern Economic Review*, and *The Economist* are a few examples. They provide in-depth information and commentary on dimensions of contemporary China's booming economy. *Time* and *The Bulletin* also cover dimension of contemporary China's security, including China's vivid scenario of the social ills inflicted by its "economic fever".

*The Military Balance*, published annually by the IISS in London, is an authoritative assessor of China's military modernisation, and the IISS's series of Adelphi Papers concentrates on military issues. For example, G.V.Segal's "China Changes Shape: Regionalism and Foreign Policy" (*Adelphi Paper No.287*, IISS London), and some publications by the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at ANU have assisted in outlining the role of the PLA in China's national interests for this dissertation.

(iii) **Internet sources.** The Internet allows extensive access to relevant data, particularly up-to-date policy documents and critical press releases of PRC. Used with care, it greatly assists in addressing the questions raised in this dissertation. For instance, 'The Survey of the World Economy' by *The Economist* (2<sup>nd</sup> October 2004, pp. 3-24) has precisely indicated China's strong economic health vis-à-vis the wobbling global economy ([www.economist.com/surveys](http://www.economist.com/surveys)).

Dr Hill's articles 'China's armed forces set to undergo face-lift' (*JIR*, Feb. 2003), 'China's naval development focuses on Taiwan' (*JIR*, June 2003), 'One year on: China's leaders set out strategy for 2004' (*JIR*, March 2004) highlight the PRC's current military modernisation process and tactical moves in achieving its immediate strategic goals ([jir.janes.com](http://jir.janes.com)).

## **Research Methodology**

The method adopted for this study has been documentary research and analysis in which multiple primary and secondary sources have been extensively utilised. The content analysis based on an archival methodology/approach has been the primary technique applied to this dissertation topic and its central questions so as to reach a set of interpretative conclusions. Guided by the central questions set for the study, the research investigates four basic source types.

The first and most extensively used are recently published secondary sources in the form of books, academic journals and periodicals relevant to this dissertation's foci. FBIS translation of Chinese military newspapers and journals has been utilised to a degree in the study, and it constitutes a hybrid secondary-primary source. The works include both specialised monographs and more

comprehensive military almanacs from Western resources, which helped to eliminate the common belief that there is no military transparency, especially in regard to information about China.

The second set of sources are specialist analyses of the PLA generally and of its many specialised aspects. This research uses not only the annual volumes of conference proceedings from the two annual meetings on the PLA, sponsored by the American Enterprise and its partners (Institute of US Army War College in recent years) and the Council on Advanced Policy Studies in Taiwan and its partners (the RAND Corporation in recent years), but also the rising number of PLA and China security articles appearing in Western scholarly and policy journals.

Primary data and assessments in leading defence and security publications are a third and invaluable source utilised in the study. These include many publications of the Jane's Information Group, the annual volumes of *The Military Balance*, published by the IISS in London, and the annual volume of the *Military Technology*, published by the MPG, Germany.

A fourth source of information is the growing number of Internet websites on global military and security affairs, as well as some PLA-specific websites listed on the China Security Homepage ([http:// mehampton/Chinasec.html](http://mehampton/Chinasec.html)). This has unparalleled holdings of books, periodicals and journals on defence and security issues.

Finally, the Defence Library Service of Canberra has been extensively used as it has a large holding of books, periodicals and journals on defence and security issues. However, contradictions and misstatements of fact frequently appear in many works, and thus a lot of time has been spent on crosschecking sources and checking with knowledgeable experts to verify questionable data or assertions, and this dissertation is hoped to be as fully accurate as humanly possible.

## **Analytical Framework**

There are three major traditional schools in the study of international relations: Realism/Neo-Realism, Liberalism/Neo-Liberalism, and Marxist/Structuralist or

World-System Theory (Baylis & Smith 2001, pp.141-249). A newer model, “Constructivism,” which is a more radical variant of Neo-Liberalism, has been found to be of particular use in analysing some important features of the conflicts covered in this dissertation

***Realism/Neo-Realism:*** In international security, a conservative worldview strongly influences the contours of “realism,” or power politics (Realpolitik), which holds that a nation rationally uses power to pursue its self-interest. In this “power politics” model, relative gain, balance of power, sovereignty, the state-centric anarchic system model, capabilities, trust, and so on are the bedrock characteristics of Realism/Neo-Realism. Regardless of differences in their doctrines and objectives, all states face threats to their integrity and survival. They can never be entirely certain where threats may arise. Therefore, they have to take seriously all potential threats and deter them by arming and attracting allies. Thus, the common environment of the international system tends to confront different types of states with relatively homogeneous challenges, and to elicit relatively homogeneous responses. The situation of particular states in the system is thus characterized by two primary variables: the number of states in the international system, and the distribution of military power amongst them.

In the Neo-Realist framework, uncertainty about military capabilities is usually the most important reason. States may significantly over-assess their own or their allies’ military capabilities and level of trust, or under-assess enemy capabilities, such that a level of preparation sufficient to deter war in the presence of accurate assessments no longer suffices. On the other hand, uncertainty about the preferences of other states is not usually taken to be similarly destabilizing. This is because cautionary countermeasures are more easily taken to hedge against the risk of uncertainty about preferences. Theoretically, if a country hitherto perceived to be an ally or a neutral becomes a threat, arms and alliances can be used to deter such a threat just as readily as they can be used to deter threats from states that are more certainly enemies.

In the contemporary Asian context, the Neo-Realist framework thus implies a focus on whether or not the expected alliance constellations for each conflict are likely to deter both sides from launching a war. On the Korean peninsula, will

South Korea and available US forces be deterred by the combination of North Korean nuclear preparations and the possibility of Chinese backing? In this analysis, war is most likely to break out if North Korea over assesses its own capabilities, or under-assesses South Korean capabilities or US resolve to back South Korea; or if South Korea over-assesses its own capabilities, or under-assesses North Korean capabilities or China's resolve to back North Korea. A similar analysis applies to the China-Taiwan and India-Pakistan conflicts.

***Liberalism/Neo-Liberalism.*** The basic tenet of the set of perspectives comprising Neo-Liberalism is that state objectives, and thus strategies, are largely determined by regime type and state identity. State identity includes not only a "civic identity," like democracy and individual rights, but also an "ethnic identity" based upon the state's ethnic composition. States typically reconcile both types of identity into a legitimising ideology that is at least the normal basis of representation by political elites. The role of non-state actors also is accounted for, and there is a belief in the concept of relative gain.

In contemporary Asia, these debates typically turn on what strategies are most likely to pacify North Korea, China, and Pakistan. The dovish view is that these regimes are liable to remain peaceful as long as certain of their fundamental interests are not threatened. For North Korea, this means that economic aid; trade and diplomatic recognition are desirable to prevent worsening famine and the possibility of a desperation-driven invasion of the South. For China, it means that declaring and recognizing an independent Taiwan are to be avoided as an affront to the strong national pride of Chinese elites. Such a provocation may lead otherwise cautious leaders to consider more seriously a military solution to the "one China problem" For Pakistan, it means that India can avoid conflict by negotiating with Kashmiri secessionists and increasing regional autonomy. This strategy avoids pushing Pakistan into a corner, where the regime is forced to choose between peace and favourable change in Kashmir.

On the other hand, the hawkish view is that the North Korean, Chinese, and Pakistani regimes are more likely to use violent means to achieve their aggressive unificationist objectives unless they are met with strong and unambiguous deterrence or incited to cooperate with international regime standards and

mechanisms. For North Korea, this means that economic aid and trade make war more likely by strengthening an aggressive military outlook, and that diplomatic recognition may be misinterpreted as a lack of resolve. For China, it means that the US should better arm Taiwan and make clear that its defensive commitment will be unchanged by a Taiwanese declaration of independence. For Pakistan, it means that India must not reward secessionist violence in Kashmir with concessions, but must rather impose retaliatory costs on Pakistani support for such violence.

Neo-Liberalism is inadequate in terms of explaining some important characteristics of the China-Taiwan, Korean, and India-Pakistan conflicts. Neo-Liberalism tends to take state preferences as given, largely determined by their regime types and state identities. For example, according to Neo-Liberalism, regime types can change and produce dramatic changes in foreign policy preferences.

***Constructivism.*** In accordance with Heo & Horowitz (2003, pp. 2-8), foreign policy debates in constructivist terms often resemble a “radicalised” form of the Neo-Liberal debates. The Neo-Liberal “hawk” versus “dove” debates are often reprised in constructivist terms. With respect to China, “doves” often believe that economic policy concession and respect for the “one China” principle will make ruling elites and mass opinion satisfied with the status quo, enhance “nationalism,” and hence make it more likely that support for regime objectives will be deepened through economic openness and a move toward political openness in the future. On the other hand, “hawks” believe that such policies may embolden Chinese elites to take risks to achieve early unification, based on a desire to further national interests in a manner consistent with repressing dissent and preserving their own power. Such developments invite open clashes that would mobilize Chinese national identity behind an authoritarian regime and away from norms and institutions associated with “Western values”. Regarding Taiwan, another debate concerns whether strong US military and diplomatic backing will accelerate or slow the emergence of an islander identity (linked with the values of “democratisation”) and its tendency to embrace the independence cause.

Will concessions push North Korea toward following China's reform path, or will they merely solidify the existing regime and embolden its more radical elements? Will concessions lead Pakistan to return toward secular nationalism and mutually beneficial political and economic stability, or will they vindicate and thus deepen Islamist identity and the associated jihadi (holy war) methods? To conclude, constructivism has the merit of explicitly addressing the kinds of transformations of state identity and regime type that are now under way in China, Pakistan, and possibly in North Korea, in the years to come.

Constructivism should be seen as a complement to the other theoretical approaches, which continue to yield valuable theoretical insights. Constructivism and Neo-Liberalism emphasize, respectively, the sources of foreign policy preferences and the transforming effects of interaction between states with different foreign policy preferences. Neo-Realism focuses more on whether or not the balance of power mechanism is effective in the context of a system with units of given preferences and resources.

***Marxist/Structuralism or World-System Theory:*** In this theory, the most important feature of world politics is that they take place within a structural, "class-like" environment shaped by the world capitalist economy. In this world economy, the most important actors are not actors but classes, and the behaviour of all other actors is ultimately explicable by class forces. Thus, capitalist dominated states, multinational corporations, and even international organizations represent the dominant class interest in the world economic system. As for the order in world politics, Marxist theorists think of it primarily in economic rather than in military terms and consider the "order" to be exploitative, hegemonic, and "unjust". This theory is the least applicable and influential of the three theories in discussing the conflicts in the study of this dissertation.

In the following sections of the present study, all of these theoretical approaches will be set within an overall framework of strategic interaction between states. Here, the treatment will be brief and the focus will be on the one dyads of each conflict, China-Taiwan, North- South Korea, and India-Pakistan. The analysis begins by looking at recent changes and trends in regime types and state

identities as they pertain to strategic culture. This approach implies further changes or possible changes in foreign policy preferences and in the corresponding structure of threats. Alternative strategies and the likely patterns of strategic interaction are then laid out. Finally, the various possible outcomes are mapped back into an assessment of further changes in regime types, state identities, preferences, and threats. With these consequences, or payoffs, of different patterns of strategic interaction in mind, it is possible to select out a number of more plausible scenarios for the future development of the three conflicts.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

The dissertation's Chapter II provides an historical as well as contemporary perspective of China's evolving strategic culture, which is largely driven by a "cult of defence". There are core strategic issues embedded in the enduring conflicts around China. Its strategic culture, the "cult of defence," is the result of interplay between Confucian and Realpolitik strands, whereby Chinese elites believe strongly that their country's strategic tradition is pacifist, non-expansionist, and purely defensive. But, at the same time, it provides them with a justification for demonstration or use of force; including offensive and pre-emptive strikes, as being defensive in nature. The first two central questions raised in the dissertation are addressed in this chapter.

In Chapter III, the study assesses the post-Cold War changes and future prospects for China in relation to these peripheral conflicts. To contextualize the conflicts in this periphery, as Taiwan has become more democratised and has forged a strong indigenous identity, Chinese threats to use force to reintegrate Taiwan have increased. China has also become more aggressive in asserting territorial claims in the South China Sea, particularly in the Paracel and Spratly Islands. Moreover, Chinese diplomacy in Southeast Asia often links security and economic initiatives in an increasingly active way. On the Korean peninsula, where large, heavily armed and nuclear-backed forces face each other across a demilitarised zone, the North Korean regime remains highly unpredictable, and continues to play a survival game by developing nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. In this context, North Korea's ties with China and Russia are briefly



explored. In South Asia, another peripheral state, Nepal, has been experiencing an intrastate Maoist inspired struggle in recent times, and this will be briefly mentioned. The interstate transnational Islamic radical forces in Afghanistan and Kashmir have successfully attracted world attention. Islam remains a powerful cultural force in the western periphery of China, including its own northwest XUAR.

Chapter IV, a case study of *China and the Indo-Pakistani conflict*, is the ‘nucleus’ of this dissertation. It explores at the roots of the rivalry to understand the difficulty of obtaining peace between India and Pakistan. The regional geopolitical dynamics of the 1960s gravitated Pakistan into the Chinese orbit, and ever since, their strategic partnership has solidified. Over the past fifty years, the Indo-Pakistan rivalry has erupted into three wars and numerous disputes. Due to the geographical proximity of China, India, and Pakistan and enduring Sino-Pakistani *entente cordiale* as the background to Sino-Indian enmity, the goals of the PRC in approaching the explosive India-Pakistan rivalry has been a key feature in the strategic triangle of three nations.

This chapter also deals with the contemporary geopolitical scenario of shifting global alliances and changing priorities, especially the Sino-American rivalry for predominance in Asia will be central in the final realignment of nations regionally and addresses the last central question of the dissertation “*How do domestic handicaps and foreign constraints limit the pace and scope of China’s role in addressing the conflict?*” Chapter V highlights the impact of the Sino-Burmese nexus to India’s security concern on its eastern flank and the Indian Ocean as a looming or potential zone of conflict. Chapter Six summarises and concludes the findings of the study in terms of the central questions set for the analysis.

## Chapter II: China's Strategic Culture

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### Introduction:

This chapter provides an historical and contemporary perspective of China's evolving strategic culture, which is largely driven by its national interest vis-a-vis the contemporary global geopolitical environment. China's political and military leaders generally accept history as a guideline to its future and see the foreign as well as domestic environments as treacherous, filled with threats and conspiracies. China's 'cult of defence' is the nucleus of strategic culture, which evolved as a result of interplay between its ancient Confucian philosophy and Sun Tzu's *Art of War*, and contemporary Realpolitik strands. Chinese elites believe strongly that their country's strategic tradition is pacifist, non-expansionist, and purely defensive. But at the same time, it provides them with a justification for the demonstration, if not the use of force; including pre-emptive strikes, as being defensive in nature. This chapter discusses myths and intrigues in China's political thought- a nexus to the strategic culture, which helps to address some of the central questions raised in the dissertation, including '*What are China's defined strategic cultural views and geostrategic interests vis-a-vis the conflicts on its peripheral zone?*'

Along the way, the contemporary Chinese perceptions of other states are strongly coloured by China's interpretations of their assumed cultural proclivities. These cultural images of other countries, particularly those in the strategic domain, influence China's assessment of real and potential threats in the international environment. As this dissertation focuses on Chinese strategic thought in parallel to Western views, the multidimensional views framed by some distinguished Western strategists at various critical times illustrate their differences from Chinese perspectives on the notion of using force in its strategy.

### Strategy in Western Perspectives

Strategy embodies more than just the study of wars and military campaigns. Strategy concerns the application of military power to achieve political objectives or, more specifically, the theory and practices of the use, and threat of use of

organised force for political purposes. Broader still is the concept of 'Grand Strategy', which involves the co-ordination, and direction of all the resources of a nation (or a group of nations), towards the attainment of political objectives. Strategy deals with the different problems of national policy, the areas where political, economic, psychological, and military factors overlap. This point is distinctly made by Henry Kissinger, who stated that the 'separation of strategy and policy can only be achieved to the detriment of both. It causes military power to become absolute application of power and it tempts diplomacy into an over-concern with finesse' (Baylis & Wirtz 2002, p.3). There has evolved a greater importance of political and economic factors in modern strategic warfare, and the closer linkage between military and political/economic affairs has become the cardinal principle of modern strategy. Various Western strategists have given multidimensional views on strategy. Baylis and others' collection of the definitions of 'strategy' (Baylis & Wirtz 2002, p.4) reveals some common features but also significant differences:

'Strategy is the use of engagements for the object of war.'-Carl Von Clausewitz

'Strategy is the art of distributing and applying military means to fulfil the ends of policy.'- Liddel Hart

'Strategy is a process, a constant adaptation to the shifting conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty, and ambiguity dominate.'-W. Murray and M. Grimsley

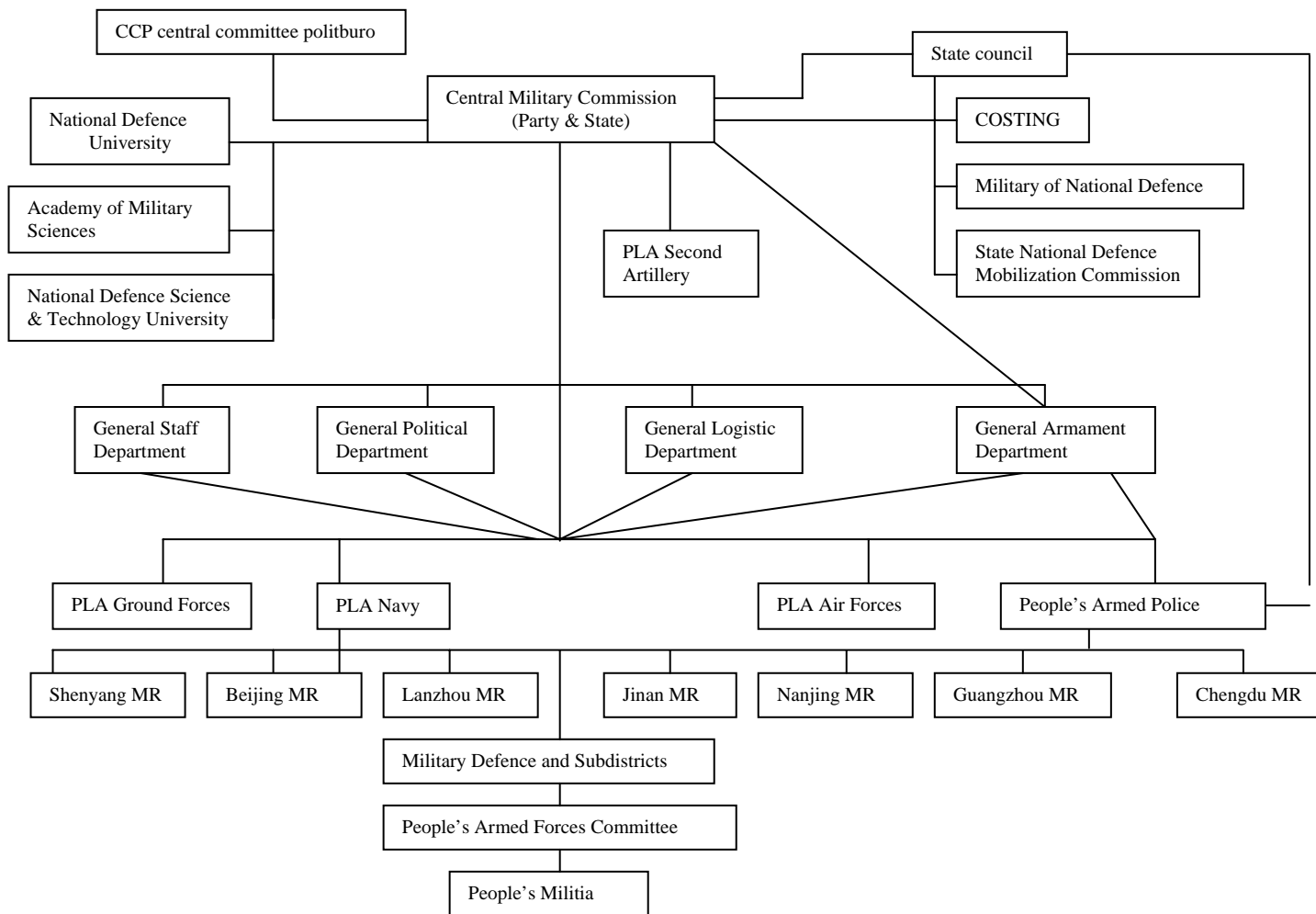
'Strategy must now be understood as nothing less than the overall plan for utilizing the capacity for armed coercion- in conjunction with economic, diplomatic, and psychological instruments of power- to support foreign policy most effectively by overt, covert and tacit means.'- Robert Osgood

### **Chinese perspectives on the concepts of doctrine, strategy and strategic frontiers**

The evolution of the Chinese perspectives on doctrine, strategy, and strategic frontiers are a synthesis of their long turbulent history and more contemporary geopolitical and geostrategical intrigues. It is important, therefore, to consider such concepts and terminology from a Chinese perspective.

***Doctrine:*** The Chinese doctrine is shaped or contextualized by strategic culture, and vice-versa, and is fundamental in all facets of political thought, including those relating to China's military modernisation. Doctrine is far more than the abstract study of core warfare—it is central to how the PLA is organised (the Command Structure of the PLA is shown in the Figure 2.1) and how it prepares to apply lethal force. As US Army Field Manual says: “Doctrine captures the lessons of past wars, reflects on the nature of war and conflict in its own time, and anticipates intellectual and technological developments in future times” (US Army, 1993).

In Western militaries, general warfare doctrine is a set of usually broad precepts used as a guide for tactics in military campaigns. This is usually distinguished as basic doctrine and operational doctrine, respectively (Shambaugh 2002, p.57). Western and Chinese military thinkers only partially agree on these definitions and distinctions. As one leading PLA strategic thinker at the elite Academy of Military Sciences succinctly put it: “ In our analysis, wars are composed of a series of campaigns which are made up of numerous general operations and specific battles. For the PLA, the strategy of active defence guides us at all four levels of campaigns, operations, battles and wars” (Shambaugh 2002, p.57). Thus, for the PLA, the campaign is the key level of combat, and that a successful military strategy at this level, which dictates the actual nature and tempo of battlefield operations, can be decisive in war. In Chinese doctrine, however, the term “ strategy” is not used in the Western sense of linking military activities to broad national security objectives in a political-military context.



**Figure 2.1: The command structure of the PLA**  
 (Source: Shambaugh, D. 2002, 'Modernizing China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospects,' University of California Press, p. 111).

The PRC's *Defence White Paper*, published in 2000, has outlined the assessment of China's national security environment and other subjects, but unlike many militaries the PLA unfortunately does not publish a National Military document explicitly detailing its war fighting doctrine. Yet, through researching of various publications and observation of China's military campaigns, different elements of PLA doctrine can be pieced together. Four separate levels of the PRC's doctrinal theory and planning are presented in Table 2. 2.

**Table 2.2: Levels of Doctrinal Analysis in the PLA (Source: Shambaugh, D. 2002, *Modernising China's Military: Progress, Problems, and Prospect*, University of California Press, p.59).**

	<b>PLA</b>	<b>Western Military</b>	<b>Level of conflict</b>
Level 1	Military thought and military principles	Basic doctrine	Total war and limited war
Level 2	Strategic principles and military strategy	Operational doctrine	Campaigns
Level 3	Operational principles	Operations	Theatre of operations
Level 4	Tactics	Tactics	Specific battle space

All three elements – doctrine, technology, and threat – have interacted to shape the PLA's posture over time, the Red Army Marshal Zhu De's axiom "The kind of war to fight depends on what kind of arms we have." has now been replaced by "Build weapons necessary to fight whatever kind of war" (Shambaugh 2002, p.60). As the PLA remains technologically inferior to most potential adversaries, thus, must continue to rely on asymmetrical warfare strategies. Despite the exigencies of the Taiwan situation, the Chinese military's overall posture today thus remains largely driven by the doctrine.

**Strategy:** The 'strategy' in Western thinking is based on Carl Von Clausewitz's maxim " war is the continuation of politics by other means" (Baylis & Wirtz 2002, pp. 26-32). To Chinese military thinkers, strategy is the manner in which military force is applied to achieve the desired outcome of an actual or potential

military conflict (Godwin 2000, p. 15). The PLA's operative military strategy, primarily at the campaign level of warfare, has come to be known as "active defence". This term has its origins in the Chinese revolutionary war, when Mao proposed a military strategy of "offensive defence, or defence through decisive engagements," in which PLA units would proactively engage the enemy, exploiting its weak points and attempt to destroy enemy capabilities and will (Mao 1972, p.105). "Active defence" takes place within a broader context of "people's war" and is often regarded as passive warfare of necessity to "lure the enemy in deep" in order to overcome the enemy's technological superiority by playing to the strengths of geography and the civilian population. This conceptualisation of *active defence* as a military strategy is thus a core component of broader Chinese military doctrine. It can best be thought of as "operational doctrine" in the Western sense, while *people's war* and its modern equivalents fit the category of "basic doctrine" (Shambaugh 2002, p.58). As the term suggests, operational principles are applicable to large-scale operations within broader campaigns, which include mobility, attrition, annihilation, quick-decision battle, close or deep defence, layered defence, joint operations, combined arms operations, pre-emptive strikes, asymmetrical warfare, transregional operations, offensive operations, and other general concepts.

