CHAPTER II

GEO-STRATEGIC LOCATIONS, EXTERNAL INTERVENTION, INTERNATIONAL CRISIS: GREAT GAME RECONSIDERED
The countries and territories comprising Inner Asia [Inner Asia is defined to include Afghanistan, Mangolia, Kazakhastan, Kirigizistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tibet and Sinkiang, with an area of 4.9 million square miles and a population in 1989 of some 135 million] have been of central importance to world politics because of the competing security interests of the great powers in that region from the late nineteenth century to the present day. The immediate background of the transformation of Inner Asia during the period from the 1920s to the 1980s was the tremendous upheavals of the First World War and the political dislocations engendered by the emergence of nationalist regimes in Russia, China and India replacing the erstwhile Russian, Chinese and the British empires respectively. These nationalist regimes played a very active role, both as models of political, economic and local change, and as intrusive forces seeking to subordinate peoples of Inner Asia to their interests. In an effort to cope with this new international environment, peoples of Inner Asia faced different challenges from those they had confronted earlier in the realms of identity crisis and foreign influence.

Our focus in this chapter is on Tibet and Afghanistan. Both the countries existed on the geo-strategic periphery of security parameter of British India. And it was the strategic imperative of the competing

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imperial powers to maintain Tibet and Afghanistan as buffers in order to prevent direct border collisions and conflict. However, the British withdrawal from South Asia, followed by and the division of Indian sub-continent into India and Pakistan, emergence of bipolar structure of world politics after the second world war and the Chinese communist revolution of 1949 disturbed the strategic balance of forces with important security implications for Tibet and Afghanistan. Both the erstwhile peripheral states invited external interventions leading to international crisis and threat to regional security.

Geo-strategic Location of Afghanistan and Tibet

Afghanistan and Tibet have been geographically, politically, historically, culturally and strategically part of Inner Asia. Afghanistan has been called the 'crossroads of Asia'. Its spine, running from North-east to South-west, is the Hindukush; the flatlands to the north are part of Turkestan. The river Oxus, now the Amu Darya, is Afghanistan’s border with the (former) Soviet Union. Historically, however, it was never a rigid line which divided peoples or cultures. The Hindukush was a much clearer dividing line, not only between Central and South Asia but also, for instance, between Yurt-dwelling and black-tent dwelling nomads. During the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, both Tibet and Afghanistan were the arenas of

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2 Lawrence Ziring, Buffer States on the Rim of Asia: Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran and the Superpowers in Hafeez Malik (ed.), Soviet American Relations with Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1987, p. 121.
the ‘Great Game’ between Great Britain, Tsarist Russia and Imperial China in case of Tibet and Great Britain and Tsarist Russia in that of Afghanistan. And by 1950, when the three nationalist regimes India, Pakistan and China emerged in South and East Asia with linkages in the bipolar structure of world politics regulated by US and USSR, Tibet and Afghanistan again became strategically significant frontier regions among powers. Afghanistan shares a 2,370 kilometer long border with the (former) Soviet Central Asian Muslim Republics of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan to its North. To its southwest and west is Iran. On the north-east is the Autonomous Region of Xingjing (Sinking) of China which is connected through the strategically important Wakhan corridor in the Pamirs. The Wakhan corridor in the north-east that connects China with Afghanistan was forced upon the Afghans by Britain. The purpose was to avoid direct contact between Russia and British India. This brings Afghanistan, and through her CIS in a very close proximity to the strategic Karakoram highway linking Pakistan and China. Therefore, it is clear that the location of Afghanistan at the geo-strategic epicentre of Inner Asia, as a land-locked state surrounded by more than half a dozen countries has important strategic and security implications for the region, in the present time as it had in the past. Lord Curzon, the architect of frontier and security policies of British India, wrote “Modern Afghanistan is indeed a purely accidental geographic unit,

which has been carved out of the heart of Central Asia by the sword of conquerors or the genius of individuals statesman.”  

Thus, the current boundaries of Afghanistan, which were drawn in the nineteenth century, reflect the relations of force and strategic needs of the imperial powers (Britain and Russia) rather than the political or social structures within its boarders.

Similarly, Tibet has been of crucial importance to the dominant powers in South and East Asia in their respective strategic calculations in the past, just as it is now. The domination of the region by either power, directly or indirectly, has been an accurate indication of its strategic value. Popularly known as the ‘roof of the world’, the Tibetan plateau forms a distinct geographic and ecological region. The plateau, with an average altitude of 4000 meters, is bounded on the south by the Himalayas, the peaks of 6000-8000 meters, on the west by Karakoram with peaks of similar heights. The geo-strategic position of Tibet beyond Himalayas, and between India and China worked as a strategic frontier region for India until Tibet’s military take over by China in 1950.

Soviet Security Interests And Military Intervention In Afghanistan

Afghanistan became one of the hot spots of cold war rivalry between the USSR and the USA, just as it was during the Anglo-

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4 C. Collin Davis, The Problem of the North-West Frontier, 1890-1908, Cambridge, 1932, p.153
Russian rivalry during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Afghanistan maintained neutrality based on isolation, which it preserved by rebuffing German overtures during both the world wars. Stalin maintained this policy, never even established a communist party in Afghanistan, though he had done so in nearly every other country bordering on the Soviet Union by 1921.\(^5\) Stalin’s successors, however, decided to compete with the west in the post-colonial world by giving aid to governments whose non-alignment with the west served Soviet interests. Afghanistan was the first country to benefit from this policy. At the time of Soviet invasion the Brezhnev leadership considered that the correlation of forces in the world politics was favorable for expansion and through support of militarized vanguard-party regimes in Third world countries.

Even though, Afghanistan was not ready for a communist movement, at the time of Saur revolution in 1978, but foreign policy considerations must have influenced the Comintern’s decision.

It is generally recognized that the Soviet invasion had its defensive and offensive elements. On one level, it was a desperate attempt to protect a Marxist regime from imminent reversal. To have

\(^5\) Anthony Arnold gives the founding dates of communist parties in other countries on the Soviet border; China (1921), Mongolia (1921), divan (1920), Turkey (1920), Romania (1921), Czechoslovakia (1921), Poland (1918), Finland (1918), and Norway (1923) Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan’s two-party Communism Parcham and Khalaq*, Hoover Institution Press, Stanford, 1983, p.6
allowed the overthrow of a regime tied so intimately and so publicly to Moscow would have encouraged reverses elsewhere and permitted the very notion of reversibility to gain general currency. A New York Times Columnist, James Reston, elaborating the Soviet move in Afghanistan, wrote in 1980: “Moscow feared that the overthrow of a Marxist government in Kabul, and its replacement by a militant Islamic regime, with the kind of religious fervor now sweeping in Iran, might invert and impale the large Islamic population on the Soviet side of the Afghan-Iran borders. This is the larger tragedy of Afghanistan.”

