

**Geo-strategic Importance of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang:  
Security Implications for India, 1979-2014**

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DECLARATION

I declare that the thesis entitled "Geo-strategic Importance of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang: Security Implications for India, 1979-2014" submitted by me for the award of the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The thesis has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

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We recommend that this thesis be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

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*Dedicated to*

*My Parents*

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AJK	Azad Jammu and Kashmir'
AKRSP	Aga Khan Rural Support Program
ASWJ	Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BLP	Boloristan Labour Party
BNF	Balawaristan National Front
CARs	Central Asian Republics
CCP	Chinese Communist Party
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
ETIC	East Turkestan Information Center
ETIM	East Turkestan Islamic Movement
ETIP	Eastern Turkistan Islamic Party
ETLO	East Turkestan Liberation Organization
ETR	East Turkestan Republic
ETR	Eastern Turkistan Republic
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Agencies
FCR	Frontier Crimes Regulations
GBDA	Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance
GBLA	Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly

GBUM	Gilgit Baltistan United Movement
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOI	Government of India
HUJI	Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami
HuM	Hizb-ul-Mujahideen
IAF	Indian Air Force
IJT	Islami Jamiat Talaba
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)
IPT	Islamic Party of Turkestan
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
J&K	Jammu and Kashmir
JeM	Jaish-e-Mohammad
KANA	Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas
KKH	Karakoram Highway
KLC	Kashmir Liberation Cell
KNM	Karakorum National Movement
LeJ	Lashkar-e-Jhangvi
LeT	Lashkar-e-Toiba
LeZ	Lashkar-e-Zil

LFO	Legal Framework Order
LOC	Line of Control
LAC	LAC
MAC	Multi-Agency Centre
NAAC	Northern Areas Advisory Council
NAC	Northern Areas Council
NALC	Northern Areas Legislative Council
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NC	National Conference
NFC	National Finance Commission
NWFP	North-West Frontier Province
OBOR	One Belt, One Road forum
PAP	People's Armed Police
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PMDC	Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation
PPP	Pakistan People's Party
RoB	Rules of Business
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SSG	Special Service Group
TELS	Transport erector launchers

TIP	Turkestan Islamic Party
TTP	Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan
UAA	Uighur American Association
ULO	Uyghur Liberation Organization
UN	United Nations
UNCIP	United Nations Commission on India and Pakistan
UNESCO	United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR),
UNMGIP	United Nations monitoring group for India and Pakistan (UNMGIP)
US	United States
WUYC	World Uyghur Youth Congress
XJMD	Xinjiang Military District
XPCC	Xinjiang Production and construction Corps
XUAR	Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR)

# **Chapter One**

## **Introduction**

Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang are two immensely important provinces of Pakistan and China, because of their strategic location, ancient history of trade silk routes and the presence of crucial natural resources in both of these regions. Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang rest at a unique junction of Asian continent, as it bridges regions of South-Asia, West-Asia, Central Asia and China. The economic linkages formed in these regions during the era of silk-route trade give an account of the historical importance of these provinces (Chansoria 2012).

Despite of their sheer strategic importance for both Pakistan and China, these regions experience serious political instability leading to extremist movements and sectarian violence. Here, in this study the focus would be laid on explaining the strategic importance of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang for both Pakistan and China. It would further strive to explain, how the political instability in these regions is making them vulnerable to extremist and sectarian ideologies. Furthermore, the geographical proximity of these two regions with the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir makes them imperative to be considered under the security dynamics of India. As, Gilgit-Baltistan traces its boundary along the North and North-West of Leh district of Jammu and Kashmir while on the other hand the North-Eastern boundary of Leh district connects India with Xinjiang through the Aksai-Chin area which India lost to China in the 1962 Sino-India war.

The present day area of Gilgit-Baltistan was assimilated into the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir during Gulab Singh's Reign in 19<sup>th</sup> century. At the time of partition of the Indian sub-continent, the king of Jammu and Kashmir decided to remain independent initially. In the immediate months after partition Pakistan made an illicit move and sent hordes of armed tribesmen to raid and occupy Kashmir. While India was negotiating with the king of Jammu and Kashmir over the terms of accession, the army of tribesmen occupied western and northern parts of the state. After occupation, Pakistan named western part of the state as 'Azad Jammu and Kashmir' and Northern parts as the 'Northern Areas'. In 1970, the 'Northern Areas' (present day Gilgit-Baltistan) was separated from Azad Jammu and Kashmir. United Nations addressed 'Northern Areas' as Gilgit-Baltistan for the first time (Farooz 2010: 181-190).

This region nestles between the western Himalayan and trans-Himalayan range. Surrounded by China's Xinjiang province to the east and north-east, Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor to the north, Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa to the west, Azad Jammu and Kashmir to the south-west and Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir to the south. "This geographical position at the meeting place of the three Great Mountain Ranges, the Karakoram, the Himalayas and Hindu Kush represents a strong strategic importance for both Central Asia and South Asia's balance of power" (Brustin 2013: 2).

Its geographical proximity with the conflict and extremism prone areas like Afghanistan and Pakistan makes it more susceptible to religious fanaticism. In 1892, E. F. Knight, wrote about Gilgit-Baltistan as the roof of the world where three empires- Great Britain, Russia and China meet and had regrettably said- "had we not sold this magnificent country, a great military cantonment would no doubt have long since been established here. This would not only have been most advantageous from a strategic point of view, but would have avoided much of the sickness and mortality which thin the ranks of our white army in India" (Hasnain 1974: 61).

Even prior to Knight's assessment of this region, Raja Gulab Singh of Jammu was highly interested in extending his influence into Gilgit-Baltistan, mainly with the aim to control trade routes (Stellrecht 1998: 23). Troops under two of his generals penetrated the mountains. General Zorawar Singh led campaigns towards Ladakh and Baltistan, while General Nathu Shah occupied Gilgit for the first time in 1842 (Sokefeld 1997: 257). These historical facts and observations by the travelers clearly depict the strategic importance of Gilgit-Baltistan historically which.

The geo-political significance of Gilgit-Baltistan for India can also be estimated from this fact that this is the only area which provides direct land access to Afghanistan and the rest of energy rich Central Asia through Wakhan corridor. Furthermore, this region shares borders with Afghanistan, China and Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa region, Gilgit-Baltistan sits on the routes to China and Central Asia.

The region is rich in water resources. Indus River, along with its three tributaries Gilgit, Shyok and Astore flows from this region. Hunza is another major river which emanates

from this region (Khan 2014: 3). Whoever controls this region will have access to extensive water resources.

Moreover, the Karakoram Highway which passes through Gilgit-Baltistan is a crucial strategic link between Pakistan and China and it has been used for supply of military equipments from China to Pakistan. Additionally, this region is also rich in numerous natural resources, including copper, gold, uranium and gems, and these could be exploited by Pakistan with the infra-structural help by China, giving Pakistan extra reasons to maintain its control over this region (Kamil 2011; Sering 2011: 15-16; Verma 2011: 138).

China established Xinjiang as its province in 1881, although the Chinese claims over this region dates even prior to the Common Era. It has gained control over this region twice in the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century for short period of time till CCP annexed it in 1949. This region is located in the north-west of China with an area over 1.6 million square kilometers. It shares borders with eight countries and constitutes for one-sixth of the territory of China. It has been a hub and channel for cultural and economic exchange between China and the West, as the silk route used to pass through it. “Xinjiang is home to around 20 million people coming from thirteen different ethnic groups with the largest being the Uyghur” (Bhattacharji 2012). This group comprises of majority *Sunni* Muslims of Turkic origin, hence have ethnic ties in Central Asia.

Indeed, the huge size and location of this province makes it strategically important, considering the fact that it shares a 5,600 km long border with Mongolia to the north-east, Russia to the north, Kazakhstan in the north-west, Afghanistan and Tajikistan to the west, Pakistan Gilgit-Baltistan and Leh district of the Indian Jammu and Kashmir to the south-west. “The oil fields at Karamay in Xinjiang are among the largest in China and the region has extensive deposits of coal, silver, copper, lead, nitrates, gold, and zinc (Debata 2007: 118; Tang 2009: 6; Warikoo 2016: 22).

Moreover, Xinjiang borders ethnically Muslim neighbourhood: Afghanistan, Pakistan and the Central Asian Republics. Having religious Islamic affiliation with the bordering nations, Xinjiang has an important role in influencing the foreign policy of mainland China considering the overlapping of resources and religious culture in this region. The



unrest in the Xinjiang due to the Uyghur problem is an important factor which determines China's Central Asia policy. The Uyghur's struggle for independence and greater autonomy has been going on since the time of its inclusion into the Chinese state. Uyghurs of Xinjiang have strong ethnic ties with the Uyghurs living Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. The fall of Soviet Union and the coming up of Central Asian Republics had a serious impact on Uyghurs, as it made them aspire that if a mighty empire like USSR can fall then they can also gain independence from China (Fuller and Starr 2003: 9).

Even today, the Uyghurs oppressed under the Chinese rule look up to their Muslim brethren in Central Asia to get support for their cause. China is quite apprehensive over the popular support to "East Turkistan" in Xinjiang as well as among the Uyghurs and other extremists living in the Central Asian Republics. The prospect that Uyghurs are present on each side of the border of Xinjiang and they might unite and make a synergetic effort to establish 'East-Turkestan' has been considered as a serious threat by China. China has been struggling and aiming to neutralize Uyghurs and their cross-border linkages, to achieve the same through enhanced regional cooperation 'Shanghai Five' was formed, which was later transformed to Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) (Winther 2014: 93).

Apart from having individually specific geostrategic importance for both Pakistan and China, these two regions cumulatively are also of immense strategic significance for the sub-Asian region.<sup>1</sup> Staging the first reason, as both these regions share a long border, this helps in furthering 'all weather' friendship. Furthermore, after the construction of Karakoram highway with the collaborated efforts of Pakistan and China, Gilgit-Baltistan provides China an unhindered land access to the Arabian Sea, leading further to the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of West Asia. This route would provide an alternative 2600 kilometers long road link to the existing sea route which is over 15000 kilometers, from Tianjin via Malacca straits to the Persian Gulf (Salman 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> The term sub-Asian Region here denotes all the area which surrounds the provinces of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang. This conjuncture of Central and South Asia is strategically very important, hence any political changes/threats in this area would make an impact over the surrounding regions relatively.

There is skepticism among observers regarding the actual motives behind this project and the extent of benefits which would reach Pakistan. The construction of the western arm of the CPEC, which is going to pass through the restive provinces of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan is still uncertain because of the security conditions of these provinces. Any terrorist attack over the CPEC projects is going to be a blow to this multi-billion dollar initiative along with Sino-Pak relations. Pakistan has already deployed a Special Security Division (SSD) comprising over 9000 regular soldiers of the Pakistan Army with 6000 personnel of the para-military force, for the security of Chinese nationals along the corridor. There are also added concerns about the Uyghur militants disrupting this project in Xinjiang, the starting point of CPEC (Ministry of Defence Pakistan 2016).

With the CPEC initiative China is also planning to develop Kashgar as a terminus of trade and reduce the isolation of Xinjiang by deepening its engagement with the mainland China, and additionally raising its potential for investment and tourism. Central Asian Republics are also keen to connect their existing infrastructure networks with CPEC, as this is going to allow these landlocked countries a land access to the Indian Ocean, while being a part of the umbrella OBOR initiative (Weitz 2013).

On the other hand, Xinjiang's border proximity with Gilgit-Baltistan provides China an easy access in the region, especially after 1963 when Pakistan gifted 'Shaksgam valley' a part of this region as a gift to China under 'Sino-Pak border agreement, in order to enhance China's presence in the region and consequently outflanking India's claim over the disputed region. At present the increased Chinese investments in Gilgit-Baltistan in the fields of infrastructure and natural resource extraction display China's long term plans in the region, thus having a direct impact over the security imperatives of India (Chansoria 2012).

Considering the immense geo-strategic significance of these two regions, it can be conceived that the political control of these two regions would undoubtedly provide an immense strategic foothold in this sub-region of South-Central Asia. Hence, Pakistan and China carried forward a set of policies to gain indispensable authority over both these regions in order to utilize the geographic location advantage and their natural resources to further their respective political and economic interests.

Therefore, to understand the root cause of the social and political unrest in Gilgit and Baltistan and Xinjiang, it is evidently imperative to discern the historical evolution of these regions and how they came under the sovereignty of Pakistan and China. Primarily, this chapter is divided into two sub parts, which would be dealing with the historical evolution of both these regions individually.

### **Historical background of Gilgit-Baltistan**

Gilgit-Baltistan shares borders with Pakistan, Afghanistan and the Xinjiang province of China. Only a few miles separate it from the Central Asian Republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan (Chopra 2006: 189). The Geo-strategic location of Gilgit-Baltistan has assumed its own strategic importance in the Himalayan region, in the Pamir-Karakoram-Hindukush tri-junction, where the huge land mass of the five nations meet. This massive land area is of great historical importance and is known by yet another name, the Northern Areas, a place where many pathways of culture and civilizations have inter-mingled, a delta of multiple faiths and cultures: Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Islam. Hence, a diverse number of languages such as Burushaski, Gojali, Balti, Ladakhi, Khowar, Shina etc. are spoken in the region. Also the presence of cross-border linkages between multiple ethnic and religious groups makes this frontier province into a complex whirlpool of geopolitics (Warikoo 2014: VIII)

The northern areas, in particular of Jammu and Kashmir, have been in focus as an important milepost on the famous Silk route in the pre-colonial period. What was mainly a route for a vibrant exchange of trade and cultures, and conquests by Mughals and predatory raids by Ghazanavis, beginning with Alexander's campaign, underwent fundamental changes. "The silk route became a road of colonial confrontation between Tsarist Russia expanding to the South and the British colonial power rushing to the Indus line in search of the geographic border for the empire" (Warikoo 2009: 37).

The ancient history of this region is quite unknown: however the contemporary historians have referred to the indigenous people of Gilgit region as 'Dardic People' (Streefland 1995: 10). Gilgit-Baltistan has also been known as 'Dardistan', and the people residing in this region were known as 'Dards'. Dardic language belongs to the Indo-Aryan group of

languages.<sup>2</sup> G. W. Leitner an Anglo-Hungarian orientalist was the one who coined the term 'Dardistan'. He visited the then 'Northern Areas' in 1860s. According to Leitner, "Dardistan served as the cradle of the 'Aryan' race and an area that contained answers to numerous ethnographical and linguistic questions of that time" (Leitner 1893: 168). Dards remained *terra incognita* in their early history. During 6<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> centuries, Gilgit was the home of Palola/Patola who practiced Buddhism and had interactions with the rulers of Kashmir and the emperors of China (Bansal 2013: 3-4). On the other hand, "Baltistan, the land of Balti people was well known as "little Tibet" or "Tibet-i-Khurd" in the medieval literature" (Stobdan 2008: 21-22). Tibetans were also active from the 8<sup>th</sup> century. Except for a few Tibetan inscriptions there is no evidence that states that Baltistan was under Tibet's control till the end of 9<sup>th</sup> century. Later history suggests that many immigrants Kashmir and adjoining areas penetrated this un-trodden region and perhaps ruled the state.

With the passage of time, Kashmir's control was passed from the Afghans to the Sikhs. During the reign of Afghans, "the authority over the peripheral regions of the state had eroded and, thus, the Sikh rule was initially confined to Srinagar and the surrounding Kashmir Valley, whereas the Jammu region was given to his Dogra Minister, Raja Gulab Singh, as a *jagir* by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1820" (Singh 1995: 39-40). Subsequently, Zorawar Singh who was a general under Maharaja Ranjit Singh, along with his superior Gulab Singh subjugated the Raja of Skardu during their Ladakh conquest and made him pay homage to the Sikh king. "Ranjit Singh's Governor at Srinagar, Sher Singh also controlled Kohistan and Astor in Dardistan, where there was a vast mine of gem stones" (Khan 1987: 78-79). Gulab Singh after consolidating his rule in the Jammu region, further conquered Ladakh in 1836 with the help of Zorawar Singh, with the permission of Ranjit Singh (Singh 1995: 39-40). "After capturing Ladakh, Zorawar Singh captured Baltistan in 1840 and appointed Muhammad Shah as the ruler of Baltistan (as a vassal of Gulab Singh)" (Khan 1987: 78-79). Meanwhile, in 1842 Colonel Natche Shah captured Gilgit and the adjoining areas of Dardistan. He was the Commander of Sheikh Ghulam

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<sup>2</sup>The term "Dardistan" was coined by G. W. Leitner, an Anglo- Hungarian orientalist who visited the Northern Areas in the 1860s and recorded his findings in his book: *Dardistan in 1866, 1886and 1893*. According to Leitner, Dardistan served as the cradle of the 'Aryan' raceand an area that contained answers to numerous ethnographical and linguistic questions of that time (Leitner 1893: 168).

Mohi-ud-din, who was appointed as the Governor of Kashmir by Maharaja Ranjit Singh (Hassnain 1978: 27).

“Raja Ali Sher Khan, ruler of a tiny principality in Baltistan, in his autobiography has clearly mentioned his assistance to Colonel Nathe Shah in his campaign against various rulers in Gilgit, his assistance to General Zorawar Singh in his campaign against Skardu and eventually his assistance to Maharaja Gulab Singh in his final offensive to capture Srinagar from Sheikh Imamuddin, the Governor appointed by Lahore.” Assessing these claims gives a clear indication about the existing close linkages among Jammu, Kashmir, Gilgit and Baltistan, in that period (Khan 1987: 87-95).

#### *Consolidation under Dogra Rule*

The forces of East India Company defeated the Sikh Khalsa Army at Subraon on 10<sup>th</sup> February 1846. After the defeat of Sikh Army, the Treaty of Lahore was signed on 9<sup>th</sup> March 1846. According to this treaty Britishers forced Sikhs to pay Rs one crore as war indemnity and cede the territory between Sutlej and Beas to the British. The then Prime Minister of the Sikhs Lal Singh, seeing the huge war indemnity offered the mountainous parts of the Kingdom, including Jammu and Kashmir, as a bargain. The British then made an offer to the Dogra ruler of Jammu, to reign as independent ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, if he agrees to pay the indemnity amount. British then decided to keep the territory between the Beas and the Ravi (including Kangra) and reduced to deal amount to Rs seventy five Lakhs (Madhok 1972: 5-7). Accordingly, the state of Jammu and Kashmir was created with the formalization of the ‘treaty of Amritsar’ in 1846. “This treaty made Gulab Singh the absolute ruler of Kashmir; he was named the ‘Maharaja of Kashmir’, and became a full-fledged sovereign of the regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh, as well as Gilgit, Chilas and Baltistan, the region, which till recently was called ‘Northern Areas’ of Pakistan” (Raina 1988: 3).

Even after handing over the control of Jammu and Kashmir to Gulab Singh and accepting his suzerainty over this Kingdom, the developments in other parts of India and especially in the Central Asia pulled to British to intervene in this region. By the 1860s British were alarmed at the growing influence of Russians at the northern frontier of Jammu and Kashmir and hence they persuaded the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir to bring Yasin

and Chitral under his control to limit the Russian advances. Contemplating the Russian threat, the British installed the Gilgit Agency in 1877 with Major John Biddulph as the first Political Agent. In 1881 the Agent was withdrawn but was reinstated in 1889 due to the growing Afghan influence in Chitral, along with the constant increase in the Russian military activities in Central Asia (Sokefelf 2014: 21; Singh 1995: 22). Meanwhile, the Dogra suzerainty was accepted by the Ruler of Chitral in 1878 and started paying tribute to the Dogras every third year (Rehman 1996: 16).

With the onslaught of the Russian revolution, the British fear grew regarding their advancements and a possible clash between the two Empires. Consequently, Britishers forced the Maharaja to lease the Gilgit *wazarat* to the British for a period of sixty years. The Gilgit lease was signed between the Maharaja and the British on 26<sup>th</sup> March 1935, this agreement provided the viceroy of India to directly assume control over the military and civil administration of this Gilgit *wazarat*. Maharaja neither could raise an objection to this forced move of the British nor was he in a state to resist (Singh 1995: 31-36). Hence, regardless of being a part of the Maharaja's kingdom, Gilgit and the surrounding areas of Baltistan, including the state's vassals, came under the virtual administration of the British from 1935 to 1947. A nominal authority of the Maharaja was maintained by the modicums of hoisting his flag at the Agency's headquarters and by the way certain state officials were appointed in Gilgit. The only considerable authority which Maharaja was left with was the power to grant mining license and leases (Chohan 1997: 220).