***Strategic Frontiers:*** This concept delineates the territorial parameters of a nation's perceived national security interests – that is, territories to which it would be willing to commit military forces in pursuit of goals that it defines to be in its national interests. China's claimed strategic frontiers now extend beyond its immediate borders into its regional periphery. They have always included Taiwan and countries contiguous to Chinese boundaries.

China's national security strategists began to define its strategic frontiers in more elastic ways. As one article bluntly emphasized: "Strategic frontiers are far greater than geographic boundaries" (Xu 1987, *Jiefangjun Bao* 3 April). The principal shift was from continental to maritime and national to regional definitions. They also include defined spheres under the sea and in space. A redefinition of China's maritime interests has been cultivated and developed as "conception of sea as territory" that includes three million square kilometres of

ocean and seas, and this is codified in the 1992 Maritime Law of the Seas adopted by the National People's Congress (Shambaugh 2002, p.67).

In as much as China became a net petroleum importer in the 1990s, some strategists even define its strategic frontiers as encompassing the Persian Gulf (Shambaugh 2002, p.67). China has made strong claims under international law to a vast expanse of ocean and islets in the South China Sea. Chinese strategic maritime frontiers are also described as ultimately extending far into the Pacific Ocean (Shambaugh 2002, p.67).

These new strategic maritime frontiers are discussed in detail in Ye Shiping's surprisingly candid 1998 volume *Zhongguo Haiquan* (China's Sea Power), which makes clear China's aspirations to be a regional and pan-Pacific naval power by the middle of the twenty-first century. More disturbing, however, are Ye's observations about the need for "living space" for China's large population, which is forced to live on a limited arable land mass, and the need for excess Chinese labour to find employment destinations (Ye 1998, *Zhongguo Haiquan*).

China's extension of its sea and space strategic frontiers began in the mid 1980s. In an article in *Liberation Army Daily* there was an emphasise on "living space," distinguished between "visible space" (controlled territory) and "invisible space" (undersea and space jurisdiction), and called for an expansion of China's ground, sea, and air strategic frontiers (Xu 1987, *Jiefangjun Bao* 3 April). As cited in Xu:

The 'national gateway' concept of active defence must be pushed outward from traditional geographic borders to strategic boundaries – by three-dimensional menacing force to protect China's legitimate rights and interests on a battlefield using strategic defensive and offensive weapon systems for prompt counterattacks in space, on land, and at sea far from China (*Jiefangjun Bao*, 3 April 1987).

Since about 1991, Chinese strategists have spoken of the strategic importance of Southeast Asian shipping lanes and the Strait of Malacca for China's foreign trade. Since the late 1980s, the emergence of India as the dominant power in South Asia and the Indian Ocean has been seen to pose a potential threat to the Chinese national interests in the Southwestern and Southern flank of the PRC's



periphery. The PRC's assertive claims over the Paracel and Spratly island groups in the South China Sea are proof of its inclusion of these territories within its strategic frontiers. As one article put it, "The strategically and economically important Spratly Islands and surrounding waters have a bearing on the basic interests of the Chinese nation. We should adopt a modern concept of the 'strategic ocean' in forming our perspective on these islands" (Shen 1988, pp. 4-5).

### **China's Strategic culture**

Strategic culture is a collection of the beliefs, norms, values and historical experiences of the dominant elite in a polity that influences their understanding and interpretation of security issues and environment, and shapes responses to them. Strategic culture establishes "pervasive and long-standing strategic preferences by formulating concepts of the role and efficacy of military force in interstate political affairs, and by clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that the strategic preferences seem uniquely realistic and efficacious" (Johnston 1995, pp. 32-64). The advocates of strategic culture argue that security management decisions are shaped by "different cultural influences on the decision makers and not by the rational pursuit of similar national security or functional organisational interests" (Synder 1984, pp.108-146).

### **Evolution of China's Strategic Culture**

Historically, presently defined China has alternated between unity and fragmentation, in roughly equal proportions. Within those swings, the inter and intra state actors played vital parts, which generally were violent, some times a more limited, or often peaceful alternation occurred between centralisation in the imperial capital and devolution to the periphery. Chinese history, therefore, is a melange composed of a Chinese sense of superiority, external threat perception, and humiliation at the hands of foreign powers. These three distinctive elements of the Chinese history are inextricably connected to the rising tide of nationalism and mentality of Chinese rulers, thereby largely attributing to the evolution of China's strategic culture.

***China's sense of Superiority:*** The first feature of China's strategic culture is the sense of innate superiority, which is largely attributed to its long history. China possessed a sense of superiority and arrogance that was spectacular in world history, at least until the twentieth century brought fascist regimes upon the scene. The doctrine behind this confidence was cosmological, hierarchical, and based on a social ethic, yet with a dose of peripheral Realpolitik. Chinese maps, from early times and also in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, included not only earth, with China central, but also heaven, with the sun depicted at the top and the moon at the bottom (Godwin 1986, pp.1-13). Wrote Ho Ping-ti of the Qing Dynasty's dealings with surrounding powers: "The true status of any of China's peripheral areas depended on China's ability to exert effective control" (Ho 1967, p.190).

There had been no reason to doubt China's view of itself as a central pool of civilization or "The Middle Kingdom," as it was surrounded by barbarous and vassal nomadic races in the bleak territory of the north and insurmountable Himalayan range in the south. The history of China is far too long and convoluted to summarize here, it need only be said that the prominent dynasties (see Table 2.3) played an instrumental role in shaping the strategic culture of present day China.

**Table 2.3: China's Principal Dynasties**

<b>Dynasty</b>	<b>Period</b>
Shang	16 <sup>th</sup> – 11 <sup>th</sup> centuries BC
Zhou	1045 – 256 BC
Qin	221 –206 BC
Han	202 BC – AD 220
Sui	581 - 618
Tang	618 -907
Song	960 -1279
Yuan (Mongol)	1279 -1368

Ming	1368 -1644
Qing (Manchu)	1644 -1912

The Chinese have claimed that their civilization is as old as 5000 years, but a coherent Chinese polity took root only in the sixteenth century BC with the establishment of the Shang Dynasty, known for fine bronze technology, horse-drawn chariots and maturation of the Chinese writing system (Hucker 1975, p.28). By the Zhou Dynasty (1045-256 BC), the polity displayed many coherent features – unity as a creed, a king with a doctrine, a claim to rule by virtue, strict hierarchy, an assumption of being at the centre of the world – the Middle Kingdom - that continued to mark the Chinese polity until our own time (Hucker 1975, p.41). In the last period of the Zhou, Confucius (551-479 BC) and Mencius (d. 289 BC) supplied Chinese civilization with its most influential public philosophy, later to be known as Confucianism, which did have the spectacular virtue of binding government and people together in a comprehensive ethic.

The Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) set up a totalitarian regime and established a centralized rule that scoffed at virtue and ruled by tough laws and the sword. The Qin dynasty introduced the notion of “state” that was close to that later defined in the modern Western sense and thus created the “Chinese State” (Terrill 2003, p.33).

Against Qin’s cruel but effective Realpolitik, there came a reaction during the pivotal Han Dynasty (202 BC – AD 220). A Confucian flavoured monarchy, pulling together the agricultural life of the central China plain, built a formidable bureaucracy that also made use of Confucian moral persuasion. From this dynasty derived *Han ren*, a common term for “Chinese person”. The last phase of the Han brought a hair-raising string of troubles such as tax evasion, floods, locusts, and apocalyptic cults, all of which led to intrigue, and massacres which became the hallmark of the Han court (Terrill 2003, p.77). Following the Han Dynasty came an interlude of chaos and contention and only the tough-minded Sui Dynasty did bring unity.

After less than four decades of Sui rule, the brilliant Tang Dynasty began to reinvent the Chinese polity, building a complex legal structure. The governmental system, inherited from the Han Dynasty and refined, had such appeal that neighbouring Japan borrowed it in the 7<sup>th</sup> century. An examination system for selecting officials on the basis of their grasp of the Confucian classics came into full flower. Beyond China, the Tang, whose ruling class had often intermarried with non-Chinese nobility, attacked and regained control of peripheral states of Korea, and parts of Persia and Vietnam (Terrill 2003, p.34).

Yet the Tang Dynasty came crashing down after being fatally weakened by the massive An Lushan rebellion followed by widespread farmer revolts at the end of ninth century. In both the Han and Tang cases, and in others too, two fundamental flaws of Chinese polity, i.e. legitimacy and succession, caused the great fall.

During the Zhou Dynasty the Chinese Wang (King) began to call himself son of Heaven, establishing a wider, “international” unlimited jurisdiction (Terrill 2003, p.39). For a long time the Chinese did not accept the idea of boundaries. A Delphic sentence from the Han Dynasty makes the point clear: “The virtuous power of the Han Chinese has no borders” (Wang 1984, p.1150). It was culture, way of thinking, not lines on a map, that set the Chinese apart from nearby peripheral peoples.

Almost every dynasty followed the essentially pragmatic dual policy of “a hard core of force surrounded by a soft pulp of virtue”, the iron fist tucked into the velvet glove (Fletcher 1968, p. 207). The option of invasion was held in readiness, in case the moral claim to Chinese primacy fell on deaf ears. Soon after unifying China in 221 BC, emperor Qin Shihuang sent a 500,000 strong army to attack Vietnam. The Ming dynasty invaded Vietnam and slaughtered millions of Vietnamese; the Qing dynasty gunpowder empire expanded to the west and undertook the annihilation of the Zungar Mongols and the extermination of millions of Muslims (Friedman 2002, p.76). Later, Mao sent 300,000 troops into Korea in 1950. In assaulting Vietnam in 1979, Deng Xiaoping said he was ‘punishing’ a misbehaving Hanoi and would teach the Vietnamese regime a ‘lesson’ (Terrill 2003, p.262). Such military assertiveness

often marked the start of a dynasty. The aim was to protect the recent achievement of Chinese unification, and flex the muscle of a new polity in a wider space was the signal to the peripheral states in and around China. The common premise was that China would play a ‘world-arranging role’ for its peripheral neighbours.

Despite the predominance of a focus on “continental security”, there was a brief period when China made a series of forays into the “Maritime regions.” In 1421, the largest fleet the world had ever seen, under the command of Ming Emperor Zhu Di’s loyal eunuch admirals set sail ‘to proceed all the way to the end of the earth.’ The voyage lasted for two years and by the time the fleet returned, China was beginning its long, self imposed isolation from the world it had so recently embraced, so the great ships were left to rot, and the records of their journey destroyed. Thus, as Menzies has argued, the knowledge was lost that the Chinese had virtually circumnavigated the globe a century before Magellan, reached America seventy years before Columbus, and Australia three hundred and fifty years before Captain Cook (Menzies 2003, pp. 6-399). Some PRC historians have expressed scepticism about such claims, as they are unsubstantiated by hard evidence.

Tibet, which had been unified for the first time in 607 AD, also came under Chinese suzerainty, and from there a Chinese emissary, leading Tibetan troops, pacified a part of North India, bringing back to Chang-an in 648 AD a captive Indian princeling. This incident was the only military encounter between China and India prior to 1962 when India faced a humiliating military defeat over the Sino-Indian disputed border of Ladakh (Aksai Chin) in the Northwest and NEFA–Arunachal, a northeastern state of India (Fairbank and Reischauer 1989, p.98). The Qing dynasty in late 18<sup>th</sup> century had four expeditions abroad to chastise the Burmese (1766-1770), the Vietnamese (1788-1789), and the warlike Gurkhas in Nepal on the border between Tibet and India (1790-1792), there after Nepal sent tribute to Beijing every five years until 1908 (Fairbank and Reischauer 1989, p. 238).

As stated “China had a very high opinion of its own achievements and had nothing but disdain for other countries. This became a habit and was considered

altogether natural”—Sun Yat-sen (Terrill 2003, p.55). When British entourage led by Lord Macartney arrived in the Chinese court with the latest invention of the “Industrial Revolution” in 1793 seeking a trade agreement, access to additional ports, and a permanent mission at Beijing, in contrast, the Chinese Emperor handed an edict of refusal flavoured with Chinese condescension to the British envoy, which eventually passed to King George III of the British throne.

Some of the maps published by PRC, are cartographically and historically egregious. The case in point is shown in Figure 2.4, which was first published in Beijing in 1954. If it portrays the potential goal of the PRC’s irredentism, then there is no “if”, but only “when” and “where” the conflicts could eventuate in the periphery of China.

***The Threat Perceptions:*** The second feature of Chinese thinking in the evolution of strategic culture is that of threat perceptions. China’s rulers have traditionally felt vulnerable to the inroads of less civilized but more powerful neighbours. Both the Mongols who established the Yuan dynasty (1279-1368) and the Manchus who ruled as the Qing (1644-1911) fell into that category. And, above all, so did the Westerners. At the outset of the twenty-first century, the PRC has been able to ‘pacify’ its borders and build cooperative relationships with all nations on its periphery. China shares land borders with fourteen nations and maritime boundaries with seven. But, territorial disputes have existed with Russia, the Central Asian republics, Japan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Brunei. For many years during the Cold War era, China faced virtual military encirclement by antagonistic nations, including the ‘containment’ policies of the United States and its Asian treaty partners (SEATO), the Soviet Union, Vietnam and India.

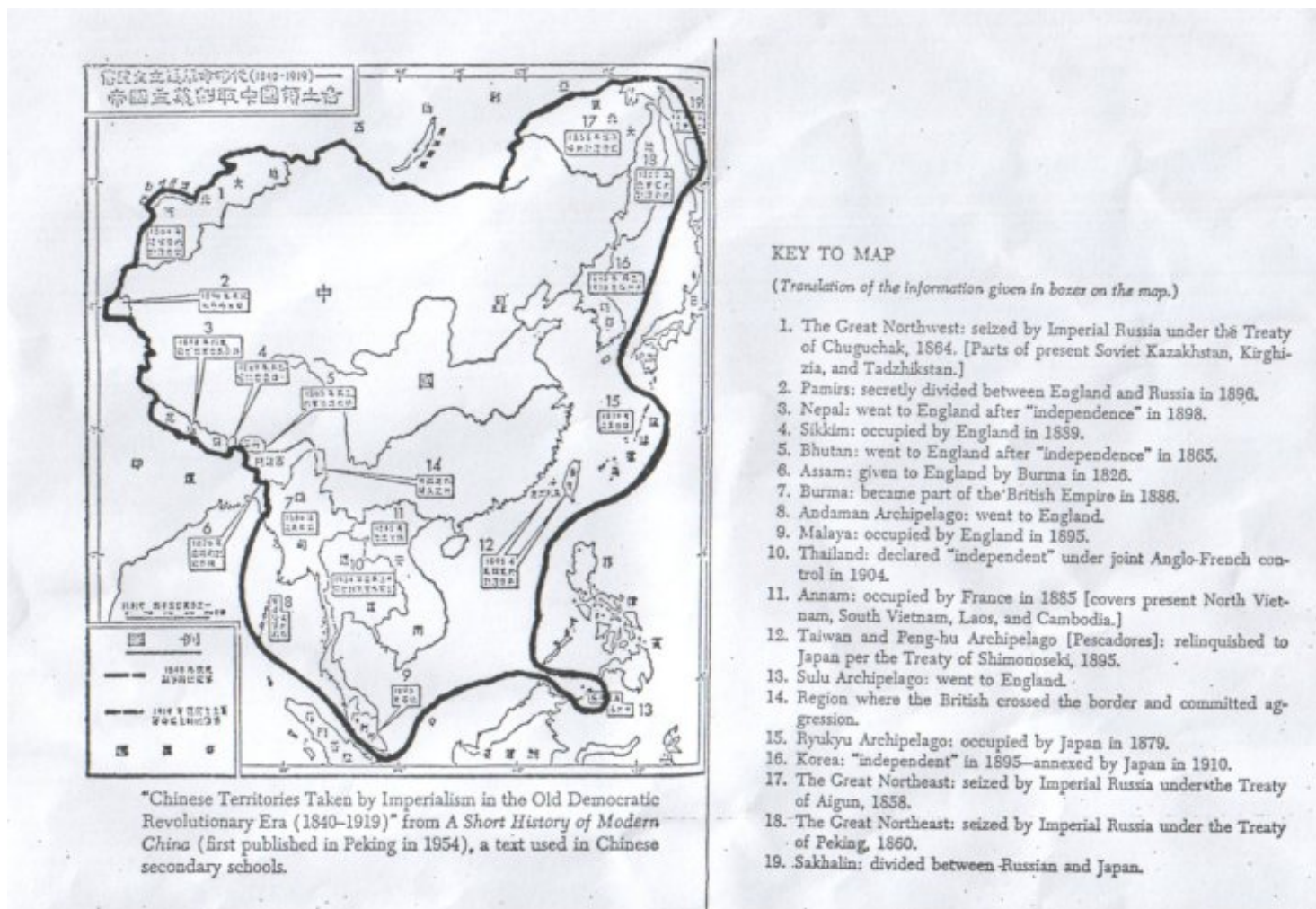


Figure 2.2: Chinese territories taken by imperialism.

At the height of tensions following the demise of Sino-Soviet “friendship” in the 1950s, the former Soviet Union alone maintained heavily armed mobile assault divisions on the Sino-Soviet frontier and threatened nuclear attacks against strategic targets in China’s heartland. During the 1960s and 1970s, Beijing added to the tensions by actively supporting insurgency movements and the destabilization of governments in Southeast Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Latin America. The international anti-communist campaigns in many countries were perceived as threatening by Mao-era Chinese strategists, and suggested that the PLA must be prepared for a range of potential threats, both external and internal. Furthermore, in the more comprehensive context, domestic ‘stability’ is always paramount, and external threats are usually perceived in the context of aggravating domestic instability.

***Humiliations:*** The contact with the West in the nineteenth century was the dawn of the third feature in the Chinese mentality, the role of humiliation in the evolution of China’s strategic culture. The humiliations of the “unequal treaties” beginning in the early nineteenth century with the Opium War (1839-42), when Britain forced China to open five treaty ports and relinquished Hong Kong, led almost all Chinese to feel a grave sense of affront to their nation’s dignity. The outcome of contact with the West was the moribund Middle Kingdom, experiencing colonial dismemberment and internal imperial decay, which ultimately led to the profound national humiliation in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, followed by another Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. A half century ago, on the eve of the Chinese Communists seizure of power in 1949, much of the country lay in ruins from three decades of internecine strife, civil war, and occupation by invading Japanese forces. Although China was on the verge of territorial unification for the first time in more than a century, the soon-to-be-established PRC was left “isolated” on the precipice of bloody conflict in Korea and two decades of hot and cold war around its periphery

The summation of these three distinctive elements - sense of superiority, threat perceptions, and humiliation blends into China’s nationalism and motivates the Chinese government in designing its strategic culture today.



## **China's Contemporary Strategic Culture**

Strategic culture has a significant dimension in the analysis of China's national security policy for two reasons. First, the subject of national culture has been widely recognised as a key factor in strategy, including its tendency to use force if necessary. Indeed, the impact of culture is vital in understanding China's military and security affairs. Particularly prevalent is the contention that contemporary Chinese international relations have been heavily influenced by an ancient and enduring civilisation. Second, scholars, analysts, and policymakers in the PRC frequently assert that past and present policy and behaviour is conditioned by a unique traditional Chinese philosophy of international relations and a set of unique experiences in dealings with other actors. Culture is the root and foundation of strategy. As cited in Nan:

“Strategic thinking flows into the main stream of a country or a nation's culture. Each nation's strategic culture cannot but bear the imprint of cultural traditions, which in a subconscious and complex way, prescribes and defines strategy making”-an influential Chinese military thinker Lt. Gen. Li Jijun (1996, pp. 443-63).

***Mao's Doctrine-People's War:*** It emphasised the primacy of politics, the superiority of men over weapons, the judicious application of weak forces against stronger opponents and the waging of protracted war by the masses. During the late 1970s PW was replaced by 'People's War Under Modern Conditions' (PWUMC). This emphasised positional over protracted guerrilla warfare; the systematic defence of Chinese cities over counter-attacking more powerful opponents in the countryside; the denial of nuclear supremacy to an opponent by surviving any nuclear attack so that the PLA would ultimately prevail through protracted conventional warfare (Tai and Chanda 1993, p.20). As shown in Table 2.4, over the past seven decades, the PLA's doctrine has evolved through roughly four phases:

**Table 2.4: The PLA's Doctrine**

First Phase:	“People’s War (PW)” (1935-79)
Second Phase:	“People’s War under modern condition (PWUMC)” (1979-85)
Third Phase:	“Active Defence/Limited War (LW)” (1985-91)
Fourth Phase:	“Active Defence/Limited War under high-technological condition (LWUHTC)” (1991-todate)

Thus, the PLA’s operative doctrine is the product of decades of rethinking the nature of contemporary conflict, the potential threats to China, and the adequacy of the PLA force structure.

**Deng’s Doctrine:** Deng, like Mao, had never forgotten that the CCP’s success was due to the PLA. Without it, there would have been no successful CCP, and no PRC. In line with Deng’s ‘Grand Compromise’ (Marti 2002, p.143), another major change occurred in Chinese military planning in 1985. China’s CMC concluded that the nation’s military doctrine should be revised to one of “limited war/active defence.” The “limited war/active defence” strategy envisions China waging small-scale conflicts along its peripheries. It also places a greater emphasis on rapid force projection than did PWUMC along with the application of high technology and intense firepower, and the achievement of military objectives over a relatively short period of time. The CMC concluded that the PLA should prepare to fight and win “limited wars” rather than major nuclear conflicts against the US. China decided to strengthen its capacity to fight along its own border and peripheries, where it could operate within “controlled space and time” with a greater level of lethality and increased mobility subject to efficient command and control.

China’s active defence / limited war strategy was thus designed to be “integrative and comprehensive”, requiring the PLA to be prepared for a variety of regional contingencies. But active defence / limited war strategy departs from PW and PWUMC by emphasising that there are increased prospects for a greater number of smaller regional conflicts in the post-Cold War era. “Border defence” entails both internal security threats in minority areas such as Xinjiang and Tibet and armed conflicts against foreign invaders in its periphery. In mid 1993 the PLA

conducted a series of military exercises emphasising combined operations to test China's rapid reaction capabilities in the South China Sea (Lennox 1999, pp. 20-3). Preparation for amphibious operations spear headed by missile strikes against Taiwan has also preoccupied Chinese military planners as demonstrated in 1996.

**Post-Deng Strategy:** Following Deng Xiaoping's death in 1997, the PLA came to exert even greater influence over China's national security posture. China's security planning has been influenced more by perceptions of how technological change will affect war fighting capabilities than it has been by threat assessments or strategic priorities. China wants to project greater military power beyond its borders but it cannot oppose simultaneously every other potential military rival. However, China's preoccupation with infusing high technology into its defence systems does indicate that the country's policy elites have little inclination to modify their regional security interests to assuage their neighbours' threat perceptions.

China is less likely to be fighting on its own homeland than it is around its periphery. For example, China may have to take sides in the Indo-Pakistan Kashmir conflict, or the old Sino-Indian border dispute could flare into a full-scale war. China also is concerned about its western XUAR, which faces "Islam's bloody borders"- Samuel Huntington's coined phrase in reference to an established fact that wherever Islam rubs up against other civilizations, wars seem to break out (Goldberg 2000, *New York Times*, June 25). Chinese strategic interests are entangled in the multi-faceted Asian conflicts, mostly in its own territorial periphery where China's strategic interests find itself applying military pressure against an increasingly independent Taiwan, against ASEAN rivals for control of the Spratly islands, or engaged in defending its North Korean ally against South Korean and American forces in a renewed Korean conflict. The strategic links between China and Myanmar and China's land access to the Indian Ocean is a grave strategic concern to India and ASEAN. The latest entry in China's peripheral conflict is Nepal's surging Maoist uprisal, which has a potential to lure its two giant neighbours (China and India), Asia's aspirant superpowers, to confront each other. If these Asian "flashpoints" in China's periphery were to erupt and evolve in ways, which may draw the PRC into war,

the conditions would be very different from those, which have unfolded so far in history.

### **Nuclear Weapons in China's Strategic Culture**

China has been modernising its nuclear capabilities over the last four decades, and its efforts are beginning to produce results. Two new ICBMs - the *Dong Feng 31* and the *Dong Feng 41* – are in development. Both are solid-fuelled, road-mobile missiles capable of carrying MIRVs. A new class of SSBN, the Type 93, along with a new SLBM, the *Ju Lang 2*, is under development, with the new missile capable of carrying multiple warheads. The development of new mobile ICBMs capable of carrying accurate MIRVs, and new MIRVed SLBMs on a more capable SSBN reinforces the ability of Chinese nuclear forces to survive a first strike, penetrate missile defences, and strike the US.

Nuclear force modernization raises the question of whether China is moving away from a minimum deterrence posture against the United States based on 'counter value' targeting of cities, towards some form of war-fighting posture geared to 'counterforce' targeting of US strategic nuclear forces. Alternatively, China may pursue a 'differentiated' strategy. China might continue to maintain a 'minimum deterrent' directed against the United States, while sub-strategic nuclear forces are employed in a coercive role against regional competitors such as Japan and India.