Inside Afghanistan, the Communist regime backed by the USSR began to crumble over the factional fights between radical and conservative (pro-Soviet) sections within the (People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan) PDPA. The Soviets forced them into reunion in 1977. Within a few months of Saur revolution of 1978, the Khalqis under the leadership of Noor Mohammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin expelled the more moderate Parchamis, pursued an oppressive and brutal programme of socialization in an underdeveloped, ethnically divided and deeply religious society, having no experience or history of socialism. Apparently, Khalq leaders carried the revolutionary


7 PDPA was founded in 1965. In 1969, the party split into two factions. Khalq (Mass), led by Noor Mohammad Taraki and Hafizullah Amin and Parcham (Banner) led by Barbak Karmal.
programme to expand their support base independent of the Soviet course. They were regarded as radical ‘left-wing deviates’ by the Soviet leaders, and their chief worry was that Amin would become a ‘counter revolutionary’ traitor. The Soviet leadership, with its difficult experience with other fervent, though independent, communist leaders such as Jossip Broz Tito and Mao Zedong were eager to oust the radical and unreliable Amin. A Soviet observer even suggested that Amin would follow the same path as Egyptian President Sadat. 8

The PDPA regime faced internal revolts against its policies that were imposed by force. These revolts, largely orchestrated by local religious leaders, were soon joined by the Afghan Islamic groups, based in Pakistan.

In this situation, the Brezhnev Politburo feared that the United States would try to install a pro-American government in Kabul with Pakistani assistance. This miscalculation was a classic ‘enemy image’, which is generated in a security dilemma. The Soviet leaders believed that only a pre-emptive action could stop the collapse of the Afghan government, and eliminate the opportunity for American expansionism. Mirroring the nineteenth-century tactics of British and Russian empires, the Soviets carried out defensively motivated aggressive act. As Garthoff wrote, “The Soviet leaders decided to

8 V. Sidenko, Undeclared War on Afghanistan, *Pravda*, Moscow, 5 February 1980
intervene militarily in Afghanistan not because they were unwilling to keep it as a buffer, but precisely because they saw no other way to ensure that it would remain a buffer."

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was motivated by more direct security considerations of than the Soviet propaganda that intervention was in response to military threats from the West and China. Soviet leaders genuinely feared the loyalty of ethnic groups in the non-Russian Republics of Central Asia and the Caucasus, because of growing militancy among Islamic fundamentalists in Iran in 1978-79 (and to a lesser degree in Turkey and Pakistan), and about Islamic insurgency against the PDPA regime in Afghanistan in 1979. These countries were in close proximity to the Soviet southern borders. As James Critchlow has noted, the Soviet Muslims in Central Asia, mainly the Turkic and Iranian peoples, ‘share proximity and historical experience with respect to the bordering Muslim countries’. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan share over 800 miles of borders with Afghanistan. The Soviet Muslims ‘have had extensive opportunities to interact with co-nationals in the Afghan population, which consists of four million Uzbeks and three million Tajiks, plus smaller and significant numbers of Turkmens’. Some of these are descendents of anti-Soviet Basmachi guerrillas who escaped from the

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USSR in the 1920s after having lost ten years of struggle against Soviet hegemony in Central Asia.\(^ {10} \)

However, we do not have any solid evidence of significant Muslim dissidence in the then Soviet Central Asia or of the impact of Muslim fundamentalism on the Soviet Muslims. Nevertheless, one must consider long-term demographic, economic, religious and cultural trends to understand the Soviet leadership’s concern about the potential spillover affect of Muslim religious movements.

Also, the international context, marked by the newly intensified Soviet rivalry with the United States, and suspicion about Sino-American relationship, heightened the stakes involved in Afghanistan. In the aftermath of the Soviet invasion, analysts tried to explain the event in terms of the 'Brezhnev doctrine'. According to this doctrine, the Soviet Union reserved the right to intervene in any communist country in order to safeguard socialism. But this explanation gives too much credit to Brezhnev’s contribution to Soviet foreign Policy. Russian Tsars and Soviet leaders alike have traditionally been sensitive about the security of nearby countries. They have used force to restore stability and or bring into power friendly, pro-Russian or pro-Soviet regimes. Since the World War II, these have been reasons for three interventions in Eastern Europe: East Germany in 1953,

Hungry in 1956, and Czechoslovakia in 1968. However, they neither intervened in Yugoslavia after their break with Tito in 1948, nor in Poland, during the upheavals in 1956 and 1970. They also did not intervene on a large scale in 1969 during and after the conflict with the People’s Republic of China on the Ussuri River. As the Afghan case illustrates, Soviet decision to use force in neighbouring countries were motivated by a number of factors, apart from the doctrinal considerations of Soviet writers and communist theoreticians, which served more as *ex post facto* justification than as real motives. Soviet intervention in Afghanistan was strikingly different from that in the East European communist regimes. Afghanistan was the first country outside the East European Security Zone and Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO), in which the Soviet intervened since World War II. Historically, Russian Tsars and Soviet commissars considered the northern Tier of Afghanistan to be within their sphere of influence, because geographically it falls well within the perimeter of Soviet central Asia.

The Russians intervened in Afghanistan on a limited scale in 1885, 1928 and 1930. (In the 19th century, the British fear of and desire to halt Russian expansionism were the motives behind two costly Anglo-Afghan wars). Yet the Russians never attempted a full-scale invasion of Afghanistan until 1979.
Although the initial reason for the invasion of Afghanistan was almost certainly not 'a stepping stone to their possible control over much of the world's oil supplies' as the Americans perceived it to be. James Reston, a New York Times columnist, remarked that Carter was jumping too fast to conclude at a time when 'a great many people' in the US and elsewhere 'do not share his (Carter's) estimate that Soviets have made a calculated military move in Afghanistan to dominate the oil fields and sea lanes of the Middle East.'

We do not know what ultimately triggered the Soviet decision to invade Afghanistan, whether internal conditions of that country, concerns of spillover affect on the USSR, or some strategic designs beyond Afghanistan. In my understanding, however, the invasion was neither an exclusively defensive move (as believed by George Kennan) nor a solely offensive move (as viewed by Richard Pipes), but rather a combination of both.