With the official announcement of the end of British rule in India in 1947, the lease of Gilgit also lapsed and British were impelled to pass the Gilgit Agency back to the Maharaja. Ergo the British decided to hand over the administrative control of all areas of Gilgit Agency, including Hunza, to the state government of Jammu and Kashmir with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> August 1947 (Jha 1996: 7). In order to reinstate Maharaja's authority Brigadier Ghansara Singh was appointed by the Maharaja as the Governor of these areas which were under the Gilgit agency on 19<sup>th</sup> July 1947. "He arrived in Gilgit on 30 July 1947, along with General Scott, the Chief of Staff of the Kashmir State Forces. During their meeting with Major Brown, the Commandant of the Gilgit Scouts, Subedar Major Babar Khan and the other Junior Commissioned Officers (JCOs), both the Governor and

Chief of Staff were assured by the Scouts that they would serve the state if their demands regarding the service conditions were accepted” (Hassnain 1978: 150-152).

At the time of transfer of power over Gilgit from the British to the Maharaja, Lieutenant Colonel Beacon, was the Political Agent. The moment Ghansara Singh took over the administration of the Gilgit agency, the entire functioning of the office came to halt. This happened because most of the British officers stationed in Gilgit had already opted for Pakistan and there were no replacements from the Maharaja’s office to fill the vacated work positions. To aggravate the existing situation the civil administration also refused to work till they were promised higher salaries. The situation deteriorated even further when Ghansara Singh got to know that all the stores had been spent or distributed and there are no consumables left in the stores. To bring some help to the ill-fated Governor, General Scott left for Srinagar on the 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1947 to get some assistance (Hassnain 1978: 152-153).

For the next more than two months, Governor Ghansara Singh was ineffectual: he kept on sending letters and telegrams to the Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary at Srinagar, to inform them about the miserable state of affairs in Gilgit and adjoining areas. All went in vain, no substantial help came from Srinagar to improve the conditions in Gilgit. Even General Scott’s efforts to bring Srinagar’s attention towards the chaos in Gilgit fetched no fruit. It seemed like the administration at Srinagar was too busy dealing the problems of valley and the unrest in Poonch to spare a thought over this far land. Not just administratively but also militarily no efforts were made to consolidate Maharaja’s authority over this region. “One company of 5th Kashmir Light Infantry (KLI) part of the state forces, commanded by Captain Durga Singh and located at Bunji, 34 miles short of Gilgit, was replaced by 6th KLI comprising two companies each of Sikh and Muslim troops and led by Lieutenant Colonel Abdul Majeed Khan. At Gilgit, 500 troops of Gilgit Scouts were being commanded by Major William Alexander Brown, who, along with Captain Matheson, had agreed to serve the state.” Major Brown was a British officer who was appointed as the commandant of the Gilgit Scouts. He volunteered to superintend the transition between the British and the Maharaja. “Two other Muslim officers of the Kashmir State Army had been deputed to serve under him. Some Muslim officers of the

6th KLI had established contact with the Muslim officers and JCOs of Gilgit Scouts with the aim of establishing Pakistan's rule in Gilgit" (Hassnain 1978: 152-153).

After Pakistan conducted the invasion of Jammu and Kashmir with the help of armed tribesmen, the Maharaja fled to Jammu and signed instrument of accession with India, which resulted in a clear chaos in Gilgit. Seeing this as an opportune moment Major Brown along with Gilgit scouts surrounded the Governor's house and took him under protective custody (Warikoo 2009: 136). In order to save the lives of the non-Muslim residents of the town Governor surrendered. Governor's surrender, "led to the disintegration of 6th KLI at Bunji, with the troops killing each other. All the Sikh troops were either killed or fled to the mountains to save their lives" (Hassnain 1978: 155-157). A provisional government was formed in the newly independent 'People's Republic of Gilgit and Baltistan' after the arrest of the governor on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1947 (Singh 1995: 41). The so called independent state lasted for 16 days and there is little doubt that Major Brown was playing to Pakistan's tunes. "It was headed by one local Rais Khan and included Major Brown, Captain Ihsan Ali, Captain Hassan (both of the State Forces), Captain Sayeed, Lieutenant Haider, Subedar Major Babar Khan (all three from Gilgit Scouts) and Wazir Wilayat Ali. On 4th November 1947, the Pakistani flag was hoisted at the Gilgit Scouts lines by Major Brown" (Hassnain 1978: 157-158). The new Governor of the North-West Frontier Province (NWFP), Sir George Cunningham instructed Major Brown to restore order (Sarila 2005: 333-334). "Subsequently, the rulers of the enclaves of Hunza and Nagar, within the Gilgit Agency, which were vassals of the Maharaja of Kashmir, also declared their accession to Pakistan" (Cloughley 1999: 20).

The role of Major Brown and Gilgit Scouts is often exaggerated when it comes to the developments that took place in Gilgit by many scholars. For Pakistan this version of the story suited best as it supports their case that the people of Jammu and Kashmir wanted to accede to Pakistan. Hence it was essential for Pakistan to portray that Gilgit Scouts were leading the rebellion to give it an indigenous colour. Their narrative advocates that moved by the local inhabitants, and his troops who were in favor of joining Pakistan, compelled Major Brown to lead that rebellion. India's point of view, involves direct British role in this by favoring Pakistan to get hold of a strategically important region and



supports various conspiracy theories. However, a careful analysis will explain that how the neglect of the Maharaja also alienated the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, despite all the requisitions of help and support nothing was provided for this region. There was discontent among the people regarding the Maharaja. According to some records, Major Brown joined rebels as the last resort. He used to present the daily reports to the Governor and took steps to prevent the rebellion and disperse the rebel elements (Bansal 2005: 9-12).

It should also be considered that Gilgit Scouts was not a homogenous force. Its platoons comprised of men from different principalities of the region, who owed allegiance to their respective rulers but professed their loyalty to the Maharaja. “In fact, “the Raja of Puniyal even came to defend Brigadier Ghansara Singh with his bodyguards,” when Ghansara Singh was subsequently attacked” (Dani 1991: 327). “Besides, there were serious differences along sectarian and ethnic lines amongst the troops of the Gilgit Scouts. Moreover, they were lightly armed and incapable of taking on the State Forces, who were better armed. Their apolitical nature is clearly evident from their 12-point charter of demands submitted to Brigadier Ghansara Singh. They related only to pay and service conditions and did not talk about Pakistan or any other religious factor” (Dani 1991: 335-336; Hassnain 1978:152-153). It becomes evident that they initially didn’t intend to revolt from the fact that they were demanding long term benefits of gratuities and pensions. Also, the local population as well as the Gilgit Scouts at that time were “free from the violent communal passions that were sweeping through Punjab” (Prasad and Pal 2005: 280-281). This could be ascertained as the probable reason behind governor’s decision to choose Gilgit Scouts over the 6<sup>th</sup> KLI comprised of Muslim troops to defend Gilgit.

The invasion of Baltistan started after the annexation of Gilgit. “It was led by Captain Ihsan Ali and also included Gilgit Scouts, 6<sup>th</sup> KLI troops, and around 1,200 combatants from Chitral sent by the Mehtar of Chitral” (Hassnain 1978: 158). Colonel Sher Jung Thapa led state forces to defend Skardu, and despite being entirely disconnected from the rest of the state or Indian forces continuously defended it for over six months.

However, Pakistani forces supported the rebels in capturing Zojila Pass in May 1948, which helped them to infiltrate across Drass, Kargil, and further points to threaten Leh. “The Indian Army had to subsequently use tanks to clear them from Zojila and defend Leh” (Singh 1995: 62). Despite Colonel Thapa’s heroic resistance at the fort of Skardu for so long, Indian forces couldn’t provide any assistance to relieve Skardu from Pakistan. Indian Army’s attempts to relieve Skardu were foiled by the infiltrators. Troops of two Gorkha platoons who were sent to provide reinforcements to Colonel Thapa were ambushed. “The Air Force for some inexplicable reasons was reluctant to undertake supply missions to Skardu by Dakotas, although they undertook far more risky operations during the war” (Lal 1986: 64-65). “The Air Force did airdrop some supplies but they fell far short of the minimum needs of the besieged garrison and the non-Muslim population that had taken refuge in the cantonment” (Madhok 1972: 73). Finally, the last standing Skardu garrison, led by Thapa, also fell on 14th August 1948, and therefore control over Baltistan and adjoining areas passed on to Pakistan (Mahajan 1973: 124-125).

### **Historical background of Xinjiang**

Xinjiang is north-western border region of China, it holds one-sixth of the country’s total land mass and has a population of about 21.58 million people (Bureau of Statistics of Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region 2011) from 13 major ethnic groups (Uyghurs, Hans, Huis, Kazaks, Manchus, Mongolians, Tajiks, Kirgis, Ozbeks, Xibes, Daurs, Russians and Tatars) (Han 2013: 48; Bhattacharji 2009). The name xinjiang was first used in the eighteenth century by the Chinese, when they took control of this north-western region in 1786. At the time, it was not the Han Chinese but the Manchus of the Qing dynasty who ruled China. The Sinicized Manchus were expansionist, conquering large amounts of land including the Manchu homeland, Mongolia, Xinjiang or Eastern Turkestan, and Tibet (Dillon 2004: 17).

Broadly speaking, Xinjiang is predominantly divided between Muslims of Turkic origin, who speak Turkic languages, and Han Chinese. The Muslims are in majority in Xinjiang but they are also divided and fractured on ethnic and linguistic line. Therefore there is no such presence of any united bloc of Muslims in Xinjiang against the Hans. Out of all the 13 ethnic groups present in Xinjiang, Uyghurs form a majority and they are considered to

be the natives of this region, which is why the autonomous region is also named after them (Dillon 2004: 23). There are no ethnic, cultural or linguistic linkages between the Uyghurs and the Han Chinese (Dillon 2004: 23-28), who constitute about 92 percent of China's population<sup>3</sup>. The Uyghurs and other ethnic minority groups living in Xinjiang including the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Uzbeks, and Tajiks are of an ethnic heritage that is closer to the peoples of neighbouring Central Asia states; Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan (Dillon 2004: 24).

In comparison, another Muslim group in China, the Hui, has become ethnically indistinguishable with the Han Chinese after centuries of inter-marriages. As a result, Han practices and norms have been internalized by them, they are included into the mainstream along with the Hans and are not considered as a threat to the state. (Bovingdon 2010: 68; Lipman 2004: 338-339) Linguistically also Huis are more assimilated with Hans, as they speak Mandarin and share customs with the Han to some extent (Davis 2008: 16-17; Gunaratane and Wang 2010: 19).

However, Xinjiang's first ever encounter with the Chinese happened in the second century B.C.E. China's Han dynasty rulers sent armies into Tarim basin oases to counter the power of their northern neighbor, the Xiongnu empire. The Chinese established garrisons and for about three centuries the two empires struggled for dominance. In the seventh century, the ruling Tang dynasty of China had strong influence over what is now eastern Xinjiang. Once again, the situation was highly changeable. For a total of 100 years, broken into two periods, the Chinese had "relatively firm sovereignty over the Tarim basin city-states" (Starr 2004: 39). After the Tang dynasty forces withdrew, the Chinese had no control over what is now Xinjiang for 1,000 years. Then in 1759, the Qing dynasty that ruled China added the region to its empire. The Qing created the entity "Xinjiang," which means "New Frontier." At the time it had a population of approximately 600,000 people (Starr 2004: 57).

The Qing was the first power in China which, in addition to having a military presence in Xinjiang, established in some areas a civil administration resembling local government in

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<sup>3</sup>For the proportion of Han Chinese out of China's population, please see, "Han Chinese Proportion in China's Population Drops: Census Data", Xinhua News Agency, April 28, 2011, (Online: Web) Accessed on 23 Jan 2015, [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-04/28/c\\_13849933.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-04/28/c_13849933.htm)

China proper. Although Qing military personnel and their families numbered about 100,000, they tended to work in cooperation with local leadership and usually avoided intervening in local affairs. Officials urged soldiers to settle permanently in the region with their families by offering long-term land leases. Up until 1781, the government also promoted civilian immigration to eastern and northern Xinjiang by giving those willing to relocate animals, tools, seeds, and short-term tax relief. By 1800, new settlers comprised 25 percent of Xinjiang's civilian population. After 1831, Chinese farmers were permitted to settle in the Tarim basin, too (Starr 2004: 58). The Qing government also used Xinjiang as a very distant place of exile for those who displeased the court.

The government's control over Xinjiang was weakened in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Between 1876 and 1881, after a major rebellion in the area, the Qing re-established its dominance for strategic reasons (Klimes 2015: 38). In 1884, despite strong opposition by many top government officials who saw Xinjiang as of little use, the Qing added the region to its list of provinces. Xinjiang began to be administered by ethnic Han Chinese officials, the same as all other provinces. Han immigration into this frontier increased as did efforts to assimilate Uyghur people into Chinese civilization. But the Qing dynasty, embroiled in other, more pressing matters, had little energy and fewer funds to govern this distant province successfully. The fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911 and the consequent events, like the birth of Soviet Russia and the socialist Central Asian states inspired nationalist separatist sentiments among the Turkic rebels in Xinjiang. In 1933 Uyghurs along with some other Turkic minorities declared independence with the formation of the 'First East Turkestan Republic'. It spanned for only a year, and was occupied China in 1934 with the help of the alliance of Hui warlords Kuomintang government of Nanjing. However in 1944, with the help of Soviet Union Uyghurs again gained independence and declared the formation of 'Second East Turkestan Republic'. With the formation of People's Republic of China in 1949, the CCP annexed the territory of 'Second East Turkestan Republic' and incorporated as Xinjiang province of China. Later it was named as 'autonomous region' in 1955 with other autonomous counties like Kyrgyz, Mongols, Hui and Kazakh (Dillon 2004: 35).

Since 1949, Communist Party has been subjecting campaigns and policy swings between openness and control in Xinjiang. The Xinjiang frontier was opened up by Manchu military expansion during the seventeenth century. This occurred in a situation in which the indigenous people, the Kazakhs and Uyghurs, were living in small groups isolated from one another. Since then the natives of Xinjiang have developed a sense of antagonism against the Han people because of the way the Han warlords mistreated the natives, for example Sheng Shicai, a Han warlord, ruled Xinjiang for eleven years and built his own despotic kingdom. After Sheng Shicai finally left office, Chiang Kai-shek appointed him minister of agriculture and forestry, arguing that despite his cruelty and dictatorship, “Sheng did not declare independence from Nanjing nor did he permit the Russians to annex Xinjiang” (Brown and Pickowicz 2010: 186). The departure of Sheng Shicai saw the replacement of one Han warlord by another, which did not change the conditions for mistrust, resentment, and rebellion among non-Han people. It remained difficult for Han provincial governments in Xinjiang to penetrate rural areas. Heavy taxation and forced labor service provoked several revolts among the Uyghurs and Kazakhs. The term “Han” became a synonym for oppression and corruption. “To compete with the Han,” the oasis dwellers developed a “new Uyghur ethnic identity” (Gladney 1990: 2-3; Brown and Pickowicz, 2007: 185-186). It is probably a fair observation that anti-Han sentiment has been generally prevalent among the Uyghurs due to harsh rule by Han warlords and local officials (Starr 2004: 67-71).

The early 1950s was a period of tolerance, as the Communist party of China established links with the local religious and social elites. In these few years, there was limited interference in religious practice, business and social norms. However, by the mid-1950s, Mao Zedong urged for many socialist changes throughout the country. The Communist Party’s policy of collectivization and the accompanying attempts to mobilize peasants against local elites drove Uyghurs and others together against the Chinese leaders. In 1956, Mao was influenced by the shift in the policies of the communist government in the Soviet Union, with the relaxation of strict controls over the citizens accompanied by the denunciation of Joseph Stalin the Soviet dictator by Nikita Krushchev in 1956.

Getting moved by the change in communist Soviet Union, Mao invited criticism by the intelligentsia and intellectuals of the Chinese society regarding the governance of the Chinese Communist party. The slogan “let a hundred flowers bloom, let a hundred schools of thought contend” (Roderick 1997: 77-78) was given. Although it was not until May 1957 that the “hundred flowers” campaign that allowed this “blooming and contending” got underway. Just because socialism was being consolidated in China, Mao expected that campaign would get conducted in an atmosphere of “gentle breezes and mild rain.” (Roderick 1997: 81) It transpired an unexpected and intense outpouring of criticism of the party by the non-party intellectuals (Cook and Murray: 2001: 16). Moreover, this criticism was accompanied by student unrest and all this prompted Mao to call back this campaign on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1956 (Knight 2007: 225).

The Great Leap Forward, which started in 1958, was characterized by calls for rapid cultural homogenization and low tolerance of difference. Even ethnicity was considered as an impediment to progress. More moderate policies came about in the early 1960s, with Muslims allowed to celebrate religious festivals. By the mid-1960s, the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) brought demands for “cultural conformity to a new extreme.” (Bovingdon 2010: 49-52) In essence, there were two Cultural Revolutions in Xinjiang, one operating within the Han dominated institutions of the Party, Xinjiang production and construction corps (XPCC) and PLA and one that related to the movement's impact on the region's non-Han population (Clarke 2011: 65). Ethnic minority regions and peoples by virtue of their ‘special’ treatment since 1949 naturally expressed practices that were not ‘in correspondence with the socialist economic base’ and therefore became key targets of the movement. For example, the Cultural Revolution’s call to attack the ‘Four Olds’ of old customs, ideas, culture and habits was ultimately more portentous for the ethnic minorities than it was for the Han (Dreyer 1994: 44). Indeed, the tenor of the attack on ethnic minorities during the Cultural Revolution can be gauged from the reported remarks of Jiang Qing regarding minorities. Mao’s wife reportedly considered the minorities to be “foreign invaders and aliens”, she was also quoted as saying, “what is so special about your tiny Xinjiang? I despise you” (Millward 2007: 275-6). Intolerance accentuated, minorities were attacked, mosques were destroyed, Muslims were forced to shave their beards, and there was chaos and fear among the Turkic people, as they were

coerced to shed their religious clothing and rituals. The forceful and intolerant policies of the Cultural Revolution were perceived by the Uyghurs as grossly unfair and an assault on their political rights and core religious identities. This brought about intense discontent and therefore instability (Bovingdon 2010: 49-52).

Beijing's has followed a two-fold strategy in Xinjiang to deal with ethnic separatism since the 1990s. While there has been suppression of any unofficial religious activity, at the same time an "ambitious program of economic reform, on the assumption that the principal underlying reason for the disaffection of the Uyghurs is not ethnic nationalism but poverty and underdevelopment," (Lim 2011: 5). According to Michael Dillon, former Director of the Centre for Contemporary Chinese Studies at the University of Durham, U.K. (Dillon 2008: 181-182) Despite the state's concerted efforts to assimilate Uyghurs into the mainstream Han culture, the cultural amalgamation is still very limited (Hyer 2006: 75-76). This can be attributed to a confluence of reasons, the increased Han migration in Xinjiang has generated trust deficit and disaffection among Uyghurs regarding Hans. The Han population has increased drastically, from 6.7 percent (220,000) in 1949 to 40 percent (8.4 million) in 2008. The demographic change in Xinjiang, accompanied by the policies of cultural oppression over Uyghurs has affected them. The rising income gap between the Han Chinese and Uyghurs have made the Uyghurs feel alienated in their own land (Bhattacharji 2012). State sponsored Han in-migration into Xinjiang has fueled discontent among Uyghurs, as they see this move as an attempt to obliterate their culture (Howell and Fan 2011: 120).

In the 1940s, Xinjiang was inhabited overwhelmingly by Muslim people, mainly the Uyghur, Kyrgyz and Kazakh, with the Han Chinese constituting only a very small minority or about 6.7% of the population (Howell and Fan 2011: 119). Meanwhile, because of the precedence of East Turkestan independence, there have been simmering hopes of being free of the Chinese rule. This was especially the case in the 1990s, in the wake of the implosion of the communist Soviet Union where several regions with similar ethnic populations gained independence (Bhattacharya 2003: 358). As a result, nationalistic Uyghur elements e.g. World Uyghur Congress (in exile) have been agitating

for independence from China for decades, very often appealing to their brethren in Central Asia and other Islamic countries across the world for support.