Any move towards a counterforce posture directed against the United States, Japan, or India would require China to reconsider its 'no first use' pledge. The pledge highlights the defensive posture of China's nuclear forces. According to Lt. Gen. Li Jijun:

China's nuclear strategy is purely defensive in nature. The decision to develop nuclear weapons was a choice China has to make in the face of real nuclear threats. A small arsenal is retained only for the purpose of self-defence. China has unilaterally committed itself to responsibilities not yet taken by other nations, including the declaration of a no-first-use policy, the commitment not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states in nuclear-free zones. In short, China's strategy

is completely defensive, focused only on deterring the possibility of nuclear blackmail being used against China by other nuclear powers. (Manning, Montaperto, and Roberts 2000, p.30).

It is uncertain if China's pledge not to use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear states applies to Taiwan, because China's leaders view Taiwan as a rogue province. Thus, in a future conflict with Taiwan, China might employ nuclear weapons against the island to destroy Taiwanese military capability or use 'electromagnetic pulse' (EMP) attacks to neutralize command and control capabilities without causing substantial damage or casualties. Some Chinese hardliners were prepared to test the 'Los Angeles option' (targeting major US cities in retaliation) if the Americans opted to interdict PLA units firing test missiles off Taiwan's shores during the 1996 US military intervention in China-Taiwan confrontation (Tow 2001, p.38).

America has some 6,000 nuclear warheads able to hit China, while much of China's existing arsenals are old and becoming obsolete (Thatcher 2002, p.181). At this stage, on the basis of the *Military Technology*, (see Table 4.1 in chapter IV), PRC's superpower status on parity with America is no more than a delicious fantasy for many in Beijing.

Notwithstanding, the deployment of a NMD system by US is a source of concern for Chinese strategic planners. Even a very limited NMD system or a regional TMD system might reduce the effectiveness of the current Chinese nuclear arsenal. NMD deployment would require China to increase the number of nuclear warheads it aims at the United States so as to maintain a minimum deterrent posture.

The Chinese are aiming, at something much more attainable, namely, to become the dominant regional power in Asia. As a result, the Chinese seem to have perfected the art of proliferation of clandestine nuclear and missile transfers as a tool of Chinese national security policy. Proliferation is for the Chinese a way of bringing pressure on the USA, by emphasising its capacity to cause trouble, without going as far as provoking a damaging conflict. But, any build up in numbers of nuclear warheads and delivery systems by China will have a direct impact on India's nuclear weapons capabilities. India acquired nuclear weapons

partly in response to Chinese military threats to disputed territories along the two states' common borders. The 1998 nuclear tests saw India officially 'go nuclear' as a response to growing Chinese capability, as well as for reasons of national prestige and domestic politics. A Chinese nuclear build-up would lead India to maintain the current strategic balance of forces, potentially sparking an arms race between the two Asian giants. Pakistan, another nuclear power in the region, would respond to any Indian strategic build-up, possibly with Chinese or perhaps North Korean assistance, by increasing its nuclear capability. In other words, a nuclear arms race in China's periphery could quickly become three-sided phenomenon. Unlike the US-Soviet nuclear balance of the Cold War, the geopolitical dynamics of a Pakistan-India-China nuclear balance are more unpredictable. The continuing Indo-Pakistan confrontation in the Chinese peripheral zone of Jammu- Kashmir at the proximity of Sino- Indian disputed area of Ladakh (Aksai Chin) makes the likelihood of tension and conflict more real between these Asian nuclear powered countries.

***Strategic Limitations:*** There are several reservations to consider with this updated security strategy. First, there is the danger that China's military leaders may apply the new doctrine before the PRC achieves the necessary force levels and diversity of capability needed to make it credible, or they may apply it ambiguously. This concern seems particularly applicable to China's nuclear strategy of "limited deterrence". Active defence emphasises the value of pre-emptive strikes as an essential tactic enabling the 'weak to overpower the strong'. "Limited deterrence" relies instead on China maintaining a sufficient nuclear force structure to avoid nuclear pre-emption (Lin 1996).

Prior to US deployment of two aircraft carrier battle groups at Taiwan Strait in March 1996, it was thought that even the few nuclear weapons China targeted against the United States would be sufficient to deter significant US military intervention in a China-Taiwan confrontation (*The Military Balance 2000/2001*). Beijing was clearly surprised and concluded, until it develops a more imposing nuclear force, Beijing cannot be sure that the United States will allow it to launch a full-scale invasion against Taiwan (Swaine 1996, pp.75-6).

The idea that “inferior forces can defeat superior forces” and that a “people’s war” is still the foundation of active defence undercuts the new strategy’s utility. This is because it concedes that a high-technology war started by a major adversary could still overwhelm Chinese border defences forcing the PLA to apply the old PW /PWUMC defensive tactics within China’s own borders. Active defence strategy, therefore, presents the risk that Chinese force planners could become too preoccupied with what type of wars China may be fighting over the near-term at the risk of under-assessing how China can prevail in limited war situations if the other side initially applies active defence better than the PLA. Therefore, if a future regional conflict involving China emerges as something other than a replay of the Persian Gulf conflict (1991 and 2003-4), the only real recourse for Chinese commanders would appear to be returning to fighting the very type of indecisive wars of attrition that the active defence strategy is supposed to avoid. China is prepared to respond conceptually to “the last war fought” but may not be prepared to adjust to the inevitably unique challenges of future war fighting scenarios.

### **Conclusion:**

Culture is the root and foundation of strategy (Scobell 2002, p. 329), and Chinese were more successful as inheritors than as innovators. The regional perceptions of China’s long-term strategic ambitions are still coloured by the territorial disputes linked with unsettling historical baggage of vassal states and tribute systems. In the arena of international relations, official decisions are based as much on perceptions as realities. Out of the nine members of the current CCP’s Politburo Standing Committee, only Luo Gan is foreign educated (East Germany). This team presided by Hu Jintao have laid down the foundation to the dynamics of China’s strategic culture in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as the Chinese strategic culture is a synergetic manipulation of cultural heritages and Realpolitik strands.

China’s military modernisation programs should ultimately benefit from the adoption of an active defence /limited war strategy for several reasons. It provides a more systematic and coherent doctrinal guideline for strengthening Chinese military power than did its predecessors and it relies less upon ideological bromides to rationalise away the strategic weaknesses of the PLA. It

acknowledges the advantages of employing highly trained personnel in coordinated military operations with limited strategic objectives. By emphasising border defence, Chinese strategists are also being forced to revise their traditional defensive bias –“luring the enemy in deep” before counter-attacking, a strategic approach that anticipated high casualty rates among China’s rural and urban populations. Mao’s famous quote of tolerating several hundred million deaths is recalled in this context.

However, China has come to the startling conclusion that dynamics of modern warfare have changed irrevocably. Now the chief threat is from limited wars, fought with high-tech weapons. Future wars would be characterised by RMA (Revolution in Military Affairs) i.e. electronic warfare and unified theatres of operation using combined forces of air, sea, and land, as well as space. Command and Control would be centralised, with wars fought from a distance using such modern weapons as cruise missiles, without hand-to-hand combat. The Gulf War (1991), Kosovo Crisis (1999), and Iraq War (2003-4) have been seen as the testing ground for the high-tech arsenals of stealth bombers, cruise missiles, ‘Mavericks’, ‘Patriots’, a new generation of operational platforms, electronic warfare equipment, remote-sensing equipment of superior quality, night vision devices, advanced systems of Command, Control, Communication and Intelligence. The net result of such qualitative improvements in warfare--high speed, high accuracy weapons with high destruction levels, as well as high survival rate of systems- have changed the nature of modern warfare, with the air force emerging as a dominant player. In such context, geography limits the ability of China to be militarily pre-eminent in all of Asia and beyond because the PLA is woefully unbalanced in terms of military capability. Therefore, so long as PLA remains technologically inferior to its potential adversary it may continue to rely on its old and timely honoured asymmetrical warfare strategies. However, PRC will not hesitate to project its military decisive force in its peripheral zone, more to protect its economic strategy than its existing geopolitical or geostrategical issues. For the time being, the PRC’s leadership would have to continue to enshrine the pivotal guidance of Deng’s “Grand Compromise” (Marti 2002, p.143)—the greatest interest for China’s survival and development in the next two decades rests on realising the strategic goal of



economic renovation. The realisation of this goal calls for domestic stability, security along the borders with peripheral states, and a world order that falls in line with the common interests of the world's people. All of this requires China to further augment building military strength while attaching importance to politics, economics, science and technology and diplomacy.

The dramatic era of decolonisation and Cold War now appear to be in the distance past, there is more than ever a need to adopt an historical, ideological, cultural and economical perspective to understand contemporary China and most of Asia's conflicted 'flash points' (excluding the ongoing Middle East's shattered road-map to geopolitical solution) in the peripheral zone of China vis-à-vis the changing global order at the start of 21<sup>st</sup> century. Along the vein of this argument, this dissertation is read in sequential and cumulative fashion as the chapters move chronologically and thematically from 'China's Strategic Culture' to 'China and Peripheral Conflicts.' Chapter II provide a broad overview of China's strategic culture at a global level over the entire period of Chinese history. Chapter III, meanwhile, will be more focused in the contemporary peripheral conflicts attributed to China directly or indirectly.

### Chapter III: China and the Peripheral Conflicts - An Overview

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#### Introduction:

This chapter highlights the various geopolitical (and, where relevant geoeconomic) issues and conflicts in China's geographical periphery and its interests and involvement in them. Contrary to the views of many liberals and realists in international relations, the Chinese are neither innately pacifist nor hardwired for conflict. Instead, retrospective to its history and culture, it is the actions of the PRC's top elites to construe and react to the events of world politics, which ultimately leads to cooperation or conflict in the periphery of China in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In this conflict-prone periphery, certain chronic conflicts are inescapably entrenched, while others are mediated and covered by face-saving self-deception. In China, 'Face' is fundamentally political *sine qua non*, involving a context over power and pride and China can sacrifice relationship to protect face. However, since China's economic growth is inexplicably entwined with its political legitimacy and survival, it is more likely that its relationships in the periphery beset with contradictions and conflicts could be metamorphosed into a strategic marriage of convenience for economic gains.

Perhaps more than any other factor, it is perceptions about China that are influencing the way in which states and actors in the peripheral zone are responding to changes in the strategic environment. These perceptions may be based, as some analysts have suggested, on a selective reading of Chinese history and a number of enduring myths about China's world view; but, in international relations, perceptions tend to "define" reality. Although China once included parts of many peripheral states in a list of "lost territories", this list has been virtually omitted from Chinese public statements since the 1967 Cultural Revolution. Yet, regional perceptions of China's long-term strategic ambitions are still coloured by the historical memories of China's support for communist guerrilla movements during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, its border war with India in 1962, its invasion of Vietnam in 1979, and by maps that still show China's claims to large tracts of Southeast Asia including all of the South China Sea (Selth 2003, p.2) [also see Fig.2.2]. China's more recent economic growth

and its concomitant military development programs are being watched closely by analysts in the region, and any signs that China is looking to extend its strategic reach are considered causes for concern.

### **China and Conflicts in Northeast Asia**

China adjoins several conflict-prone zones (Korea, India, Southeast Asia and central Asia) and its geographical position in Northeast Asia - a nerve centre of the global economy - makes China an indomitable actor in the region. The Chinese geostrategic trajectory in Northeast Asia reflects both the historical specificity of nation-state formation and the wider problems of the nation-state system in post-Cold War Asia.

***China and Korean Peninsular Conflict:*** Contemporary Chinese leaders are keen in Korean peninsular security, especially because of China's rivalries with Japan and, in the last century, the US. Today, China's key national-security objectives on the Korean peninsula are to have a friendly, stable Korea on its doorstep; this means having a Korea that is not the setting for a major war, is receptive to the PRC's influence, and does not become a springboard for the extension of Japanese military or economic power.

Chinese-Korean historical relations have left their imprint on the present. Though a tributary state of China, Korea was fully autonomous; its contacts with China were largely a matter of ritual based on acceptance of a superior civilization, thus quite different from the relationship of recurrent conflict that developed by the 19<sup>th</sup> century between Korea and Japan. In 1904-1905, the Russo-Japanese War was fought over which country would control Korea. In 1908, Japan extinguished Korea's independence. After the Japanese occupation ended in 1945, Korea was partitioned along the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel when the Soviets brought in Kim Il Sung to establish what turned into the world's most repressive Communist regime DPRK. In 1950, that regime unleashed another brutal war in which the US and its South Korean allies, together with token UN forces, prevented a Communist takeover of South Korea. This was made possible as Moscow could not cast its veto, because it was boycotting the Security Council (SC) since the start of 1950 to protest against Taiwan's KMT government holding China's permanent seat. The

initial aim of US-led UN intervention, to achieve the limited goal of ending Northern aggression, was quickly transformed into a wider set of aims centred on the strategy of reunification of the peninsula under a pro-US/UN government. The ensuing conflict eventually brought the PRC directly into the war and fighting continued until the signing of an armistice agreement on 27 July 1953. Of the 53 nations who endorsed the decision for UN actions against the aggressor in Korea, only 15 other than US and Republic of Korea (ROC was not a member of UN) provided ground, air or sea combat forces (Clark 1988, pp. 6-70). The idea of Chinese Nationalist Army participation in the Korean War was dismissed so as to avoid the political dynamite of fighting Chinese Civil War in Korean soil (Clark 1988, pp.74-75). Since then, the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel has demarcated one of the most absolute dividing lines in the world—ideologically, politically, militarily, and economically.

Since the PRC established relations with South Korea in 1992, Beijing has promoted “peace and stability” in the Korean peninsula while carrying out a difficult balancing act: engaging the South while sustaining the North. PRC leaders have made a strong economic partnership with South Korea a high priority, consistently backed the concept of a nuclear-free Korea, and supported Korean unification through peaceful means such as the Four-Party Talks (US-PRC-DPRK-ROK) that began in 1997 but have been in limbo since 1999 (Gurtov 2002, p. 399). China, along with Russia, persuaded North Korea to accept dual Korean membership in the UN in 1991 and supported the 1992 North-South Korea accords on denuclearisation of the peninsula, CBMs, and economic and people-to-people exchanges. During the nuclear crisis of 1993-94 and 2002-3, China consistently urged resolution of the issue through dialogue and advised Pyongyang, its long-time ally to avoid provoking a war. Beijing continues to play a mediator’s role in Six-Party Talks.

China’s overt diplomatic support of North Korea remains firm, such as on its sovereign right to have ballistic missiles and sell them, and on its quest for normalization of relations with the US. Whenever Sino-US tensions have mounted, such as between 1999, when US aircraft accidentally bombed the PRC embassy in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, and in the spring of 2001, on the occasion of

the US spy plane incident off China's south coast, Chinese backing of North Korea has stiffened (Gurtov 2002, p. 402). No doubt the political will of North Korea to stand up to the US-ROK-Japan powerhouse have its admirers in Beijing, especially amongst the professional military leadership.

The new recasting of the South Korea-PRC relationship has been on an economic foundation. Its trade rose from \$ 6.2 billion in 1992 to \$60 billion today making China in some months, the biggest market for South Korea's exports (*The Economist*, 24 April 2004, p.31). Close PRC-ROK commercial relations represent an ideal marriage of economic, geographic, and strategic factors in promoting Chinese interests. By 2000, the bilateral trade had topped \$30 billion and South Korean investments in China were approaching the same amount, putting the economic relationship almost on a par with China-Taiwan (Gurtov 2002, p. 403). Should the Koreans unify, the Yellow Sea or Bohai Gulf growth triangle is bound to be a major Asian centre of commercial activity, transforming the economic face of Northern Korea in the process.

The sustainability of China's two-Koreas policy is entering an interesting phase. With regard to North Korea, Beijing's strong advice to Pyongyang to open up its economy is having some impact. Kim Jong II's endorsement of China's reforms as "correct" during his trip to China in 2001 and 2004 has signalled a positive modification of the self-reliance strategy. If North Korea's progress towards an integrated economy flourishes on a scale of its mentor, then certainly the life span of the regime will stretch. As for South Korea, the huge Chinese market for Korean goods and investments may for now give Beijing something of a bargaining edge with Seoul, as the Korean economy is struggling to recover from the Asian financial crisis while also trying to restructure itself. At this juncture, apart from mediating, Chinese leaders profess to have no leverage in Pyongyang, on issues such as non-proliferation or a reduction of North Korean forces in areas near to the demilitarised zone.

***China-Taiwan Confrontation:*** Historically, from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Taiwan was part of the Chinese Empire, and, in 1895 it was seized by Japan and then remained Japanese until 1945. It was then briefly returned to rule from Beijing. Four years later the retreating Nationalist army under General Chiang

Kai-Shek sought refuge on the island and established a second seat of government claiming all of China. Today 14 percent of the Taiwanese are those who came to the island with Chiang Kai-Shek, and their descendants (Thatcher 2003, p.186).

Both Chiang and Mao agreed that Taiwan was part of China. It was simply that each side saw the other as a rebellion against the “legitimate” government. Taiwan was protected by the US and under the authoritarian rule of Chiang Kai-Shek and then his son Chiang Ching-Kuo pursued the path of capitalism; while Mao sought to create a socialist economy and society in China. In the ensuing competition between capitalism and communism, the former won hands down; despite several crises, especially when PRC forces opened a heavy bombardment of the Nationalist-held islands of Quemoy and Matsu, only a few miles from the mainland at the end of August 1958, and went on to attack Nationalist supply ships, entailing a crisis in Sino-US as well as Sino-USSR relations (Evans 1993, pp.156-158).

At the same time, since the end of civil war in 1949, Beijing has considered Taiwan part of its territory awaiting reunification, by force if necessary. While Taiwan’s independence-leaning president, Chen Shui-bian, has taken a more conciliatory stance since winning a new four-year term in March 2004, yet, Beijing has continued to stockpile its missile deployments and maintains its rhetoric of reunification. China has approximately 500 short-range ballistic missiles deployed in Nanjing military district directly pointed towards Taiwan (Parry M., 2004). The simmering China-Taiwan discord may eventually conclude, as the “economically surging China” must reassure the world that it is also a “peaceful rising China”– China too has strategic reasons to seek a peaceful solution.

***Sino-Japanese Relations:*** Sino-Japanese conflicts and cooperation are tediously long and old; this dissertation explores primarily the Sino-Japan relationship from a security perspective. In the 1950s and 1960s, Beijing and Tokyo relied upon economic diplomacy, with trade serving as a bridge in place of formal diplomatic relations. From normalization in 1972 to Japanese Emperor Akihito’s visit to the PRC in 1992, political leaders characterized the relationship as having

been one of good-neighbourly friendship marked by expanding economic links and frequent exchanges of visits.

However, as a result of changes in both the international environment and Japan's domestic political structure since 1992, Sino-Japanese relations have entered a period of competitive coexistence. According to the Japanese account, China posed a threat to Japan mainly because: China's rapid economic expansion; its increased defence expenditure over the years and lack of transparency concerning its military modernisation programme; China's 1992 Territorial Waters Law by which Beijing claims sovereignty over the Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, over which Japan also claims sovereignty and actually controls (Jiang 2002, p.153). In the 1990s, a chain of development influenced China's perception of Japan. These included growing conservatism in domestic politics; Japan's more active security policy, including the redefinition of Japan-US alliance; and the tougher stance, from the Chinese perspective, that Tokyo took in dealing with Beijing.

China's current security concerns with Japan are threefold: (a) the possibility that Japan might become a major military power, (b) the hidden agenda of US-Japan security alliance, i.e., to constrain and, when necessary, "contain" a rising China; and (c) the possibility that Taiwan might be incorporated within the scope of Japan-US defence guidelines. Beijing long has harboured strong suspicions over the growth of Japan's military strength. Japan maintains a highly professional force equipped with the most advanced conventional weapons in Asia. Japan's SDF's naval and air capabilities far exceed those of the PLA. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Japan's defence expenditure has ranked the second highest in the world, behind the US (Wu 2000, p. 298). Although Japan has no nuclear weapons, long-range missiles, or nuclear submarines, its strong technology base would enable it to develop such weapons systems rapidly should the political will arise. Chinese strategists believe that Japan's conservatives have been trying to generate the necessary will to turn the country into a major military power by removing Article 9 from their Constitution, which constrains Japan from doing so (Wu 2000, p. 298).

Japan appears to be seizing every opportunity to join US in R&D on a TMD aimed at improving its defence capabilities. Japanese participation in TMD R&D serves two purposes, Chinese analysts believe. First, a TMD system, once proven technologically effective and deployed could minimize the PRC's strategic deterrence threat, which certainly would reinforce Tokyo's position vis-a-vis Beijing. Second, a TMD R&D effort would raise the level of Japan's technologies and enhance its military capabilities. Furthermore, while TMD is defensive in nature, the technology behind it can be used to develop offensive weapons systems.

From the Chinese perspective, it is believed that the reaffirmation of the Japan-US alliance contains a strong anti-China rationale, and this is indicative of a significant problem in the PRC's security environment that will impose great strategic pressures upon it. Moreover, a strong Japan-US relationship also curtails China's geopolitical influence in its energy-rich neighbourhood of Central Asia as that region is at the centre of a new 'great game' over energy resources.

### **Sino-Russia-Central Asian Cooperation**

After the disintegration of the Soviet empire, China's relationship with Russia and the Central Asian republics has been built primarily on energy aspects of economic desideratum. Moreover, the existence of large numbers of Muslim Uighurs in the Chinese province adjoining Central Asia reflects that the nation's fate has been entwined with the wider history of Central Asia, and how the Han culture of China has had imperial intercourse over the centuries with its Turkic neighbours. The continuing state of unrest in Xinjiang and the desire there for an "East Turkestan" homeland on Chinese territory represents a serious threat to Chinese sovereignty. This threat has been one major factor driving Chinese policy in the region.

***SCO-China's Security Link:*** The SCO (China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan) represents a link to China's geopolitical strategic goals in the region. The group is an expression of China's interest in improving relations with newly independent Central Asian States as much for defensive reasons as for reasons of expanding Chinese influence and interests.



In defensive terms, securing its western frontiers through the SCO would have a big strategic pay-off for China. In terms of expanding influence, the SCO was a bid for a Chinese-influenced bloc in what Beijing hoped would be a multipolar post-Cold War world rather than a unipolar US-dominated one. With regard to both of these issues, the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist events represented a setback for Chinese policy. The generally increased insecurity in its western border and, particularly, the sudden incursion of significant numbers of US military forces and the development of numerous US military bases across the region has given a knock to China's "Grand Western Strategy" of switching resources from north and west to south and east.

***Central Asian Republics and China's Energy Search:*** The other major issue for Beijing is the need to ensure its continued access to Central Asia's oil resources. China has a projected deficit in its energy requirements and is looking to the western regions to remedy the shortfall. It is investing heavily in Kazakhstan's oilfields and planning a pipeline into Xinjiang. Any disruption to these plans would be a serious blow to China's national interest of economic prosperity and, in this respect; the USA's newfound interest in the region may indeed undermine Beijing's energy security.

As far as Beijing's pursuit of a multipolar world goes, September 11 has appeared to entrench the US as the sole arbiter of power on the globe, willing and capable of undertaking operations almost anywhere with or without international approval. Previously, China and Russia had been quite successful in shutting the USA out of Central Asia, with the Central Asian countries looking to them for their security. The US-led war against terrorism has reversed this effort as Russia and the Central Asian republics welcomed US military presence and intervention. Consequently, the projection of US military presence in the backyard of China also been accompanied by the scourge of Islamic Radicalism in China's XUAR.

***Islamic Radicalism and XUAR:*** The growth of Islamic extremism around the world since the Iranian Revolution of 1979 has less to do with theology and more to do with the failure of the domestic political economics of their respective countries. Increasing gaps between the rich and poor, unemployment, corruption, a lack of economic diversity, and the lack of viable political alternative have all

given rise to Islamic extremism. People literally become so desperate that they have nowhere to turn but to extremist religious politics. Since the early 1990s, there has been a noticeable expansion of both radical Islamists and their transnational activities. Such groups are now operating out of foreign countries, where there are fewer political and law enforcement constraints on their activities than at home. It is not uncommon now for groups from one country to train and coordinate their activities and assist one another. The radical Islamists are trying to establish an Islamic state governed by Sharia through violence and extralegal means are increasingly relying on each other in different states for assistance, financing, and training. Domestic groups with domestic grievances are now forming international alliances in pursuit of their goals.

Sensing this radical Islamic inspired terrorism in its western backyards, the PRC activated intense surveillance to stop the seepage of Islamic terrorism towards its Muslim populace. However, it was impossible to completely prevent the resource-rich XUAR from emerging as a hub of Islamic extremism in China. In December 2003, China issued a list of groups and individuals it claimed were responsible for terrorist acts in support of Xinjiang separatism and called upon the international community to take steps to curb such activities (Hill 2004, p. 52).

Certainly China has real concerns about the volatile western province of Xinjiang, which has a large Turkic Uighur Muslim population and a history of opposition to Chinese rule. In the 1990s, bombings in Urumqi and Beijing (1997) that suggested some degree of organised resistance activity led to a heavy security crackdown and thousands of arrests in an attempt to squash any nascent separatist movement. Following the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks in the US, accusations about Islamist-backed terrorism began to be viewed differently in Washington which China readily agreed to support the US war on terrorism and in turn the US accepted China's Uighur terrorist threat as legitimate.

Despite Beijing's concerns about its restive Muslim population, its grip on Xinjiang has never looked more secure. Although there may be resentment over the Hanification of the region, and widespread sympathy for the idea of separatism, the rising living standards that China's economic boom is bringing to

Xinjiang could produce a more conservative middle class; and any campaign for Xinjiang independence in the near future may lose its appeal.