The Soviets feared that the fall of a pro-Soviet regime in Afghanistan could be manipulated by the United States and China, and maintained that the United States was attempting to 'drive' Afghanistan into the 'notorious strategic arc' which the United States "has been building for decades close to the USSR's southern...

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12 For details see the debate between Richard Pipes and George Kennan in "How real is the Soviet threat?" US News and World Report, 10 March 1980, p. 33.
Soviet concerns must be viewed in the wake of US naval deployment off the coast of Iran in November 1979.

In addition to any defensive motives was the Soviet desire to be in a better position to exploit future opportunities in unstable Iran. The Soviet deployment in Afghanistan would half the distance from their own borders to the Straits of Hormuz. Soviet land-deployed aircraft in Afghanistan would be in a more advantageous position should they be needed to neutralize US air superiority provided by aircraft carriers in the area. At any rate, the US naval deployment off the coast of Iran in 1979 made the regional security vulnerable for the Soviets. The Soviets would, in effect, be able to cope with all likely contingencies in Iran, including US military intervention, civil war and any likely greater chaos. Further, forward deployment in Afghanistan would enable the Soviets to improve their strategic position vis-a-vis neighbouring Pakistan and China, creating a more effective pressure in the region.

Once again the goal of protecting the borders of an empire seemed to require intervention in the buffer state’s domestic politics. Once again, for Afghanistan to fulfill its international functions, its internal disorder had to be brought under control through violent military campaigns. The Soviet troops secured the capital as the KGB

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13 Ye. sheskok, “Milestone in the Struggle for Peace”, Sovetskaia Russia, 4 January 1980
(the Soviet secret agency) seized the Afghan government from the unreliable and brutal *Khalq* leader, Hatizullah Amin, who was killed. The Soviets used their military presence to force the PDPA to reunite under Karmal, the leader of *Parcham*. They established a new programme for the government and began a plan of counter insurgency. By 1981, the presence of the Soviet troops stabilized at about 105,000. The Soviet troops and the regime they protected carried out indiscriminate bombing of rural areas and massive repression, including systematic torture of thousands of detainees by the secret police.

In the United States, President Carter considered that the Soviet invasion constituted the 'greatest threat to peace since the Second World War' set the tone for confrontation. The West, most of the Islamic world and most of the nonaligned world condemned the Soviet intervention. A few European diplomatic initiatives that were intended to prevent the conflict from harming Soviet-US détente, quickly foundered.

Just as Soviet unilateral aid to the PDPA now, far exceeded the total given when the United States and USSR competed peacefully in giving aid to the government, so eventually did the US aid given to the Islamic resistance, the *Mujahidins*. The American aid started at about $30 million in 1980, already more than the average of $20 million per year during the previous twenty five years. Saudi
Arabia and other Arab sources at last matched American aid. The US aid went up to about $50 million in 1981 and 1982. Under the Communist regime, this amount increased to $80 million in fiscal year 1983 and $120 million in 1984. The US Congress, increasingly pushing for more effective aid, took the initiative of doubling the administration's 1985 request, raising it to $250 million, plus an extra allocation for antiaircraft weapons starting in 1986, the United States also supplied hundreds of shoulder-hold, laser-guided stinger antiaircraft missiles to the *Mujahidin*, the first time this ultra-sophisticated weapon had been distributed outside of NATO. From 1986 to 1989, the total aid to the *Mujahidin* all sources exceeded $1 billion per year. Like the Soviet expenditure, this amount was also about fifty times the average yearly expenditure by the US on aid to Afghanistan from 1955 to 1978.

To counter the Soviet expansionism the United States used the 'Nixon Doctrine' in South-West Asia. Under the 'Nixon doctrine', the United States encouraged the development of regional hegemons to guard western interests, a strategy that the Soviets perceived as encirclement. The Shah of Iran and Gen. Zia-ul-Haq of Pakistan assured their role in the American strategy in South-West and South Asia. However, in 1979 the Shah of Iran, the principal pillar of

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western security policy in the Persian Gulf, was overthrown by the Islamic Revolution. Pakistan was also facing political and economic instability at the time of Soviet invasion, and Gen. Zia-ul-Haq had particular reason to be worried about, as strong sentiments against the ruling junta prevailed among the Pashtu speaking Pathans of the Northwest Frontier province. The Government of Afghanistan, with consistent Soviet support, argued that the inhabitants of 'Pashtunistan', as it called those areas, should enjoy the right of self-determination. Pakistan was extremely sensitive of any such demand in the wake of its dismemberment of East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in India-Pakistan conflict of 1971. Therefore, to offset the possibility of 'Pashtunistan' being carved out of Pakistani geographical space, Pakistan started supporting the Afghan resistance guerillas against the PDPA regime. For the United States, Pakistan became the 'Frontline State' to counter Soviet influence in South Asia.

In this process, both the superpowers poured far more resources into Afghanistan's conflict than they had ever devoted to establish a cooperative security arrangement in the region. The intervention cost came to the Soviet Union about $5 billion per year, compared with a total of about $2.5 million in aid in the previous twenty-five years. The troops and many Soviet advisors who followed them, guaranteed more direct Soviet control over the party and government. During the

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15 Also see an identical estimate in the archives of the CPSU Central Committee Politburo, quoted in Washington Post, November 15, 1992
presence of Soviet troops, Moscow conducted an airlift of weapons and other supplies to Kabul. As one Moscow diplomat said, “Arms, food, fuel, even the money for the army’s paychecks comes from here”. However, the Soviets soon found that far from stabilizing the situation, their troops provoked national resistance leading to total chaos in Afghanistan. (A detailed discussion on Soviet military intervention and subsequent involvement of ‘regional linkage states’ viz. Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and external powers viz. US in politics of Afghan Resistance against is attempted in chapter III).

Therefore, in the wake of Soviet invasion in Afghanistan the co-operative security arrangements among great power, which furthered the consolidation of an Afghan state since the end of the second Anglo-Afghan war, had completely broken down, and the two superpowers engaged is the intense Cold War, poured sophisticated weapons and massive quantities of cash into every social network they could find in this still impoverished country. The breakdown of international co-operation made inevitable the collapse of Afghanistan.

PRC’s Strategic Interests, Tibet’s Military Takeover And Regional Conflict

As in the case of Afghanistan, the military take over of Tibet by the PRC in 1950 reflects its strategic value rather than the Chinese

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ideological justification of Tibet’s ‘liberation’ from imperialism. The Soviets also gave similar ideological justification to conceal their strategic interests in south-west Asia and overran Afghanistan in 1979. The Chinese argue that in 1950 Tibet was a backward, feudal state in which people were oppressed by a minority of priests and hereditary officials; the People’s Liberation Army (PLA) liberated the ‘Tibetan nationality’ from — to use the words of the 17-point agreement\(^\text{17}\) — ‘the depths of enslavement and suffering’. Interestingly, the second point of the seventeen-point agreement simultaneously underlines that the role of the PLA is to ‘consolidate the national defence’.