In this politico-historical context, the Uyghur's contention with Chinese rule arguably arises from nationalistic inclinations, not militant intentions or religious differences (Bovingdon 2010: 3-4). Ultimately, this is also a display of the conflict arising from the opposing rights of sovereignty and self-determination. As Rupert Emerson said, as cited by Gardner Bovingdon in his book, 'The Uyghurs: Strangers in Their Own Land', "The state has an indisputable prerogative and duty to defend its own existence, and the nation comes likewise to be endowed with a right to overthrow the state" (Bovingdon 2010: 3-4). The right to self-determination and the rights of state-building can be conflictual and lead to destabilization of a state if not if not balanced appropriately by the government.

### **Rationale and scope of the study**

This study would attempt to explain theoretically, how the states exploit and control the regions which it considers to be geo-strategically important. In this context the political situation of Gilgit-Baltistan within Pakistan and Xinjiang in China would be studied. Till now, no comparative study has been pursued on the political disempowerment of the people of both Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang by their respective states. This political disempowerment is further leading to the rise of ethnic violence in these two regions. Furthermore, the worrisome part is the presence of extremist terror groups like ETIM and LeT in both the provinces, which are working to establish inter regional ties between them. Consequently, amplifying the extremist and sectarian threats, this in turn would have a serious impact over the security of this sub-Asian region.

Concluding with the scope of study, the time period chosen for research starts from 1979 (opening of Karakoram Highway KKH) till 2014. The reason behind selecting 1979 as the starting point is to explain the strategic shift that came in the security environment of Pakistan, China and India after the construction of Karakoram Highway. This development immediately enhanced the geo-strategic importance of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang. It further provided China an access to Arabian Sea and the middle-east and simultaneously consolidated Pakistan's authority over Gilgit-Baltistan, hence outflanking



India's claim from the region. Therefore, this strategic advancement linked the security narratives of Pakistan, China and India together.

The study of this existing literature extensively helps in conceptualizing and understanding the 'Geo-strategic' importance of both these regions. It also explains the current political conditions of these regions and the dominance of China and Pakistan in Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang respectively and China's upper hand strategic dominance in both the regions. It would also provide us with a specific view about the prominent strategic and security threats emanating for the sub-Asian region because of the political unrest in these regions. Yet the current literature lags on various aspects to decipher the conflict dynamics in these regions and its linkages with their vital geo-positioning. There is also a lack of investigation and comprehensiveness regarding the functional aspect of 'Geo-strategy' as a concept to understand the importance of geographical positioning of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang along the lines of communication and centers of resources. Furthermore, there has been no study done yet over the comparative analysis of the political conditions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang and their linkages with each other. Therefore, this research would attempt to lay focus on these research gaps.

Following the rationale and scope of study, the research seeks to answer some pertinent questions: What are the various factors which led to the rise of extremist movements in both Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang? How far the policies followed by Pakistan and China in Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang respectively are responsible of the social and political unrest in these regions? How the political disempowerment of the minority ethnic group by the majority ethnic group has led to political instability in both these region? What counter measures are taken up by the governments of India and China to curtail the security threats emanating from Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang? How the influx of extremist influence from across the LOC would have an impact over the political situation of the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir? How the political unrest in both Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang is posing a security threat towards India?

The objective of the study is to comprehend 'Geo-strategy' as a concept to contemplate the strategic importance of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang. It attempts to examine the policies carried forward by Pakistan and China in Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang to gain

control over these regions. It also analyzes the dynamics of ethnic conflict in both Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang and to trace out any linkages in between them, if any. It delves to apprehend the similarities and differences if any in the political conditions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang. In the end it critically assesses the impact of the political turmoil in both Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang over the security paradigm of India.

Taking into consideration the above mentioned research questions and objectives, this study attempts to test three hypotheses: firstly, Pakistan and China have utilized the geo-strategic location of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang to destabilize India's security environment. Secondly, Sectarian strife and political disempowerment of Gilgit-Baltistan is affecting the security of India. Finally, China's inability to resolve the ethnic unrest in Xinjiang is leading Uyghurs to establish linkages with extremist forces.

The study will use comparative approach. This method involves the study of at least two cases or observations to interpret how parallel processes of change are played out in different ways within each context. It further involves the juxtaposition of values or variables, of attributes shared by two or more objects or cases. The research would compare the strategic importance of these two regions with each other and how important these regions are cumulatively.

The research would be based on Jakub J. Grygiel's explanation of 'Geo-strategy' and 'Geo-politics'. According to him, "It is the geographic distribution of centers of resources and lines of communication, assigning value to locations according to their strategic importance" (Grygiel 1972: 41). Based on this conception, the study would try to critically assess and provide an explanation of how the Geo-strategic position of a region makes it important on a regional basis and the geographical location is directly linked with the kind of political conditions and security environment of the region.

The research would include both primary and secondary sources of data. The primary sources would include relevant proposed documents related to the proposed topic from official government sources e.g. white papers published by Indian government, reports published by United Nations Security Council, reports published by the governments of Pakistan and China regarding these two regions and the minorities residing there. Information would also be drawn from the security experts from India, China and

Pakistan, through interviews and questionnaires. The secondary sources would include books, journals, research articles, newspaper articles, web articles, published interviews and commentaries of the scholars/academicians.

The study is divided into six chapters, including this introductory chapter, which has already elucidated the historical dimensions of both Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang. Furthermore, the second chapter discusses in detail the conceptual framework and theoretical background. It would further attempt to decipher the strategic importance of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang geographically, historically and politically.

The third chapter would analyze the co-relation between the strategic importance of Gilgit-Baltistan and the kind of policies carried forward by Pakistan to gain control over this region. It would further look into the political conditions of Gilgit-Baltistan since its occupation by Pakistan and how it's leading to political unrest in the region.

Chapter four would describe how Xinjiang's location has led China to assert more control over this region, in order to foster its strategic interests. It would also illustrate how the policies furthered by China in Xinjiang have developed the political dynamics in a certain way, which has created security issues in this region.

In chapter five the emphasis would be laid to discuss and inquire about, how the political unrest is leading to the formation of linkages between the extremist forces in between Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang, which is further threatening the security imperatives of India. It would also assess the security narratives of Pakistan, China and India and how they are linked with each other with respect to the political conditions in Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang. Finally, it would explore the linkages between the policies forwarded by Pakistan and China in both Gilgit-Baltistan respectively leading to the political disempowerment of these regions and consecutively destabilizing the security environment of India.

Finally the concluding chapter would compare the similarities and differences among the political conditions on both these regions. It would also attempt to figure out the relation between the political marginalization of the natives of these regions and disturbed regional security environment. Lastly, the chapter would conclude with the observations

and congregate the assessments made in each chapter. It would review the hypotheses based on the analysis undertaken in the chapters and seek to come up with feasible policy recommendations and suggestion to curb the security issues arising among this sub region.

**CHAPTER TWO:**  
**Geo-strategic Importance of Gilgit-Baltistan and**  
**Xinjiang**

Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang are two landlocked provinces located between the two Asian giants - India and China. The geographic positioning of these two provinces is has an historic importance because in 19<sup>th</sup> century this region served as the point of face-off between the mighty British and Russian empires (Lamb 1994: 20). Situated in the middle of Karakoram range, Hindu Kush and Pamir range in the north and western Himalayas in the south, the strategic positioning of these two regions make them ever more significant for India, Pakistan and China. These regions shares border: in the north-east with Mongolia, Russia to the north, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to the north-west, Afghanistan and Pakistan in the west, Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir to the south-west, with politically unstable Tibet in south-east (Warikoo 2009: 59).

The geographical location of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang's serves as a focal point for China "to access the mineral and energy-rich markets of Central Asian countries including Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan." Pakistan and China demonstrated their will to explore the strategic border they share in the Karakoram range between Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang by constructing Karakoram highway (KKH) in 1979 and created a corridor from Kashgar to Arabian sea via Gwadar. The two countries are also planning to link Kashgar and Xinjiang though rail network to further their economic and strategic objectives in the region (Bansal and Gupta 2007: 221).

Simultaneously, Gilgit-Baltistan can also be seen as a pass-way for the Asian sub-continent to reach Central Asian markets. Countries like Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan are rich in uranium, cotton, oil and gas resources. The future project of installing a gas pipeline between Iran and China is also scheduled to pass through this mountainous region (Senge 2012: 3-4). Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang can also be seen as the connecting link not only between Pakistan and China, but also as an extension to the West-Asian countries.

Considering the above mentioned, it can be assessed that the geographical proximity of these two regions with each other amplifies the geo-strategic value in a cumulative way. Therefore, it can also be conceived that the political control of these provinces would undoubtedly provide an immense strategic foothold in the region. Considering the geostrategic realities, Pakistan and China have carried forward certain policies in Gilgit-

Baltistan and Xinjiang respectively to gain indispensable authority over both the provinces to further their respective political and economic interests. However, the policies carried by Pakistan and China have led to emergence of political instability in these provinces, which is affecting the security environment of the whole region.

Considering, the strategic importance of these provinces and their changing security-environment. The major global powers like US and China can be seen to be directly engaged in these areas. On one side US is planning to stay longer in Afghanistan, as an sudden exit could be detrimental to its security, which means prolonged US interference in the regional politics of South and Central Asia. On the other hand, China's major OBOR initiative to revive the old 'silk routes' and connect with Europe is going to set a new world order with China being the center of it, would obviously also have an impact over the regional political and security dynamics of South and Central Asia (Farooq 2010: 181-190).

The 'Great Game'<sup>4</sup> has been revived after 9/11 terrorist attack in US, as shown by the subsequent developments in Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), founded in Shanghai in 2001, with Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan as its members, is another manifestation of the 'Great Game' and points to the strategic importance of the Central Asian region. China's role in establishing and strengthening the SCO for gaining a strategic foothold in this region and the trans-Himalayan region has gained added importance in this environment (Warikoo 2009: 64). Therefore, Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang falls perfectly under China's strategic radar, to further its interests.

Within this broader perspective, this chapter aims to analyze, examine and interrogate concepts related to geo-strategy and other relevant issues associated with it. It provides theoretical background to the proceeding chapters, and tries to understand geo-strategic

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<sup>4</sup> "The Great Game" (Online: web) Accessed on 15 January 2012, URL: [www.sras.org/the\\_great\\_game](http://www.sras.org/the_great_game), "it is a term often used to refer to how world politics affect Central Asia and India. Most historians see a distinct continuity in this political struggle starting from 1813 with a near-century of British-Russian imperial competition. The game continues through the conflicts which arose regarding the spread of Communism after 1917 and through the Cold War, when the US usurped Britain as the world's other superpower and Great Game's other major player. Many studies continue to use the term to describe and better understand the current relations between Russia, China, and the US, as these countries compete for influence in the resource-rich but politically volatile region."

importance of the region and how the action of the regional and global players, in order to pursue their respective interests, has changed the security environment of the region. Primarily divided into two parts, the first part of the chapter explores the concept of geo-strategy and how this sub field of geo-politics emerged rapidly in the latter half of the twentieth century. The final section explains the geostrategic importance of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang, both individually and cumulatively.

### **The concept of Geo-strategy**

Geo-strategy is a sub-field of geopolitics, so in order to have a detailed understanding of geo-strategy, the description endeavors to begin with a brief description of the concept of geopolitics. Geopolitics, “as thought and practiced, is linked to the establishment of states and nation-states as dominant political institutions. Geopolitics, especially, is historically connected to the end of the nineteenth century, a period of increasing mounting competition between the most powerful states.” Initially Geo-politics was understood only under the domain of inter-state conflict, and only powerful western states were used to studies and considered under this field of study. In other words, “there was a theoretical attempt to separate geopolitics from imperialism, the dominance of powerful countries over weaker states” (Fint 2012: 6).

The term Geo-politics comes from the term ‘Geopolitik’ coined by the Swedish political scientist Rudolf Kjellen in 1905 (1864-1922). Kjellén defined geopolitics as “the theory of the state as a geographical organism or phenomenon in space” (Cohen 2003: 11). However, the concept was popularized most famously by Karl Haushofer, (Gerard 1994: 250-272) under the term ‘Wehr-geopolitik’, several American and English writers from military and political science background attempted to translate the conventional German term, “Wehr-geopolitik” as “Defense Geo-politics”, but it could not translate the essential characteristic of the German term which represented more of an aggressive political geography (Gyorgy 1943: 347-362) General. Frederick L. Schuman refers to Wehr-geopolitik as “geo-strategy” in his article, “Let Us Learn Our Geopolitics.” “This seems to be the most forceful translation of the original German expression coined by General Haushofer” (Gyorgy 1943: 347-362).



Halford Mackinder used his 'Heartland Theory' to apply the concept of geo-politics in the sphere of international politics. In a thesis titled "The Geographical Pivot of History," Mackinder theorized "that in the industrial age, the natural resources of Central Asia 'the great pivot' are so vast that it will serve as the geostrategic instrument for the state that controls it to become the empire of the world." (Mackinder 1962: 41) According to Mackinder global politics was a "closed system" in way that the actions of all the countries were in a way connected, and the major fulcrum of contestation was between the sea and land powers. He defined the history and geography of by describing the core of Eurasia landmass as the pivot area in 1904, which he renamed again in 1909 as the 'Heartland', over which he propounded his theory.

Thayer Mahan's works in "Influence of Sea-power upon History" (1890) and The Interest of "America in Sea-power" (1897) influenced Mackinder immensely. In his work, Mahan professed that "great powers were those countries whose insularity, coupled with an easily defensible coastline, provided a secure base from which, with the aid of a network of land bases, sea-power could be developed and national and global power attained and enhanced" (Flint 2006: 20).

On the contrary to the theorizing of concepts of geopolitics by the Anglo-American thinkers, the German school of geopolitics applied the principles of power politics into the sphere of military science and is also responsible for combining and including geography and politics in the politics of war. Accordingly, Haushofer also created a geo-political vision "that unified two competing political camps in inter-war Germany: the landed aristocrats, who wanted to expand the borders of Germany eastwards toward Russia and the owners of new industries such as chemicals and engineering who desired the establishment of German colonies outside of Europe to gain access to raw materials and markets" (Flint 2016: 11). A key characteristic of classic geo-politics was illustrated by the Germans, in which the earth and people is classified into a hierarchy of most and least important, which then justifies political actions of war, neglect or alliance. "This process of social stratification operates in an analogy with a regionalization of the world into good/bad, safe/dangerous, valuable/unimportant, peaceful/conflictual zones" (Flint 2006: 20).

Geopolitics, “describes the relation between politics and territory both on local and international level. It comprises the art and practice of analyzing, proscribing, forecasting, and the usage of political power over a given territory. Specifically, it is a method of foreign policy analysis, which seeks to understand, explain and predict international political behavior primarily in terms of geographical variables.” The prime geographical variables are: the geographic positioning of the country or countries in case of multiple states, the landmass or the territory occupied by that country, climate zone of that region where the country is situated, terrain of that region, demography, availability of natural resources in the territory and technological advancement (Evans 1998: 37).

Academically, geo-politics is an inter-disciplinary study of various other fields like history, social science and geography in a comparative and inter-linked way, in regard to spatial patterns and politics ranging from the domestic level to the international. “It is multidisciplinary in its scope, and includes all aspects of the social sciences with particular emphasis on political geography, international relations, the territorial aspects of political science and international law” (Hyndmann 2012: 243-255).

“In the abstract, geopolitics traditionally indicates the links and causal relationships between political power and geographic space, looks to geographic or Earth-centered physical and spatial characteristics for its explanatory power.” (Parker 1986: 199) “The unit of analysis is the state. Its location, size, resources, and population are placed in the context of political ideology, socio-cultural values, and technology to assess the dominant forms of war in a given time. The manipulative application of this knowledge is called geo-strategy, a state dominant assessment of the geospatial bases of power in plans or strategies for continuing military, economic, diplomatic, and socio-cultural advantage” (Dolmann 2012: 80).

In the post-cold war era neo-classical geopolitics emerged, which primarily focused over the geographical factors (access to the sea, resources etc.) and the strategic value attached to them, correspond to more realistic of geopolitics. Therefore, the geographical position and other geographical features imply a direct influence on the foreign policy of a state. “In neoclassical geopolitics, the strategic value of specific attributes of territories plays

the leading role, which led to the development of Geo-strategy as a core concept” (Makinen 2008: 23).

In an environment of an ever increasing scarcity of resources, the interests of states are bound to overlap, and conflict are expected, Geo-strategy can be explained as a study of “the capacity of a state to recognize the geographically advantageous positions and capacities that enhance state power and attempts to control those positions or at a minimum deny control of those positions to an opponent, to ensure the continued health and growth of the state” (Dolmann 2012: 80).

“It is ignoring strategic impossibilities and willing to exploit militarily any phase of human life, any reality of the natural or man-made world. It is a continuous and relentless national strategy in which peace-time diplomacy and war-time military power are alike aimed at fighting the enemy” (Gyorgy1943: 347-350). “Geo-strategy is a type of foreign policy guided principally by geographical factors as they inform, constrain, or affect political and military planning. As with all strategies, geo-strategy is concerned with matching means to ends, a country's resources (whether they are limited or extensive) with its geopolitical objectives (which can be local, regional, or global).” According to this field of study Strategy is weaved with geography just like geography linked with nationhood (Gray and Sloan 1999: 3).

Geo-strategists, differ from geo-politicians because they approach geopolitics and advocate proactive strategies from a state centric view. Just like other political theories, Geo-strategy derives its relevance in accordance with the context it is devised: national or ethnic background of the strategist, amount of resources a country possesses, national interests of the state, political geography, and technological advancement that affects political, economical, cultural and military engagements (Gray and Sloan 1999: 83).

However, Theorists, academicians, and political scientists working in the field of geopolitics have not agreed upon any universal definition of geo-strategy. Most of the definitions, “emphasize the merging of strategic considerations with geo-political factors. While geo-politics is ostensibly neutral, examining the geographic and political features of different regions, especially the impact of geography on politics, geo-strategy involves comprehensive planning, assigning means for achieving national goals or securing assets

of military or political significance. It is the geographic direction to a state's foreign policy. More precisely, geo-strategy describes where a state concentrates its efforts by projecting military power and directing diplomatic activity" (Grygiel 2008: 21-22).

The underlying assessment is that due to the availability of limited resources, it is difficult for states to create a multi-dimensional foreign policy. Therefore, they should focus militarily and politically on the regions which are geo-strategically located. "Geo-strategy describes this foreign policy thrust of a state and, therefore, is not necessarily motivated by geographic or geo-political factors. A state may project power to a location because of ideological reasons, interest groups or simply the whim of their leaders" (Grygiel 2008: 21-22).

"Geo-strategy can function normatively, advocating foreign policy based on geographic factors, describing how foreign policy is shaped by geography or predicting a country's future foreign policy decisions on the basis of geographic factors"(Gray and Sloan 1999: 3).

The present changed global security environment has led the geo-politicians and the geo-strategists to concentrate more on the aspect of 'Security'. The term 'Security' has generated a more concrete and practical meaning to research in the field of Geo-politics and Geo-strategy (including military strategy and regional strategies for development). The modern global changes are leading geo-strategy out of its traditional military-political meaning and necessitating its wider interpretation in the context of various natural, ecological, cultural and socio-economic aspects of global and regional security. (Hlihor 2014: 17)

A basic geo-strategic motive of modern policy is the desire for control over geographic areas which are geo-strategically important and are rich in natural, human or economic resources as well as control over such areas that can be used in controlling important routes and lines of communications. These observations about the concept of geopolitics and geo-strategy once applied to this research work, it clearly explains the current security environment of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang and the political struggle over the region, in which the three major stake holders: Pakistan, China and India are contesting for their respective interests.

As mentioned above the modern geo-strategic policy is to get control over a geographic area of geo-strategic importance, this policy is aptly followed by Pakistan and China in Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang. The geographical location of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang between India, China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan makes it of sheer paramount geostrategic importance. Besides the geographical positioning, these regions are rich in water and other natural resources, the description about these resources is given further in this chapter.

According to Jakub J. Grygiel, “It is the geographic distribution of centers of resources and lines of communication, assigning value to locations according to their strategic importance” (Grygiel 1972: 41). Considering this statement, it can be argued that China has analyzed the centers of resources in and around Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang and is carrying out extensive infrastructural development projects which, in turn, is providing China a progressive control over the region that is rich in natural resources and is therefore, of immense economic importance to China. In this way these regions are also providing pathway towards the Central Asia under its revival of ancient silk-routes strategy and also towards energy rich Middle-East through the Karakoram Highway, which ultimately ensures China a hold over the lines of communication of the region. Construction of Karakoram Highway and other infrastructural development projects are indirectly benefitting Pakistan to have a better control and accessibility over Gilgit-Baltistan’s territory and resources (Wilson 2009: 174). It has boosted Pakistan’s army movement along the LOC with India, consequently outflanking India’s claim from the region and posing a direct threat to India’s security (Gupta 2015). Hydrocarbon resources in Central Asia and issues of energy security is expected to enhance Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang’s strategic importance in the regional politics because of its proximity in terms of the energy resource bases, along with the countries with high energy consumption.