### **China and Conflicts in South Asia**

As an old Chinese saying goes, “one mountain cannot accommodate two tigers,” a key feature of Beijing’s South Asia policy has been its “India-centric” approach. Beijing has always known that India, if it ever gets its economic and strategic acts together, alone has the size, might, numbers and, above all, the intention to match China’s status. While a more detailed assessment of China’s concerns about India and Indo-Pakistan conflict has been undertaken as a case study in Chapter IV. The major objective of China’s strategy has been to prevent the rise of a peer competitor, to challenge China’s status along its periphery.

***Maoist Uprising in Nepal:*** In sharp contrast with Pakistan (see chapter IV), China has had limited success in keeping Nepal out of India’s orbit. Nepal’s foreign policy is based on non-alignment, a prudent course for a tiny sovereign country between the regional rivals India and China. Nepal’s relation with China is relatively ‘formal’, with the Nepali government generally reluctant to do anything (like allowing the Dalai Lama to visit), which might ruffle Chinese feelings. But here, the focus is on the intra-state conflict involving “Maoist” insurgents against the Nepalese authorities – a matter of some concern to China in terms of the “peripheral conflict,” and perceives it may not be in China’s national interest.

In the aftermath of the massacre of most of the royal family in June 2001, Prince Gyanendra the brother of late King Birendra ascended to the throne to face many challenges, in particular the communist uprising collectively known as “Maoist” with a broadly Maoist philosophy based loosely on the “Shining Path” movement of Peru. Some of their aims, such as abolition of the Nepalese monarchy and establishment of a socialist government have attracted the unemployed and the younger generation. More practically, they also seek to address some of the genuine grievances of poor people.

In a fractured political landscape, the “Maoist” conflict has claimed over 10,000 lives since it began in 1996 (*SBS News*, 20Aug.2004) [see figure 3.1]. Numerous peace talks and ceasefires have failed to hold. To have quality armaments and funding for insurgency in a poor country like Nepal implies some sort of high-level collusion. However, there is no apparent lip service, let alone material support for the comrades-in-arms (Maoist) either from Communist China or India’s West Bengal and Kerala state, which are in the grips of Communist Party of India.

**Table 3.1: Casualties - Government Forces Vs. Maoist Rebels**  
(Source: RNA, July 2004, in Janes Intelligence Review, [jir.janes.com](http://jir.janes.com))

Security force casualties (up to 21 April 2004)						
			KIA	WIA		MIA
Army (to 30 May 2004)			467	786		6
Armed police			182	274		6
Civil police			1,178	1,655		361
Total			1,1788	2,678		372
Maoist casualties (up to 30 May 2004)						
Killed			Wounded			Surrendered
Confirmed	Estimated	Total	Confirmed	Estimated	Total	
5,898	1,445	7,343	113	505	618	890

US authorities increasingly linked the Maoists with international terrorist organizations although there is little evidence to support this claim. In addition, promised military assistance, in the form of weapons, training and helicopters was increased and the governments of India, China and the United Kingdom promised more support (<http://www.greenkiwi.co.nz/footprints/frames/mb-right.htm>, 30/05/2004).

The Maoist insurgency in Nepal may not be quickly resolved. Government forces are likely continued to have the upper hand but their opposition is clandestine and determined. “Communism is a malignancy that grows on misery and

dissatisfaction” (Clark 1988, p.330). It is also true that when a country faces a Communist revolution – and, whether victorious or defeated, communist revolutions generally entail the shedding of blood in abundance (Thatcher 2003, p.124). Nepal is strategically placed buffer zone between China and India, and the annexation of a sovereign state of Sikkim by India in 1975 is still fresh, if the failure of democracy and rise of anarchy, causes Nepal to follow Sikkim’s path, the balance of power in China’s southern periphery could be tilted in India’s favour.

***Bhutan Locked in the Indian Orbit:*** China’s annexation of Tibet has played a major role in shaping Bhutan’s policy of leaning towards India. As per Article 11 of the Indo-Bhutan Treaty of 1949, the small Buddhist Kingdom is “guided by the advice of the Government of India in regard to its external relations” while “the Government of India undertakes to exercise no interference in the internal administration of Bhutan”. Unlike Nepal, Bhutan has neither tried to undermine this special relationship by playing China against India nor demanded a review of the 1949 treaty (Singh 2000, p.38). The persecution of Buddhists in Tibet and its past experience with China have made Bhutan apprehensive about developing close ties with Beijing, Bhutan is, however, committed to maintaining “correct relations” with China. There is not much trade or economic interaction between the two. China has conducted negotiations with Bhutan on the 500 km border since 1984 and the two sides have finalised their boundary demarcation.

***Bangladesh Leaning towards China.*** China did not take long to establish diplomatic ties with Bangladesh (three years after its emergence in 1975), even though it had earlier compared India’s role in the birth of Bangladesh to that of the Japanese creation of Manchu Guo and described it as an example of Indo-Soviet manipulation of regional unrest (Malik 2001, p.88). Beijing had also exercised its first veto as a permanent member of the UN Security Council to block Bangladesh’s entry into the United Nations in 1972. However, since the early 1980s, China has emerged as an important economic aid donor, trade partner, diplomatic ally to Bangladesh, and its largest supplier of military hardware, particularly to its navy. At one stage, China toyed with the idea of

using Bangladesh for the purpose of finding an outlet to the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean (Singh 2000, p.31).

***China a Countervailing Force in Sri Lanka:*** Geostrategically, Sri Lanka sits astride the shipping lanes of the Indian Ocean. India's interventionary involvement in the Sinhalese-Tamil ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka (1987-1990) is a prime example of New Delhi's attempts to realise its twin objectives of enhancing its strategic position while at the same time containing the geopolitical fallout from Tamil ethnic separatism, which threatens India's unity and integrity. China and Pakistan remain Sri Lanka's main suppliers of arms. From Sri Lanka's perspective, "a stronger presence of China as a countervailing force is a desirable phenomenon in view of the growing and unquestionable supremacy of India in the region"(Werake 1990, p.65). Beijing routinely issues endorsements of Sri Lanka's "struggle to protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity" and China's opposition to "any outside intervention" in the strife-torn nation. The ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka also shows how difficult it is for India to secure its interests in the subcontinent. With Burma and Bangladesh under Chinese influence, Tibet heavily militarised and Pakistan a close strategic ally, India has become overly concerned about the need to ensure that Sri Lanka does not lean towards any extra regional power inimical to India.

### **China and Conflicts in Southeast Asia.**

Over the past decades or so, China has pursued CBMs with individual Southeast Asian states to reduce tensions resulting from territorial or border disputes and with Southeast Asia in general through the ASEAN. In the 1990s, China signed border agreements with Laos and Vietnam and set up CBMs to promote border cooperation and trade. China has established CBMs with the Philippines to address their territorial dispute over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea, especially after the Philippines accused China of taking over one of the islands, the Mischief Reef, in 1995. In 1999, China also agreed to CBMs with Thailand enhancing diplomatic and security cooperation.

China has focused on active involvement with multilateral organizations such as the ASEAN plus three and ARF to diffuse tensions with its ASEAN neighbours

over the disputed ownership of the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea and to seek arrangements that could serve as an alternative to US-style bilateral alliances in Asia.

***China's Territorial Claims in South China Sea:*** The South China Sea region is the world's second busiest international sea-lane. More than half of the world's super tanker traffic passes through the region's waters. In addition, the South China Sea region contains oil, gas and other marine resources strategically located near energy-consuming countries.

China claims all of the islands including Spratly and most of the South China Sea for historical reasons. China also claims the Paracel Islands and includes them as part of its Hainan Island province. Chinese claims are based on a number of historical events, including the naval expeditions to the Spratly Islands by the Han Dynasty in 110 AD and the Ming Dynasty from 1403-1433 AD ([www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov), 2002). Chinese fishermen and merchants have worked the region over time, and China is using archaeological evidence to bolster its claims of sovereignty. In 1947, China produced a map with 9 undefined dotted lines, and claimed all of the islands within those lines. A 1992 Chinese law restated its claims in the region ([www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov), 2002). China has occupied 8 of those islands to enforce its claims. In 1974, China seized the Paracel Islands from Vietnam.

The dispute over the Spratly Islands is perhaps one of the most complicated disputes in the world. The Spratlys dispute remains the principal source of tension in Southeast Asia and retains the potential to trigger a regional conflict, hence, China's concerns about this maritime region. Tables 3.2 and 3.3 show different states' respective claims and entailing military conflicts in South China Sea.

**Table 3.2: Countries and their respective claims in South China Sea**  
(Source: [www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov), 30/11/ 2002)

Country	Claim
Brunei	Does not occupy any of the islands, but claims part of the South China Seas nearest to it as part of its continental shelf and Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ). The boundary lines are drawn perpendicularly from outermost points on the Brunei coastline. In 1984, Brunei declared and EEZ that includes Louisa Reef.
Indonesia	Not a claimant to any of the Spratly Islands. However, Chinese and Taiwanese claims in the South China Sea may extend into Indonesia's EEZ and continental shelf, including Indonesia's Natuna gas field.
Malaysia	Its Spratly claims are based upon the continental shelf principle, and have clearly defined coordinates. Malaysia has occupied 3 islands that it considers to be within its continental shelf. Malaysia has tried to build up one atoll by bringing soil from the mainland and has built a hotel.
Philippines	Its Spratly claims have clearly defined coordinates, based both upon the proximity principle as well as on the explorations of a Philippine explorer in 1956. In 1971, the Philippines officially claimed 8 islands that it refers to as the Kalayaan, partly on the basis of this exploration, arguing that the islands: 1) were not part of the Spratly Islands; and 2) had not belonged to anyone and were open to being claimed. In 1972, they were designated as part of Palawan Province, and have been occupied.
Taiwan	Taiwan's claims are similar to those of China, and are based upon the same principles. As with China, Taiwan's claims are also not clearly defined. Occupies Pratas Island in the Spratlys.
Vietnam	<p>Vietnamese claims are based on history and the continental shelf principle. Vietnam claims the entire Spratly Islands (Truong Sa in Vietnamese) as an offshore district of the province of Khanh Hoa. Vietnamese claims also cover an extensive area of the South China Sea, although they are not clearly defined. In addition, Vietnam claims the Parcel islands (the Hoang Sa in Vietnamese), although the Chinese seized them in 1974.</p> <p>The Vietnamese have followed the Chinese example of using archaeological evidence to bolster sovereignty claims. In the 1930's, France claimed the Spratly and Parcel Islands on behalf of its then-colony Vietnam. Vietnam has since occupied 20 of the Spratly Islands to enforce its claims.</p>



**Table 3.3: Military Conflicts in South China Sea**  
(Source: [www.eia.doe.gov](http://www.eia.doe.gov), 30/11/2002)

<b>Date</b>	<b>Countries</b>	<b>Military Action</b>
1974	China, Vietnam	Chinese seized the Paracel Islands from Vietnam, with 18 of its troops killed in clashes on one of the islands.
1988	China, Vietnam	Chinese and Vietnamese navies clashed at Johnson Reef in the Spratly Islands. Several Vietnamese boats were sunk and over 70 sailors killed.
1992	China, Vietnam	Vietnam accused China of landing troops on Da Luc Reef. China seized almost 20 Vietnamese cargo ships transporting goods from Hong Kong from June-September.
1994	China, Vietnam	China and Vietnam had naval confrontations within Vietnam's internationally recognized territorial waters over Vietnam's Tu Chinh oil exploration blocks 133, 134 and 135. Chinese claim the area as part of their Wan' Bei – 21 (WAB-21) block.
1995	China, Philippines	China occupied Philippine-claimed Mischief Reef. Philippine military evicted the Chinese in March and destroyed Chinese markers.
1995	Taiwan, Vietnam	Taiwanese artillery fired on a Vietnamese supply ship.
1996	China, Philippines	In January, Chinese vessels engaged in a 90-minute gun battle with a Philippine navy gunboat near Capones Island.
1997	China, Philippines	The Philippine navy ordered a Chinese speedboat and two fishing boats to leave Scarborough Shoal in April; the Philippine navy later removed Chinese markers and raised its flag. China sent three warships to survey Philippine-occupied Panata and Kota Islands.
1998	Philippines, Vietnam	In January, Vietnamese soldiers fired on a Philippine fishing boat near Tennes (pigeon) Reef.
1999	China, Philippines	In May, a Chinese fishing boat was sunk in a collision with Philippine warship. In July, another Chinese fishing boat was sunk in a collision with a Philippine warship.
1999	China, Philippines	In May, Chinese warships were accused of harassing a Philippine navy vessel after it ran aground near the Spratly Islands.

1999	Philippines, Vietnam	In October, Vietnamese troops fired upon a Philippine air force plane on reconnaissance in the Spratly Islands.
1999	Malaysia, Philippines	In October, Philippine defence sources reported that 2 Malaysian fighter planes and 2 Philippine air force surveillance planes nearly engaged over a Malaysian-occupied reef in the Spratly Islands. In the Malaysian Defence Ministry stated that it was not a stand – off.

A critically important assessment of Burma as part of China’s Southeast Asia strategy has been discussed in chapter V as a second case study of this dissertation.

### **Conclusion:**

China’s main substantive strategic interest is its continued economic growth, which demands international stability in general and peripheral stability in particular. Another critical interest is that, crucially for the legitimacy of the PRC government, China needs to maintain the principle that insists Taiwan and the mainland are both part of one (undefined) “China”. Taiwan’s bedrock requirement is the security and continuation of its autonomy and new democracy, including both electoral and individual rights. A second interest is in its rapidly increasing trade and investment positions with the mainland. But, the key player is the US. America’s strategic interests are to maintain regional stability and economic growth, to sustain good working relations with Beijing, and to ensure that the Taiwan issue is resolved peacefully and Taiwan’s nascent democracy is protected. The US, under Republican and Democratic presidents alike, has opposed a unilateral declaration of independence by Taiwan (within the threshold of America’s Taiwan Relation Act 1979). Moreover, Beijing would likely react to such action by taking very strong steps, and the ensuing conflict in the Taiwan Strait would pose dangers for the US, China and Taiwan and would likely have a “lose-lose” outcome.

On the Korean peninsula, the Chinese geopolitical strategy clearly seem to be driven by a consistent set of objectives: to sustain Chinese influence in a divided but peaceful Korean peninsula for as long as the North can survive and to position China to continue to have influence over Korean affairs after unification.

Korean unification may pose problems for Chinese interests, however, depending on how unification comes about and on the state of PRC-US relations. A unified Korea under the South's open social system, capable of "infecting" ethnically Korean portions of north China, would be one such development that Beijing would probably consider threatening. Furthermore, a unified Korea might become the object of Sino-Japanese competition yet again; it might remain tied to the US security system; or, as a nuclear-weapon state, it might be a competitor and potential threat. If/when Korean unification finally occurs, China surely would prefer that it occur gradually, without conflict or a sudden exodus of more refugees.

The Chinese elites are seriously concerned about the increase in Japan's military capabilities which would shift the regional balance of power in Japan's favour. A militarily powerful Japan is more likely to invoke its alliance with the US to intervene should a military conflict arise in the Taiwan Strait. China also is concerned that an enhanced Japanese military would constrain a rising China and produce a security architecture for East Asia that is jointly dominated by the US and Japan.

Almost all of the East Asian countries' particularly Japan's, oil needs are imported from the Middle East and Africa and have to pass through the strategic Strait of Malacca into the South China Sea. Countries in the Asia-Pacific region also generally depend on seaborne trade to fuel their economic growth, and this has led to the sea's transformation into one of the world's busiest shipping lanes. Over half of the world's merchant fleet (by tonnage) sails through the South China Sea every year. The economic potential and geopolitical importance of the South China Sea region has resulted in jockeying between the surrounding nations to claim this sea and its resources for themselves.

The boundary disputes have shaped China's relations with South Asia. Whilst Beijing has resolved its disputed boundaries with Nepal and Pakistan, territorial disputes with India and Bhutan are yet to be resolved. In Beijing's view perceiving India as a sole strategic competitor, the containment of New Delhi's influence in its periphery is offering generous economic and military assistance to India's neighbours. All of India's neighbours have obtained much of their

military arsenal from China – indeed 90 per cent of China’s arms sales go to countries that border India (Malik 2001, p.74).

From Beijing’s perspective, “whether China and Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, or Pakistan wish any particular relations is exclusively for them to decide. For India to attempt to dictate or limit those relations is unacceptable” (Garver 1992, p.72). Because of the asymmetry in size and might, India is invariably drawn into the big-brother syndrome in relation to its smaller neighbours. Whenever South Asian countries have tried to play “the China card” in their relations with India, problems have arisen between India and China as well as between India and its South Asian neighbours (Malik 2001, p.75). However, in contrast with Southeast Asia, the interplay between economics and security is rather weak in South Asia, since geostrategic considerations predominantly shape China’s policy towards the region. These latter themes will be explored in-depth in the next chapter.

## Chapter IV: China and the Indo-Pakistani Conflict

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### Introduction:

Based on the discussion and analysis in the previous chapters, this chapter aims to assess the dynamics of conflict and cooperation among China, India and Pakistan. With the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, China is becoming more central to world politics. Its enormous size and stature as a new hub of economic growth make China a rising power. The Pentagon's 2004 *Annual Report on the Military Power of the PRC* determines that "China's PLA is embarked on an ambitious, long-term military modernisation effort to develop capabilities to fight and win short-duration high-intensity conflicts along its periphery"(Hill 2004, p.52). Historically, such shifts in power relationships have caused instability in the international system. Moreover, China adjoins several conflict-prone zones (Korea, India, Pakistan, Southeast Asia and Central Asia) in which savage wars flared up with unexpected intensity in the past (see Figure 4.1). Global and regional geopolitical shifts have buffeted this region more than ever. The end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union altered the global security environment and the relations India and Pakistan had with external actors, especially the great powers. The rise of militant Islamic conservatism – and terrorism – and the 1998 decisions by New Delhi and Islamabad to enter the "nuclear club" have further transformed regional dynamics. These momentous events put this peripheral zone in a precarious state. Many variables, including history and ideology, are at play in this historically conflicted zone, and the expected future scenarios of conflict and cooperation depicted here represent a slice of most of the possible developments. While the previous chapters have treated China's history, worldview, and strategic culture, the case study here explores China's position vis-a-vis India, the Indo-Pakistani dispute, their worldviews, and strategic cultures. Some key questions, as raised in the introductory chapter, are addressed here, including:

What are these "Peripheral Conflicts" that are of such concern to the PRC, particularly those involving itself, India and Pakistan?

What sources must China marshal to play an active role in addressing the simmering tensions in this sector of its periphery?

The regional supremacy “race” between modern-day China and India goes back to a contrast in philosophies that could hardly be greater. Contemporary China is, in part, a product of Mao Zedong’s materialist conviction that “power comes out of a barrel of gun.” For India, Mahatma Gandhi’s religious concept of non-violence was the strongest weapon used to free India from its colonial yoke. India is a democracy in an increasingly pluralistic society, while China is one-party authoritarian state. India, however, has more divisions based on religion, caste, language or ideology than does China, where one race - the Han - is more dominant than any other single group. Over the past decade, China’s economy has grown faster and attracted much more foreign investment than India’s. That is the central reason why most of the rest of the world, notably the US, has paid much more attention to China than to India.



**Figure 4.1: China and its conflict-prone periphery.**  
 ([http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/asia\\_pol00.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/asia_pol00.jpg))

However, there also are striking similarities between China and India. Both countries have huge and relatively poor populations. Like Chinese traditionally see their country as *Zhongguo*, the Middle Kingdom, so are the Indians who see their country as *Bharat*-the centre of the world. India is striving to become a superpower, which most Westerners find irrational. China is striving to become a superpower, which most Westerners find reasonable. Both China and India “threaten” smaller neighbours – Taiwan and Pakistan, respectively, as the most obvious examples but not the only ones. Both China and India claim substantial areas of the Himalayas, the world’s highest mountains, where their armies fought each other in 1962. Both countries have a large, growing, and increasingly modern army, navy and air force.

It is impossible to ignore the threats, both conventional and nuclear, that China and India pose to other countries, and the possibility that Chinese and Indian arms will clash again over disputed lands and spheres of influence. India is anxious to contain any perceived threat from China in order to maintain Indian pre-eminence in the subcontinent. In pursuing this ambition, India has confronted many adversaries over the years. Many perceive Pakistan as India's main enemy, and Pakistan is obsessed with perpetuating this myth, as is India itself. But other nations in the periphery – Sri Lanka, Nepal, and even Bangladesh, which India created out of East Pakistan – have been India's adversaries in a sense because they stand in the way of a Greater India. Non-violence, non-alignment, and nuclear non-proliferation were India's intended international agenda and image at the onset of independent India. But, India has drifted away from these stances and waged five wars, a few mini wars and lengthy anti-insurgency campaigns in its short history of independence. While a detailed analysis of the nature and origins of Indian conflicts is not the focus of this dissertation, this chapter outlines key issues of involvement in conflict by these three actors, beginning with a look at India since its independence.

### **Historical Overview of India's Wars**

*Kashmir – The Root of Indo-Pakistani Conflict:* The emergence of Kashmir as a conflict zone in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was the product of the regional geopolitical upheaval that has transformed it into a geostrategically important place. Kashmir, which has been a burning issue for Indo-Pakistani conflict ever since their independence, has indirectly linked it with another heavyweight state actor, China. If Kashmir had not been included as part of India in 1947, the Sino-Indian War of 1962 would most probably not have occurred.

The so-called Kashmir question has dominated relations between India and Pakistan since both gained independence. The Kashmir problem is partly a British legacy. In 1846 the British, successor to the Muslim Moghuls, sold Kashmir outright to a wealthy Hindu ruler of Jammu for 500,000 pounds and was annexed to his own state (Carver 1990, p.205; and Praagh 2003, p.367), thereby complicating the demographic structure of the state of Jammu and Kashmir (see Figure 4.2).





**Figure 4.2: Divided Kashmir**  
[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/kashmir\\_disputed\\_2003.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/kashmir_disputed_2003.jpg)

Kashmir was predominantly Muslim, especially in the Vale of Kashmir itself, while, Ladakh is Buddhist. Down on the plains of Jammu there is an overwhelmingly Hindu population [77% Muslim, 20% Hindu, out of 4 million population in 1947 (Carver 1990, p.205), and the population reached 10 million in 2002 (*The Economist*, 14 February 2002, p. 21)]. As Pakistan followed an ideology of Islamic nationalism, its *raison d'être* to claim Kashmir on the basis of geographic contiguity with its predominantly Muslim population was crucial to its religious ideology as the cornerstone of the state.

India formulated an ideology championing the concept of 'secularism', as the pillar of Indian democracy, and it was equally important to Indian leadership to demonstrate that even a Muslim entity could thrive in a predominantly Hindu but

secular state (Ganguly 1986, p.11). But today, the Indian view of conceding the territory of Kashmir to Pakistan or to the people of Kashmir (in accordance with the result of plebiscite if ever held) would weaken its 'secularism' is not merely cosmetic ideology, but gravely strategic in the national interest. The threat of territorial disintegration would set a precedent to the eventual "Balkanisation" of India.

Under the Indian Independence Act of 1947, the Raj's paramountcy in India's 562 princely states lapsed and the states became temporarily independent until the assorted princely rulers acceded to either India or Pakistan. A Muslim prince in the then contemporary circumstances almost certainly would have opted for Pakistan. Sir Hari Singh, a Hindu maharajah of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, however, did not want to become part of India either. He wanted independence for his state, but found himself caught between conflicting ambitions on the part of the two new powers of India and Pakistan, both rejected the independence stance of any princely state.

***India's First War in Kashmir (1947-48):*** It is difficult to pinpoint the exact date when the Kashmir hostilities of 1947-1948 started, as neither side made a formal declaration of war. Pakistan had imposed an economic blockade on Kashmir and sent marauding armed Pathan tribesmen across the Kashmir-West Pakistan border on 22 Oct.1947 to intimidate the Hindu ruler (Gupta 1966, p. 111). The only recourse for Sir Hari was to ask India for an armed resistance to the Pakistani-supported invasion. But the cost of the Indian assistance was the accession of the state of 'Jammu and Kashmir' to India. As the terms of accession were signed on 26 Oct.1947 (Praagh 2003, p.368), the Indian forces intervened, and began the first Indo-Pakistani War, which dragged on for more than a year before it ended with UN-supervised ceasefire.

The UN resolution of 5 January 1949 left *Azad Kashmir* (Pakistani controlled Kashmir) with 5,000 square miles (see Figure 4.2) and about 700,000 people. The rest of the state, with 81,000 square miles and 3.5 million people, was placed under Indian control (Carver 1990, p.209). The UN ceasefire line that went into effect in 1949 was later legitimised as the line of control between Indian and Pakistani forces. Tension remained high, but India successfully used the USSR's

veto in the UN Security Council to protect its interests in the dispute whenever the UN attempted to put its resolution for a popular plebiscite or referendum that would have allowed Kashmiris to exercise their internationally established right to self-determination (Praagh 2003, p. 265). Now, there is no USSR, but the Kashmir Conflict remains as alive as ever.