Tibet had always been a buffer between China and India. In the past, it had a similar significance between, first, the Mongols and India, and later between British India and Imperial Russia. But the hurried military takeover of Tibet in 1950 in the then existing circumstances clearly demonstrated the Chinese resolve to occupy an area of highest strategic importance and not allow it to be taken over by any hostile or potentially hostile power(s). 1950 provided the opportune moment to accomplish this task. The Russians were

\(^{17}\) The 17-point agreement for the peaceful liberation of Tibet was imposed by force on the representatives of the Dalai Lama by the PRC. It was signed in Beijing on 23rd May 1951.
temporarily well disposed, while the British had withdrawn from India. PRC used this opportunity and integrated Tibet to its western and southern borders by building roads, airports and other logistical requirements for the PLA, indicating the urgency and its strategic value for the Chinese security and defense system under its self-appointed goal of ‘liberation’.

In the late nineteenth century, Tibet assumed significance as a strategic corridor of defense, important for the security of British India’s North-East frontiers from the threat of the expanding Tsarist Russia in Central Asia. Its strategic value was emphasized by Lord Curzon in 1901 who was the architect and advocate of British forward policy in Central Asia in the following words:

It would be madness for us to cross the Himalayas and occupy it (Tibet). But it is important that no one else should seize it; and it should be turned into a sort of buffer between the Indian and Russian Empires. It Russia were to come down to the big mountains she would at once begin intriguing with Nepal; and we should have a second Afghanistan on the north. I’ve not put this very clearly. What I mean is that Tibet itself and not Nepal must be the buffer state that we must endeavour to create.\(^\text{18}\)

In independent India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad (who later, became India’s first President) along with Deputy Prime Minister, Sardar Patel, strongly supported Curzon’s policy of keeping Tibet as an

independent buffer state.\textsuperscript{19} They described Tibet as “India’s northernmost outpost in the Himalayas”.\textsuperscript{20} Tibet’s disappearance as a geo-strategic space following PRC’s takeover in 1950 and its significance and its consequences for India’s security was highlighted by an Indian parliamentarian in the following terms: “In international politics, when a buffer state is abolished by a powerful nation, that nation is considered to have aggressive designs on its neighbours”.\textsuperscript{21} Therefore, the role of Tibet as a buffer state important for peace and security of the two Asian giants that surround the Himalayan Piedmont—India and China can hardly be challenged even from the late twentieth century perspective, especially, in the light following developments in and around Tibet after the Chinese occupation:


2. Nuclearisation of Tibet and its implication for South Asian security;

3. The large scale transfer of Han population to Tibet at India’s North-East border makes it easier for China to offset the possibility of Tibet ever assuming the role of a buffer.


\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., p. 295.

\textsuperscript{21} Parliamentary Debates, Lok Sabha, Vol. XVIII, No. 7 August 19\textsuperscript{th}, 1958, p. 7548.
4. Tibetan revolts and protests of 1959 and 1989 against PRC’s rule also has potential to endanger regional insecurity.

However, unlike British India, independent India did not possess necessary military capability to maintain peace and security in entire security-strategic theater as a concerned balance of power; in 1950.

Having worked out the loss in cost-benefit analysis of the colonization of Tibet, as it would bring diminishing returns, British evolved a strategy of autonomous Tibet under the weak Chinese suzerainty fulfilling the imperial defense and national security strategies. The Simla Convention of 1914 to demarcate the Sino-Indian and Sino-Tibetan boundaries gave fullest expression to British strategic designs to secure India’s northeastern frontier and Tibet’s place in them as Article III of the Simla Convention recognised “the special interest of Great Britain, in virtue of the geographical position of Tibet, in the interest of peace and order in the neighbourhood of the frontiers of India and adjoining states”.22 According the Simla agreements, Tibet would be divided into two zones: Inner Tibet consisting of Kham and Amdo was declared Chinese sphere of influence, and Outer Tibet (currently) Tibetan Autonomous region) “becomes autonomous under the direction of the Government of Lhasa, and Chinese are precluded from introducing military forces,

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22 Paroshotam Mehra, *The Northern Frontier*, Oxford University Press, Delhi, 1979, p. XXXI.
administrative officials or colonists in this portion of the country". As it is clear from the relevant documents of India office: "The extent of our interest in Tibet, as is made clear in the Simla convention of 1914, is the maintainance of the integrity and autonomy of Outer Tibet (i.e. Tibet proper), and of an effective Tibetan government, able to maintain peace and order in the neighbourhood of the frontiers of India and the adjoining states and free from the influence of any foreign power (excluding China from that term)."

When India became independent in 1947, it inherited existing treaty rights, including extra-territorial rights, and obligations of the British India government in regard to Tibet. However, Nehruvian India lacked the necessary military capability vis-à-vis China to protect Tibet from external intervention implicit in the conditions laid down in the 1914 convention which the British signed and consequently submitted to the Chinese demand in 1954.

In the wake of Chinese aggression in Tibet, militarily weak India preferred 1954 Indo-Chinese agreement, also known as, Panchshila or 'peaceful coexistence' to govern India’s future relations with China. Panchshila was expected to guarantee each country’s territorial integrity and to ensure non-aggression, non-interference in each others’ internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence. From 1954 to 1959, it appeared to

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23 Ibid., p. 177.
24 Ibid., p. 49.
provide an adequate diplomatic containment\textsuperscript{25} of China along the Northern borders. But as early as March 1959, the gospel of *Panchshila* began to show its shortcomings. The Tibetan revolt of March 1959, and the events towards the end of 1959, such as Sino-India military collisions in the Ladakh and North East Frontier Administration (NEFA) and the Sino-Indian war of 1962 gave an indication of the real nature of Chinese commitment to *Panchshila*.