Considering the growth rate of the economies of India and China and their requirement of energy to sustain their development both these nations will be the largest market of hydrocarbons in the coming decades. As noted earlier, the only available substantial sources of hydrocarbons are located in the Central Asia and the Gulf countries.

Considering this, Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang are going to remain key regions in the future energy needs of both Pakistan and China, besides its role in the regional energy transportation landscape. The geographic location along with the presence of important communication lines and links like KKH, makes these two provinces a key transit hub, especially after the launch of CPEC. Hence, it can be assessed that the geographical positioning especially places Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang in a dominating position to influence the strategic picture of the sub-Asian region. Karakoram Highway, connecting Xinjiang with the Gwadar port, providing an easy access to the 600 km Makran coast, opens up to the energy and trade routes out of the Strait of Homuz (Behera and Joseph 2004: 82-83).

Analyzing the other understanding of modern geo-strategy of controlling a region of geo-strategic importance to block other countries from establishing communication linkages, applies clearly in the case of Gilgit-Baltistan, as the occupation of the parts of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir by Pakistan deprived India of its direct border linkage from Afghanistan through the Durrand Line. Pakistan is intentionally denying the claims of India on the region, as it fears that India will gain the strategic link with Afghanistan which can be a security challenge for Pakistan because it would bring India at the border of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. Moreover, If India gains control of Gilgit-Baltistan again, it would cost Pakistan its land linkage with China, which would be a huge strategic blow to its security.

The analysis of the factors having influence over the contemporary geo-strategic behaviour of China and Pakistan is quite dynamic. It is distinguished by increasing efficient and effective mechanisms for exerting influence over the regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang through force. Consequently, migrations provoked by ethnic confessions (Shia-Sunni and Uyghur-Han conflict), socio-political (delusive representation of masses in Politics) and ecological factors, the cross-border infrastructural projects (Chinese undertaken projects), the fast spreading of ecological dangers hazards (ecological imbalance from the construction of Diamer-Bhasha dam in Gilgit and Baltistan and “the Great Western Development Programme” by China in

Xinjiang), illegal trafficking of drugs, weapons, and international terrorism - all these aspects are dealt with in detail in the subsequent chapters.

### **Gilgit-Baltistan's geostrategic importance:**

The very fact that the boundaries of Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, Tajikistan and India coincide at Gilgit-Baltistan, provides a unique geo-strategic value to this region (See Map 1). It is through this area that the Karakoram Highway passes providing Pakistan extended land access to Central Asia. Gilgit-Baltistan has been integral with regard to India's communication network in the trans-Himalayas. In early 20th century Lord Curzon visualized "the Himalayan regions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Ladakh, Sikkim, Bhutan and north-east frontier as an inner defence line for India protected by a Tibetan buffer region" (Choudhury 2008: 6). Britishers always saw this Karakoram-Himalaya wall vulnerable and guarded these mountain passes with their militaries on the southern side to safeguard the Indian sub-continent along with the commercial sea-lanes, which used to extend from Australia to Western Europe.

The British were wary of the fact that Russians could reach India through the mountainous passes of Karakoram, Hindukush and Pamirs. A direct land access to India could provide them access to the port facilities and they might end up diverting the sea trade by using overland routes to Europe. The western Europeans didn't want that to happen, as this could have jeopardized their monopoly over sea-trade, consequently leading to the collapse of their huge empires. It was this threat due to which the 'great game' started in the mountainous terrain of Gilgit-Baltistan (Hopkirk 2001: 358).

The imposing geographical features and high daunting peaks (Dar and Saini, 2013: 50-53) did not prevent the region from becoming a hub of communication, cultural interaction and overland trade. Important land routes- Leh (Ladakh)-Yarkand-Kashgar crossing Khardung La pass over the Karakoram range, and Gilgit-Hunza-Kashgar across the Khunjerab and Mintaka passes, pass through this region. Whereas the Leh-Yarkand route, which used to be the main artery of trade and communication between India and Central Asia remains closed since 1949, the Gilgit-Kashgar route has been developed into the Karakoram Highway providing China direct land access through Pakistan (Warikoo 2014: 124; Sheikh 2015: 2).

**Map 1: Jammu and Kashmir**



Map No. 3953 Rev. 4 UNITED NATIONS  
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Cartographic Section

Source: United Nations website, [Online: Web] Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> June 2017 URL:  
<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/kashmir.pdf>



Covering an area of about 28,000 sq. miles (about 73,000 sq. kms) Gilgit-Baltistan has seven districts- Gilgit, Skardu, Hunza Nagar, Ghizer, Diamer, Ghanche and Astor, with a total population of about two million. Whereas the entire population of Hunza, Yasin, Puniyal, Ishkoman and Gupis are Ismailis (followers of Agha Khan), the people of Nagar and Baltistan (Skardu, Ghanche) are Shia Muslims. Gilgit has 45 per cent Shias and 35 per cent Sunnis (mainly Punjabi and Pakhtoon settlers from Pakistan). Chilas, Astore and Darel/Tangir have a Sunni Muslim majority.

**Table 1: Population / Sectarian profile of Gilgit-Baltistan**

District	Population (Million)	Sect-wise (%)			
		Sunni	Shia	Ismaili	N/Bakhshi
Gilgit	0.196	35	45	19.5	0.5
Skardu	0.289	36	88	-	6
Diamer	0.177	100	-	-	-
Ghizer	0.162	10	5	85	-
Ghanche	0.199	23	2	-	75
Astore	0.096	70	30	-	-
Hunza-Nagar	0.130	-	55	45	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.249</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>11</b>

Source: Gilgit Baltistan Scouts, Government of Pakistan, [Online: Web] Accessed 1<sup>st</sup> June 2017 URL: <http://www.gilgitbaltistanscouts.gov.pk/geodemo.htm>

Gilgit-Baltistan being the part of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir was under the authority of the Maharaja of the state. As mentioned above, the British feared the expansion of Russians towards the south of the Karakoram, hence to save their own interests, the British persuaded the Maharaja to hand over the frontier of Gilgit to them.

British government was sure that if Russia moves further south then the forces of Maharaja won't be able to hold them and hence they would reach the necks of the British in India. Considering the threat British took over the Gilgit agency on 29<sup>th</sup> March 1935 for 60 years (Gilgit Lease 1935 National Archives).

Furthermore, being located in the middle of Chinese western Xinjiang Province, Afghanistan's Wakhan Corridor, Pakistan controlled Kashmir, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in Pakistan, and India's Jammu and Kashmir, the region possess an enormous geostrategic relevance. The construction of Karakoram Highway and its completion in 1979 brought both China and Pakistan closer in terms connectivity and trade and now this road plays key role in China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor, being the starting point of this huge project. This is gaining significance since the territory of Gilgit-Baltistan determines an essential part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a multimillion dollar development project which is heralded as a "game changer" for Pakistan and the whole region. Moreover, Gilgit-Baltistan is home to mighty Indus and most of its major tributaries hence it plays a vital role in fulfilling Pakistan's large hydel power ambitions.

The region has a bountiful of natural resources and especially mineral resources, with "abundance of a number of precious metals and important radioactive material. It has huge reserves of gold- there are numerous gold mines, especially in Bhasha, Braldo, Parkuta, Saltoro and in the rivers Shigar, Indus and Shyok. Good quality marble is mined in Kwardo, near Skardu, whereas black marble is found in Gulabpur and Chotron. In fact, the entire region, Kwardo to Bhasha, is full of marble. In Wasoned in Shigar Valley, emerald is mined and a mica mine exists near Nyaslo stream in the Bhasha Valley. Copper sulphate is mined in Chorbat. There are iron mines in Nend in Shigar and Chotron in Braldo, whereas lead is mined in Pharda in Khapulu and Daso in Shigar. Antimony is found in the area of Stak in Rondu and alum is found in Ghowari stream and in Ashkopo<sup>5</sup>" (Khan 1987: 133-134). In addition, the region also has mines of uranium 238, topaz, quartz, iron, sulphur, ruby and oil (Bansal and Gupta 2007: 189).

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<sup>5</sup> Official Pakistan Government sources, [Online: Web] Accessed 1 June 2017, URL: <http://www.gilgitbaltistan.gov.pk/DownloadFiles/InvestmentPotential/Minerals.pdf>

Major international land and frontier conflicts exist in this area, historically also Gilgit-Baltistan was the frontier province between Russian and British empires. It also shares border with the Xinjiang province of China which is also suffering from political unrest due to Uyghur conflict. On the other side there is Afghanistan which has been in the state of war since late 1980's. Whereas, India and Pakistan have been stuck in a conflict over the state of Jammu and Kashmir since 1947. Even the Sino-Indian border dispute, which started with the 1962 war still needs to be settled. Central Asia's geographical proximity and presence of extremist groups in there also pose threat to the security environment of this region. Prior to USSR's disintegration under the Soviet regime such extremist elements were nonexistent. Post 1991 with the advent of independence among the Central Asian, the practice of Islam spread sporadically and openly, and religious elements who used to operate inconspicuously started coming out freely. Eventually the Islamist extremists grew stronger, and the newly formed Central Asian regimes failed in containing these Islamist moments (Louw 2007: 25-27). As a result, a call for the formation of a regional caliphate under Sharia law was given by the Islamic groups. Since then a new geopolitical situation has developed across the north-western Himalayas.

In the past, this region has been a gateway to India for innumerable cultural influences and invasion from Central and West Asia. "The 14th century Sufi Muslim preachers from Persia and Central Asia introduced Islam in Baltistan" (Osmaston and Denwood 1995: 189-190). Similarly, Islam has also taken the same route to enter Gilgit-Baltistan, in the same century through Turkic Tarkhan rulers. "Even in contemporary times, India has had to experience successive military aggressions from Pakistan in 1947, 1965, 1971, 1999 (in Kargil) and in the form of a proxy war in Kashmir that has been going on for more than twenty two years now, besides the Chinese military offensive in 1962 from across the Himalayas" (Warikoo 2014: 125-129). The situation has become adverse for India especially after the construction of Karakoram Highway from the security point of view as China has been consistently providing diplomatic, military, logistics, physical and financial support to Pakistan to enable it to consolidate its grip over the strategic frontier area of Gilgit-Baltistan.

This region is strategically important for both India and Pakistan, as it is the only region which has borders with China, Afghanistan and the Indian part of Kashmir. The possession of Gilgit-Baltistan provides Pakistan to restrict India's reach to the Central Asian Republics, as the demarcated border named as Durrand Line between India and Afghanistan falls under the Northern Areas of POK. This deprivation of India's border linkage with Afghanistan bestows Pakistan a strategic advantage over India, because in this way Pakistan denied India's only way to have direct land access to Central Asia. Historically looking, Gilgit-Baltistan provided strategic eminence to Pakistan in both the cases of Siachen Conflict and Kargil War. Considering the close proximity of areas of Gilgit-Baltistan with Indian part of Kashmir, Pakistan has used this territory to carry its covert military expeditions in both Siachen and Kargil.

Additionally, this region links Pakistan and China via 885 kms long highway traversing across the rough terrain of the Karakoram range. It was constructed in 1978 and was first named as 'friendship highway' and then was renamed as Karakoram Highway (KKH). It was constructed by the Frontier Works Organisation (FWO), who also employed the engineers from the Pakistan Army Corps along with the participation of an estimated 10,000 Chinese Engineers and Labourers (Kreutzmann, 1991: 723-724) "without paying" any royalty to the people (Bansal and Gupta 2007: 190). Initially Karakoram Highway only connected Kasghar in Xinjiang with Havelian in the Abottabad district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This strategic move was initiated by China with a broader vision of connecting with Afghanistan, the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf and Africa, in order to achieve its economic goals (Sering 2012: 9). It can also be seen as a strategic seed sowed by China whose fruit would be reaped by both Pakistan and China with the accomplishment of CPEC (See Map 2).

Along with the KKH, China has also assisted Pakistan to construct a network of feeder roads in Gilgit-Baltistan linked with the KKH. For instance, "the feeder road built eastward through the Shaksgam, Raskam and Shimshal Valley, linked Gilgit with Hotan, which is an important military base situated at the cross-section of Tibet-Xinjiang Highway and the Hotan-Golmud Highway. The Hotan-Golmud Highway links Xinjiang to Qinghai province and central China. It reduces the distance between Gilgit and

Golmud to almost half, while bypassing the longer Urumuqi-Kashgar Highway Likewise, the feeder road stretching along the southern rim of Xinjiang connects Gilgit with Aksai-chin and reduces the distance between both regions by more than 1200 kms” (Ispahani 1989: 190-202). These infrastructural developments have helped Pakistan and China to connect military establishments of West Tibet to Xinjiang and Pakistan. Consequently KKH along with the network of feeder roads have provided China and Pakistan enhanced military grip around India’s northern frontiers and compromising India’s security, which was also seen during the Kargil war.

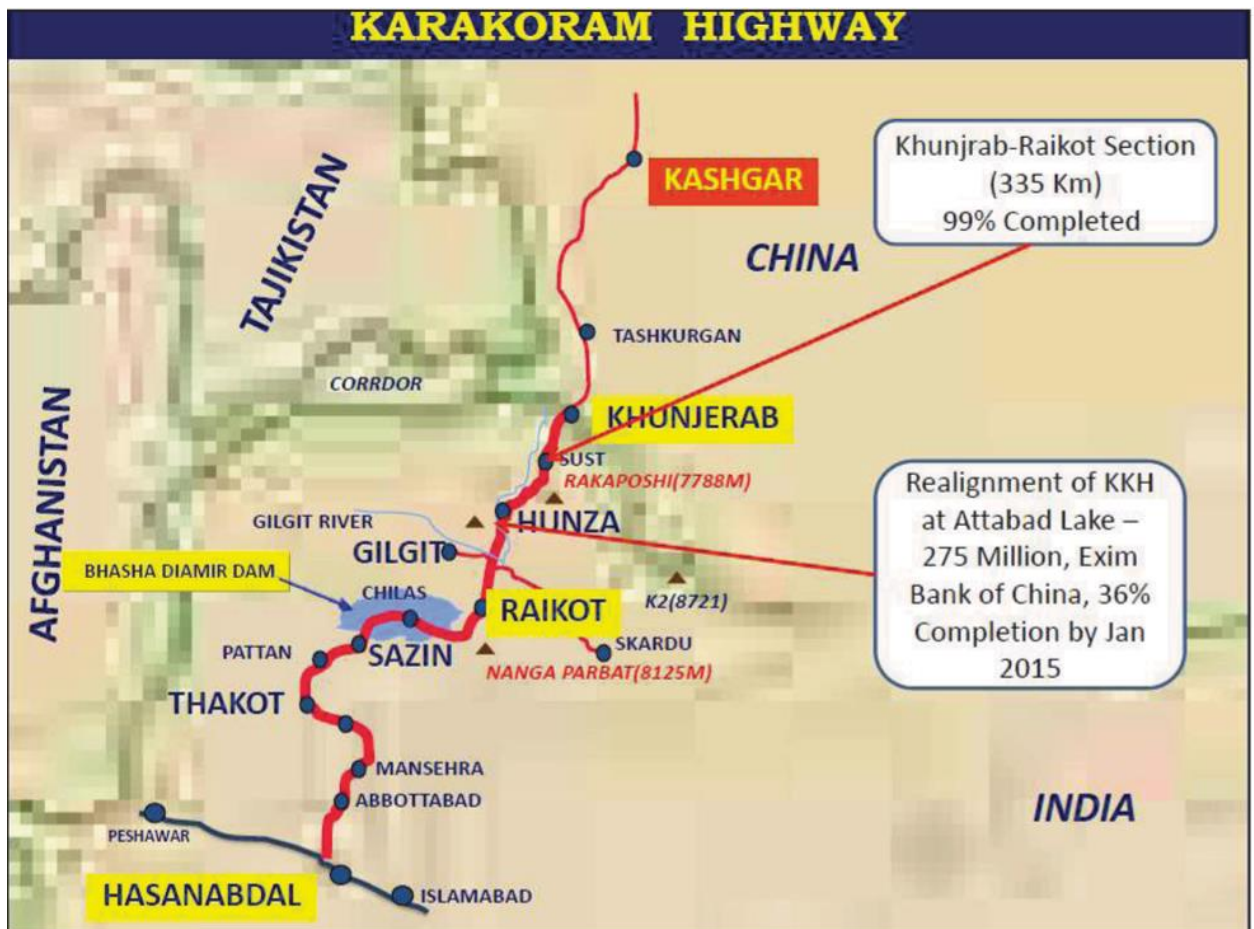
Road connectivity between Pakistan and China through the KKH, also safeguards its strategic and political interests vis-à-vis India. KKH passes through the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir, and it brings the armies of India, Pakistan, China and Afghanistan within the striking distance. The completion of the KKH provided Pakistan with a strategic upper-hand over India, which it didn’t have in Gilgit-Baltistan since 1947. This highway provided Pakistan with an enhanced access to the remote areas of Gilgit-Baltistan. With the commencement of this highway the communication and transportation network in these untrodden areas was drastically improved, favoring Pakistan to exert its military presence along the northern frontier of India.

This highway tremendously helped Pakistan to consolidate its military bases next to LoC and also accentuate the ability of its army to launch any offensive action in the Ladakh region of India. Similarly, “feeders along Qala Panja, Mintaka and Wakhjir Passes provide a direct connection between Gilgit-Baltistan and Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Such connections were further strengthened when China built concrete-base suspension bridges in 1996 in Gupis, Yasin, Darel, Tangir and Shigar valleys. The Darel and Tangir bridges link with the Indus right-bank road as an alternate sustainable supply line to KKH, which is termed as ‘world’s most attractive target for air interdiction” (Ispahani 1989: 201-202).

China’s trade route strategy is a striking feature of its camouflaged geo-strategy, which it applied to enable itself and Pakistan to utilize KKH to contain and limit the political influence of India in the region (Ispahani 1989:197) For instance, “China and USA established listening posts in Gilgit-Baltistan and used the KKH to transfer military

supplies and manpower from Xinjiang to the Afghan mujahideen to sustain the Afghan-Soviet War during the early and mid-1980s.” (Rahman 2007: 213-214) China has also “used KKH to transport its nationals from Xinjiang to PoK to join the *jihadi* training camps during the Afghan jihad” (Cooley 2002:59).

**Map 2: Karakoram Highway**



Source: Ministry of Communication, Government of Pakistan, [Online: Web] Accessed 19 October 2015, URL: <http://www.communication.gov.pk/>

The connectivity provided by the Karakoram highway allowed China to exploit Pakistan territory as another front against India (presence in Gwadar) and has also used Pakistan as deterrent to keep a check on India’s growth (Sering 2012: 17). The accord signed between Pakistan and China in 1966 enabled Pakistan to have access to the weapons of China through the KKH (Ispahani 1989:199) It has been Chinese military aid which has

helped Pakistan to sustain its wars on the eastern front with India and carry on this low intensity conflict (Starr 2004:143).

Since the commencement of KKH till the 1990s China has been the primary source to fulfill Pakistan's military needs. However, the supply of weapons and other army supplies still continue to happen via KKH. In an interview with Professor Kondapalli of Jawaharlal Nehru University, he said that "in 2005 few Indian sources monitored and detected the movement of transport erector launchers (TELs) carrying missile barrels on the KKH" (Personal interview February 2016). In fact, "China has not ratified the border arms reduction treaty and the mutual reduction of military forces and disarmament on the border treaty with Pakistan, which it signed with its other neighbours<sup>6</sup>" (Serling 2012: 19). Therefore, such accords continue to allow Pakistan and China to have weapons trade without any hindrances, mostly out of sight of outside observers.

Moreover, the road also allows economic benefits, if the road is closed even for a short span of time, it inculcates significant losses. Taking the example of 2003 road closure because of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars) threat in China, Pakistan and the northern areas had to bear the major brunt. According to a report furnished by 'The Dawn', in one month the traders in Gilgit-Baltistan suffered loss of 100 million, the northern areas trading corporation lost 5 million, customs fell to 49.18 million, Rs800,000 was paid by the importers whose consignment were blocked and had to pay charges to truckers in china and the hotels around the KKH lost around 1.8 million (Border closure causes 2003).