***India's Second War (1961):*** Most of the world chose to believe that newly independent India was following Gandhian notions of non-violence and strict non-alignment in the rapidly developing global confrontation between the Soviet bloc and the West. In reality, India casually compromised these principles from the moment it came to an inglorious end in arbitrary partition and religious violence, by clearly espousing a softer version of Indian chauvinism. During the Suez Crisis in 1956, India strongly condemned the UK, France and Israel for their military intervention in Egypt for strategic purposes. But in the same year India manifested its double standard when it failed to criticize the USSR for its simultaneous invasion of Hungary and brutal suppression of a popular movement for autonomy (Praagh 2003, p. 265). India again failed to criticize the 'Brezhnev Doctrine,' based on the principle of 'limited sovereignty' for Eastern bloc nations (Baylis & Smith 1999, p. 96), when USSR crushed the Czechoslovak revolt in 1968.

***India's Policy - Iron Fist in a Velvet Glove:*** After the British left India; the French had voluntarily withdrawn from the tiny territory of Pondicherry in South India, while the Portuguese had stayed on in their enclave of Goa and two smaller territories named Daman and Diu on the Arabian Sea coast south of Bombay. Portugal's presence in the subcontinent was nearly 450 years old, and its Roman Catholic and cultural influences had spread to Bombay and beyond (Praagh 2003, p.266). But India insisted that Goa, Daman, and Diu represented an unacceptable colonial intrusion on its land. Lisbon ignored Delhi's demands for a negotiated Portuguese withdrawal.

India shocked the international community on the night of 18 December 1961, when Indian Air Force bombers, without warning, hit key facilities in Goa, and won its second war in thirty-six hours (Praagh 2003, p. 266). The blatant use of force exposed India's superior attitude and "iron fist in the velvet glove" stance

towards its neighbours and rest of the world. Unfortunately, this stance would hurt India the most when it boomeranged on New Delhi in 1962.

***The Sino-Indian Cartographic Quarrel:*** The conflict between China and India along more than 4,000 kilometres of the world's highest and most glorious mountains goes back to the British Raj at the turn of the last century. It is certain to continue at least well into the twenty-first century. No treaty has ever formally delineated the undemarcated and disputed boundary which affects over 125,000 square kilometres in three distinct sectors north-east corner of Ladakh in Kashmir, known as *Aksai Chin*; an area west of Nepal where the frontier of Uttarakhand state joins that of Tibet; and that between Arunachal state and Tibet, east of Bhutan up to the border with Burma. The sector that mattered most to China is the *Aksai Chin*, as it is China's main western route from Xinjiang to Tibet. India had inherited almost all the northern frontiers from the days of the British Empire. China's case, with much justification, was that of no Chinese government had ever agreed to nor signed any treaty delineating these frontiers. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup>, the threat of Russian encroachment on the northern frontiers of India preoccupied the British Raj, the uninhabited frozen wastes north of Kashmir (See Figure 4.3) was unilaterally pushed forward (Johnson-Ardagh line in 1865, and Macartney-Macdonald line in 1899) to suit its defences (Carver 1990, p. 211). At that time China was weak, and posed no threat, however, by WWI, China's presence in Tibet was judged a potentially greater threat to India. So the British with the consent of Tibetan representatives (China refused to participate) established Himalayan boundaries (McMahon line in 1914) that they hoped the Chinese would respect (Carver 1990, p. 213; and Praagh 2003, p. 269). At stake then, and now, are 130,000 square kilometres of remote disputed mountainous borderlands and, since the late 1940s, the prestige and strategic position of the world's two most populous nations.

***India's Third War (1962):*** A more serious Chinese threat to India started in 1950, when Communist Chinese leaders sent the PLA into Tibet to take over the vast plateau between Han China and the Indian subcontinent. This was a latent threat to India's protective Himalayan shield. Instead of resisting or condemning,

India's "philosophical" leaders appeased China in the name of Asian solidarity. India embraced what were called the five principles of "peaceful coexistence," in a 1954 agreement with China on the Tibetan issue (Praagh 2003, p. 270). India refused to acknowledge the threat imposed by the PLA in Tibet until after the theocratic leader, the Dalai Lama, made a miraculous escape over the Himalayas to India in 1959 as Chinese troops massacred his rebellious countrymen and came close to destroying Tibet's Buddhist culture. The political asylum of the Dalai Lama and his followers in Dharamshala in northern India was like a nip of poison to any "Sino-Indian brotherly" relationship.

However, China had started linking its remote XUAR into Tibet in 1957 what it considered its own territory, and occupied the 59,000 square kilometre eastern bulge of the Ladakh sector of Kashmir known as Aksai Chin, establishing its presence as the third power in the troubled state of Kashmir. Far to the east, the Chinese crossed the McMahon Line (see Figure 4.4) from Tibet.

When the Chinese Premier, Zhou Enlai, visited Delhi in April 1960 (Nepal and Burma signed their border agreement with China in this visit) for extensive talks on the border issue, the Sino-Indian conflict could have been avoided if Nehru had met Zhou's specific proposals which included Beijing's willingness to accept the McMahon Line as the border in the east (although China had not formally recognized it), if India would accept the Chinese presence in Aksai Chin in the west but India out rightly refused Chinese proposals (Praagh 2003, p. 273).





**Figure 4.3: Main Sino-Indian Dispute in the Western Sector.**  
[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/china\\_indiaw\\_border\\_88.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_indiaw_border_88.jpg)

Starting in late 1961, India also pursued a covert “forward policy” of pushing back Chinese forces in the Himalayas. By September 1962, the Indians had regained about 6,500 square kilometres of the 36,000 square kilometres in disputed Ladakh (Praagh 2003, p.272). Arrogance more than naiveté was at the root of the India’s China policy, and it was a hollow arrogance if India’s military unpreparedness was taken into account. India’s China policy failed miserably when Beijing decided it could put up no longer with Indian territorial gains and gratuitous insults, and sought to give Asia and the world a dramatic lesson in the use of military might to preserve China’s hegemony.



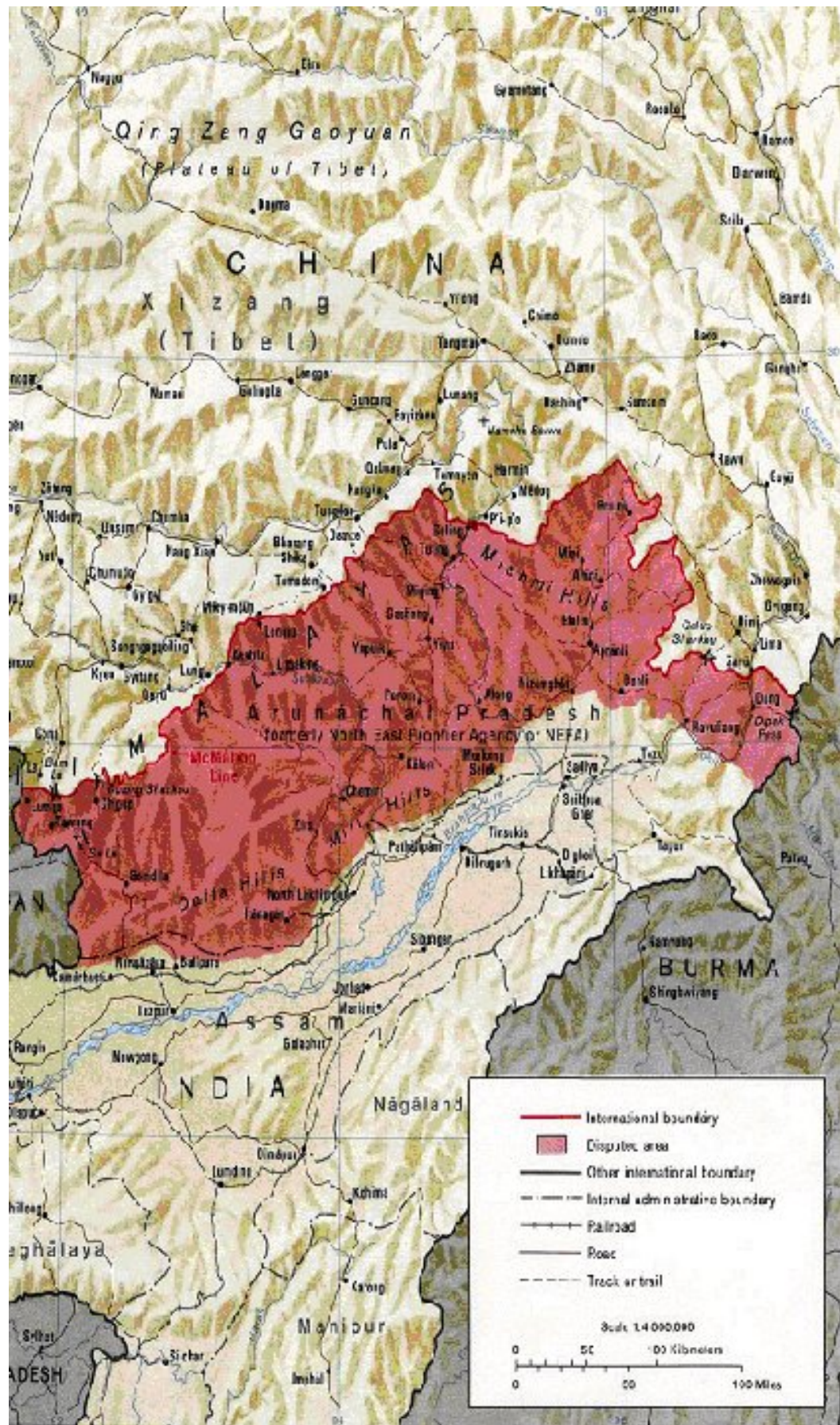


Figure 4.4: Sino-Indian eastern border conflict zone  
[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/china\\_india\\_e\\_border\\_88.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/china_india_e_border_88.jpg)

The conflict reached a climax in October and November of 1962 in the only war India lost of the five it has waged. India's affinity to the Soviet Union, however, did not prevent it from taking the most significant step in India's history on 20 November 1962. The self-appointed paragon of non-alignment appealed urgently to the United States for warplanes to strike advancing Chinese troops and protect Indian cities [Nehru informed neither his cabinet nor the foreign ministry of his desperate appeal through the US embassy, and it remained a secret until early 1965 after his death (Praagh 2003, p. 285)]. Washington responded immediately: an aircraft carrier of the US Pacific fleet made for the Bay of Bengal.

But, the Chinese government announced cease-fire and withdrew behind the 1959 LOAC, i.e. McMahon Line by 1<sup>st</sup> December 1962 (Praagh 2003, p.285). These were precisely the terms that China repeatedly had sought to negotiate peacefully with India. Having demolished the forces that had stealthily carried out the forward policy, Beijing now imposed terms unilaterally, also warning Indian troops to stay back twenty kilometres or risk further attack.

This was all part of a brilliantly conceived and executed battle plan that added up to the most striking military triumph in the history of the PRC. The PLA in the NEFA and Ladakh inflicted on numerically equal Indian forces a series of stinging, and humiliating setbacks. Tactically, strategically, and politically, India suffered a debacle at the top of the world at the hands of a clever, determined, tough-minded Beijing leadership.

*India's Fourth War (1965):* After the first Kashmir crisis, Pakistan realized that it would not be able to defend itself from India based upon its own capabilities. It eagerly began to court and obtain military assistance from the West, especially the US. This coincided with the first priority of US foreign policy at that time, the containment of the Soviet Union and China. The US decided to enlist Pakistan as a bulwark against communism in Southwest Asia, and induced Pakistan to enter the SEATO in 1954.

The period from 1948-1965 was fraught with tension and distrust between India and Pakistan. As the 1962 war revealed gross weaknesses in the Indian military, Pakistan turned to the victor of 1962 Sino-Indian war in an attempt to balance



India's influence in the region. This was reflected by the 1963 Sino-Pakistan Boundary Agreement, whereby Pakistan transferred a third of Kashmir west of the Karakoram pass it had occupied in 1947-48 to China, subject to a settlement of the dispute between rival claimants India and Pakistan (Bedi 2002, p.34).

On-going tensions culminated in another territorial dispute in April 1965, this time over the Rann of Kutch. While this crisis did not escalate to a full-scale war, the cease-fire that prevailed set the stage for future conflict between India and Pakistan, as neither was satisfied with the settlement. Border incidents flared into a full scale Indo-Pak war in Jammu-Kashmir region in August 1965, with most of the fighting being confined to the Western sector. India responded militarily in order to protect its reputation and credibility with its Pakistani adversary. The US and UK arms embargo on both countries during the hostilities encouraged Pakistan to turn more to China for arms while India turned more to the Soviet Union.

Faced with increasing pressure from the UN in general, and the US and UK in particular, on 20 September, the Indian decision to bring the war to a close was made on political, not military grounds (Ganguly 1986, p.90). Additionally, there were fears that the Chinese might open a third front along the Himalayan border. In fact, China had delivered a three-day ultimatum on September 17 in which it threatened "grave consequences" unless India dismantled certain fortifications erected between Sikkim and Tibet (Ganguly 1986, p.90).

***India's Fifth War (1971):*** The West Pakistani military ambition was obsessed with Kashmir and its inegalitarian and undemocratic character of brutal repression including deliberate campaign of eliminating educated Bengalis from all positions of influence, which had estranged Bengalese in East Pakistan (Ganguly 1986, p. 117). As a result of the country's first real democratic election in 1970, the Awami League Party of East Pakistan won an overwhelming victory. Its leader, Mujib (as he was known) should have been prime minister of all Pakistan instead of prisoner of the Army (on treason charges). The West Pakistanis could not accept an East Pakistani (Bengali) prime minister and blatantly defied the outcome of the ballot box. The increasingly likely outcome of splitting West and East Pakistan was not without appeal to many West Pakistanis.

Zulfikar Ali Bhutto was inspired by the vision of a Pakistan led by himself as there no longer would be any danger of control by a Bengali majority, and this had instigated a split between the western part and East Pakistan's Sheik Mujibar Rahman (Praagh 2003, p.304). This led to violent demonstrations in East Pakistan; the Pakistani military failed to stop the continuing carnage; and ultimately the Awami League supporters upgraded their political demand from regional autonomy to sovereignty for the East Pakistani Bengalese (Ganguly 1986, p.120).

***Fragmentation of Pakistan - Birth of Bangladesh:*** Indian armed forces were over stretched in confronting the same enemy on its western and eastern flanks (West and East Pakistan), let alone on the northern flank (Chinese). In May 1971, West Pakistan could not be persuaded by Indian political pressures to remove its stranglehold on East Pakistan, as this was having serious implications for Indian Bengal, invaded by an estimated 9.8 million refugees according to *Newsweek* magazine (Ganguly 1986, p.116). A strategic decision to annihilate India's enemy on the eastern flank had thus arrived. India was preparing its military force in support of the guerrilla force (Mukti Bahini), but the time for flexing its military muscle was not yet ripe. India's armed forces, which normally looked primarily westward and secondarily northward to fight in very different terrain from that of East Pakistan, would have to be prepared and redeployed for a very different campaign from any for which they had hitherto planned.

A new Indian strategic doctrine was thus formulated for victory in East Pakistan: the most crucial, the threat of Chinese intervention was minimized, partly by diplomatic action and partly by waiting until winter snow blocked the mountain passes and immobilised the PLA, which was also the most suitable weather for operations in East Pakistan (Carver 1990, p. 228). By early November 1971, India was ready for a third Indo-Pakistan War backed up by a 'Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation' with the USSR signed in August 1971, and this was an important difference to previous wars. India's underlying rationale for war was the establishment of an independent Bangladesh only in East Bengal (Praagh 2003, p.505). Indian troops crossed the border into East Pakistan in early December 1971. The Pakistani air force responded by attacking air bases deep

inside India. With Bengal's plains dry, the Indian forces swiftly routed the scattered Pakistani forces defending the eastern sector of the country. With Himalayan passes blocked by snow with the onset of winter, Chinese forces in Tibet could not move to the east as they had in 1962, even if Beijing wanted to; and Pakistani forces in the west could not cross the mountains into Indian-held Kashmir as they had in 1965. The US naval task force dispatched to the Bay of Bengal, comprising the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier "Enterprise" and seven destroyers succeeded not in intimidating but angering India (Praagh 2003, p.307).

As the USSR vetoed the UN cease-fire resolution introduced by China and US, the war proceeded until the Pakistani forces surrendered on 16 December 1971 (Carver 1990, p. 233). India's deliberate and violent fragmentation of Pakistan undermined the myth of the ideological solidarity of Islam. The realities of economic disparity and cultural domination by the West Pakistani elites seemed of greater significance than any commitment to an abstract religious ideology.

The ramifications of India's third and most decisive military victory over Pakistan immediately went far beyond the subcontinent. The leadership in Washington and Beijing were appalled that their mutual ally, Pakistan, had lost its eastern territory. They thus perceived a grave strategic threat from the Soviet Union's increasing influence in India extending to Bangladesh and encircling China. In this respect, the 1971 Indo-Pakistan war probably contributed substantially to the momentum towards the then emerging strategic Sino-US entente.

### **Threat: The Leading Component of Strategic Culture**

What causes one country to feel a threat from another that would lead it to seek an alignment with a third country? Strategists have suggested that four factors contribute to the perception of a security threat; aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions (Chambers 2002, p. 475). Drawing on the assessments of strategic culture in the previous chapters, what can be surmised about Indian, Pakistani, and Chinese perceptions of threat? Threat perception is the nucleus of any strategic culture that is durable and long lasting, changing only slowly. Based on these factors, what are the likely patterns

of enmity and the strategies adopted by China, India, and Pakistan in China's peripheral zone?

***China's Strategic Culture vis-a`-vis India:*** Chinese security elites see India as a potential rival and future threat, and they have a strongly negative perception of India's strategic culture (Chambers 2002, p. 482). That having been said, until 1998 the PLA was even silent about Indian "regional hegemony." But the nuclear tests of that year seemed to be a wake-up call to the PLA, and India started to appear on the Chinese strategic radar screens. The primary Chinese strategic goal on the border dispute is the need to prevent the Indian influence in Tibet, traditionally quite strong, from gathering momentum. So long as Beijing controls Tibet, the PRC will remain largely insulated against the ethnic and social subversive forces. As a measure of its determination to retain such control, China has prioritised the deployment of land-based tactical nuclear weapons, especially solid fuelled IRBM targeted against Indian cities (Tow 2001, pp. 29-30). By 2002, the PLA's strategic analysts expressed concerns over India's regional ambitions and growing military capabilities, and nuclear arsenal. The main Indian nuclear threat to China is the *Agni* IRBM which, when fully developed, will be able to target key Chinese cities (Hagerty 1998, pp. 175-6). As cited in Shambaugh, the PRC's "new view" vis-a`-vis Indian threat is as follows.

The Indian geostrategic targets are to seek hegemony in South Asia, contain China, control the Indian Ocean, and strive to become a military power in the contemporary world. The Indian policy of occupying Chinese territory in the eastern sector of the border region targeting its missiles on southern and south-western China, and maintaining its military superiority in the Sino-Indian boundary region to consolidate its vested interests and effectively contain China (2002, p.306).

According to Shambaugh, China's view is that India desires to establish hegemony across the South Asian region, and therefore insists that the various countries of South Asia respect what India defines as its security interests in that region (Garver 2002, p.390). India and China clashed several times in the 1970s and with the standoff at Sumdorong Chu in the eastern sector from October 1986

to March 1987 being the most serious incident since 1962 (Sidhu & Yuan 2001, p. 353).

***Indian Strategic Culture vis-a`-vis China:*** Since 1962, Indian military strategists have had to operate on the basis of an assumption that Pakistan might decide to enter a major Sino-Indian war, or that China might similarly decide to come to Pakistan's aid in the event of a major Indo-Pakistan war. Effective Indian subordination of Pakistan would end this two-front concern, allowing India to concentrate its forces and attention solely against China.

With the end of the Cold War, at least three different streams of Indian strategic culture, **Nehruvianism**, **neoliberalism**, and **hyperrealism**, contend for dominance in India vis-a`-vis China and Pakistan (Bajpai 2002, p. 245). Indian strategic culture is already undergoing change, moving away from the Nehruvianism, which guided Indian foreign and security policy since independence. The question remains, however, toward which competing school or worldview is it evolving: neoliberalism or hyperrealism? One Indian scholar, Kanti Bajpai, sees the trend since 1990 as moving toward neoliberalism, with its belief in the ability of India to negotiate mutually beneficial deals with other countries, even with Pakistan. However, he also notes that since 11 September 2001, and especially since the 13 December 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament House, Indian thinking is also evolving in the direction of hyperrealism (Bajpai 2002, p. 290). This tendency also views China as the principal threat to India, and strongly believes that the Chinese only respect power.

***Nehruvians*** broadly endorse the kinds of policies that the Indian government has pursued with China since 1992 in bringing Beijing around to the lingering border settlement. An adequate defence against China is vital. New Delhi must be able to defend its borders and cannot be caught napping if Sino-Indian relations should suddenly decay as they did in 1961-62. However, India's posture along the border should not be provocative (Ranganathan 1998, p. 254). Nehruvians believe that India and China have a broad geopolitical interest in common, namely, to ensure that Asia does not become either an arena of conflict between Asian countries themselves or an object of renewed and enhanced Western

influence (Bhattacharjee and Dixit, *Indian Express*, 28 May 1998). India and China, and other major Asian powers, should come together to build confidence and cooperation amongst themselves in order to avoid mutual conflict and to keep the US and other Westerners at bay (Dutt, *Tribune*, 17 April 1999).

The Indian *Neoliberals* view China differently. Sino-Indian relations in the distant or even more recent past are largely irrelevant. It is the present and future of India and China that must be paramount. In a globalised world, where the barriers to trade, investment, and technology have loosened as never before, the past holds few lessons. Older quarrels, such as the border disputes, are anachronisms that have little bearing on contemporary choices; above all, these choices must be concerned with how states can manage the opportunities and challenges of globalisation (Singh 1998, p.38). Looking at China through the lens of the border dispute is thus, probably the wrong way to assess the relationship. It is China's economic revolution and the effects of economic change on its foreign and security policies that are crucial (Bajpai 2002, p.269). China is rapidly becoming a great power. In the pursuit of great power status via rapid economic growth, China is now committed to pragmatic policies toward India, Taiwan and Japan, as well as toward the US (Bajpai 2002, p.269).

While the Indian Nehruvians think that India and China can be friends and allies and while neoliberals argue that India and China can cut a strategic deal if they develop their economic relations, the Indian *hyperrealists* see China as the greatest military threat to India, far more so than Pakistan (Chellaney *Hindustan Times*, 21 April 1999). The Nehruvians, in the hyperrealist view, failed in the 1950s and 1960s to comprehend Chinese goals and methods, and to prepare to meet force with force. They are no wiser about China forty years later: communication and contacts with China will do little to change the basic expansionist and aggressive tenets of the authoritarian Chinese leadership, and it is thus absurd to think that the two countries can combine to manage Asian security (Nanda *The Pioneer*, 20 April 1999). According to hyperrealists, the neoliberals also are misguided about China. Their faith in the power of economics is exaggerated. For China, pragmatism in foreign and security policy and economic modernization is merely tactical and will be dispensed with when

Beijing feels strong enough to use unilateral means to achieve its national interests. India must therefore prepare itself militarily to deal with China. Nuclear deterrence is vital if India is to be secure against China (Singh 1998, p. 14).

In addition, India's conventional military power must be augmented to defend Indian territory against the largest army in the world. Beyond military preparedness on India's part, New Delhi must knit together an alliance of Asian countries that will contain China. It must do to China what China has done to India, namely, encirclement (Bajpai 2002, p. 261). Some Indian hyperrealists would go so far as to insist that India must reopen the Tibet question and help counter China's rule (Malik *The Pioneer*, 24 August 2000). A counter-encirclement strategy will assume even greater importance as the US position in Asia diminishes. The Indian hyperrealists argue that the US will eventually have to pull out of Asia, leaving the field open to China. At that point, Asians will have to face up to the responsibilities of containing China by themselves.

***Pakistan's Strategic Culture vis-a`-vis India:*** Pakistan's strategic culture is premised heavily on insecurity, distrust vis-à-vis India and the genesis of its claim on Kashmir. There are four fundamental rationales. Kashmir was the homeland for India's Muslims before independence, and Pakistan feels incomplete without it. Kashmir was the "K" in the acronym that made up the name Pakistan, which also means the "land of the pure". Without Kashmir, Pakistan is literally meaningless. Second, Pakistan's army has long hankered after the "strategic depth" Kashmir would give it. It will never feel utterly safe without it. At a reasonably low cost to Pakistan, it keeps half of India's army tied up (*The Economist*, 14 February 2004), and is the third reason for fuelling the war. The last is the Indus River (See Figure 4.4), the lifeline of semi-arid Pakistan whose economic mainstay is agriculture and its allied industry. Ironically, the source of the Indus River originates in Indian Kashmir and that causes jitters in water-wary Pakistan.

Any potential for change in Pakistan's strategic culture is based on the influence of conservative Islam on the officers who joined the military ranks in the 1970s and 1980s (Chambers 2002, p. 482). The top Pakistani commanders seem to have drawn a line between conservative Islam and Islamic radicalism, believing that

the latter will undermine the professionalism, discipline, and service ethos of the military (Chambers 2002, p.282). Nevertheless, if this more militant Islamic radicalism becomes a stronger element in the social-religious and strategic cultures of the middle officer corps, can the efforts of President Musharraf and the current senior military leadership truly halt the evolution of Pakistani strategic culture in this direction?