The suppression of Tibetan revolt by the Chinese, their expanding frontier policy and eventual Sino-Indian conflict led to criticism of Nehru’s *Panchshila* policy in Indian Parliament and press. According to a critic, Nehru’s policy towards China, was “born in sin”.\textsuperscript{26} It was declared as “dead as a dodo”,\textsuperscript{27} and in reality there was no *Panchshila* between China and India because of China’s “aggression.”\textsuperscript{28} In the wake of 1962 Sino-India conflict, Nehru himself accepted the failure of the doctrine and stated “For five years, we have been victims of Chinese aggression across our frontiers in the North.... China, which has claimed and still claims to be anti-imperialist, is pursuing a course

\textsuperscript{25} In the absence of military might and also apprehensive of possible Chinese expansionism, Indian policy planners tried to contain China by negotiating security through peace and friendship agreements. *Panchshila* agreement, signed between India and China in 1954 is a reflection of this. It was a matter more of expediency than of historical illusion or idealism of India’s foreign and defence policy. India also pleased China by advocating its representation in the United Nations and by refusing to brand China as an “aggressor” in Korea. Furthermore, in order to appease or satisfy China of its territorial ambitions, India accepted Chinese sovereignty over Tibet.

\textsuperscript{26} Parliamentary debate, Lok Sabha Vol. XVIII. No. 7, August 19\textsuperscript{th} 1958, p. 1676.

\textsuperscript{27} The Indian Express, October 25 1962, p. 3.

\textsuperscript{28} The National Herald, October 9, 1962, p. 1
today for which comparisons can only be sought in the 18th & 19th centuries”. 29

The Sino-Indian border skirmishes from mid-50s to full scale war of 1962 was not simply an outcome of the border dispute or collapse of peaceful coexistence, it primarily resulted from the Chinese occupation of Tibet in 1950 and their forceful suppression of Tibetan uprising of 1959. Norman D Palmer, among others, favour, the argument that the 1962 conflict sprang from Chinese occupation of Tibet and their “brutal suppression’ of Tibetan rebellion in 1959 which resulted in seeking of the asylum by the Dalai Lama and several thousand refugees in India. He suggests that China ‘deliberately precipitated’ confrontation with India by its ruthless suppression of the rebellion and serious intrusions towards south of the McMohan line and in Ladakh areas. He concludes:

In retrospect, the current troubles between the Asian giants may be traced to the Chinese decision to establish direct control over the Tibet region... the consolidation of Chinese control of Tibetan autonomy and then again the brutal suppression of the uprising in Tibet in March 195930


Tibet has been strategically, politically and historically as important to China as it is to India. Indian Ambassador to China Panikkar noted that Tibet was the only area where the Chinese and Indian interests “overlapped”.31 For the Chinese, Tibet constituted the backdoor to China in their scheme of national security system32 and in geopolitical terms as “natural’ geographical limit of its power.”33


32 The idea of Tibet as a backdoor to China was first conceived by the East India company to explore new trading opportunities in South-Western China. British trading interests in Tibet, however, acquired strategic and political dimensions towards the last quarter of the nineteenth century in the wake of the ‘Great Game’ between Imperial Russia and Great Britain in Inner Asia. Tibet became a strategic corridor in British imperial defence perimeter against Russian incursion into India’s north-eastern frontiers. The very purpose of Younghusband expedition of 1903 was to prevent any Russian influence in Tibet. However, contemporary Communist historiography depicts the Younghusband expedition as an ‘iron clad proof’ that the British in India coveted Tibet, which would be later used as a base to attack China proper. In real terms, the Younghusband expedition dawned the strategic importance of Tibet in the Chinese mind. Thud, the Governor of Szechuan warned, ‘Tibet again is like a backdoor to a house. If the door is opened wide, robbers will flock into the apartments’. Another Chinese official expressed a similar view: ‘Lhasa is the capital of all Tibet, the home of the cult of Lamaism, the abode of imperial resident, the seat of numberless Buddhist shrines, the rendezvous of all the tribes; it has long been coveted by the British. Tibet again is the door that shuts off Yunnan and Sichuan, and should we prove remiss, the teeth will feel cold when the lips have gone. Any disturbance of her present status would bequeath to us a legacy of deep-seated injury’. Dawa Norbu in “Imperialism in Inner Asia 1775-1907” in K. Warikoo and Dawa Norbu (eds.), Ethnicity and Politics in Central Asia, South Asian Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 1992, pp.21-59

33 Dawa Norbu, Chinese strategic Thinking on Tibet and the Himalayan Region, Strategic Analysis, vol. XII, no. 4, July 1988, p. 381.
The disappearance of Tibet had significant strategic implications for India. A worried Sardar Patal noted at that time that the event had brought 'the expansion of China to our gates', and cautioned that Communist China had some definite aims and ambitions that were contrary to India’s national security.\(^{34}\)

Therefore the Sino-Indian overlapping of interests created a classic case of security dilemma as to who should occupy the strategic frontier region between the two giants, and China resolved it in its own favour by occupying Tibet.

On a broader level the international situation from the mid 40s to 1950 also contributed to China’s resolve of grabbing Tibet by force. By the end of the second World War, political changes came quickly in East Asia. In China, civil war broke out again after the temporary hiatus created by an alliance, albeit shaky, between the feuding sides (nationalists and communists) during the war against Japan. The Communists won the political victory by violent struggle against the Japanese and Kuomintang under the 'red' banner of Marxism-Leninism-Maoism. However, the new Communist regime in China faced with the prospect of isolation in world politics, marked by US-Soviet cold war, tactically and pragmatically chose to "lean on one side" (i.e., Soviet union) in international relations.

\(^{34}\) Durga Dass, op cit., no.19 pp. 459-462
Moreover, in South and South-East Asia (India, Burma, Vietnam, Indonesia, Philippines), nationalist movements were at their peak to win independence from the colonial powers. It is in this context of political turmoil with the emergence of China’s (KMT) as a communist country along with Soviet Union, that the US foreign policy geared itself towards the containment of communism in Asia.

Once again, Tibet acquired the strategic significance reminiscent of the ‘Great Game’ between the Russians and the British in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Realising the strategic importance of Tibet, the Charge d’Affairs of the US Embassy in New Delhi, George R. Merrell, requested his government in 1947 to reciprocate the 1946 Tibetan goodwill Mission (the one that congratulated the US for having won the second world war) by sending a mission to Lhasa. He argued for good relations between US and Tibet, and wrote, “Tibet is in a position of inestimable strategic importance both ideologically and geographically”. Furthermore, he also wrote, Tibet could act as “a bulwark against the spread of communism throughout Asia... (and, moreover) in an age of rocket warfare might prove to be the most important territory in all Asia”. American policy and attitudes maintained Tibet as, in some form or the other, a part of China - albeit enjoying an extraordinary amount of

36 Ibid.
independence from the central Chinese government. This independence along with its strategic importance encouraged Washington to maintain at the very least some loose friendly ties with Lhasa while simultaneously supporting China’s position on Tibet’s status. The US government unequivocally stated their position on Tibet in a diplomatic communication dated May 15, 1943 in the following terms:

“For its part, the Government of the United States has borne in mind the fact that the Chinese government has long claimed suzerainty over Tibet, and the Chinese Constitution lists Tibet among areas constituting the territory of the Republic of China. This Government has at no time raised a question regarding either of those claims”.37 However, the United States saw independent Tibet as a partner in an anticommmunist crusade designed, at the least, to bring pressure to bear on China and, at the best, topple the communist government.38 The Americans adopted the strategy to “foster and support anti-Communist elements both outside and within China with a view to developing and expanding resistance in China to the Beijing regime’s control, particularly in South China”39 in the aftermath of Chinese take over of

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37 Cited in A. Tom Grunfield, op. cit.,no. 35, p. 85.