KKH is also significant for exploiting the tourist potential of this region. Though there are air services to Gilgit and Skardu from Pakistan, the bulk of the tourist movement takes place through the KKH. However, the scenario changed after 9/11 and at present the increasing sectarian violence in the region has affected the tourist inflow. Today the KKH assumes even more importance for two other factors- the Chinese investments in

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<sup>6</sup> Pakistan is not among the list of signatories, China signed its arms reduction and the mutual reduction of military forces and disarmament on the border treaty. [Online: Web] Accessed 30 March 2017, URL; <https://fas.org/nuke/control/mrmfba/>

the northern areas and also elsewhere, especially in Gwadar<sup>7</sup> and the proposed rail link and gas pipeline.

In present economic (and geo-strategic) context, with the initiation of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project KKH is again going to play an exclusive role by linking Gilgit to Gwadar port. CPEC is a \$46 billion package which includes projects which majorly falls into two categories: power and transportation. “On the transport side, there are about \$12 billion in plans to build, among other things, a rail link connecting Gwadar, a Chinese-built deep-sea commercial port on Pakistan’s southern coast, to the western Chinese city of Kashgar, some 2,000 miles to the north. Other projects include widening the treacherous Karakoram highway (The National Highway Authority of Pakistan has upgraded the Karakoram Highway’s Khunjerab-Raikot section of the Karakoram Highway (KKH) which forms part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. The 335-kilometre section of the KKH has been upgraded by China Road and Bridge Corporation at the cost of \$ 510 million)” (CPEC : KKH upgradation 2016), “itself previously built with Chinese help; upgrading Gwadar airport; building a 125-mile tunnel linking the two countries; and upgrading a number of existing highways, including the critical Karachi-Lahore section” (Rakisits 2015).

A number of energy projects, “about \$34 billion in total, are also on the drawing board, including pipelines to transport oil and gas to Kashgar; the completion of the Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline; and a number of coal, wind, solar, and hydro energy plants that would add some 10,000 megawatts to energy-starved Pakistan by 2018” (Albate 2016: 486). Development of Gwadar port is the main project for China, it would provide Beijing a reliable and long-term access point in Arabiansea (hence Indian ocean), which would be used by China to link its trade with Gulf and Africa.

Currently, Gwadar port is only being developed as a commercial port. Although, in the future it can be transformed into a port with navy facilities for the Chinese Navy. If such a development happens, which is not so unrealistic, it would drastically challenge India’s security in the Indian Ocean and would also increase Sino-Indian maritime competition.

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<sup>7</sup> Chinese interests and investments are discussed separately in the Fourth chapter.



As per China's first official defense white paper, published in early 2015, which makes quite clear that the "traditional mentality that land outweighs sea must be abandoned, and great importance has to be attached to managing the seas and oceans and protecting maritime rights and interests" (China's Military Strategy White Paper 2015).

In a move that will strengthen the defense of Gwadar, "Pakistan is negotiating with China the purchase of eight diesel-powered, conventionally armed attack submarines. This acquisition, which is reportedly part of the CPEC package, would be one of Pakistan's biggest weapons purchases ever, at about \$6 billion." Possession of such advanced submarines by Pakistan would definitely add extra load over India's marine security concerns.<sup>8</sup>

### **Xinjiang's Geo-strategic importance:**

Xinjiang accounts for one-sixth of China's total territory and constitutes for one-fourth of China's frontier, as it shares a 5,600 kms long border with eight countries from Mongolia in the north to India in the south-west (Government White Paper 2003; Raczka 1998: 374). In the south and south-east, it shares its boundary with the Tibetan plateau and the Qinghai province. Further in the east it has a comparatively short border with the Gansu province which also provides Xinjiang a land link with the developed eastern coastal side of China (See Map 3). The limited domestic connectivity between the China proper and this far western province of Xinjiang has been a hurdle in the economic development and integration of this region with the country, this would be discussed in detail in fourth chapter. However, the extensive international frontier of Xinjiang makes it favorable for regional and international trade. China is also launching projects like CPEC and OBOR from Xinjiang, in lieu with the historic silk routes which used to pass from this region (Tian 2009).

According to the census report given in Xinjiang statistical yearbook 2012, Xinjiang's population is 22.32 million. There are 10.52 million Uyghurs, the native majority ethnic group of Xinjiang and then secondly there are 8.47 million Hans, the majority ethnic group of China which constitutes a huge chunk of the population of Xinjiang. (Xinjiang

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<sup>8</sup>Pakistan's pivot to China (2015), Pakistan Defence, [Online: Web] Accessed 21 November 2016, URL: <https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/pakistans-pivot-to-china.409208/>

Statistical Yearbook 2013). Xinjiang being one of the five autonomous regions of China is home to 13 major ethnic groups: Hans, Uyghurs, Macnhus, Huis, Kyrgyz, Ozbeks, Tajiks, Mongolians, Kazaks, Xibes, Daur, Russians and Tatars. The Uyghurs form a majority in the region, and this multiethnic pattern prevails even today.<sup>9</sup> “The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Xinjiang in 2012 is 7505.31 million RMB, and the GDP per capita is 33796 RMB” (Xinjiang Statistical Yearbook 2013).

**Map 3: Xinjinag**



Source: China Sage, [Online: Web] Accessed 20<sup>th</sup> May 2016, URL: <http://www.chinasage.info/maps/xinjiang.htm>

Xinjiang is important for China not only because of its geographical position but also its abundance in coal, crude oil, and gas. Xinjiang has an estimate of 2.086 bln tons of oil reserves, accounting 30 percent of China’s oil resources. Natural gas resources are about

<sup>9</sup>Population and Ethnic Groups of the People’s Republic of China, Economic and Commercial Counsellor’s office of the Embassy of the People’s Republic of China in the Kingdom of Norway, (Online: Web), Accessed on 29 April 2017, URL: <http://no2.mofcom.gov.cn/article/aboutchina/nationality/200903/20090306117655.shtml>

1,010.3 trillion cubic metres, accounting 34 percent of China's total natural gas resources. The oil and gas reserves are located in Gobi desert. There are 133 explored coal reserves, among which the reserves of Turpan and Yongur basins exceeded 50 bln tons and were being ranked among the top ten in the world. Xinjiang accounts for 20.8 percent of the Wind energy produced in China. Xinjiang is also blessed with water resources, with surface water being 8.82 bln cubic metres. Ground water reserves are 2.51 bln cubic metres, and glacier reserves make up to 50 percent of the whole country (Warikoo 2016: 22-23)

Xinjiang among the richest province of China and has a bountiful of natural resources. "It has more than 500 species of wild plants and 700 species of wild animals. Some of the wild herbs in the region have high medicinal value. Reserves of 122 kinds of minerals have been identified. The region is rich in energy resources like oil, coal, hydro, solar and wind energy. Xinjiang enjoys 2600 to 3000 hours of cloudless days per year. Along with this huge source of solar energy, the region has seven windy places where wind energy can be generated. Xinjiang has the country's largest reserve of natural gas and the second largest petroleum production capacity. According to Chinese sources, the region lacks surface water, but abounds in rich groundwater sources." Being an arid region, water is immensely important for the development of this province (Starr 2004: 264).

The importance of Xinjiang has been of strategic nature throughout Chinese history. Xinjiang along with Central Asia has with the center of historical transition in the Eurasian continent, especially this region has been the middle point which has linked the civilizations of Europe and Asia. "A role underpinned by their centrality to the historical opposition of the pastoral-nomadic core of Central Asia to the agricultural civilizations of the Eurasian periphery" (Millward 2007). During the time when rivalries sprouted between Chinese based principalities and Mongolia, the significance of the steppes and oasis land of Xinjiang also rose. At that point of regional strife and rivalries, China's authority was established in Xinjiang, "as the China-based states attempted to cut-off the nomadic power's access to grain and revenue from trade" (Christian 2000: 16-17; Barfield 1981). "This is borne out by the historical record, not only of the Han-Xiongnu rivalry between 100 BC and 100AD, but also the subsequent Tang-Turk rivalry of the

sixth to eighth centuries through to the Qing and the Zunghars in the mid-eighteenth century” (Lattimore 1940: 306).

However, none of the China based rulers or dynasties were able to hold the territory of Xinjiang continuously for a longer period of time. “Even the Qing, regarded as the most successful and expansionist of China-based dynasties in Inner Asia (except the Mongols), only held Xinjiang for barely sixty years after its conquest in 1759 before the first wave of Turkic-Muslim unrest and rebellion occurred.” After the fall of the Qing dynasty in 1911, there was instability in the western frontier of China, and these developments made suitable conditions for the Hans of China to establish their rule in Xinjiang (Clarke 2012: 8-9).

PRC with the help of People’s Liberation Army established its control over Xinjiang in October 1949. From 1949 till 1991, China majorly focused over linking and integrating Xinjiang with the rest of the country. It wanted to overcome the hurdles of connectivity and lack of communication linkages, which were the causes of failure for the previous dynasties and rulers in holding Xinjiang. It can be said that “China succeeded in overcoming the obstacles of distance and communication by 1990-91 through the development of a long-term strategy of extending modern, industrialized infrastructure (i.e. railroads, highways, radio, telecommunications, etc.) into the region” (Clarke 2008: 111).

Post 1991, the regional security environment changed with the demise of USSR and suddenly security at its western frontier became of utmost importance for China. For China it was a major change because with rising need for increased diplomatic activity now it had to deal with a number of independent states instead of one Soviet Russian. The respite from the absence of superpower got replaced by the prospects of developing relations with the newly formed unstable Central Asian states. Alongside the threat of Islamic extremism and Pan-Turkic revival also started looming over China, as Xinjiang being in the proximity of these states and the chances of having an extremist spill over in Xinjiang became more probable. The disintegration of USSR, and the coming up of Central Asian states also gave hopes to separatist Uyghurs, which led to a wave of wave of unrest in Xinjiang in the 1990s (Clarke 2010: 8-9; Tukmadiyeva 2013: 91).

“On April 5, 1990, in the township of Baren, ZeydinYusup, the leader of the East Turkistan Islamic Party led a protest with around 200 men. They marched to the local government office and demanded an end to the mass immigration of Han Chinese into Xinjiang. The Chinese government initially sent in a detachment of armed police to the site of the disturbance. The Uyghur militants and authorities started fighting, and the violence spread across the town. The uprising, which lasted for several days, ended when the Chinese government sent hundreds of heavily armed police and soldiers to quell the riots” (Clarke and Christofferson 1993: 130-151; Han 2013: 52-53)

The amount of threat which was perceived by Beijing due to the combining of internal and external factors “was illustrated by Vice-Premier Wang Zhen’s exhortation during a visit to the provincial capital of Urumqi for the regional authorities to construct a ‘great wall of steel’ to defend the motherland from ‘hostile external forces’ and ‘national splittists’ internally” (Clarke 2014). Therefore, China’s primary objective while framing its Central Asia policy in the 1990s was to safeguard stability in the Xinjiang province. Beijing furthered this policy by ensuring that these newly formed states recognize and respect, their “One China” discourse and also keep a check on separatist and extremist elements among the Uyghur diasporic communities in the region. In this context Xing Guangcheng, an eminent author who has been working on China argued that, “to a larger extent the stability and prosperity of Northwest China is closely bound up with the stability and prosperity in Central Asia” (Mckerras and Clarke 2009: 96).

On 26<sup>th</sup> April 1996, in Shanghai the presidents of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan met and formed Shanghai five, with the aim to foster mutual trust and initiate confidence building measures, with an idea to enhance regional cooperation (Hu 2004: 132). The membership of this organization was extended to Uzbekistan on its sixth anniversary in 2001. The presidents of all the six countries of this group declared the beginning of a new multi-national regional cooperation organization in the Eurasian continent. On 15 June 2001, the name Shanghai Co-operation Organisation (SCO) was given to this regional initiative. “The eastward expansion of NATO, the strengthening of the US-Japan security alliance and common aspirations regarding a multi-polar world, brought China and Russia closer. To carry out a joint struggle against national

separatism, international terrorism and religious extremism was the objective of this organization, until the St Petersburg Summit in June 2002, when a trade component was also added to the other activities of the SCO” (Chaudhuri 2005: 24-25).

Moreover, “developments in this realm have also illustrated China’s strategy to use Xinjiang’s geo-strategic position as a launching pad to establish important linkages not only with Central Asia, which can be seen with One Belt, One Road initiative, in which China plans to establish a link to the historical “Silk Road” which connected East Asia, Central Asia and the Mediterranean region over roughly 800 years ago” (Clarke 2013: 4) This historic system of extensive trade routes led to the exchange of not only goods, but also of ideas, cultures and political influence between the East and the West.

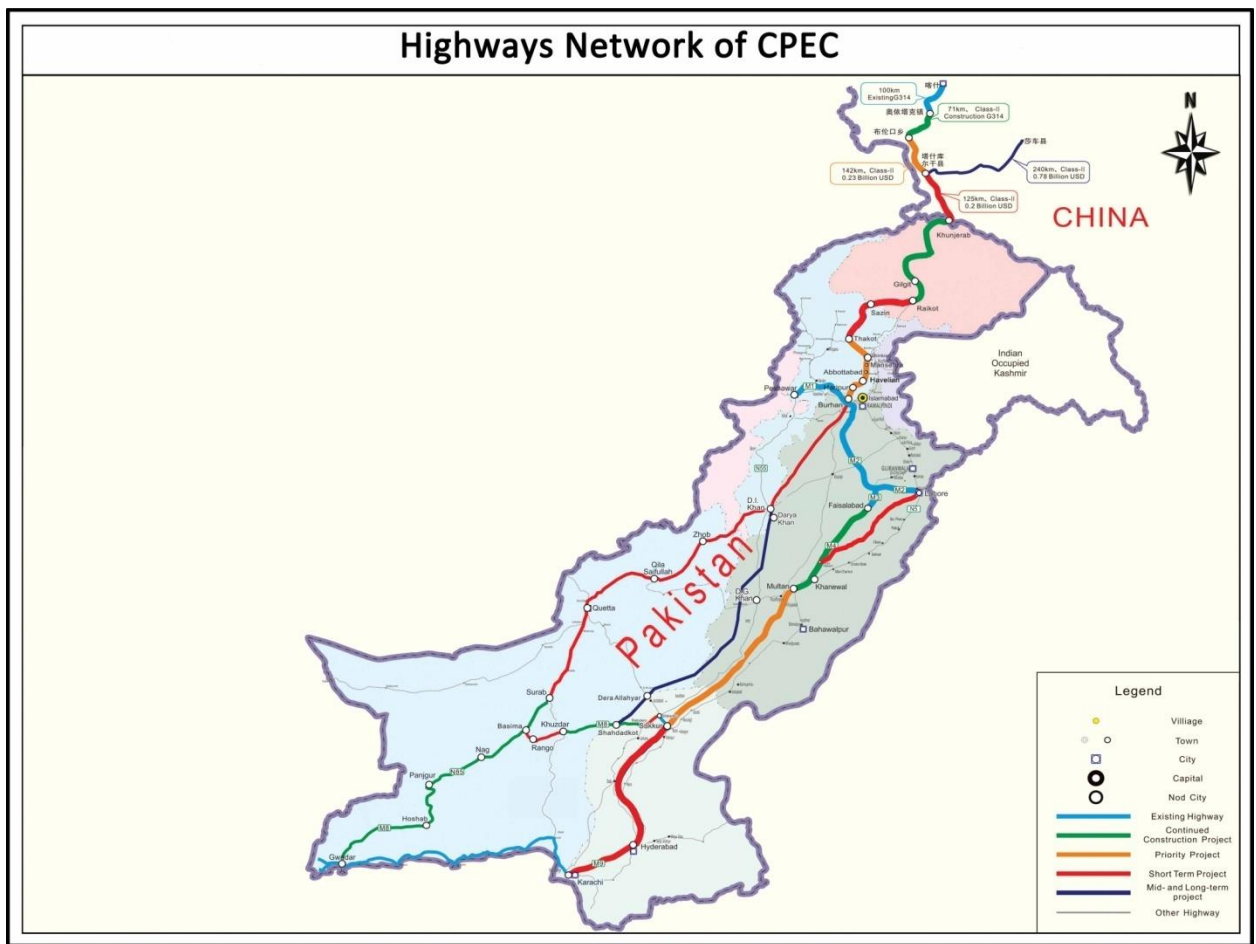
“While Sino-Pakistani cooperation in the development, improvement and maintenance of the Karakoram Highway- that links the major city of southern Xinjiang, Kashgar, with Islamabad - has been ongoing since the opening of the highway in 1969, it has received renewed attention since 1991” (Haider 2005: 538-539). The most significant part of this cooperation have been the development of deep water Gwadar port in Arabian sea, which is linked with Kashgar via KKH. However with the launch of CPEC, the significance of this port has increased multi-fold (see Map 4). As the map illustrates, from the top right corner, the CPEC highway starts from Kashgar with the blue colour line and it meet the Gwadar port in the down left corner of the map with green line. The colour blue denotes existing highway and green means under construction project.

Strategically, “Gwadar provides China with access to the Arabian Sea and potential diversification of its oil imports from the Gulf States and Africa through a secure, land-based route to Xinjiang” (Haider 2005: 98). Additionally this port would provide the shortest route for the oil and gas exports of Central Asia to the world markets, while China’s enhanced involvement in the port after CPEC would provide it with extensive ability to monitor Indian movements in the Indian Ocean along with the presence of US Navy in the Persian Gulf.

The economic benefits of Gwadar port are not only going to be limited to Pakistan and China but would also benefit Central Asia, considering the regional economic engagement China is offering through OBOR and CPEC. “The upgradation of the

Karakoram Highway and successful operation of the port estimated to China's dependency from the sea route and the distance between Kashgar to Gwadar would remain only 2800 kms and cargo trade volume from 200,000 twenty-foot containers in 2005 to nearly 300,000 by 2015" (Starr 2007: 395). The distance that exports from Xinjiang would have to travel to get to international markets will be halved from 4000 kilometers to China's east coast that they currently have to traverse to 2000 kilometers south to Gwadar (Clarke 2008: 106).

**Map 4: Highways Network of CPEC**



Source: China Pakistan Economic Corridor Maps, China Pakistan Economic Corridor Maps, [Online: Web] Accessed 17 April 2017, URL: <http://cpec.gov.pk/maps>

Apart from having individually specific geostrategic importance for both Pakistan and China, these two regions cumulatively are also of immense strategic significance for both

these countries. Staging the first reason, as both these regions share a long border, this helps in furthering 'all weather' friendship. Furthermore, after the construction of Karakoram Highway with the collaborated efforts of Pakistan and China, Gilgit-Baltistan provides China an access to the Arabian Sea, linking further to the Indian Ocean and Gulf of West Asia. China's aim to control this region is also linked with its objective to have access to Pakistan, through which it can hasten its overland transport of resources and reduce its dependency over the long sea routes. "Beijing has also planning to invest in high speed rail and road links through Gilgit and Baltistan. The geo-political significance of Gilgit-Baltistan for China reflects in her building railway line, gas pipeline and road links on this highway" (Saini and Dar 2013: 48).

On the other hand, Xinjiang's border proximity with Gilgit-Baltistan provides China an easy access in the region, especially after 1963 when Pakistan gifted 'Shaksgam Valley' a part of this region, to China under 'Sino-Pak border agreement, in order to enhance China's presence in the region and consequently outflanking India's claim over the disputed region.

However, with the official inauguration of CPEC project in 2015 Gilgit-Baltistan have come in limelight again. Although China has been able to make inroads into the region through its previous development projects, CPEC, touted as China's largest investment project in Pakistan so far. Although, it's just not Pakistan who is gaining out of this CPEC initiative, as Kashgar in Xinjiang being the starting point of CPEC project, its bagging a lot of investment. In February 2017, Chinese authorities in Xinjiang said that "they will inject record funding into building new roads this year so it can better serve as China's trade hub linking countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt. New infrastructure projects are also expected to bring more job opportunities for locals, the region's top economic planning official said. This year, the northwestern region will invest 170 billion yuan (\$24.8 billion) into new roads, up nearly six fold from 2016" (Weihua and Jia 2017). According to Zhang Chunlin, the director of the Xinjiang Development and Reform Commission, "this region has never seen such a huge investment in road construction". Zhang further added that "the region will also invest 8.1 billion yuan in constructing railways and 4.8 billion yuan in civil aviation projects,



both up by 50 percent from last year. The investment in building roads, railways and airports this year will top the total funding for transportation infrastructure from 2011 to 2015. Building a highway network in a region that takes up one-sixth of China's territory is a priority." As per Zhang, "about 40 percent of the cities and counties in Xinjiang are not connected by highways. Without the highways, oil, coal and agricultural products of Xinjiang cannot be shipped out of the region smoothly, and logistics costs will remain high" (Weihua and Jia 2017).