***India's Strategic Culture vis-a`-vis Pakistan:*** The core of the Indian *Nehruvian* approach is to change Pakistani attitudes towards India. The only way of accomplishing this, in the end, is through communication and contact with both the Pakistani government and people. No matter what the provocation by Pakistan, Nehruvians argue, New Delhi must hold firmly to a policy of engagement and negotiation. Summitry is one way of keeping a conversation going with Pakistani officials. Trade and the benefits from it can be instrumental in showing Pakistanis that diplomatic normalization with India is profitable. People-to-People interactions (sports, culture, intellectual exchanges) also can serve to de-demonise India in the Pakistani imagination. In sum, only a multifaceted relationship with Pakistan can bring about lasting accommodation and a viable peace. China would view this as an opportunity to expand its economic markets on its southwestern periphery, and at the same time would mobilize its diplomatic arsenals to keep Pakistan in its orbit of influence.

When Indian **neoliberals** think about India-Pakistan relations, they approach the issue differently from Nehruvians. Where Nehruvians emphasize a multifaceted process of communication and contact, neoliberals look essentially to strike bargains to the advantage of both sides. In this view, Pakistan is a threat to India's security but can be brought around to a more pacific and accommodative view of the relationship if New Delhi uses an approach built on the promise of mutual gain, particularly economic gain (Dattar *Indian Express*, 13 July 2001). Neoliberals argue that, ultimately, Pakistan's leaders and people are not above the logic of costs and benefits. Whatever their sense of national identity and their fear of India, Pakistanis will eventually measure their policies toward their neighbour in terms of the advantages and disadvantages of alternative courses of action. In the end, economic well-being is paramount for any society, and



Pakistan will come around to the view that it must cut a deal with India in order to give its people a better life (*The Hindu*, 21 June 2001). China's view on this would be favourable, as it knows that military power and economic prosperity depends upon the command of the global markets.

The Indian *hyperrealist* prescription for dealing with Pakistan is not to overly worry about the intensity of communication and contact with that country, nor to rely on the imperatives of economic change, nor even to turn to others for help. Instead, hyperrealists argue, India must focus on the "fundamentals" and on policies that have stood the test of time in the international system. Ultimately, the only language that Pakistan understands and heeds, like any other country, is the language of power and violence. The core of India's policy therefore is to build its military strength (Karnad *News Time*, 5 Feb 2000). Given that India is eight times Pakistan's size, it should be in a position to overawe Pakistan's military. From a position of dominance, New Delhi should dictate terms to Pakistan. With military strength will come an array of options that can be used to raise the socio-economic costs of Pakistan's intervention in Kashmir. That these options should be exercised sooner rather than reacting later to Pakistani provocations is the essence of a workable, effective policy.

What does it mean to take the fight to Pakistan? Hyperrealists argue that India should repay Pakistan in the same coin militarily, but in addition, politically and economically. Militarily, India should make Pakistan pay a much higher cost for the conflict in Kashmir. At the very least, Indian force should be more aggressive in counter-insurgency operations, as they were in Punjab.

In effect, the Indian hyperrealists imply that the destruction or debilitation of Pakistan is the only truly viable solution. Pakistan is an implacable foe and with every setback or defeat it will only rebuild itself for the next round of conflict. Pakistanis see compromise and negotiation, restraint and cooperation as signs of weakness and incoherence in India. Unless Pakistan is reduced to a state of permanent chaos or debility, it will, phoenix-like, rise from the ashes to challenge India again and again (Bajpai 2002, pp.265-66). The Chinese would see this as a strategic threat not only to its closest ally Pakistan, but also to its own national interests in the southwestern periphery. To counter such an Indian worldview,

Pakistan has forged a close strategic partnership with China, India's nemesis, primarily to offset Indian power.

***Indian Views on Terrorism and Muslims:*** Indian Muslims from Kashmir and some Pakistani Muslims have certainly been involved in attacks in Indian states other than Kashmir in the last decade. But most Indians consider Muslims a fifth column for Pakistan (Noorani 2003, p.3). Given the spread of India's 130 million Muslims through the country and the potential linkages with radical Islamic organizations in the region, especially Pakistan, the potential of the terrorism perpetrated by disaffected Muslims to destabilise the country is far greater (Gordon 2004, p.1).

### **Sino-Pakistan Entente**

Within months of the Dalai Lama's flight to India, Chinese ambassador Pan Tzu-li wrote to Prime Minister Nehru in May 1959 warning that China would make common cause with Pakistan, thereby forcing India to face military and diplomatic pressure on two fronts (Malik 2001, p.85). To this end, Beijing found in Islamabad an only too willing "partner." The Sino-Pakistan strategic partnership is one of the two bilateral relationships (the other being North Korea) that have not just survived but thrived during the ups and downs and numerous twists and turns in China's foreign relations since the 1950s. Despite steadily improving relations with India since the late 1980s, China has not become less friendly to Pakistan, primarily because the combined strategic and political advantages China receives from its relationship with Pakistan (and, through Pakistan, with other Islamic countries). These easily outweigh any advantages China might receive from a closer relationship with India. Above all, Pakistan is the only country that stands up to India and thereby prevents Indian hegemony over the region, thus fulfilling a key objective of China's South Asia policy.

Moreover, the Chinese believe that as long as India is preoccupied with Pakistan on its western frontier, it will not stir up trouble on the Tibetan border. A secure and stable India at peace with Pakistan would, on the other hand, make New Delhi focus on China and East Asia. In the short to medium term, Beijing will continue to support Pakistan, since it is vitally important to China's energy

security offering access to bases in the Persian Gulf (Gwadar), providing military security (by keeping India's military engaged on its western frontiers), addressing geopolitics (given its geostrategic location at the intersection of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East), promoting national unity and territorial integrity (Tibet and Xinjiang), enhancing maritime strategy vis-à-vis India, serving as a staunch diplomatic ally (in regional and international fora, including the Islamic world), providing a buyer and supplier of conventional and unconventional strategic weaponry, and above all, constituting a bargaining chip in China's relations with India and the United States.

***Pakistan's Nuclear Capability -- Pillar of Sino-Pakistani Entente:*** China has been the most important and reliable ally of Pakistan over the past four decades. In its search for the appropriate delivery vehicles for its nuclear weapons, the Pakistani military turned to its all-weather friend, China. Although notionally committed to the US-sponsored program to limit ballistic missile proliferation known as the MTCR, China proved both able and willing to transfer the requisite ballistic missile technology to Pakistan. Beijing has not only provided Islamabad with nuclear bombs, enriched uranium and plants – all three installations at Kahuta, Khushab and Chasma were built with Chinese assistance – but also their delivery systems: ready-to-launch M-9 (Ghaznavi/Hatf), M-11 (Shaheen), and a number of Dong Feng 21 (Ghauri) ballistic missiles (Malik 2002, p. 21). China's willingness to supply these technologies, most notably the M-11 missile, with a flight range of 451 miles, had one compelling motivation to build Pakistan up as a strategic surrogate against India in its southwestern periphery. In the aftermath of the Indian and Pakistani nuclear tests (1998), followed by the Kargil conflict in 1999, the estimated Nuclear Weapons Inventories were: 45-95 for India and 30-52 for Pakistan (*The Economist* 25 May 2002, p. 27). In addition to Pakistan's nuclear capability, there is another significant aspect of the Sino-Pakistani entente cordiale, the monumental "Gwadar Project" in the Persian Gulf.

***The Gwadar Project - A Hallmark of Sino-Pakistani Friendship:*** In 2001, on the occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of Sino-Pakistan relations, China agreed to underwrite a massive development project in Pakistan's western Baluchistan province (Garver 2002, p. 414). China's

financing of 80% of the Gwadar Project is a powerful manifestation of the continuing vitality of the Sino-Pakistani entente cordiale (*The Australian* 4 May 2004, p.10).

So, what is the Gwadar Project? Named after the small city on the Arabian Sea (480 kilometre West of Karachi, see Figure 4.5) where the project is based, the Gwadar Development Project entails construction of a new, major deep-water port, which will transform a small fishing village into a modern harbour with the capacity eventually expected to equal Karachi, which in 2001 carried 90 percent of Pakistan's seaborne trade (*Pakistan Observer*, 14 May 2001).



**Figure 4.5: Showing Gwadar and River Indus in Pakistan.**  
[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia03/pakistan\\_sm03.gif](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/cia03/pakistan_sm03.gif)

Establishment of Gwadar as Pakistan's key transit routes for Central Asian energy to reach world markets would have immense spill-over effects for the fiscal resources of the Pakistani government and for Pakistani economic development. The resources available to Pakistan's government for its discretionary use would be far greater. Strengthening Pakistan's defence capabilities would certainly be one choice. Pakistan's involvement in the world economy, and consequent economic growth, would also be greatly facilitated by the doubling of Pakistan's harbour capacity.

From a military standpoint, the creation of a second major seaport 450 kilometres further from the border of India than Karachi would substantially enhance Pakistan's strategic depth in the event of a war with India. This consideration seems to have been decisive in Pakistan's decision to move forward with the Gwadar Project. During the end game of the Kargil incident of spring 1999, the Indian Navy had swiftly concentrated forces off Karachi Harbour. The swiftness of the Indian move had succeeded in trapping Pakistani naval forces inside the harbour, as well as threatening to close Pakistan's sole major seaport should the incident at Kargil continue unresolved. In the Indian view, the threatened blockade of Karachi played an important role in compelling the Pakistani military to call its infiltrators back behind the Line of Actual Control at Kargil. Within two years of the Kargil mini-war, Pakistan's government decided to move forward with the Gwadar Project in spite of objections from Pakistan's Planning Commission that the large cost of the project made it nonviable on economic grounds (Garver 2002, p.416). Pakistan's government nonetheless decided to move forward with the project on "strategic grounds."

In sum, the Gwadar Project is an extremely ambitious undertaking with wide-ranging geostrategic implications. Gwadar may provide multi-dimensional advantages to Pakistan, but one unparallel advantage to China. That is, with China's ever rising energy demand, Gwadar is a standby strategic harbour to import Middle East fossil fuel through a land route Chinese built Karakorum highway in the critical event of Karachi Harbour being blocked by the Indian or US Navy's tactical blockade of the SLOCs that approach the South China Sea through the Indian Ocean and the Straits of Malacca/Sunda/Lombok.

The Gwadar Project is a powerful demonstration of China's continuing interest in keeping Pakistan strong even as Sino-Indian *rapprochement* progresses. It is noteworthy that China undertook support of Gwadar Project shortly after the process of Sino-Indian *rapprochement* resumed following the chill in Sino-Indian relations, which was caused by India's May 1998 nuclear tests with their explicit anti-China justification.

## **Sino-Indian Rapprochement**

Once again there is the pattern of Sino-Indian *rapprochement* advancing in tandem with continuing Sino-Pakistani strategic cooperation. Beijing has clearly endorsed Lord Palmerston's axiom that "nations have no permanent allies, only permanent interests" by seemingly distancing itself from Pakistan as Sino-Indian *rapprochement* progressed.

The 1962 war left a deep scar on bilateral relations. Since then, despite the restoration of ambassadorial relations in 1976, and the several high-level visits between Beijing and New Delhi, to date, no solution of the border issue has been worked out. However, the starting point for the process of Sino-Indian *rapprochement* was Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's December 1988 visit to Beijing. In terms of its political-symbolic significance, Gandhi's 1988 visit was equivalent to Richard Nixon's 1972 visit to China. Gandhi's visit was also based on an Indian decision to accept Beijing's long-standing proposition that the two sides should set aside the border dispute, where the two sides agreed to disagree, and move forward with relations in other areas where agreement was possible (Garver 2002, p. 397).

In 1993 and 1996, moreover, China and India signed two important agreements to maintain peace and tranquillity and reduce tensions along the LOAC, including force reductions and limitations on military activities (Foot 1996, pp.58-76). Indian Prime Minister Vajpayee's third visit to Beijing in June 2003, led to the formation of joint groups to work on border issues, and as part of that agreement India recognized China's rule in Tibet and China dropped its recognition of the disputed Indian territory of Sikkim (*FEER*, 29 April 2004).

Beijing's shift in position was manifested on the issue of Kashmir. During the 1990 crisis, Beijing responded to strong Indian pressure by dropping its long-time endorsement of a plebiscite in the Kashmir region in accord with the UN resolution of 1949 (Garver 2002, p.399). Nine years later, in 1999, during the Kargil crisis caused by Pakistan's seizure of mountain peaks on the Indian side of LOAC overlooking vital Indian road links with Leh in Ladakh, Beijing once again rejected Pakistan's efforts to bring the Kashmir issue before international fora, and urged both India and Pakistan to abstain from using force, to de-escalate

the confrontation, and to resolve their disputes peacefully via discussion (Ragagopo 2000). Between 1997 and 2001, Beijing also refused endorsement of Islamabad's effort to create "strategic depth" in Taliban controlled Afghanistan and hosted an embassy of the Islamic State of Afghanistan headed by the Northern Alliance (Garver 2002, p. 400).

The rationale for this shift in Beijing's position was Deng Xiaoping's apparent desire to create a stable environment for economic development by reducing tensions with all of China's neighbours. Also, there was no more fear of Soviet encirclement via closer Indian association with Moscow (Garver 2002, p. 400). Plus, there was an element of close similarity of Islamic separatism in China's Xinjiang with India's Kashmir spawned by the common adversary – the Islamic radicals.

*Islamic Radicalism/ Separatism – a thorn in the Sino-Pakistan entente:* China has long faced threats of ethnic separatism from the Islamic, largely Turkic, peoples of Xinjiang (Garver 2002, p.431). Its serious concern with such problems is manifested by the successive declarations on co-operation to prevent terrorism and fundamentalist militancy between China, Russia and some Central Asian states. As Islamicist separatist activity increased further in the mid – and late – 1990s, it is the Pakistan component of the issue, which is in discussion here. In the recent past, Pakistan's leverage with the Taliban was very important to Beijing, and with this borrowed leverage China could impart greater influence with the Taliban than either the United States or Russia (Ahrari 2001, pp. 32-33). It seems clear that Pakistan acted in compliance with Beijing's demands for assistance.

To what extent do China's leaders know about Pakistan's support for transnational Islamic radicalism? A definitive answer to this question is currently unavailable, but Chinese intelligence almost certainly has at least a general understanding of the dynamics of Pakistan's ISI, the Muslim radicals in Pakistani madrassahs, and Osama bin Laden's Al-Queda. Terrorist attacks against the United States, the West, and India are not necessarily contrary to China's interests. From Beijing's perspective, the crucial question is this: How likely are

the Islamic radical forces being created by the madrassahs and Al-Queda to turn against China?

Toward the end of 1999 Chinese intelligence found that Xinjiang's Islamic groups were sending their "backbone members" for training at Al-Queda's camps at Afghanistan-Pakistan border region (Garver 2002, p. 433). Beijing turned to Islamabad for help. Pakistan responded by keeping a wary eye on developments in Islamic militancy and "must not, in any way, be associated with something the Chinese perceive to be inimical to their interests," and that "Beijing has been increasingly concerned about the negative impact of the violence in Afghanistan and Pakistan on its restive Moslem population in Xinjiang" were some of the warnings that appeared in the headlines of Islamabad's *The News* in July 2000 (Garver 2002, p. 434).

It is clear that China's link with Pakistan was an important instrument for countering Muslim radicals, that is, for dealing with China's internal security problems in Xinjiang. Using Pakistan's good offices did not bring wholly satisfactory results for China, but Beijing did utilize those good offices.

The logic of Pakistan's contemporary situation suggests that Pakistani military leaders have been, and will continue to be, solicitous of China's concerns about Xinjiang. China has continued to give Pakistan important strategic support. It would be extremely reckless for Pakistan's military leaders to alienate China by failing to respond to Chinese concerns about Xinjiang. Accomplishing Pakistani "strategic depth" requires retaining Chinese support while forging a solid Islamic alliance between the Muslim conservatives and the moderates in Pakistan. Meeting Beijing's requirement in disarming Muslim radicals without sacrificing Islamabad's national objective is certainly a major political problem for Pakistan's military rulers. For China's part, continuing warm relations and strategic partnership with Pakistan gives Islamabad an incentive to respond to Beijing's concerns over Xinjiang. If Beijing were disengaged from its strategic partnership with Islamabad, leaders in that capital would have fewer incentives to comply with Beijing's strategic concern about Xinjiang and its encirclement of India.



***India's effort to drive a wedge in the Sino-Pakistani Entente:*** A letter sent by Prime Minister Vajpayee to world leaders at the time of May 1998 nuclear test had publicly targeted the Sino-Pakistani nuclear threat for India's need to openly acquire nuclear weapons with the explicit anti-China justification (Vajpayee 1998, p. A12). Although Indian leaders in effect apologized a few months later for openly calling China a threat to India (Garver 2001, pp. 865-889), the Indian criticisms remained as one mechanism of Indian pressure on China over its strategic partnership with Pakistan. India insisted that sensitivity to each other's security concerns was essential to a productive dialogue (*The Times of India*, 9 March 2000). At the second dialogue session in February 2002; New Delhi again raised the issue of Chinese assistance to Pakistan's missile programs (*The Telegraph*, 21 January 2001).

***India's "Look East" policy:*** India's "Look East" policy is a new strategic cast as another mechanism of Indian pressures on the Sino-Pakistan entente. The expansion of India's security relations with Japan, Taiwan, and Vietnam under the "Look East" policy is especially worthy of note, since they are of special concern to Beijing. Japan is, of course, China's historic rival for pre-eminence in Asia and a Chinese foreign policy concern ranking only behind the US as of 2002. A Japan-India defence dialogue initiated in July 1997 was interrupted by India's May 1998 nuclear tests. It was resumed, however, following the visit to India by Prime Minister Y. Mori in August 2000 when the two countries proclaimed a "global partnership" (Sen 2000, *The Telegraph*).

Indian links with Taiwan are also extremely sensitive. In this context, in January 2002 one of Taiwan's most reliable papers, *Lianhe Bao*, reported that Indian air force officials had secretly visited Taiwan, and that Taiwan and India had begun the exchange of military information. Taiwan has also reportedly begun posting a military liaison officer to New Delhi (Wang 2002, <http://udnnews.com>). Finally, India has added a nuclear colouration to its relationship with Vietnam- another nemesis of China and still deeply apprehensive of China's growing power- by agreeing to assist Vietnam's efforts in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. It is understood, of course, that skills, technologies, and perhaps materials developed in civilian applications of nuclear power are intrinsically transferable into

military areas, at least in the absence of very strict international monitoring. Through its accumulation of strategic links with China's neighbours, New Delhi has adopted a strategy in East and Southeast Asia similar to that which China had adopted in South Asia. New Delhi is using counter-encirclement to deal with Chinese encirclement.

***Iran in Sino-Indian Geostrategy:*** Recently India and Iran, have upgraded their bilateral relationship that has come under intense scrutiny by the RAND Corporation and termed this relationship as the 'Tehran-New Delhi Axis' (*Atlantic Monthly* 2003, p.87). Given India's adversarial relations with Pakistan, India's cooperation with Iran in the development of a new port complex at Chah Bahar on the coast of Iran is India's only gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia (Pant 2004, p.377). The significance of this project is that India's relationship with Central Asia will no longer be hostage to Islamabad's policies.

As India has the largest population of Shia Muslims in the world after Iran, and both states are concerned about the festering Shia-Sunni strife in Pakistan. India views Iran as an influential Islamic state that can effectively counter Pakistan's anti-India propaganda in the Islamic world. While Pakistan promptly recognised the Taliban regime, India and Iran never established diplomatic contacts with the Taliban. India and Iran, together with US and Russia, were the main supporters of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance that routed the pro-Pakistan fundamentalist Taliban regime in Afghanistan in 2001 (Pant 2004, p.374). Given Iran's strained relations with the West, India also is seen by Iran as an important partner and a possible conduit to the West.

Like Burma in the east, it is Iran in the west where the Sino-Indian strategic competition is locked for winning influence. Chinese firms are key suppliers of ballistic and cruise missile-related technologies to Iran. China is also helping Iran pursue the development of a nuclear fuel cycle for civil and nuclear weapons purposes, despite Beijing's 1997 bilateral commitment to the US to forego any new nuclear cooperation with Iran (Pant 2004, p.382). While Iran's development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles may not be of any direct strategic consequences for India, China's growing leverage over Iran can shape Tehran's attitudes toward Delhi in the coming years. China, so far, has been very

successful in hemming India in from all sides, and if Iran decides to follow China's lead; it might render India geopolitically handicapped.

### **Defence Capability and Future Alignment**

Based on the distribution of defence capabilities (See Table 4.1) and the perceptions of threat derived from historical experiences and the strategic cultures, it is seen that Pakistan continues its alignment with China to counter the threat from India. India's capabilities are adequate to cope with the threat from Pakistan, but China continues to be economically and militarily more powerful than India (and India's ability to cope with China will depend in part on the growth of its nuclear arsenal). Therefore, it is probable that India will develop some relationship of alignment with the United States to counter the putative Chinese threat. The United States has increasingly viewed China as a strategic rival – at least in Asia – and the growth of Chinese economic and military capabilities will pose a potential threat to US interests and forces in the region. Thus, forging a strategic alignment with the United States was one of New Delhi's main instruments of pressure on Beijing.

However, this alignment may remain weak. Historically, India's strong desire for policy autonomy, a relatively strong showing of the anti-American Socialist-Communist parties in the Indian democracy, and bilateral disagreements over the issue of nuclear proliferation are three major potential barriers. Nevertheless, there is a tectonic shift away from India's 'non-alignment' foreign policy. A new chapter has recently been added in the history of the Indo-Israel relationship as well. India, the champion of the Palestinian cause since 1948 has played host to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon leading a team mostly of defence products manufacturers in 2003. Israel is the second largest supplier of military equipment to India after Russia (Bedi 2003, p.5). Indo-Israeli relationship is overtly seen as a "synergy" in terms of facing a common enemy - the radical Islamic forces; but covertly, it could be a strategic united front to annihilate the "Islamic" nuclear capabilities of Pakistan.

**Table 4.1: Defence Capabilities of China, India, and Pakistan in 2003-2004**  
 (Source ARY TECHNOLOGY. MILTECH. 1/2004. The World Defence Almanac 2003-04;  
 Issue 1. 2004, Vol. XXVIII, ISSN 0722-3226 MPG, Germany)

Country	China	India	Pakistan
Defence Budget	US\$ 25 billion (2004)	US\$ 13.6 (2.4% of GDP FY03/04)	US\$ 2.8 billion (3.6% of GDP FY 03/04)
Total Active Manpower	2,500,000	1,210,000	654,000
Para Military Force Personnel	1,000,000-1,200,000	290,800	282,000
Strategic Forces	<p>Second Artillery Force (Strategic Rocket Force)            Personnel: 90,000</p> <p>Missiles:</p> <p>ICBMs: 20; silos-based 13,000 km-range.</p> <p>IRBMs: 10; 4,750 km-range</p> <p>MRBMs: 50; 2,000 km-range.</p> <p>Submarines: 1 XIA SSBN with 12, 1,700 km-range with a single 200-300 k.ton warhead.</p>	<p>Strategic Forces Command (SFC)</p> <p>ICBM (Surya): 10,000 km-range (mentioned in the govt. programme)</p> <p>IRBM (Agni III): 3,500 km-range</p> <p>IRBM (Agni II): 2,100 km-range</p> <p>MRBM (Agni I): 700 km-range</p> <p>MRBM (Prithvi): 250km-range</p> <p>Some of them are reported to be under development</p>	<p>National Command Authority (NCA)</p> <p>ICBM: Not Known</p> <p>IRBM (Ghauri III): 2,500 km-range</p> <p>IRBM (Ghauri II): 1,500-1,900 km-range</p> <p>IRBM (Ghauri I): 10; 1,500 km-range</p> <p>IRBM (M-II): 24;</p> <p>IRBM (Shaheen II): 2,000 km-range</p> <p>MRBM (Shaheen I): 750km-range</p> <p>MRBM (Ghaznavi): 300km-range</p> <p>SRBM (Abdali): 180-200km-range</p> <p>Note: Some of them are reported to be under development</p>
Land Forces	Personnel: 2,000,000	Personnel: 980,000 plus 800,000 Reserves and 40,000 Territorial Army	Personnel: 535,000 plus 198,537 Reserves

Military Equipment	MBT: 10,000 APC: 5,000 SAMs: 30 TOR-MI SSMs: 100 SRBM 75, M-9 FROG 7 types.	MBT: 3,200 APC: 800+ SAMs: 222 SSMs: 40+ Prithvi I/II	MBT: 2285 APC: 800+ SAMs: 400 SSMs: Haft-1/1A, Haft-2
Navy	Personnel: 230,000 (including 7,000 marines) plus 350,000 Reserves Fleet: Aircraft Carriers: -- -- Destroyers: 27; including 6 Hangzhou Class (Sovremenny type) Frigates: 25 Submarines: 72 including XIA-class SSBN Naval Aviation: 35,000	Personnel: 55,000 (including Naval Air and 1,000 Marines) 15,300 Coast Guard. Fleet: Aircraft Carriers: 1 Virrat; Russian STOVL Aircraft Carrier Admiral Gorshkov is expected to come into service in 2008 Destroyer: ----- - Frigates: 13 Submarines: 14 Naval Aviation: About 7,000	Personnel: 27,8000 (includes 1,200 Marines) plus 3,200 Reserves. Fleet: Aircraft Carrier----- Destroyers: ----- Frigates: 7 Submarines: 11 Naval Aviation: All are based in Mehran
Air Force	Personnel: 350,000 (including Strategic forces and 220,000 air defence personnel) Combat Aircrafts: 2650(approx) including 76 Su-30 MKKs, 120 Su-27 SK/UBKs (latest), and 1000 Mig-19s (oldest) in the inventory	Personnel: 110,000 Combat Aircrafts: 775(approx) including 28 Su-30 MK/MKLs, 50 MIG-29/Ubs (latest) and 300 MIG-21 (oldest) in the inventory	Personnel: 67,000 including civilians. Combat Aircrafts: 450 (approx) including 32 F-16A/B in the inventory

*The Future of the Sino-Pakistan and. Indo-US Alignments:* US DOD officials were of the view that the US Department of State was unwilling to abandon its prejudices against India from the Cold War era when Delhi was a close Soviet ally. This has been an ‘obstacle’ to the emerging bilateral military relationship, as the State Department does not seem to share the defence establishment’s longer-term strategic views (Bedi 2003, p. 35). However, in recent years, Indian and US interests appear to converge most directly with regard to containing China. Indian and US views were “strikingly similar”, being based on keeping Beijing out of the Indian Ocean Region, where over the past decade it has been making swift inroads. An unidentified US admiral said that “ The US and India both view China as a strategic threat and share an interest in understanding Chinese strategic intent, though we do not discuss this publicly” (Bedi 2003, p.36). The geostrategic imperatives under the pretext of ‘saving democracy’ against an economically surging Communist China may be another subtext to push India and the US in the direction of closer alignment.