39 Ibid. p. 100.
Tibet in 1950. They clandestinely supported the Tibetan rebellion against the PRC’s rule. Incidents of American training, supply of weapons to rebel, and monitoring flights were reported during that period as a *Washington Post* story says: “guerillas are said to have been well supplied by some mysterious agency with necessary light weapons and ammunition.”\(^40\) The United States continued to meddle in Sino-Tibetan politics, purely for strategic reasons in the late fifties and even now as well, just as the British rulers did throughout their rule in India.

But, in reality, American involvement in Tibet as an external power did not alter the situation in Tibet in any discernible manner after the brutal suppression of Tibetan rebellion of 1959. Although China remained anxious over Tibet in the aftermath of Sino-Soviet split by the late 50s and early 60s and after the subsequent growth of Indo-Soviet relations. This happened especially in the early 1970s when India, backed by the Soviet Union, engaged itself with the liberation of Bangladesh and the merger of Sikkim with the Indian Union. Such concerted Indo-Soviet co-operation, according to Chinese perception, constituted a probable danger to the Chinese occupation of Tibet. This general strategic vulnerability of Tibet, reinforced by the Tibetan revolt against PRC’s rule in 1959, which discreetly involved foreign intervention, necessitated that Tibet be treated as a national

security issue. The PRC’s overriding priority to secure strategic border region with India was steeped in the techniques of Marxist-Leninist tradition of communist socialization. Firstly, being aware of the past Chinese attempts to dominate Tibet during the Imperial and Republican periods due to absence of modern communication, Beijing spent $4,232 million on “transportation and communication” during the First Five-Year Plan (1953-57) supposedly for the whole country.\footnote{Dawa Norbu, op.cit., no.335-76.} The amount constituted 11.7% of the total development expenditure.\footnote{C. F. Remer (ed.), \textit{Three Essays on International Economics of Communist China}, University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1959, p.49} There is evidence to suggest that most of that total amount went for road-building projects in Tibet. Chang Chi-I, the Deputy Director of the United Front Works Department of the Chinese Communist Party, in his book on national minorities wrote:

\begin{quote}
with respect to communication and transportation, the greater part of the new highway construction throughout the country since liberation has been located in the frontier regions of the motherland and in areas inhabited by national minorities... The highway routes involving major engineering were, among others, the following: Kangting-Tibet, Tsinghai-Tibet, Tsinghai-Singiang, Chengtu-Apa, Lanchow-Lang muszu, Kunming-Talo, Lhasa-Shigatse, and Phari-Yatung.\footnote{Translated by George Moseley under the title. \textit{The Party and the National Question in China}, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass, 1966, p. 107.} 
\end{quote}
Thus, the Chinese Communists, immediately after the conquest of Tibet in 1951, embarked on establishing modern communication system, especially motorable roads, to link up Tibet with China to overcome the barriers of Tibetan Plateau. Tibet is a high upland "for the most part bleak and barren and cut by mountain chains stretching all the way from Kashmir to West China, ... frightening and almost formidable in its geographical features."\(^4\) China had completed it highways totaling 15,800 Km, with 300 bridges in outer Tibet alone, connecting 97% of region's countries by roads.\(^45\) These efforts had great strategic importance for Sino-India relations as they facilitated constant logical and other supports to forward bases of the PLA in Tibet. This land-link strategic communication was further reinforced by building airfields for rapid deployment of troops and for logistical supplies to counter any likely external intervention in Tibet or border war with India. There are 23 airfields. These airfields are located at the following places: Kartse, Kantse, North Koko Nor, Lithang, Jekondo, Tachienlu, Nakchuka, Chamdo, Drach-Dranang, Nyahang, (east Tibet); Lhokas Lhasa, Gyantse, Shigatse, Ghonkar, Dzong (central Tibet); Phari, Chusul, Tram, Worag, Gartok, Karsu, Nagari and


\(^45\) Radio Lhasa (Tibetan broadcast), September 9, 1975. It was the occasion of the 10\(^{th}\) Anniversary of Tibet Autonomous Region on which China released most of its statistics on Tibet. Cited in Dawa Norbu, "Strategic Developments in Tibet", *Asian Survey*, vol. XIX, no. 3, March 1979, p. 248.
Thingri (Western Tibet). Some of them like Shigaste, Phari, Worag, Thinri, and Chushul are close to Indian, Bhutanese and Napalese border in South and Southwest Himalayas. Furthermore, the Chinese Air Force, operating from the bases in Tibet, can also be used as air defence system for its nuclear activities in Tibet. The Tibetan Review reported in 1969 about the transfer of 'gaseous production and research from LopNor to Tibet because of former’s proximity to Soviet border and vulnerable to a preemptive strike.'

Similarly, the Russian Novosvi Press Agency (NPA) reported in 1974: “China already has 200 atom and hydrogen bombs ready for action.” It should be noted here that all these vital strategic communication links and military installations along with deep entrenchment of the PLA in Tibet, apart from securing Tibet, was utilized as a diplomatic tool to launch ‘peace offensive’ to counter the Soviet strategy to encircle China through Indo-Soviet co-operation. China successfully utilized Tibet-based Chinese army to pursue its competitive diplomacy to build its own “spheres of friendship” in the Cis-Himalayan region and beyond vis-à-vis India. With these efforts, China could safeguard the precarious balance of power emerging out of Sino-Soviet rivalry in South Asia, and on the other hand prevent the emergence of an India-controlled subcontinent. To that end, it

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46 Cited in Dawa Norbu, op.cit., no.33, 251.
supplied Pakistan with arms and demonstrated its readiness to intervene directly on Pakistan’s behalf. Beijing’s determination to prevent Indian supremacy in the subcontinent entered a new phase with India’s nuclear test in 1974. To counter any resultant threat, China assured Pakistan of its “full and resolute support, including that against nuclear threat and nuclear blackmail.” It is suspected that the current Pakistani nuclear programme is supported by China.