In the 2017 annual session of the National People's Congress of China, the Xinjiang delegation proposed "the construction of high-speed railways linking the regional capital of Urumqi and southern Xinjiang's Kashgar, the starting point of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), as well as another one connecting Urumqi and northern Xinjiang's Horgos, a land port on the China-Kazakhstan border. The delegation also proposed starting construction on the China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway, which has long been discussed and planned." Construction of the railway lines from Xinjiang to Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan is very urgent to enhance economic cooperation, the national lawmakers from Xinjiang said. "A total of 223 westbound trains carrying construction materials, agricultural produce, garments and other merchandise traveled via nine cross-border routes linking Xinjiang to Central Asian countries in 2016," said Hu Kaijiang, director of the Xinjiang Economic and Information Commission. In 2017 itself, "Xinjiang plans to expand operations to run 400 westbound cross-border trains to facilitate exports of technology and equipment and seek new growth opportunities", Hu further added (Jia March 2017).

Geographic location, rich natural resources and preferential policies introduced to encourage opening-up would provide Xinjiang advantages in becoming the core area on the economic belt. Becoming a key player on the economic belt will also benefit the region's social development, only if it would be able to include the native population of Xinjiang as a shareholder of profit in this project.

At present the increased Chinese investments under CPEC, in Xinjiang and Gilgit-Baltistan in the fields of infrastructure and natural resource extraction display China's

long term plans in the region, thus is going to have a direct impact over the security imperatives of India.

Considering the immense geo-strategic significance of these two regions, it can be conceived that the political control of these two regions would undoubtedly provide an immense strategic foothold in this region. Hence, Pakistan and China carried forward a set of policies to gain indispensable authority over both these regions in order to utilize the geographic location advantage and natural resources of these regions to further their respective political and economic interests. Therefore, to understand the root cause of the social and political unrest in Gilgit and Baltistan, the subsequent chapters deal with examining the policies carried forward by Pakistan and China in these regions and their outcomes.

**Chapter Three:**  
**Pakistan's policy towards Gilgit-Baltistan**

After the partition of the Indian sub-continent in 1947, the princely states of British India were given a choice to either join India or Pakistan. The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari Singh initially decided to remain independent. However under diplomatic pressure from India and Pakistan, the Maharaja signed a stand-still agreement on 12<sup>th</sup> August 1947 and sent it to both India and Pakistan to buy some time. The agreement read, “Jammu and Kashmir Government would welcome Standstill Agreement with Union of India/Pakistan on all matters on which there exists arrangements with the outgoing British India Government.” Pakistan accepted Maharaja’s offer and sent a communication to the Prime Minister of J&K on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1947. It read, “The Government of Pakistan agrees to have Standstill Agreement with Jammu and Kashmir for the continuation of existing arrangements ...”<sup>10</sup> India on the contrary did not accept the proposal and asked the Maharaja to send his official representative to Delhi to discuss the offer in detail (Gajrani 2004: 166).

Following the declaration of partition between India and Pakistan, communal violence broke out between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in the state of Punjab, as the state was also getting divided along with India. The riots were based on communal lines and it started spreading in other parts of India as well, along with the state of Jammu and Kashmir. In J&K riots were mostly limited to Jammu region, and Muslims were getting targeted here, which led to rebellion against the Maharaja in Poonchh region of the state in September 1947. Pakistan utilised this opportunity and launched an invasion in Kashmir with the help of armed Pakhtun tribesmen and reached till 15 miles from Srinagar (Bose 2013: 243; Fact Sheet on Jammu & Kashmir 2012; Lamb 2002: 136-137; Schofield 2000: 60).<sup>11</sup> Assessing its army’s inability to defeat these tribesmen Hari Singh asked for India’s military assistance, but Nehru agreed to provide help only on the precondition that the Maharaja signs the instrument of accession with India (Kashmir Affairs- Accession of Kashmir state to the Dominion of India 1947, National Archives).

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<sup>10</sup> “History Of Jammu & Kashmir”, Jammu and Kashmir Government , [Online: Web] Accessed 25 April 2017, URL: <http://jakemp.nic.in/aboutj&k/history.htm>

<sup>11</sup> Outward Telegram from High Commission from India to The United Kingdom, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/do133-611.jpg>

Maharaja agreed to the terms of India and signed the instrument of accession on 26<sup>th</sup> October and on the same day Indian forces were air lifted to Srinagar to provide help to the state forces. India also agreed to the accession after receiving the consent of Sheikh Abdullah, who was a popular secular leader of National Conference in the state (Instrument of Accession of Jammu and Kashmir State 1947: Dasgupta 2002: 49). The members of NC, mostly Muslims in the valley provided logistical support to the Indian forces (Singh 1995: 106). Indian intervention in Kashmir infuriated Mohammad Ali Jinnah. On 27<sup>th</sup> October he ordered Lt. General Douglas Gracey, Chief of the Pakistan Army, to lead Pakistan army into Kashmir, but the Supreme Commander, Field Marshall Auchinlek persuaded him to pull back his orders. However, this withdrawal of orders was short lived and Jinnah approved the military supply to the raiders in November 1947. Later in 1948 Jinnah dispatched his regular army troops in Kashmir but kept on denying its involvement until late July 1948 (Dasgupta 2002: 50-51; Lamb 2002: 136-137).

Meanwhile in the Northern Areas of J&K, as discussed in detail in the previous Chapter, Major Brown along with the local disenchanting people took over Gilgit and declared it as independent. Major Brown sent panic-stricken wireless messages to Pakistani authorities in Peshawar to take over the area and as a result Pakistan sent its first political agent, Sardar Mohammad Alam to formalize the take over. The accession took place on 28<sup>th</sup> April 1949 with the representatives of 'Azad Kashmir' and Muslim Conference signing the accord. "The agreement attempted to legitimise Pakistan's administrative control over Gilgit and Baltistan" (Singh 1995: 41). Major Brown termed his action as a coup and notified the authorities in Peshawar about Gilgit's accession to Pakistan. Sir George Cunningham, the governor of the NWFP, on learning about Brown's coup directed him to restore order in Gilgit (Sarila 2005: 333-334).

India's Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1948 lodged a complaint in the United Nations Security Council, invoking article 34 and 35 charter to call for a peaceful settlement between India and Pakistan over the conflict of Kashmir. Nehru followed Mountbatten's advice to take this step, although his deputy Sardar Patel was strongly against this move (Deora and Grover, 1991: 28) In the complaint, India mentioned its acceptance of going along with the will of people of J&K and to conduct a "plebiscite or

referendum under international auspices,” once the aggressor was evicted (Hingorani 2016: 164).

The United Nations Security Council on 20 January 1948, established a three-member UN Commission on India and Pakistan (UNCIP) with the objective to assess the situation in J&K and exercise mediation. The Council further expanded the commission to five members on 21<sup>st</sup> April and levied it with the job to restore peace in the state and initiate the process of a plebiscite, after the withdrawal of tribal troops. Especially after Pakistan’s Foreign Minister’s acceptance of the presence of Pakistan Army in Kashmir on 7<sup>th</sup> July 1948, UNCIP passed a resolution on 13<sup>th</sup> August 1948 and directed Pakistan to withdraw its regular troops along with the tribesmen, after which both these countries should conduct a plebiscite under the supervision of UN (UN Maintenance of Peace and Security Chapter VIII 1948: 344-346; The Jammu and Kashmir Issue 2013; The Kargil review committee report 2000: 43-44)

India and Pakistan agreed partially on the UNCIP resolution of 13<sup>th</sup> August 1948 to maintain cease fire but Pakistan refused to withdraw its troops from the Jammu and Kashmir under the situation there was no point for India to withdraw her troops. The ceasefire came into effect on 1<sup>st</sup> January 1949. UNCIP sent a monitoring group for India and Pakistan (UNMGIP) on 24<sup>th</sup> January 1949, to J&K “in order to monitor the 840 km long cease fire line across Jammu and Kashmir. This Cease Fire Line (CFL) was later renamed in 1972 as the Line of Control (LoC). The presence of the UNMGIP was approved by India and Pakistan through an agreement in Karachi on 27 July 1949”<sup>12</sup> (Noorani 1996: 271-273). UN Secretary General appointed Fleet Admiral Chester Nimitz, an American, as the plebiscite administrator,<sup>13</sup> but he was not able to perform his job because both India and Pakistan objected over the implementation of the UNCIP resolution over plebiscite, based on their personal interpretations over the issue of demilitarization.

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<sup>12</sup> UNMOGIP Background, [Online: Web] Accessed 22 June 2016, URL: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmogip/background.shtml>

<sup>13</sup> UN Security Council, “Resolution 80 (1950) of 14 March 1950S/RES/80 (1050)”, [Online: web] Accessed 22 June 2016, URL: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3b00f1b710.html>

In December 1949, “the Security Council entrusted its President General A. G. L. McNaughton of Canada to negotiate a demilitarization plan in consultation with India and Pakistan.” Pakistan accepted a simultaneous demilitarization but Indian government refused to demilitarize its troops, on the grounds that Pakistan being the aggressor state should vacate captured areas and India claimed the legality based on the instrument of accession signed by Maharaja Hari Singh. Without India’s support the initiative failed. Therefore in 1949, the cease-fire line separating the Indian and Pakistan controlled parts of Jammu and Kashmir was formally put into effect (Blinkenberg 1997: 110).

After the accession to India, Indian administered J&K followed a democratic path with constitutional representation as per Article 370 of the Indian constitution (see Appendix I). The part of J&K under Pakistani occupation was divided into Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) and the Northern Areas (present day Gilgit-Baltistan). The control of the Northern areas was further handed over by the leaders of AJK to Pakistan under the Karachi Agreement of 28 April 1949 (Warikoo 2014: 159-160).

### **Pakistan’s policies towards Gilgit-Baltistan and the region’s situation:**

The northern parts of Pakistan occupied Kashmir including Gilgit agency and other adjoining vassals, were brought under direct control of the central government of Pakistan after the Karachi Agreement and was named as ‘Northern Areas’. Being a disputed territory it is not included in the constitution of Pakistan. Therefore, the people of this region have no constitutional representation and are denied of fundamental rights. This region has been directly ruled by the Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas Affairs (KANA).<sup>14</sup>

Northern Areas has followed a markedly different route when it comes to Constitutional development, as compared to AJK. In 1948, introductory judicial structures were installed to run administration in AJK. To establish a proper system of administration, Rules of Business (RoB) were framed in 1950, under which all the legislative and executive powers were rested with the president of AJK. In addition to this an ‘AJK state council’ was also formed in 1960, purely on election basis, it constituted 24 member out

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<sup>14</sup>The details about Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan can be obtained from <http://www.kana.gov.pk>

of which 12 were to be elected by the people of AJK and the other 12 by the refugees of J&K settled in other parts of Pakistan. In another major democratic move, the system of adult franchise was included in 1970 through the Jammu and Kashmir Act, 1970. This led to the election of President and legislative assembly on the basis of adult franchise for the first time in AJK. Finally in parliamentary system was set in motion in AJK in 1974, through the AJK interim Constitution Act 1974.<sup>15</sup> These facts represent the democratic form of institutional setup was being created in AJK since the very beginning.

On the contrary, Gilgit-Baltistan followed a different route and was governed more like a colony. Pakistan followed the British imperial model of centralized governance and initially installed a political agent for the region. Being administered by the NWFP for sometime the command of the Northern Areas was handed over to KANA in 1950. Frontier Crimes Regulations (FCR), the tool used by Pakistan government to administer the Federally Administered Tribal Agencies (FATA) was then applied over Gilgit-Baltistan (International crisis group Asia report 2006; Stobdan and Chandran 2008: 4). Most of the local rulers were co-opted by Pakistan by offering them some subsidies and were also allowed to retain major portions of their collected revenue from their domains. While nominal executive, judicial and legislative powers were accorded to rulers of Nagar and Hunza, as they could exercise it only according to the agent's directions (Dani 2001: 409).

In 1952 another development was made in terms of the administration of the Northern Areas which depicts how the region was politically marginalised. The joint secretary of KANA was given an additional charge of the administration of the Northern Areas being a political resident but had to be situated in Islamabad instead of Gilgit. This form of administration was practiced till 1967 and then a position of political resident was created in Northern Areas with its head quarters in Gilgit. The political resident being the representative of federal government has superlative powers. He was the financial and revenue commissioner, he was also the head of the judiciary and local administration and was also responsible for the enforcements of the FCR. The political resident was assisted by two other political agents, posted in both Gilgit and Baltistan, after the latter got an

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<sup>15</sup> "Azad Jammu and Kashmir- An Introduction", Legislative Assembly of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, [Online: Web] Accessed 31 March 2017, URL: <http://www.ajkassembly.gok.pk/ajkintroduction.htm>.



agency status. The political resident also had legislative powers and used to exercise them in accordance to the federal government (Dani 2001: 409).

In 1969, a Northern Areas Advisory Council (NAAC) was created by General Yahya Khan, with the objective to administer Northern Areas. However, it also came out to be more of a nominal body because it was kept subordinate to Pakistan's political resident and didn't possess any decision making powers (Kruetzmann 2008: 209). This also explains the way Pakistan government was unwilling to pass on any political power to the people of Northern Areas.

Under the government of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, some major administrative changes were brought in the Northern Areas with the abrogation of FCR, agency system and the rule of hereditary princes. Furthermore, Gilgit and Baltistan were converted into districts. The NAAC was replaced by Northern Areas Council (NAC) in 1974, and system of adult franchise was introduced to elect its members. The political resident of the region was named as resident commissioner, and the political agents became deputy commissioners (Discord in Pakistan 2007: 9).

Despite all the administrative changes brought by the Bhutto regime in the Northern Areas, the structure of government formation was denied to them, which was given to AJK under the 1974 interim-constitution, which provided them their "president, prime minister, legislative assembly, supreme court, high court, public service commission and even flag and anthem".<sup>16</sup> (Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim Constitution Act 1974; International Crisis groups Asia report 2007) Pakistan only controls defense, communications and foreign policy in the case of AJK and regarding rest of the powers AJK government has autonomy, including directly elected Prime minister, which is not the case with Northern Areas.

In 1990 two residents of Diamer district Malik Muhammad Miskeen and Haji Amir Jan, of the present day Gilgit-Baltistan, filed a petition in the Azad Jammu and Kashmir High Court, seeking the constitutional status of the people living in the Northern Areas and

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<sup>16</sup>"The Azad Jammu and Kashmir Interim constitution Act, 1974 (Act VIII of 1974)", Legislative Assembly of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, (Online: Web) Accessed 25 April 2017, URL: <http://www.ajkassembly.gok.pk/ajkinterimconstitutionact1974.html>

demanding participation in the Federation of Pakistan. They also sought that the people of Northern Areas should be provided the right to access the Supreme Court of Pakistan and that the Provincial Government's status should be defined (Sahni and Cherian 2007).

The AJK High Court took critical note of the arbitrary and unrepresentative administrative system and the absence of fundamental rights in the Northern Areas in its verdict. The Chief Justice of the court ruled "Azad Kashmir Government to immediately assume the administrative control of the Northern Areas and to annex it within its administration, creating administrative and judicial machinery and provide due representation to people of Gilgit-Baltistan in the legislative assembly and council of Azad Kashmir".<sup>17</sup>

The government of Pakistan filed an appeal against this judgement of AJK high court in the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court's verdict came on 14<sup>th</sup> September 1994 stating, "the Northern Areas are part of Jammu & Kashmir state but are not part of Azad Kashmir as defined in the Azad Kashmir Interim Constitution Act, 1974"<sup>18</sup>(Ali 2001: 120-121). However this judicial struggle led to inclusion of some administrative changes. In 1994 a Northern Areas Executive Council was formed to provide a nominal representative government with 26 members with only advisory powers and no legislative authority (Bertrand and Laliberte 2010: 97).

Even these changes didn't bring much of a difference and the real power continue to rest with the Ministry of Kashmir and Northern Areas (KANA) and its joint secretary, and Pakistan continued to govern it as a colony. Another change came in 1999, when the Supreme Court of Pakistan noticed the "dictatorial and colonial system at work in Gilgit and Baltistan" and ordered the government of Pakistan to install an elected representative government with an independent judiciary, to provide basic fundamental rights to the people of Northern Areas within a time span of six months. This action taken by the Supreme Court was in response to a petition filed by Wahab al-Khairi (founder of Al-Jihad Trust, Rawalpindi). The petition pleaded that the court should intervene and help in

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<sup>17</sup>Historical perspective of Gilgit-Baltistan, 2015 Pamir Times, [Online: Web] Accessed 22 May 2017 URL: <http://pamirtimes.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/finalreport.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> The Azad Jammu and Kashmir interim constitution act, 1974, [Online: Web] Accessed on 17 June 2017, URL: [http://www.ajkassembly.gok.pk/AJK\\_Interim\\_Constitution\\_Act\\_1974.pdf](http://www.ajkassembly.gok.pk/AJK_Interim_Constitution_Act_1974.pdf)

providing the basic human rights to the people of Northern Areas. In accordance with the Supreme Court's order, Government of Pakistan framed a political package for this region. KANA's minister Retired General Abdul Majeed Malik visited the area and met with the local representative. He took an account of the situation in the region and on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 1999, announced that government would soon bring a constitutional reform and with these reforms it would transform the Northern Areas Council into Northern Areas Legislative Council (Institute of policy Studies Report 2004).

Federal government in order to install elected representative governance system in the region announced the procurement of elections for the local bodies and the Council. While the proposed actions of government were still under discussion and scrutiny, the army took control on 12<sup>th</sup> October 1999. However, the new government also stood by the decisions already made about conducting the elections as scheduled. Under the supervision of military the elections took place. Amendment in the "Legal Frame Work Order 1994" however was executed after 9 months on 7<sup>th</sup> July 2000.

According to the government's announced package the renamed Northern Areas Legislative Council (NALC) was installed and an appellate court of justice was provided. In 1999, the NALC elections took place, however even this body had limited legislative and financial powers (IDSA PoK project report 2011: 17). Hence, the absence of representation in the federal government or constitution still continued, and the representatives of people still couldn't address to the demands or grievances of them. The executives of the Northern Areas did not have any electoral constituency and kept on serving the federal government with having any accountability to the people. Being devoid of having a decision making voice in Islamabad, they also didn't have any control or say over the formation of the national budget. "Federal allocations to the provinces are made on the basis of the National Finance Commission (NFC) Award" (International crisis group Asia report 2007).

The chief executive of the region in January 2007 announced that the federal government is in the process of framing a constitutional reforms package and is going to send it to the federal cabinet for approval (Muhammad 2007).

Eventually that package came up as the Gilgit-Baltistan Empowerment and Self Governance Order, 2009). This order renamed ‘Northern Areas’ as ‘Gilgit-Baltistan’. Prime Minister Gilani, unveiled the package on 8<sup>th</sup> September 2009 and the first thing it mentioned was, giving the name to the region linked to their identity. “Anchored in article 258 of the Constitution of Pakistan, the Order, though short of providing constitutional status to GB, has given the region identity by renaming it”<sup>19</sup> (Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance Order, 2009). “It was a long-standing demand of the people, since northern areas merely denotes a direction rather than describe a people or their land” (Ali, Naqash and Nagri 2015). Moreover, “the region’s tourist economy was being shrunk due to its location being confused with terror-infested FATA. A change of name thus served to rebuild the image of the region too” (Hussain 2009)

Along with new name for the region, the 2009 order also replaced the 1994 Northern Areas Legal Framework Order (LFO) and provided the region with the the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly (GBLA), a legislative body with powers to legislate on 61 subjects and choose its own Chief Minister through elections (Freedom House 2013: 808). With the commencement of this package, Gilgit-Baltistan also got a position for Governor just like the other provinces of Pakistan, and the post of Chief executive was abrogated and its powers were given to the Chief Minister instead of newly created post of Governor. Ministers were the advisors in the legislative assembly. “The leader of the Legislative Assembly would be known as chief minister; the Assembly would have 33 members, of whom 24 are to be directly elected; it will have powers to legislate on 61 subjects” (Lansford 2012: 1102).