The main axis, then, will likely be Pakistan and China on the one hand, and India and the US on the other. The degree of polarization between these two axes remains uncertain, and may in fact be fairly weak. One mitigating factor is that the actual behaviour of the relevant countries might not be as hostile and aggressive as some fear. Second, the strategic cultures of India and Pakistan may not evolve toward the more strident views discussed above. Finally, the role of the US and the triangular relationship that it has formed with India and Pakistan could prove crucial to the status of the Indo-Pakistan relationship.

If the US does not maintain a policy of engagement with both India and Pakistan, particularly if it draws back again from Pakistan, one could expect greater polarization between the two axes of alignment. Lacking a constructive relationship with the US, Pakistan’s fear of India will be greater, and it will take actions to strengthen its security against that neighbour, including a closer relationship with China.

If Pakistan were to disintegrate or be taken over by Islamic extremists after a departure of General Musharraf, new instability would rock the region. Another frightening scenario is the prospect of Chinese-made Pakistani nuclear weapons

falling into the hands of terrorists. These scenarios put Beijing in a dilemma. Some Chinese strategists see the current South Asian crisis as an opportunity to recover lost ground and thwart India's ambitions to challenge China's future economic and military primacy. Another war between India and Pakistan might dash New Delhi's hopes of an Indo-US alliance to counter China, which would be a welcome development from Beijing's perspective.

Some PLA hawks even see China benefiting from an Indo-Pakistani nuclear war. At the time of the 1999 Kargil conflict, one Chinese military official told a Western diplomat that "should India and Pakistan destroy themselves in a nuclear war, there would be peace along China's south-western frontiers for at least three decades and Beijing needs twenty to thirty years to consolidate its hold over restive Tibet and Xinjiang provinces" (Malik 2002, p. 20) However, this remains a minority viewpoint. The majority believes that Beijing should have absolutely minimum involvement in a situation where there can be no clear winners.

While a certain degree of tension in Kashmir, and hence Pakistan's ability to pin down the Indian military on its western frontiers is seen as enhancing China's security, neither an all-out India-Pakistan war nor Pakistan's collapse would serve Beijing's grand strategy. Concern over the implications of an all-out war on its southwestern borders after September 11, with the US Army at its western border in the pretext of fighting terrorism, has led Beijing to keep a close watch on the situation and has taken diplomatic and military measures to safeguard its broader geostrategic interests.

### **The Sino-US Relationship and China's Peripheral Conflicts**

While seeing opportunity and benefit in interactions with the US, primarily in terms of trade and technology, Beijing apparently believes that the United States poses a significant long-term strategic challenge in its own periphery (Huiskens, 2004, p.12). As cited in Sutter, the PRC's President, Hu Jintao, is alleged to have observed:

The US has strengthened its military deployments in the Asia Pacific region, strengthened the Japan-US military alliance, strengthened strategic cooperation with India, improved relations with Vietnam,

inveigled Pakistan, established a pro-American government in Afghanistan, increased arms sales to Taiwan, and so on. They have extended outposts and placed pressure points on us from the East, South and West. This makes a great change in our geopolitical environment (*Pacific Forum PacNet*, 7 March 2003).

While Washington has been distracted by the war on terror and policing the globe, Beijing has been diligently courting ASEAN with free trade agreements, trying to develop the ASEAN plus 3 forum (includes China, Japan and S. Korea and excludes the US) into the central multilateral forum for the region, and promoting its security concepts as an alternative to the US-led alliance framework.

Ironically, for much of the world, the war on terrorism led by US offers not just an “impunity” (India in Kashmir, Israel in Palestine, China in Xinjiang are just a few examples) but also a strategic bonus: the American diminishment – in the sense that waging war, policing the globe in many fronts is consuming, and containing the US power. While US expends blood and treasure in faraway places like Iraq and Afghanistan, China has been in a better position to build its economic and military superpower status for the future. In essence, this has brought an environment of greater fluidity and thus greater uncertainty and anxiety in global strategic affairs.

However, the technological advancement and sheer size of the US nuclear strategic nuclear forces dwarfs China’s nuclear capabilities and of the whole region for that matter for at least another few decades. As cited in the *Military Technology, The World Defence Almanac 2003-2004*,

US GDP US\$10.4 trillion (2002), US Defence Budget US\$401.3 billion (FY04), Total Active Manpower: 1,390,500 active duty, + 863,330 Reserve and National Guard and 665,000 civilians.

***US Strategic Nuclear Forces - Current Force Levels:*** Total Deployed Warheads: Aggregate official figure for START 1 counting purposes; 6,000 (as of 5 December 2001). Estimated actual inventory: 4,800.



*Sea Launched:* 336 SLBMs with up to 1,747 warheads.

*Land Based:* Some 547 ICBMs with up to 2,000 warheads;

*Air Launched:* Under the Nuclear Posture Review (NPR), only 21B-2s and 66 B-52Hs are to be maintained for nuclear roles.

*Tactical nuclear warheads:* US Navy has 12 aircraft carrier, Carrier-borne aircraft no longer have a nuclear option capability, but are still available as an option for SSNs.

(Source: Military Technology- Miltech 1/2004, The World Defence Almanac 2003-04. ssue1, Vol.XXVIII, MPG, Germany, pp. 24-26).

The sheer weight of US military machine, able to ride roughshod over any opposition is in question. Yet, in sum, the US hovers at the top of China's pyramid of relationships. Sustaining a dynamic strategic accommodation, and preserving a robustly stable Asian region, will be a tough test of the diplomacy and statecraft of both countries for decades to come.

### **Conclusion:**

It is said that each conflict simply prepares the ground for the next. Should the Indo-Pakistani conflict escalate into a conventional full-scale war or nuclear one, neither the geopolitical nor radioactive fallout would remain in China's southern periphery. China would face difficult choices. Open support for its most allied ally would jeopardise relations with the US and India. But non-intervention on Pakistan's behalf could encourage India to solve the Pakistan "problem" once and for all, tilting the regional balance of power decisively in its favour. Unrestrained Indian power could eventually threaten China's security along its soft underbelly – Tibet and Xinjiang.

On the other hand, if India and China are set for closer ties and more cooperation, one big question is whether this undermines India's newly minted strategic relationship with the US. With closer ties, will India and China oppose on the US? One China analyst, Harry Harding has stated, "neither China nor India dared to take on the US. Both needed the US" (*FEER*, 29 April 2004, p. 15).

Assessing the above, it is likely that China would not like to see a situation of permanent armed hostility between India and Pakistan, worse still actual conflicts, such as that which occurred over Kargil where Beijing is called upon to take sides. An “internalisation” of the Kashmir dispute in tandem with anti-US Islamic militancy in Central Asia would affect China and promote, as it fears, Western and particularly American intervention on the PRC’s periphery. US-led intervention in Iraq, Kosovo and Central Asia has left China very uncomfortable. In the coming years, Beijing’s diplomatic skills will be tested as it marshals the US military away from its peripheral geostrategic zones while simultaneously continuing to attract US MNCs for its continuing economic growth. China’s strategic relationship with Pakistan, Burma and North Korea, particularly vis-a-vis nuclear issues, could be obstacles to its future diplomatic overtures to US and India. To date, China’s assistance to Pakistan to develop nuclear and missile technology, in addition to being Islamabad’s biggest supplier of conventional military weapons, is an obstacle in building trust between the PRC and India.

The triangular relationship between China, India and Pakistan is delicately poised, and opportunities have been opened up for the management of this triangle to the benefit of all three. China needs to demonstrate its credibility to various state actors in its periphery that there has indeed been a readjustment in its relations with India and Pakistan marked by a realistic restraint and responsibility appropriate to a great power. Pakistan needs to avail itself of constructive and comprehensive dialogue on Kashmir and contribute towards the creation of the peaceful environment that would facilitate such dialogue. India needs to hitch its economic wagon to the locomotive of China’s surging growth and must avoid disengagement of Sino-Pakistan relationship as a single-issue in the pursuit of a better relationship with China. It must be realised that in practice, China is neither going to dilute its political relationship with Pakistan for the sake of Sino-Indian friendship nor allow all dimensions of its ties with Pakistan to be detrimental to the its relations with India.

## Chapter V: Sino-Burmese Nexus in China's Periphery

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### Introduction:

The traditional Sino-Indian rivalry has now acquired a maritime dimension. As China's naval strategy seeks to secure the country's oil supply and trade routes through the Indian Ocean to the Straits of Malacca and the South China Sea, China can be seen as a challenger to India's great power pretensions in the Indian Ocean. Both are forging new, quietly assertive military strategies underpinned by growing economies and expanding defence budgets and are seeking new allies in their periphery. This chapter treats a new component in the Sino-Indian competition including some entailing aspects of the central question *what role has China played, or will play in its peripheral conflicts and to what extent?* Beijing is seen to be investing heavily in developing the Bandarabbas base in Iran, the Gwadar deep seaport in Pakistan, and the naval bases in Burma [officially, Burma is called Myanmar] (Malik 2001, pp.79-80). Surprisingly, Burma's pro-Beijing new foreign policies, extraordinary growth of its armed forces, and the wider strategic implications of these developments for regional countries, did not appear to have attracted a great deal of interest on the part of Indian analysts and officials until early 1990s. Burma's closer relationship with China could assume much greater importance to India, rather than being dismissed as a small, isolated and weak player, Burma could be transforming into a source of regional concern. Burma occupies a geostrategic position of considerable importance, between the nuclear-armed giants of India and China. It lies at the crossroads of South Asia, Southeast Asia and East Asia and adjacent to some important Indian Ocean shipping lanes and a number of busy east-west commercial air routes (See Figure 5.1).

China's relations with the emerging Burmese state historically have not been as close as contemporary specialists of both governments insist that the world to believe – they have not always been *pauk hpaw* (siblings). Kublai Khan destroyed the first Burmese kingdom of Pagan in 1298, and various regional and local Chinese armies have subsequently clashed with the Burmese along the frontier. In other periods the Burmese repelled Chinese armies.



**Figure 5.1: Geostrategic Position of Burma Source:**

[http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/burma\\_pol\\_96.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/burma_pol_96.jpg)

But times have changed. Since independence in 1948, Burma has been most careful with its China relationships. It was the first to recognize the PRC, and in the period prior to present military-dominated rule exchanged numerous delegations and received some Chinese assistance. Burma was most concerned in 1950, when Kuomintang forces fled into Burma, because the Burmese felt the PRC might pursue them. In 1960, the military caretaker government signed a border agreement with the Chinese, but in the following decade, General Ne

Win's regime became too close to the Soviet Union thereby profoundly upsetting China.

From the 1960s to the 1980s, Burma retreated into xenophobic isolationism, and was largely ignored by the major powers. It re-emerged onto the world stage in 1988 when a massive pro-democracy uprising was ruthlessly crushed by the Burmese army, and assumed direct control of the country. Immediately ostracised by a large segment of the international community, and faced with a range of economic sanctions, the new military government in Rangoon dubbed as SLORC abandoned decades of neutralism. It developed strong bilateral ties with the PRC, which itself was emerging from the traumas associated with the Tiananmen Square pro-democracy massacre of 4 June 1989.

China has not, since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, harboured expansionist ambitions towards, or engaged in open hostilities with, Burma, Thailand or Laos. Yet regional perceptions of China's long term strategic ambitions are still coloured by the historical evidence of China's support for communist guerrilla movements during the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, its border war with India in 1962, its invasion of Vietnam in 1979, and by maps that still show China's claims to large tracts of Southeast Asia (including South China Sea). China's economic growth and military development programs are being watched closely by analysts in the region, and any signs that China is looking to extend its strategic reach are considered causes for concern. Issues such as this will be treated in this brief case study.

### **Burma's Strategic Culture and China**

According to Merrill, there are three broad schools of thought concerning Burma's relation with China, **the domination school**, **the partnership school** and **the rejectionist school** (1998, pp. 20-21). These all entail strategic implications for China's conflict-prone peripheral zone and the Indian Ocean region.

*The domination school* harkens back to the great power politics and strategic balances of the Cold War. Its advocates argue that small, isolated and poverty-

stricken Burma must inevitably succumb to the pressures of its much larger neighbour, and effectively become a pawn in China's bid to achieve world power status. They cite China's apparent "stranglehold" over Burma, as exercised through its loans, arms sales, trade and influence along Burma's troubled northern borders. In these circumstances, it is felt; Rangoon would have little choice but to conform to Beijing's wishes. This school discounts Burma's ability to manage its own affairs in the face of China's overwhelming strategic weight, and predicts that by the beginning of the next decade Burma will have become a "satellite" or "client state" of an expansionist China (Malik 1994, pp. 137-56).

Burma is thus seen as a reluctant ally in China's attempts to surround and contain India. To this school, Burma's new and improved ports are potential support bases for Chinese warships intent on dominating the Straits of Malacca, and controlling the sea lines of communication through the Indian Ocean to the Middle East. Burma's new airfields are future bases for Chinese combat aircraft intent on threatening eastern India. The reported intelligence links between Rangoon and Beijing are an integral part of this wider Chinese design. Looking further afield, the Rangoon regime has been characterised as an agent of the Chinese government, able and willing to subvert regional councils on behalf of its larger patron (Selth 2003, pp. 9-10).

*The partnership school* broadly accepts the main arguments of the domination school, but is much more cautious in its predictions of how China will come to draw Burma into its orbit of influence. As cited in Garver,

the Sino-Burmese military relationship suggests that China's leaders see that Burma as an area of substantial Chinese interests and that they aspire to eventual establishment of a permanent and effective military presence in the Indian Ocean (2001, p. 295).

This school rejects the idea that China will simply impose its views on Burma, and sees this process gradually developing along the lines of a more even-handed strategic alliance. The members of the partnership school feel that, while Burma may not be prepared to agree to a significant Chinese military presence now, the Rangoon government will ultimately come to recognise the benefits of a deeper strategic partnership with Beijing, "founded on mutual trust and common

interests” (Garver 2001, p.296). Under these circumstances, the Rangoon regime may well grant facilities to the PLA in Burma, which Beijing can use to extend its strategic influence in its immediate periphery and in the Indian Ocean region.

*The rejectionist school* seems to consist mainly of scholars with a specialised knowledge of Burma, and Sinologists sceptical of China’s purportedly “expansionist” designs (Selth 1996, pp. 213-30). Their arguments consist of three main points.

Firstly, they argue that throughout history Burma has always been very suspicious of China, and only turned to Beijing in 1989 out of dire necessity after it was ostracised by the West and made to suffer a range of economic sanctions. This change of policy was adopted reluctantly and by no means represented a permanent shift in focus or allegiance. The members of this school are confident that Burma will be able to manage the complexities of the bilateral relationship, and resist becoming a major player in the strategic competition between China and other powers, like India. To support their case, they cite Burma’s fierce national pride and its preparedness over the years to bear enormous costs to maintain its independence and territorial sovereignty. They accept the military regime’s repeated assurances that permanent Chinese military bases will never be permitted in Burma. Also, the members of this school believe that Burma is looking first to Southeast Asia for its models of government and economy, not to China.

Secondly, despite their unprecedented closeness at present, Beijing has not always been able to get its own way with Rangoon, nor seems likely to win everything it wants. For example, the Irrawaddy transport corridor scheme, a high priority for the Chinese government, has struck numerous problems in recent years. First the SLORC, and since 1997 the SPDC, has been dragging its feet over the scheme, apparently troubled by the economic and political leverage it will give China. Also, there is considerable unhappiness in the Burmese military over the standard of workmanship and capabilities of the Chinese military materiel that has been acquired by Burma. To China’s annoyance, the Burmese military is now turning to Russia and other countries like the Ukraine and North Korea for its latest arms acquisitions (Selth 2003, p.11). In the mid-

1990s the Burma Air Force took delivery of about a dozen Russian Mi-17 utility helicopters, and in 2001 the military regime closed a deal for ten MiG-29 fighter aircraft (Selth 2004, p. 30). Chinese officials have kept a low public profile, and learned to tread warily with their notoriously volatile and unpredictable Burmese counterparts. The violent demonstrations that led to a break in diplomatic relations between Rangoon and Beijing in 1967 is still fresh in Chinese memory.

Thirdly, while it suits Burma to develop its relationship with China now, it will always retain the option of drawing back from China's close embrace. Should the Rangoon government wish to escape China's embrace, the *rejectionists* argue that India would clearly be prepared to assist and other regional countries would doubtless see it in their interests to do so as well. If Burma could resolve its key differences with the Western democracies, even they would be prepared to offer the Rangoon regime a range of other options.

### **The Impact of Rangoon-Beijing Ties on China's Peripheral Zone**

In this regard, Burma's close relationship with China since 1988, and in particular its burgeoning defence links consisting of a wide range of modern weapon systems, new military equipment, and arms production facilities have attracted considerable attention in the ASEAN and China's competitor India. As cited in Selth:

Burma's military acquisitions have reportedly included more than 120 F-7 and A-5 fighters, Y-8 transport aircrafts, K-8 trainers, 10 Hainan offshore patrol boats, six Houxin guided missile patrol boats including a wide range of tanks, armoured cars, towed and self-propelled artillery pieces, multiple rocket launchers and transport vehicles. Beijing has also helped Rangoon to improve Burma's defence industries, by helping to build small arms factories and improving its naval ship building facilities (2003, p.3).

Of particular interest to New Delhi have been reports that China and Burma have negotiated a multi-faceted intelligence sharing arrangement, and personnel from the PLA are currently helping to operate some of the more specialised electronic surveillance equipment acquired mostly from China by the Burmese armed



forces. This equipment has reportedly been installed along Burma's coastline and offshore Islands of Great Coco (just north of India's Andaman Islands), Ramree off the Arakan coast, Haingoon, and on Zadetkyi Kyun off the Kra Peninsula in Burma's far south (Ball 1998, pp.219-30). The functions of these facilities are said to include the monitoring of regional military activities, especially air and naval movements in the eastern parts of the Bay of Bengal, and surveillance of India's strategically important tri-service military facilities on the Andaman Islands. The stations are also believed by some to be aimed at intercepting telemetry from Indian ballistic missile test launches over the Bay of Bengal.

*Is Burma China's Land Bridge to the Indian Ocean?* Also of interest to observers of strategic developments in the Indian Ocean region has been China's participation in a massive civil and military infrastructure development program in Burma, which has included new and improved harbours and airfields. Chinese firms (some reputedly associated with the PLA) have been involved in the construction or upgrading of port facilities at Sittwe (Awyab) and Kyaukpyu on the Bay of Bengal, Bassein and Hainggyi Island in the Irrawaddy Delta, Mergui in southern Burma, and at Rangoon (Selth 2003, p. 4). As might be expected, several of these harbours are also home to elements of the Burmese Navy. Some commentators have suggested that, these ports may not only handle an increased flow of trade goods from southern China, but they could also be used as forward operation bases for the PLA Navy. Alternatively, they could become logistical depots for the replenishment of PLAN vessels operating in the Indian Ocean. As Garver has written "Chinese warships could sustain a far more intense and effective pace of operations in the Indian Ocean"(2001, p.292). The new Chinese intelligence facility on Zadetkyi Kyun is reported to include an earth satellite station that Indian officials believe is capable of maintaining contact with Chinese submarines operating in the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea.

In addition, Indian authorities have reportedly questioned Rangoon's motives for what has been described as a "new wave" of airfield construction projects that have been undertaken in north and northwestern Burma in recent years, reportedly with Chinese assistance. These works have been at An,Bhamo,Hkamti, Homalin, Kale, Kyaukhtu, Monywa, Pakokku and Putao. All

but one of these airfields (Bhamo, which is close to China's southern border) are said to be "clustered in a zone running north to south adjacent to Burma's border with India" (*Foreign Broadcast Information Service*, 28 June 2003). Several of the new or improved runways are now reportedly capable of handling jets and large aircraft. The construction of these airfields with Chinese involvement has "unnerved the Indian security establishment", (*The Hindustan Times*, 2 May 2003). In response to Indian queries, the military government in Rangoon known since 1997 as SPDC has stated that these new airfields are simply part of a large-scale program to upgrade Burma's outdated civil aviation infrastructure to enhance commercial activities. These explanations are plausible, but clearly Indian suspicion remains high.

Over the past 15 years, some Indian commentators have gone even further to claim that, by the early 1990s, China had already established a permanent military presence in the country, including a massive tri-service base in the Irrawaddy delta. According to one report, the base is also home to at least a corps of PLA ground troops. One Indian estimate has put the cost of this base, purportedly called Base Number 013, at "US\$2.50 billion at the very least" (Baranwal 1993, p374). To help support such claims, some analysts have pointed to the Indian Coast Guard's capture, in 1994, of three Chinese trawlers in Indian waters. These vessels, which were flying Burmese flags, were reportedly equipped with sophisticated electronic surveillance equipment, capable of eavesdropping on official Indian communications (Selth 2003, p.5). This incident has been cited as further evidence of the strategic links between China and Burma, and of China's aggressive designs in the Indian Ocean region.

### **Sino-Burmese Nexus and Regional Reactions**

Accurate or not, the above reports have played on existing suspicions of China's long term geostrategic aims in its periphery, and helped fuel a more immediate concern that Burma's relationship with China could threaten India, and possibly even ASEAN's regional stability.

*An Encirclement of India's Eastern Flank:* The Indians view Pakistan as China's vanguard in its western flank, and Burma, another strategic partner of

China in its eastern flank, as the PRC's grand strategy to encircle India. As cited in Kanwal,

While China professes a policy of peace and friendliness towards India, its deeds are clearly aimed at the strategic encirclement of India in order to marginalise India in Asia and tie it down to the Indian sub continent; Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka have been assiduously and cleverly cultivated towards this end. Myanmar has been recently added to this list (July-September 2000, p.13).

These fears prompted a major policy review in the early 1990s, as India became concerned that its hostile attitude toward Burma's military regime was pushing it further into China's embrace. Since that time, New Delhi has been engaged in a policy of establishing closer bilateral ties with Rangoon through increased political, economic, more recently, even military ties and high level visits from both sides. At the same time, India is trying to develop its economic relations with Southeast Asian states such as Thailand, while offering itself to Singapore, Malaysia and Vietnam as a strategic counter weight to China.

**ASEAN's Concern:** While reluctant to offend China, ASEAN have also been concerned about Rangoon's developing relationship with Beijing. In the early 1990s Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia all sought and received firm assurances from the SLORC that Burma would not go too far down the China road. While there were clearly strong economic motives, part of the reluctance of ASEAN countries to join in the West's public condemnation of the Rangoon regime during the 1990s almost certainly stemmed from a fear of driving Burma further into the arms of China. In addition, there were a number of reasons why Burma was admitted to the ASEAN in 1997, against the wishes of its dialogue partners in the West, but a major factor seems to have been a desire on the part of member states to draw Rangoon away from Beijing. It is possible that China's apparently more measured approach to regional issues through ASEAN plus three forum, including its support for the US-led global war against terrorism and its attempts to curb North Korea's nuclear program, have eased ASEAN's fears of the Rangoon-Beijing nexus.

***China's 'Pariah' Allies in its Periphery:*** Despite the long break in the Burma-North Korea's bilateral relationship, following a 1983 North Korean terrorist attack in Rangoon on South Korean President Chun Doo-hwan, they have been quietly developing closer ties in recent years. The main impetus for this reconciliation may be a shared "pariah status," the coincidence of their respective needs, their common perception of external threats from the US and its allies, and felt a need to take whatever measures are necessary to deter an invasion and ensure regime survival. Burma wants arms, while North Korea wants food and funds. The interests of both are served by working together more closely. While China and several other countries have met most of Burma's immediate needs, North Korea offers an attractive alternative source of arms and military equipment. Pyongyang feels no qualms about defying the international community and selling arms to a pariah state like Burma. It is possible, too, that, for strategic reasons, the SPDC was keen to further diversify the source of its arms, even at the risk of upsetting China.