The Soviet influence into India also constituted a grave threat to China. It was perceived, in effect, as a Soviet flanking move. A possible riposte to this threat was a Chinese penetration into West Pakistan, which could also serve as a warning to India not to countenance too deep a penetration by the USSR. Regionally, it would also facilitate a counter flanking maneuver in the Pamirs – a mountain region of the Soviet Union on the borders of Xinjiang, Kashmir and Afghanistan--an area that the Chinese claimed.

In the more immediate Cis-Himalayan region, the objective function of Chinese military buildup in Tibet is to support the development of cordial relationship with Nepal and Bhutan as ‘New Buffer Zone’ between India and China. Thus, China’s ideal and long-term goal in the Cis-Himalayan region appears

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to encourage actively the emergence of independent buffer states in the Cis-Himalayan region between itself and India with the hope that they will be more friendly to it than to its adversary, India...what seems to be China’s aim, in more immediate and concrete terms, is to combat the Indian influence in the region and prevent the possibility of the Himalayan states becoming forward bases for any attacks against "China’s Tibet".\textsuperscript{49}

However, the relative loss of Russian influence from that of the Soviet days in Indian subcontinent has not witnessed any perceptible change in China’s position on Tibet.

**India, China and Tibet in Post Cold War World**

The collapse of Soviet Union and the subsequent global realignment of forces provided opportunities for India to emerge as an important player of Asian affairs. Also, United States in order to maintain its Asian strategic boundary\textsuperscript{50} vis-à-vis China in the South and South-east Asia found India as a natural post Cold war ally.

\textsuperscript{49} Dawa Norbu, op.cit., no.46 p. 258.

\textsuperscript{50} Geographic borders and strategic boundaries are not synonymous by any means. According to a Chinese strategic analyst, geographic border refers to territorial land, territorial waters and corresponding territorial air. Strategic boundaries refer to the limits of geography and space related to a country’s interests, that a country’s military forces are actually able to control. In the real world, some country’s strategic boundaries are smaller than their geographic boarders. Other countries, like the US and Soviet Union, have strategic boundaries which are far greater than their geographic borders. See Xu Guangyu, "Pursuit of Equitable Three-dimensional Strategic Boundaries" in \textit{JPRSCAR}, 29 March 1988, p. 35.
Similarly, Chinese leaders and strategists see the recent changes in the global and regional strategic environment as an opportunity to become a global power. At the same time, the Chinese want to thwart any attempts by Asian countries like India and Japan to form any alliance with the United States against what they commonly perceive as the common ‘China threat’ in the post-cold war, post-Soviet era. While for long-term purposes, the Chinese perceive their strategic military prowess and growing economic power as offsetting American hegemony, their short-term objective is to see their country’s role as the leader of a bloc of nations challenging American supremacy. Hence, China sees some benefit in making common cause with India so as to resist ‘arm-twisting’ by the United States. The Chinese leaders reportedly told the visiting Indian President, Dr. S.D. Sharma, that if the Third World countries like China and India did not unite and cooperate they would be left behind, and bullied by others.

However, a closer examination of the Indian and Chinese perspectives, despite the current thaw in Sino-Indian relationship since late 1980s, suggests that a fair amount of tension and confrontation between these continent size neighbours is inevitable. In the post cold war world, marked by the game of encirclement and counter


encirclement, Indo-US informal strategic alliance vis-à-vis China assumes an important dimension. Indian policy makers are optimistic that a shared interest in containing China’s growing economic and military influence in Asia would cement Indo-US, Indo-US-Japan and Indo-ASEAN ties. The significant improvement in the Indo-US relations since the end of cold war has led some observers to conclude that the changing strategic realities -- the withdrawal of US military bases from Philippines, the planned reduction of US forces in the Indian and Pacific Oceans, China’s tendency to flex its muscles, and Washington’s problems with China -- would compel the United States to look for an alternative Asian power to contain China. For its part, India now supports American presence in South-East Asia, seeing it premised upon the containment of Chinese influence.53 Besides the larger strategic Sino-US strategic calculus, Indian support for American presence in the South-East Asian region emerges out of its own security and strategic concerns vis-a-vis China. The recent Chinese forays into Burma have been perceived by India as a security threat, because Burma also provides an invasion route. China’s inroads into Burma, when juxtaposed with India’s ties with Bangladesh, are, from New Delhi’s perspective, serious encroachment into India’s sphere of influence. As an analyst at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) puts it: “In dealing with China

we have to consider what it is doing in the east rather than see if only as a northern threat.” China’s forays into Burma have been variously described by India’s China watchers as “a further demonstration of China’s long encircling areas”, formation of yet another “Chinese satellite”, as “removal of a useful strategic buffer on India’s eastern border”, “Tibetization of Burma”, and as a demonstration of Beijing’s “westward thrust into the Indian ocean, well beyond China’s traditional sphere of influence”, which constitutes a direct challenge to New Delhi’s Strategic interests. The security implications of China’s influence in Burma, coupled with instability and insurgency movements in north-eastern India, and an increase in drug trafficking on a largely unguarded 1600 km Indo-Burmese border, are too serious to ignore. India’s security environment would worsen, once Chinese arms supplied to the Burmese forces slowly find their way to Naga and other north-eastern insurgent groups, fighting India on the Burmese border in the north-east, just as the Chinese and Pakistani weaponry supplied to the Afghan mujahiddins in the 1980s, found its way into the hands of Sikh and Kashmiri separatists in India’s north-

Similarly, an observer of Burmese affairs noted: “Just as China’s support for Pakistan puts pressure on India to the west; so closer Chinese ties with Burma adds to India’s strategic concerns in the east.”

Therefore, Chinese encirclement strategy of India has come full circle with the new Sino-Burmese strategic partnership coupled with the traditional Sino-Pakistan axis.

Viewed from this perspective, the current phase of détente in the Sino-Indian relations since the late 1980s should therefore be seen as a short-term tactical move, in spite of Sino-Indian rhetoric about their post cold war rapprochement. According to one China observer, “while China may mouth friendly statements about India, the listener’s test of her real intentions need to be gauged from the nature of her relationship with Pakistan.”

Thus, soon after signing of the so called ‘landmark agreement’, to maintain ‘peace and tranquility’ between India and China in 1993, the Chinese reassured the worried Pakistanis that moves ‘to improve ties with India will not be made at your cost’.