In addition, the Governor was given the power to head a council of 12 members. This council would comprise of 6 members from the legislative assembly and 6 to be appointed by the Governor itself. This new order also provided this region to have its own a public service commission and Chief election commissioner. The government provided this order to give Gilgit-Baltistan a “province-like” status.

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<sup>19</sup>Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance) Order, 2009, Government of Pakistan Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Northern Areas, (Online: Web), Accessed on 23 April 2016, URL: <http://www.gbchiefcourt.gov.pk/downloads/self-governance-order-2009.pdf>

The 2009 reform is concerned only with the guarantee of maintaining some sort of figurative political representation and to deal with matters of administration and development , rather than giving answers to people's citizen ship rights demands. (Subramanian 2009)

The 2009 reform order is no more than a ruling approved by Pakistan's Federal Cabinet. Gilgit-Baltistan has no representative in the National Assembly because the people of the area cannot participate in state elections. It creates new figure of the Governor (in line with the other provinces of Pakistan) with wider powers to supervise the decisions of the Assembly and establish a Supreme Appellate Court. However, despite some minor improvements, the main debate on the political characteristics of Gilgit-Baltistan persists with important implications in terms of rights for the local population. Considering an example, Article 9.2 of the 2009 Order, which deals with the freedom of association, refers to limit of association or political expression regarding activities detrimental to the 'ideology of Pakistan' (see Appendix II). This vagueness about "how the ideology of Pakistan has to be interpreted' has clear implications for imposing restrictions on autonomist movements, apart from other religious or cultural considerations (Parker 2016: 147-149).

According to some indigenous political parties of Gilgit-Baltistan like Balawaristan National Front (BNF), Karakorum National Movement (KNM), Gilgit Baltistan United Movement (GBUM), Boloristan Labour Party (BLP) and Gilgit Baltistan Democratic Alliance (GBDA), this order was expected to address the long standing needs of the people but it's a mere eye-wash and does not meet the genuine demands of the rejected people of this region. The Gilgit-Baltistan United Movement (GBUM) termed 2009 order as deceptive and illusory. The chairman of this party Manzoor Hussain Parwana, who is in favour of total independence from Pakistan, in his reaction to the package noted: "The so-called provincial set-up is fraudulent and a blackmailing offer of the government, which aims to conceal the political atrocities and brutal colonial control on the people in the occupied region" (PoK Project Report 2011: 18)

The Pakistan media also addressed the limited promises made by this 2009 order and stated that "other than recognizing the identity of the people of the region through a

change in nomenclature, rest of the package was a pack of gimmickry”. Described as “symbolic gesture of empathy towards the people rather than a real change in the governance structure of the area” (Abbas 2009). “It was not meant to address the concerns of politically and economically deprived people of Gilgit-Baltistan. The elections that followed were not free and fair. In reality, the Legislative Assembly and the council will have to function under the strict control of Ministry of Kashmir Affairs and Gilgit-Baltistan (the successor of KANA) in Islamabad” (PoK project report 2011: 18).

Even after the implementation of the 2009 the so called self governance order, the Gilgit-Baltistan elections which happened in the same year in November were not free and fair according to ‘Free and Fair Election Network’ report (Dawn November 2009). Some of the International NGOs working in the region reported serious irregularities in the process of elections in Gilgit-Baltistan (Lansford 2012: 1102). The political and democratic ambiguity of Gilgit-Baltistan can be simply assessed by this simple fact that this “region is not included in the Pakistani constitution and has no constitution of its own, meaning there is no fundamental guarantee of civil rights, democratic representation, or separation of powers” (Freedom House 2011: 783).

The helplessness can be assessed from the statement of Nawaz Khan Naji, founder of BNF and member of Gilgit-Baltistan legislative assembly. He argues that, “we are stateless people. We are caught up in the Kashmir dispute, although we left the state of Jammu and Kashmir under a coup but we were not accepted by Pakistan constitutionally” (Online interview July 2016). The process of marginalisation can thus be characterised here primarily by state denial of equal rights to the inhabitants of a specific territory they consider their own. The Pakistani state exercised power in Gilgit-Baltistan in a predominantly despotic manner (Mann 1984: 190), although it did progressively adopt a more kind tone in the form of guided governance. The spatial dependencies created, i.e., the historical relationship with Kashmir and the current setting within the state boundaries of Pakistan, have caused confusion in people’s understanding of the space they inhabit. Moreover, the undefined status of the region has raised the issue of sovereignty. Although the Pakistani state exerts authority and political control, and delivers key services to the population - albeit limited - it refuses to grant them proper

nationhood until the Kashmir conflict has been resolved. Trapped in a zone perceived as geo-strategically significant and previously a crossroads of multiple influences, the region of Gilgit-Baltistan has been marginalized as a colony.

### **Exploitation of natural Resources**

Gilgit-Baltistan is abundantly rich in natural resources. The region has substantial reserves of gold and other minerals. There are 168 deposits of gold in this region and the amount of gemstones can be assessed from the fact that Pakistan annually extracts around Rs 500 million worth of these stones from this region and is planning to explore other valuable minerals as well (Nagri 2016).<sup>20</sup> Pakistan is planning to exploit these gold mines through an agreement with the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). “According to the agreement, more than half of total share (56 per cent) will go to AusAID, and rest (46 per cent) will be equally divided between the Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation (PMDC) and the Pakistan government, namely Ministry of Kashmir and Northern Areas Affairs (KANA) and the Northern Areas administration” (Miandad, Shah, Khan and Ahmad 2014: 30; Bansal and Gupt 2007: 189).

The region also possesses thick forest range in the Dardistan province of Balwaristan, which covers almost 11000 hectares of the land. These forests yield to the government of Pakistan revenue of more than Rs 1.5 billion by way of timber. However, the local people of the region are paid a meager amount as royalty and are also denied of traditional usage of the forests (Bansal and Gupt 2007: 190-191).

Gilgit-Baltistan is also strategically important for Pakistan's water security. About 10 to 20 percent of Gilgit Baltistan is covered by glaciers. Between 30 to 50 percent of the Karakoram Range is glaciated, which is massive if compared to the Himalaya which has a cover of just 8-12 percent and even lower European Alps with mere 2.2 percent. An additional 30 to 40 percent of the region has seasonal snow, which represent a significant frozen fresh water reservoir that last from a single season to several decades through gradual accumulation. The glaciers and snow covers are crucial for the Indus Basin and

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<sup>20</sup> Mineral sector of Gilgit-Baltistan, [Online: Web] Accessed 12 March 2017, URL: <http://www.gilgitbaltistan.gov.pk/DownloadFiles/InvestmentPotential/Minerals.pdf>

form the major part of Indus River's perennial flow. Gilgit Baltistan's four rivers (Shigar, Shyok, Hunza, Ghizer/Gilgit) and countless streams constitute the main source of the river's flow (See Map 5). The mountainous ecology of this region is dotted with some of the world's largest glaciers outside the polar region. More than half of GB is located above 4500 meters. The prodigious glaciers situated in GB such as Biafo, Hisper, Batura, Baltoro, Gashabrum and Chogolungma, many of them about 40 to 70 km long) (Khan 2014: 3).

**Map 5: Rivers of Gilgit-Baltistan**



Source: Pamir Times, [Online: Web] Accessed 12 June 2017, URL: <https://i1.wp.com/pamirtimes.net/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/GB.gif?resize=600%2C440>

In 1980, Kala Bagh dam was proposed to be constructed by the federal government of Pakistan in the Punjab province, to address the shortage of water. However, due to the



immense pressure created by the provinces of NWFP, Sindh and Baluchistan against the construction of this dam, the project was dropped. The Kalabagh Dam, is proposed for construction along the Indus River in the northern Pakistan, with the aim to support agriculture and power production. Residents of the NWFP believe that they would be bearing an inordinate share of dam's environmental impact and, perhaps they also tend to fear inadequate compensation from neighbouring Punjab which would benefit far more from the dam's capacity to regulate water levels and generate hydropower. Downstream, Sindh residents contested the 'theft' of water and the impact on the salinity of the Indus near its mouth at the Arabian Sea, which would hurt coastal mangroves and local agriculture (Moran 2011: 89). However, the Ministry of Water and Power on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2016 has disclosed that the construction of the dam can be undertaken by the government only on the basis of a "consensus decision" (Khan 2016).

The foundation laid by Islamabad to construct the Diamer-Bhasha dam has been strongly opposed by the people of Gilgit-Baltistan, as according to them this would further add to their already unaddressed grievances. Gilgit-Baltistan's diamer district has been decided as the site of excavation. This dam "will submerge 30-32 villages (thousand of kanals of agricultural land along with 125 kilometer Karakoram Highway) and uprooting approximately 26,000-40,000 people" (Singh 2012: 601). Furthermore, while the dam is being built in Gilgit-Baltistan, the power plant is planned to be constructed in Bhasha, which is in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, which can be seen as an attempt to discard people of its royalty.

The dam has been opposed by local people on the grounds that "it will inundate around 32 villages of Dimaer district along with vast tracts of agricultural land and will have an adverse impact on the local environment" (Bansal 2008: 93). Local resistance also revolves around the absence of a political identity for Gilgit Baltistan, which even after the 2009 governance order is neither an independent entity nor a province of Pakistan. Groups opposed to dam construction carried out protests in Islamabad and elsewhere to put across their concerns to the authorities. They complained about the absence of local ownership of a huge project that is likely to impact the lives of large sections of the population. People resent the fact that they do not have any political and constitutional

rights even though they pay taxes to the government of Pakistan. All this has led to considerable unrest in the area (Singh 2012: 602).

Apart from this, the construction of this dam will also have immense demographic and ecological impacts, more than 30,000 people will be displaced (Diamer-Bhasha Dam 2012) and 37419 acres (IPR fact sheet 2016: 5) of agricultural land will be submerged. Huge damage to fish stock in the fresh water river system would happen due to the discharge of effluent and almost over 50,000 trees would be lost if the construction of this project goes on in Diamer (FODP 2011).

According to some expert economists of All-Parties National, “Gilgit-Baltistan should also receive a sum of Rs 1,470 crore every year in royalties from Islamabad for using the water resources of Indus river. Instead, Islamabad gives the area only Rs 225 crore, which helps little to improve its almost nonexistent infrastructure and rampant unemployment” (Behera 2007: 191).

Afzal Shigri, on these issues made the following important observations for Pakistan, “The FO (foreign offices) suicidal push to include this area in a future united state of Kashmir has serious repercussions for Pakistan. The country’s biggest water reservoir and lifeline cannot be allowed to be situated in a weak and unstable political entity. It is therefore vital that the constitutional status of this area is settled once and for all and this area is integrated in Pakistan with representation and in the national assembly and senate and its own provincial set up” (Shigri 2006) He also commented, “the Gilgit-Baltistan comprise a very sensitive and important region that opens up Pakistan to China and Central Asia” (Stobdan and Chandran 2008: 80).

The autonomous and self-sufficient people of Gilgit-Baltistan, with the natural resources at their bay, are totally dependent on Pakistan today, despite the increased connectivity through KKH. However, this link has been used by Pakistan for its own strategic gains and to drain out the wealth of Gilgit-Baltistan. This crucial lifeline in the recent years have been jeopardised by natural calamities like earthquakes and floods, affecting the life of the people of this region (Khan 2005).

### **Infused Demographic change in the region**

Gilgit-Baltistan's has a population of around 1.2 million, which includes four subdivisions of Islam: "Shias (41 percent), Sunnis (28 percent), Ismaili (20 percent), and Noorbakshi (11 percent) and with at least 24 linguistic and ethnic groups" (Hunzai 2013: 2; See Table 1 in Chapter 2). Gilgit-Baltistan being a Shia majority region has been directly governed by Islamabad. The state in order to have better control over this region, Pakistan attempted to alter the demographic balance of this region by infusing Sunni Muslims to this region. Pakistan being a Sunni majority state, which proclaims Islam as its "*raison d'être*," but taking the case of Gilgit-Baltistan it seems like, its acceptance of Islam is implicitly coded as Sunni. It would be discussed further that if there have been reservation among the majority Sunnis regarding the loyalty of the Shias of Gilgit-Baltistan, which led Islamabad to enforce demographic change in this region.

The roots of sectarian violence in Gilgit-Baltistan can be traced from the 1970s, when mutual invective campaigns were started by the religious leaders of both Shia and Sunni sects. The reforms taken under the Bhutto regime, which has been discussed earlier, has linkages with the Shia-Sunni conflict (PILDAT 2011: 13).

The princely kingdoms were abolished during 1972-74 by the Bhutto government in order to enhance control over the Northern Areas, so that the whole region could be brought under one administrative unit. After that the state agencies like intelligence, KANA bureaucracy and army were directed to embark a divide along the sectarian lines, in order to hamper secularism and regional solidarity. This divide and rule policy was propagated by the state through sponsoring sectarian religious organisations, which were guided to proliferate sectarian antagonism as way to divert political agreement. Intelligence sponsored religious leaders of both the sects accomplish this objective (Nosheen, 2008: 9-10)

Pakistan's another big first step to alter the demographic composition of Gilgit-Baltistan came in 1974, with the abrogation of State Subject status rule removed in relation to the Northern Areas/Gilgit-Baltistan. This meant that non-State Subjects were then provided with the right to purchase non-moveable property in this region. The significant consequence of this change was the serious demographic change that occurred in the

Northern Areas/Gilgit-Baltistan: the percentage of Shias has reduced from 80 per cent in 1947 to about 55 per cent in the early 2000s (Behera 2006: 196; Snedden 2015: 218-219).

Finally, in 1979 the state funded Islamisation and the Zia-ul-Haq's pro-Saudi stance stipulated the approval of the law to enforce payment of '*zakat*' (religious tax) to the government. This created serious uproar among the Shia community against this law. The growth of sectarianism was fostered in numerous ways by Zia. The policies like enforcement of '*zakat*', made the Shia community believe that the federal government is trying to establish a "Sunni-Hannafi" state, which is going to impose the Sunni way of Islam and other minorities are going to be persecuted.

The government's reforms aggravated sectarian tensions among the Shia and Sunni communities in Pakistan. Implementation of Islamic law raised the question: 'whose law?' among Shias. This community then protested that while they welcomed the implementation of Islam, they would not tolerate the imposition of regulations that stemmed from Sunni law school rather than Shia legal principles. As a result in early July 1980, leaders of this ethnic group convened a conference in Islamabad which drew more than 100,000 protestors. The agitated Shias then sieged the secretariat in Islamabad and thousands of them protested against the enforcements of the Zakat and Ushr ordinance. It could be seen as an indication that Shias were getting apprehensive about the Sunni style Islamisation of Pakistan (Esposito and Voll 1996: 111; Rashid 1996; Asia Report 2007: 16).

The alienation among this minority Muslim community in Gilgit-Baltistan exacerbated due to the attempts made by Zia to impose Sunni based Islam in the region. As a result "the Sunni Deobandi militant groups especially Sipah-e-Sahaba spread their reaches in this remote tribal region and the Shias and the Ismailis were made to submit to their puritanical aggression" (Bansal 2008: 84). The natives of Gilgit-Baltistan perceived that local administration is also taking the side of Sunni extremists. As the discontent among the majority Shia community in Gilgit-Baltistan rose, it further led to first major violence attack in Gilgit in May 1988. Pakistan perceived it as a 'Shia revolt' sponsored by Iran. This further infuriated Zia-ul-Haq and he in order to punish the Shias of Gilgit-Baltistan, sent horder of "Wahabi Pakhtoon tribesmen from NWFP and Afghanistan along with

Special Service Group (SSG) group commanded by then Brigadier Pervez Musharraf'. This planned genocidal move by Zia led to the massacre of over 700 Shias and the villages of Manawar, Darot, Jaglot, Pari, Bonji and Jalalabad were razed to the ground (Warikoo 2014: 207-208; Waterman 2014: 251; Indian Defence Review, 2002: 85).

According to media reports, low-intensity sectarian tension and political rivalry<sup>21</sup> instigated a massacre of hundreds of Shias in Gilgit by armed tribesmen from the tribal areas, who invaded Gilgit along the Karakoram Highway. "They destroyed crops and houses, lynched and burnt people to death in the villages around Gilgit town. The number of dead and injured was put in the hundreds" (Raman 2003). The savagery of these intruders from Pakistan's 'Wild West' left the peaceful residents of Gilgit and Baltistan stunned. Since then the locals have always perceived the Pakhtoons both from NWFP as well as refugees from Afghanistan, as agents of Pakistani establishment (Ahmed 2002: 38).

"After 1988 sectarian riots became a regular feature of Gilgit and Baltistan. The pattern showed that whenever the populace in Gilgit and Baltistan demanded their constitutional rights, there were riots" (PILDAT 2011). On 17<sup>th</sup> August 1993, on the death anniversary of Zia-ul-Haq, massive sectarian riots again broke out in Gilgit and more than 20 people got killed before army intervened and brought the situation under control.

Army had also accused Shias of amassing "weapons in mosques", which included M-46 bombs, which were brought from Iran. This followed persecution of Shias and a large number of Shias were arrested (Singh 1995: 139). Since 1988, increased persecution has created a strong sense of estrangement in the people of Gilgit-Baltistan and has led to the creation of ultra nationalist political groupings like Balwaristan National Front.

In May 2000, another issue of 'textbook controversy' erupted in Gilgit, which led to Shia people of Gilgit to move an agitation against the changed syllabus of the government school book in the region. The controversial textbook was published by Punjab Textbook

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<sup>21</sup> The attack was triggered by a quarrel between Shias and Sunnis in Gilgit. On 17 May 1988, Shias celebrated Eid-ul-Fitr, the festival marking the end of the Muslim fasting month, Ramadan, a day earlier than the Sunnis. Sunnis, who were still fasting, clashed with Shias, as a result of which a Shia student leader was seriously wounded. As violence escalated, two people were killed. After news of the violence spread to other parts of the region and beyond, Sunni mullahs in NWFP declared a jihad against Shias and called on volunteers to join.

Board and covered various subjects like Urdu, social studies, Islamiyat. The text regarding Islamiyat infuriated Shias and was totally unacceptable to them. According to them these textbooks are written in a way to show disregard to the Shia way of Islam, although the Sunni way of Islam was starkly glorified. For example, “it was argued that visual representations of performing prayers followed the Sunni style of prayer, implicitly delegitimizing the Shia way of being Muslim. Similarly, it was felt that the lives of Caliphs as well as the Prophet’s Companions were extensively discussed, while those of the revered Shia Imams were barely mentioned”. Moreover, “the approach to Islamic history was a purely Sunnite one. Only sayings of the Prophet (hadith) accepted by the Sunna were mentioned. Persons were described and valued according to the Sunnite tradition. Shi’ite personalities were left aside or not referred to in due form. Such representations were deemed to undermine the faith and identity of Shia youth” (Nosheen 2008: 1-2; Stober 2007: 390).

The ‘textbook controversy’ affected the Shia-Sunni relations so deeply that even after four years of the actual incident, the agitation started again in 2004. Which led to violent clashes between the Shia protestors and the state authorities, an atmosphere of serious sectarian antagonism prevailed and curfew was imposed for a period of 11 months to bring normalcy. The agreement was final taken to withdraw the controversial chapters from the textbooks in April 2005 and replace them with the books published by the NWFP Textbook Board and the National Book Foundation. A local Shia cleric Imam Aga Syed Z. Rizvi, helped the local state authorities to resolve the conflict to the satisfaction of the people of Gilgit-Baltistan (Nosheen 2008: 1-2; Behuria 2004: 79).

### **Ascending extremism and *Jihadi* influence in Gilgit-Baltistan**

The 1980’s witnessed the rise of religious fundamentalism in Gilgit-Baltistan under the aegis of Pakistan. The radical Islamisation policy of General Zia provided a major push to the growth of Islamic fundamentalism in the region. Pakistani leaders calculated that with absolute control of AJK and Northern Areas affairs with Islamabad, they can carry on a low cost tactical proxy war against India, especially in Indian part of Kashmir (Stobdan 2006: 89-90). In order to provide continuous support and help, a Kashmir Liberation Cell (KLC) was established in Muzaffrabad in 1987 under the patronage of

Pakistan's ISI. The Prime minister of AJK constituted a five member committee to suggest measures for making the cell effective (Kashmir Liberation Cell 2002 Dawn).