North Korea's record of proliferating nuclear technologies to Pakistan through the Daesong Group has been widely reported in the media (Lintner & Crispin 2003, p.24). Also, according to Kyodo News Agency, North Korea is trying to sell 'missile technologies and related parts' to the Rangoon regime (*Yonhap News*, 6 December 2003). Noting the contacts between Burma and North Korea, R.G. Lugar, Chairman of the US Senate Foreign Relation Committee, stated 'the link up of these two pariah states can only spell trouble' and called Burma a 'potential source of instability throughout South and Southeast Asia' (Selth 2004, p.38). The shared strategic relationship of both Burma and Pakistan with China has brought them even closer. And, Pakistan has manifested its readiness to export peaceful nuclear technology in support of Burma's nuclear reactor project at Natmauk (Selth 2004, pp. 30-39, Lintner & Crispin 2003, p.24).

### **Conclusion:**

As this brief overview has shown, China has much to gain from a close relationship with Burma. It remains anxious about the security of its frontiers vis-à-vis a rising India, including the long and sensitive border it shares with Burma. A friendly and politically compatible government in Rangoon, looking to China

for support against the Western democracies and dependent on Chinese economic assistance, is very much to Beijing's liking. This is particularly the case given that the alternative to the current military regime may be opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who is seen by Chinese leaders as being strongly sympathetic to the West and western political values. A democratic government in Rangoon would thus add to China's own long-standing fears of strategic encirclement by the US as well as India. Beijing is keen to develop the economy of southern China, by exporting goods through a new transport corridor stretching from Yunnan by road to the Irrawaddy River at Bhamo, and thence by barges and trucks to Kyaukpyu on the Bay of Bengal. While regular Chinese naval deployments to the Indian Ocean are still a distant prospect, some analysts believe that access to Burmese ports could eventually permit the PLA Navy to "control and dominate the Indian Ocean's SLOCs", including the Straits of Malacca (YB 1997, p. 3). In addition, as noted above, Burma's geostrategic position on the Bay of Bengal is an important listening post vis-à-vis the strategic containment of India and has attracted the interest of China's intelligence services in recent years.

In measuring the Sino-Burmese nexus, the ASEAN countries are probably correct in judging that China sees the current Burma as a sympathetic voice in regional councils. In this regard, Beijing would not have to dictate any terms to Rangoon, as the Burmese government already shares Beijing's views on such key issues as internal security, human rights and the entitlement of other governments and multilateral organizations to involve themselves in a country's domestic affairs. China no doubt welcomes the addition of Burma to that diverse collection of countries around the world which share a concern about the US's sole superpower status, and global economic influence. Many of these countries also distrust the UN's increased preparedness since 1990 to intervene in other countries, on the grounds of broad security concerns, humanitarian sentiment or the need for regional stability. China knows that its position on the UN Security Council has been seen by the Rangoon regime as a guarantee against a UN – sponsored military operation to restore democracy in Burma or to create autonomous ethnic states, along the lines of the multilateral intervention in East Timor. In return, China feels it can count on Burma's support in other UN

debates, relating to subjects like national sovereignty and human rights. The relationship effectively serves the needs of both sides.

The Burmese military government has been quick to recognise Burma's growing importance in the more fluid Asia-Pacific strategic environment. Over the past 15 years, the Rangoon regime has become adept at exploiting Burma's geostrategic position and manipulating the concerns of its regional neighbours. It has been quite comfortable about using its close relationship with Beijing, to attract support from influential countries like India, and to gain attention in important councils like ASEAN. At the same time, the developing relationship with India, its links with ASEAN and its arms deals with Russia, North Korea and other suppliers, can all be seen as part of Rangoon's attempts to balance China's influence and to keep open other foreign policy options.

There are many uncertainties, and some genuine concerns, but the Sino-Burmese relationship has developed a life of its own and, given other strategic developments, may come to grow beyond the power of either country to control. This could have unpredictable consequences for India and the Indian Ocean region. Moreover, given the recent strengthening of economic and other sanctions against the Rangoon regime in support of the democratic movement led by Aung San Suu Kyi by the Bush Administration, it may turn even more to China for diplomatic and economic support. The embattled Burmese military government may also feel that it has no alternative but to develop closer relations with fellow pariah states, like North Korea. The military regime in Rangoon preserves the prime objective of retaining its political power, and this will take precedence over any perceived impact on the wider strategic environment in China's periphery and the Indian Ocean region.

## Chapter VI: China and Peripheral Conflicts - Conclusion

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The aim of this dissertation has been to assess the generic nature and particular dimensions of interstate and intrastate conflicts on the periphery of China. Particular focus has been placed on their significance in China's strategic culture and its geostrategic interests and roles in them. In this context, the study has analysed the enduring India-Pakistan conflict as the central case study, and also has considered a secondary case study focused on strategic competition and potential conflict in Burma. The "central questions" involving China's opportunities and challenges for containment or facilitation of the peripheral conflicts are analytically summarised in this concluding chapter. As set out in the introduction to this study, they are:

- What are China's strategic cultural views and future geostrategic interests vis-a`-vis the peripheral zone of conflict?
- What are these "Peripheral Conflicts" that are of such concern to the PRC, particularly those involving itself, India, Pakistan and Burma?
- What role has China played, or will China play, in such conflicts, and to what ends?
- What resources must China marshal to play an active role in addressing the simmering tensions in its neighbourhood?

### *What are China's strategic cultural views and future geostrategic interests vis-a`-vis the peripheral zone of conflict?*

The roots of China's strategic cultural views and geostrategic interests have been traced back to the history of conflicts in its peripheral zone. The record of historical events there have compelled China to set its guiding priorities that have ultimately evolved to form contemporary China's strategic culture. They are clearly the high levels of undistracted economic and technological progress, which require significant geopolitical quiescence to ensure domestic order, and effectively protect its security interests along the periphery and beyond. While all national governments regard the defence of territory as a primary task, for China, traditionally an agricultural civilisation in which land represents wealth and

status, the issue has a particular resonance. Historically, failure to defend territory from outsiders consistently resulted in the government of the day losing its legitimacy (or “mandate”) to rule. This concern about national integrity makes issues like Taiwan – the last missing piece in the national jigsaw, Tibet and Xinjiang so difficult to resolve or maintain.

This study has found that China is determined to build comprehensive national power as a strategy for defending its state interests. It has shown intent to assimilate high technology from Western resources and develop its economic capabilities at home in order to become an authentic great power during the twenty-first century. Despite China’s recent publication of several defence ‘white papers’, there remains a relative lack of transparency about strategic objectives on the part of Chinese policy makers. Efforts to identify China’s core national strategic culture and geostrategic interests in its peripheral zone therefore remain somewhat speculative. However, this study asserts that the initial short-term phase of China’s power- building strategic culture has been based on pursuing an open-door trade policy aligned with a diplomatic posture keyed towards avoiding major conflict with great powers. At the same time, generous economic and military aid provision, in both conventional and unconventional weapons or materials to its strategic allies perpetuate China’s influence in the periphery. The long-term strategy of China has been to maintain traditional goals of defending national sovereignty and to enhance its major power status by developing and broadening technological, economic and military bases.

Along this line, as long as the Beijing leadership is not assured of China’s attainment of relatively advanced levels of economic and military development, its involvement in a major war would be a remote possibility for several decades. Thus, China under the CCP has prioritised economic reform to such a degree that its traditional ‘world view’ has been assigned a secondary status to that of pursuing national economic development. At the same time, integration of China in the regional and global economy, and its incorporation into major multilateral organizations, has enhanced its image in the international arena as a cooperative great power. This study, therefore, concludes that China’s economic growth concomitant with technological advancement is a means to a more fundamental



strategic end: its strategy is to use its newfound economic 'muscle' to reshape China's geostrategic interests in accord with its own strategic cultural views with less regard to the views of the intra and inter-state actors in the periphery and beyond.

***What are these 'peripheral conflicts' that are of such concern to the PRC, particularly that set involving itself, India, Pakistan and Burma?***

As the case study on 'China and Indo-Pakistan conflict' has revealed, the relationship between China and India is at a crossroad at the beginning of the third millennium. Their historic rivalries and strategic cultures suggest that a fair amount of competition if not tension between these continent-sized neighbours, which also happen to be the world's two most populous nations, is inevitable. In the global status stakes, it is China with which India wants to achieve parity. In addition to the traditional disputes and frictions, the nuclear/missile issue has now emerged as a very significant source of disagreement and contention between the two Asian giants. The Chinese know India is the only Asian country determined to resist China's pre-eminence in its periphery by developing the full spectrum of economic and military capabilities. Therefore, a key feature of Beijing's geostrategic consideration in its southern periphery has been dominantly 'India-centric.' As mentioned in chapter III, intrastate tensions in Nepal may also be of concern to China.

Whilst Beijing has resolved its disputed boundaries with Nepal and Pakistan, territorial disputes with India and Bhutan are yet to be resolved. As each conflict seems to simply prepare the ground for the next, the major dispute concerning the Sino-Indian border, which runs through some of the world's most arduous mountainous terrain, has never been formally delineated and the two sides fought an inconclusive war over part of it in 1962. It remains a formidable challenge in the Sino-Indian relationship. The dominant border area of Aksai Chin, which China considers to be part of Xinjiang, and the Ali area considered to be in Tibet are the two disputed Sino-Indian conflict zones in the western section. In the eastern section, India bases its claim on the MacMahon Line, which China disregards as Tibet had no authority to make the MacMahon Line agreement with Britain in 1914. In the central area, 2000 km<sup>2</sup> of territory is also in dispute

Therefore, the PRC asserts that India is occupying large tracts of Chinese territory.

In assessing the contemporary geopolitical dynamics in China's peripheral zone of conflict, it is likely that China would not like to see a situation of permanent armed hostility between India and Pakistan, worse still actual conflicts such as that which occurred over Kargil, where Beijing is called upon to take sides. Otherwise, China would face difficult choices. Open support for its closest ally, Pakistan, would jeopardise relations with the US and India. But non-intervention on Pakistan's behalf could encourage India to solve the Pakistan "problem" once and for all, tilting the regional balance of power decisively in its favour. Unrestrained Indian power could eventually threaten China's security along a soft underbelly in Tibet and Xinjiang.

The triangular relationship between China, India and Pakistan is delicately poised, but some opportunities have been opened up for the management of this sensitive triangle to the benefit of all three. However, China needs to demonstrate its credibility to various state actors in its periphery that there has indeed been a readjustment in its relations with India and Pakistan marked by a realistic restraint and responsibility appropriate to a great power. Pakistan needs to avail itself of constructive and comprehensive dialogue on Kashmir and contribute towards the creation of a peaceful environment that would facilitate such dialogue. India needs to press forward with constructive initiatives without being discouraged by domestic political setbacks, and must not insist on the dismantlement of Sino-Pakistan *entente cordiale* as a single-issue in the pursuit of a better relationship with China. It must be realised that, in practice, China is neither going to dilute its political relationship with Pakistan for the sake of Sino-Indian friendship nor allow all dimensions of its ties with Pakistan to be detrimental to its relations with India.

In recent years, as part of CBMs, the Sino-Indian relationship has warmed up, leading to clarifications concerning their longstanding border disputes, pragmatic trade agreements and efforts to deal with counterterrorism. However, beneath the diplomatic niceties and apparent desire for cordial interaction, there lurk the strong negative images of India in the Chinese mentality, and vice-versa. Perhaps

the issues where the two strategic cultures most collide have been the on-going Sino-Indian border problems, China's strong strategic ties with India's *bete noire*-Pakistan and a competition to influence a relatively new actor, Burma, on India's turbulent eastern flank. To date, China's assistance to Pakistan's development of nuclear and missile technology, in addition to being Islamabad's biggest supplier of conventional military weapons, had been a thorn in the Sino-Indian relationship. This strain has been furthered by Rangoon's proclivities to join Beijing's orbit of influence. It has been China's main foreign policy agenda to establish stability along its peripheral borders, yet many peripheral neighbours do not care about stability as much as preferring China's generous military and economic assistance as a means to their regime survival.

Establishing a security presence in Burma and waters nearby has become central to China's vital maritime strategy. Burma "bridges" Mainland China to the world's third largest ocean-the Indian Ocean. The rationale for a PLAN presence in these waters includes two maritime threats arising from China's dependence on SLOCs for trade and imported petroleum. First, it would position Beijing to influence the vital SLOCs through the Straits of Malacca, Sunda and Lombok. Second, China's activities in Burma indicate a maritime strategic goal of establishing a controlling presence on the western approaches to the South China Sea. Interestingly, China's involvement in Burma is viewed by India as a serious security threat on its turbulent eastern flank. Concurrently, on India's western flank, its nemesis Pakistan has been China's closest ally and does everything in China's favour as long it relates to a diminishing of India's sphere of influence. The Beijing-Rangoon nexus and China's ambitions in the Indian Ocean have alerted Indian strategists who view this an attempt by China to contain and encircle India on its vulnerable eastern flank.

***What role has China played, or will China play, in 'peripheral conflicts', and to what ends?***

As China shares land borders with fourteen nation-states and maritime boundaries with seven, it has been defining, refining and asserting control over disputed claims with most of its neighbours including India, Vietnam and Russia, all of whom it has fought wars with. While China's geostrategic interests are

overwhelmingly peripheral, its sovereignty issue over Taiwan uniquely differs from most others. Clearly, Taiwan has been at the top of China's list of potential tensions and possible conflict. Such a possible conflict resides between Beijing's notion of cultural and historical destiny to employ nationalism to shore up its regime credibility and legitimacy, and contemporary US geopolitical views on the Strait of Taiwan. At no point in history has the direction of Taiwan's internal political process assumed such importance in shaping the future of China's eastern periphery. The rapid rise of China in both economic and geopolitical terms and the dramatic diminution of Japan's economic vitality are reshaping China's eastern peripheral order in ways that few anticipated until only a couple of years ago. While Taiwan has little control and a lessening influence over these larger trends, the island "entity" is a key catalytic factor in affecting how the ongoing transformation of China's eastern peripheral order might eventually evolve. On the strategic horizon, two possible outcomes, with drastically different consequences for the region, await the political standoff in the Taiwan Strait.

On the one hand, tensions in the Strait might provoke a major war between China and the US and reshape China's eastern peripheral order. If this happens, it will certainly unravel the security anchorage that has underwritten the region's stability and prosperity for more than a quarter century. In polar opposition to such a conflict scenario, the stepped-up pace of economic integration across the Strait might lead to a peaceful reconciliation under some form of economic, if not political, union between Beijing and Taipei. This could bring about an entirely new configuration of economic, political, and strategic forces in East Asia, requiring the US, China, and Japan to adjust to a different reality. If this happens, it will eliminate a major flashpoint in China's eastern periphery as well as the likelihood of an accidental clash between Beijing and Washington. Such a transformation would, at the same time, make China potentially a more formidable strategic challenger to the US and Japan, as a peaceful reconciliation across the Strait would certainly relieve China of a major historical burden and release a significant portion of its energy and resources to other needs. But, there also exists a tactical reason why Beijing must stand firm on the Taiwan-unification issue, that is, to prevent a domestic domino effect in other potentially

independence-minded regions of the PRC, including the XUAR and Tibet, (although, latter's geostrategic importance has substantially reduced and has become rather an economic liability).

Contemporary Chinese leaders believe in a well demarcated and defended boundary to forge good neighbourly relations, as a result, border issues with Russia have largely been resolved, although the area east of the Amur and Ussuri rivers, including Vladivostok, remains in Russian hands as the result of what China rejects as 'unequal' treaties. However, agreement on 'joint exploitation' over the 1969-flashpoint islands on the Ussuri River was reached in 1998 and there does not seem to be any particular ambition to change the current status quo.

The strategic threats of Islamic extremism in Central Asia have largely been alleviated through the SCO. Yet, China's closer ties with Central Asia – the location of the world's second largest energy reserves – are apparently tactical, owing to its geographical proximity and hence it's potential to fulfil China's soaring energy consumption needs. Understandably, Beijing's willingness to make significant concessions to its Central Asian neighbours during the process of settling disputed borders following the break-up of the former Soviet Union has been favourable in producing a more peaceful atmosphere along China's northwestern and western periphery. It kept only 20 percent of the land disputed with Kazakhstan, 30 percent of the land it disputed with Kyrgyzstan, and with Tajikistan conceded the majority of its claim to the Pamir Mountains.

The XUAR is China's direct link to the Central Asian republics as well as its Muslim population centre. If Beijing mishandles its domestic Muslim problems, it runs the serious risk of alienating states that directly control the supply of its strategic energy resources. No less serious, unrest in the XUAR could readily lead to a decline in outside oil investment and revenues, thus hampering an industry of vital strategic importance to China's future economic growth and prosperity. Such threats may have been a primary consideration in China's early support for the US-led war on terrorism in the aftermath of September 11, 2001.

*What resources must China marshal to play an active role in addressing the simmering tensions in its neighbourhood?*

China's dynamic and frequently stressful relationships with its peripheral nuclear states have induced a greater US interest in the region to balance the strategic scales. By the turn of the century, the US and China had each singled the other out as the main obstacle to their strategic visions. In the only major statement on defence and security prepared by the Bush administration before September 11-the "Quadrennial Defence Review" (QDR) – China was all but named as the most probable strategic problem of the future. However, it will be decades before China has a comprehensive portfolio of power remotely comparable to the US globally, and it will have to resolve some quite staggering peripheral and internal challenges to get there. With the US defence capabilities, especially its hi-tech and nuclear strategic forces, being staggeringly superior to the contemporary Chinese inventories, China would have to skilfully marshal its diplomatic and economic forces to avoid with any future conflict with the US. The aftermath of any Sino-US armed confrontation would be disastrous to the global economy and humanity, let alone to China's core national interest of economic attainment or the Chinese cultural philosophy of "face-saving." In sum, the US hovers at the top of China's pyramid of relationships. Sustaining a dynamic strategic accommodation, and preserving a robustly stable Asian region, will be a tough test of the diplomacy and statecraft of both countries for decades to come. The threat of using the PLA's conventional or non-conventional defence capabilities as a last resort in a near future confrontation against the US should not be only limited to rhetoric but revert to mutual respect.

An "internationalisation" of the Kashmir dispute in tandem with anti-US Islamic militancy in Central Asia would affect China and continue to promote, as it fears, American intervention on the PRC's periphery on the pretext of fighting international terrorism. US-led intervention in Iraq, Kosovo and Central Asia has left China very uncomfortable. In the coming years, Beijing's diplomatic skills will be tested as it seeks to marshal the US military away from its peripheral geostrategic zones, while simultaneously continuing to attract US MNCs for the sake of its continuing economic growth. In this respect, China's strategic relationship with Pakistan, Burma and North Korea, including those relating to

nuclear issues, could be obstacles in its future diplomatic overtures with both the US and India.

Although China claims that it has no hegemonic ambitions in its periphery, its previous support for liberation movements in Asia, its rapidly-growing and resource-hungry economy, its considerable military capabilities, its existing territorial disputes with Japan over Diaoyu/Senkaku islands and with ASEAN neighbours over the demarcation of territorial boundaries in the South China Sea make it the major cause of concern for most countries in and around China's periphery. However, Beijing's recent conciliatory posture on the issue of Spratly Islands provides some encouragement. China has agreed with the ASEAN claimants that the UNCLOS should be the governing criterion for resolving the territorial dispute and it has agreed to negotiate the issue multilaterally.

Since the border agreement of 1961 between China and North Korea, the present boundaries appear to be largely undisputed. However, the shakiness of the current regime in Pyongyang is making the validity of the border agreement an active political concern specifically in the emergence of unified Korean peninsula following the collapse of the communist North. China's leading role and active participation in the six-party multilateral cooperation and discussions in furthering the Korean peace process is indisputable. And, it is highly probable that China has been marshalling its influence to maintain the geopolitical status quo and will deter any North Korean ambition to invade South Korea - China's newfound trading partner along its northeastern periphery.

In 1962, the geography of the Sino-Indian disputed border terrain was so inhospitable and remote; it was almost logistically impossible for the opposing forces to engage decisively. Yet, the facts of geography have been altered considerably by 'disruptive technologies' of WMD and their delivery systems, most notably ballistic missiles. As a result, it is far easier for China and India to wage war than it was in 1962. In sum, if China's strongly negative image of India's strategic culture is combined with China's own 'cult of defence', there is good reason to be concerned about the future of relations between New Delhi and Beijing. While open conflict between Asia's two emerging great powers is not preordained, indeed it is in their mutual interest to avoid military contest, and

pursue CBMs. The analysis here raises a sobering reminder of the simmering tensions in their relations.

The contemporary geopolitical volatility in energy-rich countries has presented a grave energy threat to China's surging economic growth and its lack of a "Blue Water Navy", let alone aircraft carrier battle groups to protect SLOCs has punctuated its security incapability and unveiled China's strategic "soft belly". Its closer ties with Pakistan, Burma, and Iran validate China's maritime geostrategic interests as it imports most of its fossil fuel from the Middle East and Africa. Thus, building a strong PLA Navy to protect SLOCs has been a *raison d'être* in its national strategy of economic command of the global markets.

The latest "entry" in China's zone of peripheral conflict has been Nepal's surging Maoist insurgency, which has a potential to lure its giant neighbour India into a confrontation. In such a peripheral conflict, China's tactical effort would be 'containment' of the eruption of the 'flashpoint', at the same time, insulating other rival powers in its sphere of influence through accelerated economic and military assistance.

The social and domestic political aspects of contemporary China are not the scope of this dissertation, however, a brief point about a critical factor evolving in China's socio-politico-economic spheres may be appropriate at this phase. As China's integration into the global market has brought rapid economic growth and status as a greater power, it has also widened the gulf between the rich and poor, the booming coastal cities and economically uncompetitive interior rural areas, the SOE and private enterprises and, more critically, has witnessed hedonistic attitudes placed between profit and patriotism. While the Chinese elites are motivated by Realpolitik rather than solidarity with Communism, the common Chinese population is much more influenced by pragmatic calculations of well-being than by the ideal of nationalism. As a result, the PLA's recruitment drive to attract educated youngsters to its high-tech branches of the air force and navy has met a fairly cold response. When national and individual interests clash, the ideological appeal of communist revolution may not espouse the same fighting spirit in the PLA as in the past.



China's ultimate dependence on the PLA to address peripheral conflicts is beyond doubt, but the PLA remains in essence a military influenced by the organisational model adapted from the Soviet Union in the 1950s. Although there has been serious consideration given to adopting various US Army-style organizational reforms – such as a JCS or theatre war system – so far these have been largely deferred. The PLA must make further basic changes to these existing rigidities and excessive compartmentalisation in its organizational system if it truly wants to become a more flexible and agile military.

The PLA has substantially downsized its troops; yet, a bulk of its defence budget has been spent on personnel, which do not leave a great deal to invest in procurement to replace its antiquated equipment and boost R&D. In sum, the China's defence budget is greater than ever before and it spends it rationally, but there still is scant financial evidence pointing to a significant military build-up.

While some progress has been made, and the Chinese military does field a numerically large force with relatively modern weaponry in most categories of its conventional and strategic systems, the Chinese military-industrial complex has remained constrained by science and technology. Without access to equipments and technologies from the West, the PLA and China's military-industrial complex has an uphill course to close the weaponry and defence technology gap with the US and the West (including Japan). As the US and its Western allies' embargo against military hard-ware sales to China in the aftermath of Tiananman Square massacre of 1989 has still remained intact, China's weaponry and technologies procurement from Russia has been meeting some of the PLA's needs, but they are far from sufficient to provide it with a power-projection capability.

China is located in a dangerous neighbourhood and Chinese leaders have always viewed threats, security, and power in more comprehensive terms than many Westerners. Consequently, the PLA must be prepared for a range of potential conflicts, both external and domestic and some transnational. Territorial disputes have existed with Russia, the Central Asian republics, Japan, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Sikkim, Burma, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Brunei. However, by the outset of the twenty-first century, the PRC has been able

to largely pacify its borders and build cooperative relationships with most nations on its periphery. This is no small diplomatic feat considering the numerous conflicts Beijing has had with its peripheral neighbours since CCP came to power in 1949. In the Chinese geopolitical context, domestic “stability” (CCP’s legitimacy) has been perpetually paramount, and external threats or conflicts are usually perceived in the context of aggravating domestic stability, thereby hampering its aim of achieving global economic command and power-projection military capability.

In sum, as China is grooving to an exuberant global beat, this dissertation concludes that the intensity of conflicts along China’s periphery has dimmed to such an extent that its political, economic, and social order will probably not disintegrate into chaos in the near future. Instead, China’s rapidly growing economic capacity and its growing prestige in faraway capitals like Washington and Paris has meant an expansion of Chinese “soft power”, i.e., an assertive China with an ability to get what it wants by attracting and persuading others to adopt its goals, instead of blunt economic and military coercion. And, China could reasonably be expected to manage most, if not all, the conflicts in its periphery to its own advantage. These include: efforts to augment its military capabilities in a manner commensurate with its increased economic muscle and acquire new allies and underwrite the protection of others in its periphery. It is unlikely that the PRC will actually acquire new or reclaim old territory for China’s resources or for symbolic reasons by penalizing, if necessary, any opponents or bystanders who resist such claims. While it may wish to redress past wrongs it believes to have suffered; or attempt to rewrite the prevailing international “rules of game” to better reflect its own geostrategic interests; or in the most extreme policy choice, perhaps even ready itself for preventive war or to launch predatory attacks on its foes on the pretext of the “cult of defence,” – all of which have been seen as the bedrock of the contemporary China’s strategic culture, however, it is probable that China will not pursue these at the cost of its future economic and/or social security agenda.

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