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China's Pakistan connections, coupled with the growing insurgency in Kashmir, worry Indian policy makers. Despite Chinese assurances that it will play the Pakistani card, the Indian strategists believe that China will continue to pro top Pakistan so as to pin down India's military assets on the India-Pakistani border.  

It is in this strategic context that Denny Roy observes: "China's current 'open door' orientation should not be misinterpreted. Beijing tolerate interdependence with its political enemies because this is at present the best way of hastening economic development, which will increase China's security in the long term. But the cooperative posture which China favours at this stage of its development in no way rules out a resort to force in the future".  

Thus, India cannot pin too much hope on the current phase of Sino-Indian detente, because China is known to befriend enemies in times of diversity.

Our digression from the thematic focus in this section of this chapter is to examine the Tibetan strategic importance for the security

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of India's north-east frontier in post-cold war era. Our strategic survey of Indo-China relations amply demonstrates that India cannot pin too much hope on the current phase of Sino-Indian detente because the underlying power rivalry between the two Asian giants, and their self images as great powers or centers of civilization and culture, have not fundamentally changed.

Hence, Tibet will remain a bone of contention between India and China, as it has been since the late nineteenth century till its occupation in 1950, and through out the cold war. Internationally, the cause of Tibet's independence has received a boost by the informal diplomacy conducted by the Tibetan diaspora around the world as well as by the recognition of Dalai Lama as a legitimate representative of the Tibetan people. For the Dalai Lama, the informal diplomacy opened a channel of communication to negotiate directly with Beijing. It was blocked in 1987, as the Sino-Tibetan talks broke down. However, America's growing trade deficit with China caught Tibet as a very handy weapon to whip China to get concessions on trade and human rights issues. It was clearly reflected in the British State Department Authorization Act, passed on 28 October 1991, which included the following paragraph:

That it is the sense of Congress that Tibet including those areas incorporated into the Chinese provinces of Sichan, yuman, Gausu, and Qinghai, is an occupied country under established principles of international law whose true representative are the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan

In Britain, Members of Parliament signed a motion seconding the U.S. Congressional Act, and called Tibet an "Occupied Country".\footnote{“China bore over a 'Major' Tibetan Victory”, Tibetan Review, vol. 27, no. 1, January, 1992, p. 8.} Other world bodies have also passed resolutions supporting the cause of Tibet’s independence.

These developments have led to the internationalization of the Tibetan issue at a time when Chinese foreign policy is driven by its economic interests and is focussed on the United States and East Asia. It is clearly in its interest to keep its western and southern frontiers quiet. On the other hand, the events inside Tibet since 1987 (see chapter four for the political, social, economic and human cost of Chinese 'liberation' of Tibet. This chapter also deals with the role of Buddhism in Tibetan people persistent opposition to the 'PRC's rule) has clearly demonstrated the crisis of legitimacy of Hon state to rule there. Fundamentally, therefore, Sino-Tibetan conflict involves "state either as a party to conflict or as an object of people’s demands and perceptions".\footnote{Ted Robert Gurr, "Introduction", in Ted Robert Gurr, ed., Handbook of Political Conflict, New York 1980, p. 2, Cited in Dawa Norbu, "Han Hegemony and Tibetan Ethnicity, International Studies, vol. 32, no. 3, 1995, p. 298} China's fear of internal instability in face of resentful
Tibetan population would make its position weak in geo-strategically important boarder region is an added incentive to search for a tranquil environment with India. Besides, China is apprehensive about India's backing for the Dalai Lama and Tibetan resistance. The post-Nehruvian power elite in India, especially, some of India's China-watchers, argue that India’s repeated protestations that Tibet is an autonomous region of China, are unnecessary. The government run Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) asks: "Even if our statement on Tibet is the existing position, why should we keep repeating it when the Chinese have actually made no effort to fulfil their promise of autonomy to Tibet?". Policy makers in New Delhi are also aware that any boundary agreement under present conditions may not be in their interests because there is a general consensus that the long-term security of India's northern frontiers lies in the restoration of Tibet's independence. From New Delhi's perspective, the expulsion of hostile influences from Tibet, and the establishment of a friendly or neutral government in Lhasa, would go a long way in ushering in a peaceful and stable environment in South Asia. On a purely propagandist plane, the power elite in India is willing to use the Tibetan card to neutralize traditional Chinese support to Pakistan on the Kashmir issue.

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66 Nirmal Mitra, op.cit., no. 54, p. 59
To enhance this, Buddhism is laying the foundations of a new diplomatic relationship as "the linchpin of India's new policy" in Central or Inner Asia. Mongolia, which has historical relations with Tibet, is the first country to establish relationship with India on the basis of Buddhism. It is also beneficial for India as a diplomatic and cultural counterpart to Islam in Inner and Central Asia. According to one observer: "A new awareness of Buddhism in fostering ties with Buddhist societies in Central Asia particularly those of Mongolia, Bhutan and Tibet, Burma and the Buddhist rim of Northern India. There is a chance of spreading the initiative in Southeast Asia." 67 These developments worries China, especially in Tibet where it finds itself in ethnically very weak position.

Therefore, in the long term, neither the Indian nor the Chinese defense planners can rule out the possibility of a renewed confrontation around Tibet. The game of encirclement and counter-encirclement or mutual containment between them might provoke more rivalry and competition than confrontation. As, Surjit Mansingh, advises that in view of the "unpredictable dynamics of change in Central Asia... (and in view of) the still growing prestige of the Dalai Lama, it would be well for the Indian Government to formulate a long range policy on Tibet, taking into account the contingent factors". 68


68 Surjit Mansingh, op.cit., no.55, p.59
Conclusions

In our foregoing analysis we have seen that the British involvement until the late 1940s as a significant actor in the international relations of South and Inner Asian International system maintained the relative strategic stability and peace in Politically Relevant International Environment (PRIE). However, the British withdrawal from South Asia as an important balance of power disturbed the network and structure of relations between interacting actors with diverse capacities and interests. Regionally, India and Pakistan succeeded British India, whereas, the Chinese Revolution brought about a radically different regime ever existed in Chinese history. Globally, the end of second world war gave birth to a bipolar structure of world politics marked by cold war where US and USSR competed as centers of decision making, military organisations, economic coordination and diplomatic cooperation involving a large segment of the international system. Tibet and Afghanistan as geo-strategic territories, important from the point of view of superpower rivalry in Inner and Central Asia as well as for the ‘regional linkage states’, acquired an important strategic dimension in the ‘Age of Empire’.