“Atleast 55 training camps are said to be located in the region and their cadres’ number close to 5,000” (Singh 2009: 34). The difficult mountainous terrain and proximity of these camps in respect to Indian side of Kashmir helps in making infiltration in J&K quite convenient, especially in summers. “Muzaffarabad and Kotli are known epicenters of such camps and dreaded militant organisations such as Lashkar-e-Toiba (LeT) and Hizbul Mujahideen have their operational headquarters there. Terrorist camps are noted to be widespread in Bhimber, Bakryal, Balakot, Chawari, Kotli, and Mangla. Lashkar has two camps in Muzaffarabad: Abdul-Bin-Masud and Danna. Hizbul has one in Muzaffarabad and the other in Mangla. Jaish-e-Mohammed also has a strong foothold in the region even though it operates chiefly from Balakot” (North West Frontier Province) (Singh 2009: 334-335).

The earthquake of 2005 led to the formation of cordial relations between the people and the extremist groups such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba, as they provided immense help to the people during the time of the calamity, camouflaged as a “social welfare organisation” Jamaat-ud-Dawa. Initially the state authorities were not able to reach most of the people and these terrorist groups provided relief to the affected people and the help was much appreciated by the local people during the critical time of relief work (Stobdan and Chandran 2008: 92). The absence of strong political institutions and poor socio-economic conditions of this region led the terrorist to move freely without any check and also influence the poor uneducated youth of the region. A lot of international NGO's and relief agencies moved their attention to PoK after the 2005 earthquake. However, it also brought a change in the region, as the arrival of large scale international relief agencies and NGO workers made the Government of Pakistan to make a move and push the presence of the terrorist camps and hubs to more interior areas. This led to a slight descend in the terrorist activities and infiltration in J&K especially (IDSA PoK project report 2011: 27).

However, anti-India extremist activities re-surfaced in Gilgit-Baltistan especially after General Kayani took command of the Pakistani forces, as he initiated a policy of

rapprochement with certain sections of the terrorist groups of Hizbul Mujahideen and LeT. In 2009, the report published by the Freedom House brought out by the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), stated that “A number of Islamist militant groups, including those that receive patronage from the Pakistani military, operate from bases in Pakistani-administered Kashmir” (Freedom House 2009). The terrorist groups who traditionally used to focus entirely over conducting militant activities in Indian Kashmir have changed their *modus operandi* and have started establishing *madrassahs* in this region. These terrorist groups have also increased their network by connecting with other similar groups from the tribal areas of Pakistan like Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Under the pressure from US, in August 2009 Pakistan government banned 25 terrorist groups operating around the country, including Jaish-e-Mohammad, which is involved in multiple terrorist attacks in India. Although the “government claimed to have raided and sealed off the Muzaffarabad headquarters of the LeT, also known as the Jamaat-ud-Dawa, other reports indicated that the group continued to operate training camps in the region” (IDSA PoK Report 2011: 28).

“Tension between Islamist pro-Pakistan groups and pro-independence Kashmiri groups as well as some local residents has reportedly increased in recent years” (Freedom house 2008: 843). As the Pakistani forces are clamping down on the terrorist camps, the security situation in Gilgit-Baltistan is expected to deteriorate. “There have been references to a new militant outfit, Lashkar-e-Zil (LeZ) operating out of the area. LeZ is supposedly an amalgamation of several militant outfits including Tehrik-e-Taliban, Pakistan (TTP) led by Commander Hakimullah Mehsud, the Azad Kashmir chapter of the Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HUJI) led by Commander Ilyas Kashmiri, and the Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ) led by its jailed leader Akram Lahori” (IDSA PoK Project Report 2011: 29; Mir 2010; Chandran and Chari 2013).

In an unprecedented attack by an extremist dressed as a trooper killed nine foreign tourists in the Himalayan range of Gilgit-Baltistan, out of those 9 tourists 4 were Chinese nationals, TTIP took the responsibility of this attack (Sherazi 2013). Incidents like these are going to keep Beijing worried about Pakistan’s commitment and efficacy to deal with terrorist threat in its own territory. Pakistan government and military is under pressure



from China to eradicate the extremists from Gilgit-Baltistan, especially after the official launching of CPEC project, which would lead to clashes between the state forces and these extremists and disturb the security of this region. ISIS affiliated groups have announced publicly their intentions to attack and erase the “infidels” from the country.

ISIS is continuously striving to expand its ideological base in South Asia, and forming linkages not just with the terrorist organisations of Pakistan e.g. Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and Taliban but is also establishing contacts with the political organisations like Jamat-e-Islami and Ahl-e-Sunnat Wal Jamaat (ASWJ). “These organisations, as well as the Ikhwanul Muslimoon (Muslim Brotherhood), share the ideology of Maududi, Hasan al-Bana, and Syed Qutub that is best summarized by Jamat-e-Islami’s statement, It is very necessary to welcome the announcement of the establishment of Islamic caliphate by the ISIS because Islamic caliphate is the aspiration of every Muslim and there has never been a disagreement on the issue among the Muslims in any period of history” (Senge 2015) An assessment of the formation of such linkages between the terrorist organisation and such statement it is becoming evident that ISIS is gaining political ground in Pakistan (Senge 2015).

According to a report published by Washington Times on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2017, talks have been going through between Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahri and Islamic State chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi for a merger between the two (Munoz and Taylor 2016). A grouping of these two would significantly expand the affiliates and linkages between the terrorists from West Asia to South Asia. According to a report published by Dawn in 2014, a strategic 10 member committee has been formed by ISIS with the help of local terrorist organisation including the followers of Mullah Omar. “The report also warns of plans to target military installations, government buildings, and the Shia community and there is a strong indication that a Taliban-ISIS crescent of control is emerging with its epicenter in Northern Pakistan. As Lashkar-e-Jhangvi and ASWJ have a strong presence in Gilgit-Baltistan, their potential collaboration with ISIS is a concern for the region where the majority Shias are their prime target” (Zaidi 2014).

Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) a militant organisation which is known to have links with the ISIS is growing its presence in Gilgit-Baltistan. TTP has also chosen a local

resident Khalid Balti as its spokesperson. He is replacing Shahidullah Shahid, who joined affiliates of ISIS in Pakistan and left, was reported to be killed in a drone attack by US (Senge 2015). Dozens of people have been killed in Gilgit-Baltistan in the last three years including Police men, locals minorities and tourists, due to the attacks executed by the Taliban. Local schools have also been attacked by the same group to display its resentment against liberal education. ISIS affiliated groups making their influence in the region, along with the movement of extremists from the adjoining areas of Xinjiang, Central Asia and Afghanistan and the targeted religious and sectarian violence is going to deteriorate the security situation of GilgitBaltistan (Bhattacharji 2015).

Pakistan has used the territories, resources and people of Gilgit-Baltistan to achieve its internal and external national interests. Militarily, Pakistan has used this region as a launching pad for a low intensity proxy war by installing terrorist camps in the region by the Pakistan government to annex the Indian part of Kashmir (Behera 2007: 170-171). Considering, the geographical proximity of Gilgit-Baltistan with Xinjiang, Central Asia, Indian Kashmir and Afghanistan. This region can provide the extremist groups a strategic base to connect with other extremists across the border. Geographical terrain is rugged and barren, so it provides easy hide outs for the terrorist groups.

Strategically any sort of control over Gilgit-Baltistan (which some religious extremists already have) is going to bring these terrorist elements right on the door of Kashmir, which would emanate serious security repercussions in an already volatile Kashmir.

### **Discontent among the people of Gilgit-Baltistan**

Gilgit-Baltistan has been in turmoil since its occupation by Pakistan, it has been considered more as a colony than a regular province. Analyzing the above mentioned facts, Pakistan has followed extreme exploitation policies in the region to serve its own interests which has resulted in the deterioration of the people and the region as well. Despite, “abundance of resources”, the region falls among the “most backward areas in entire South Asia” (Bansal and Gupta 2007: 185-186). The backwardness and marginalization of this region can also be easily assessed by evaluation the socio-economic indicators of Gilgit-Baltistan from Table 2. As the figures clearly show that the socio-economic indications of Gilgit-Baltistan are lower than national figures.

According to Ali Shafa, a human rights activist from Gilgit-Baltistan, The Aga Khan Rural Support Programs (AKRSP) is the only organisation which is promoting quality education in this region and the schools developed by it along with some help of local NGOs has initiated educational programmes in this region. “The region has no university, no professional college and moreover, the entire region does not have any kind of industry. About 43.1 percent of the population of this region is poor” (Rana 2016). The main source to earn livelihood is government service. The “natives joining the civil service are paid 25 percent less than personnel from Pakistan’s Punjab province posted in the Northern Areas on deputation”. The locals have been showing their resentment against this discrimination (Behera 2007: 192).

**Table: 2: Socio-economic indicators of Gilgit-Baltistan**

	Gilgit-Baltistan	Pakistan
Per-capita income	US\$ 350	US\$1046
Literacy rate	38%	56%
Population Doctor ratio	1:4100	1:1212
Maternal mortality rate	600/100,000	272/100,000

*Source:* Reform Agenda-Road to Sustainable Economic Development, Government of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan. [Online: Web] Accessed 24 June 2017, URL: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PAKISTANEXTN/Resources/GOVERNMENTOFGILGIT-BALTISTAN.pdf>

Despite the efforts made by the local NGOs to develop and set up new schools in the region, the literacy rate is still very low.

Though the discontentment amongst the people of Gilgit and Baltistan had been brewing ever since Pakistani occupation in view of the denial of constitutional mechanism to

voice their grievances, yet the situation began changing for the worse with “the construction of the Karakoram Highway in the 1980s”, which “connected this once inaccessible region to the rest of Pakistan” and “brought with it religious fanatics, who have managed to spread sectarianism in the area” (Bansal 2008: 85-91). About 70 percent of the businesses, particularly in the Shia dominated Gilgit region, is dominated by nonlocals, mostly Pashtuns from Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and Kashmiris with a largely Sunni background. Gradually, non-locals purchase land, build properties and apply for domiciles to enter government departments with the help of non-local officers. This trend is affecting the local Shias as their economic opportunities are being taken away by outsiders, hence leading to aggravation sectarian animosity (Muhammad 2014: 6).

Ali Shafa, an academician and human rights activist from Gilgit-Baltistan argues that Pakistan has always given a step motherly treatment to the people of this region. According to him Pakistan has unleashed miseries in this region for the Past 70 years and there is unhindered open nepotism and corruption favouring the Sunni Muslims from Punjab and KPK. He further stated that most of the high postings in all of the departments of the state are occupied by the outsiders from Punjab and KPK, while the educated youth of Gilgi-Baltistan remains unemployed (Online Interview May 2017).

After 55 years of occupation under Pakistan, adult literacy in Gilgit-Baltistan is 38 percent (Table 2). Although tourism provides certain support to the local economy, the lack of adequate infrastructure remains an obstacle to explore it in professional manner. However the tourism industry was never great in this region but still was supporting the locals to some extent and that also suffered drastically after the attack of 9/11 and the US war in Afghanistan (Ali 2005). According to official estimates “some 80 percent of foreign tourists coming to Pakistan visit Northern Areas every year. However, while Islamabad earn over Rs. 4.5 billion from the tourists who visit the region it does not pay anything to the locals” (Bansal and Gupta 2007: 187).

Pakistan has also not infringed over the issue of increasing extremism in Gilgit-Baltistan despite much opposition by the native people. For instance, in September 2011, ‘Press for Peace’ a local civil society organisation claimed that “a large number of women protested against recent activities of some banned *jihadi* groups in the Neelum Valley”. According

to 'Press for Peace', "the women also approached the Pakistan Army in Athmuqamthe district headquarters of Neelum Valley, and urged the officers to stop the militants from crossing into the Indian side of Kashmir" (Joshua 2011).

However, people of Pakistan-occupied Kashmir diaspora, including Gilgit-Baltistan in April 2017 protested in front of the Pakistan High Commission in London against the presence of terrorist camps in AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan and demanded the government to shut them down. The demonstration was an organized move to pull the attention of the western media towards this issue. Protestors focused in asserting over the fact that there is presence of organisations Hizbul Mujahideen and Jamaat-ud-Dawa, which although have been banned by the Pakistan government. Protestors went to the extent of urging the Pakistani Army to leave AJK and Gilgit Baltistan (Anti-Pakistan protest 2016 ANI).

The discontent among the people of Gilgit-Baltistan also came in front after they were sidelined from sharing the dividends of CPEC. Large number of protesters gathered in Skardu on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2017 to protest the exclusion of Gilgit-Baltistan from the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project. The protest was organized by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and during the protest they mentioned that while 439 kms of land in Skardu had been acquired by the government for CPEC, Gilgit-Baltistan had not received any share in the project. Rather, the total investment of \$42bn dollars has been directed towards Punjab and other areas, the PPP said. The protesters further noted that while the chief ministers of all four provinces had accompanied Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on his visit to China for the One Belt, One Road forum (OBOR), the chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan had not been invited. This again shows that the exclusion of the Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan from the forum was a sign that the Pakistan government has adopted exploitative and discriminatory policies in the area (Taj 2017).

Pakistan government started the crackdown over the people of Gilgit-Baltistan especially in 2016, when they started raising their objections over CPEC. According to news report published by Times of India in August 2016, "some young men were imprisoned for demanding political rights and asking the Pakistani Army to leave Gilgit's soil. Over 500 young Gilgitis were jailed, including Gilgit's top political activist Baba Jan, which saw increasing mass street-based movement for his release" (In PoK's Gilgit 2016). Protestors

in Gilgit alleged the Pakistan government of abusing human rights in this region on a massive scale to suppress the voices of the people against CPEC. According to the youth protesting the CPEC is only going to provide benefit to the Pakistani Punjabi traders and China. They further added that the resentment among the people is also rising because the natives of this region are not being involved in any sphere in regard to CPEC and the voices are raised against this discrimination are dealt harshly. From these statements it becomes clear that the coercive crackdown and arrests are being made to suppress the people and their reservations regarding CPEC.

Abdul Hamid Khan, Chairman of BNF, stated that arresting few dozens of young men is not going to suppress their struggle. He further argued that “CPEC is going through their land and still the people of Gilgit-Baltistan are not a party in this treaty, this is a clear exploitation of the rights of the people Gilgit-Baltistan, to whom this land belongs to and the Pakistan government clearly is hand in glove in this move to alienate Gilgit-Baltistan” (Online Interview March 2015). In an extended move to discard people from the royalty and benefits of CPEC, the only dry port which used to be in Sost in Gilgit-Baltistan is now getting shifted to Havelian in the Hazara district of KPK province. This move is going to render more than 10,000 people jobless. Although CPEC Project Director Zahir Shah has responded to this by saying that its not on the cards right now and depends on the completion of CPEC (Muhammad 2015). However, while conducting some interviews with the youth of Skardu and Gilgit, the only reponse which came out regarding CPEC was that “it’s only bringing smoke and dust for the people of Gilgit-Baltistan”.

Consequences of Pakistan’s policies are resulting in making the security environment of the region more volatile. The region has become a stage for violent protests by the marginalized population due to continued subjugation by the Pakistan government, and being a Shia minority they believe that their ethno-cultural and religious identity is threatened. The discontentment within the populace of Gilgit-Baltistan has been increasing over the years and besides ethnicity has a strong sectarian undertone. Discontentment and resentment is getting increased among the people of Gilgit-Baltistan Its reaching a crescendo with the increased use of force by the Pakistan’s armed forces.

Pakistan's policies towards Gilgit-Baltistan since its occupation have worsened the condition of people and the region. The continued subjugation, economic exploitation, demographic dilution, increasing Islamic Fundamentalism and denial of legal and political rights to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan by the Pakistan government has led to turmoil in the region. The strong discontent among the people is having an adverse impact over the security environment of the region, as continued sectarian strife and hatred, illiteracy and unemployment leading the youth of the region to join extremist groups. These outcomes of the policies of Pakistan towards Gilgit-Baltistan are affecting the security of both India and China respectively.

**CHAPTER FOUR:**  
**China's policy towards Xinjiang**



The Uyghur are in a centuries-old conflict with China over what the latter considers its north-west territory. Xinjiang's political past is a story of repression and revolt, marked by two brief periods of Uyghur independence (1933-34 and 1944-49). Over the past hundred years, pan-Turkic, Marxist, and Islamist ideologies have shaped Uyghur separatist thought. The territory now known as Xinjiang was consolidated as a part of China in 1759, when the Qing dynasty invaded it. The Qing installed military governors at Yining and garrisons at key locations but otherwise left local government in the hands of the region's native leaders (Starr 2004: 327). About a century later, a local warlord named Yakub Beg was the first of many Uyghur leaders to demand independence based on appeals for shared religion and ethnicity. He briefly established a kingdom centered on Kashgar before he was defeated in 1877. The Qing dynasty fell in 1911. The years from about 1916 to 1949 are often called China's 'warlord period', marked by an unstable central government (Chung 2002: 9).

A series of dictatorial provincial governors ruled Xinjiang. During this time Xinjiang's society split along religious, ethnic, economic, and political lines to form a number of quarrelling factions-Muslim, Chinese, Uyghur, Hui, Kazakh, warlord, commoner, Nationalist, Communist, etc. (Starr 2004: 104). Pan-Turkic ideals took roots in Kashgar and other parts of Xinjiang from 1910 to 1920, carried by visiting intellectuals from Russian Turkistan and the Ottoman Empire. When Xinjiang's government tried to interfere in the affairs of Hami's traditional ruling family in 1931, local Muslims rebelled, beginning a series of violent uprisings led to the formation of the Eastern Turkistan Republic (ETR) in Kashgar on November 12, 1933. The ETR is sometimes also called the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkistan. The ETR's constitution both proclaimed *sharia* law and professed modern, democratic principles. However it lasted for almost a year and was then once again absorbed into China.

In 1944, with the support of Soviet Russia, the Turkic rebellions of Xinjiang declared independence again and created the Second East Turkestan Republic. With the formation of People's Republic of China, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) annexed the territory of Xinjiang again in 1949. Later in October 1955, this region was renamed as an

“autonomous region” of the People’s Republic of China, with a number of autonomous Mongol, Kyrgyz, Kazakh, and Hui counties (Dillon 2004: 35).

Since 1949, Xinjiang has been subject to a range of CCP’s policies swinging between openness and control. It is probably a fair observation that anti-Han sentiment has been generally prevalent among the Uyghurs due to punitive rule by Han warlords and local officials. (Starr 2004: 67:71) The early 1950s were a period of tolerance, as the CCP established links with the local religious and social elites. In these few years, there was minimal interference in business, religious practice, and social norms (Bovingdon 2010: 49-52). However, by the mid-1950s, Mao Zedong urged for many socialist changes throughout the country. The CCP policy of collectivization and the accompanying attempts to mobilize peasants against local elites drove Uyghurs and other minorities together against the Chinese leaders.

In 1956 Mao initiated the Hundred Flowers Campaign, during which the intellectual community was cordially invited to provide constructive criticism to the communist system. The initial response to the invitation was cold and people refrained from contributing to it. Most feared that raising their voice against the establishment might invite the wrath of the communist government. After repeated invitations many intellectuals came forward and raised their concerns regarding the failures of the government. Mao wasn’t expecting such harsh criticism and was taken aback by the response. The party found itself bombarded with hostile criticism primarily aimed at the government’s decision to adopt Soviet style education system (Bevis 2013: 125). The scale and intensity of protests that ensued was not expected by the Chinese leadership and it came like a wave of shock, which led to the unleashing of anti-rightist movement of 1957 in order to suppress the opposition. At the same time Uyghurs in Xinjiang saw the system of autonomy as a façade and denounced it, and demanded greater role in the governance. To counter the demands of the Uyghurs, the CCP gave the anti-rightist movement a different agenda to target the separatist forces in Xinjiang and curb the aspirations of ‘local nationalism’ (Bovingdon 2010:50).

Despite the presence of such challenges, CCP dispossessed elite landlord Uyghurs from their lands, brought reform in the land tenure system and Islamic establishments under its

own control. The lands owned by mosques and religious shrines were also redistributed by the Communist Party. The land reform movement in Xinjiang served similar political purposes, while simultaneously setting the stage for collectivization of agriculture. Although, the main agenda behind this land reforms in Xinjiang was to attack the Islamic founding in Xinjiang, which was a well-established clerical organization that deeply penetrated the society. It was through the land reform program that the party undermined the independence of institutionalized Islam in Xinjiang. The first move taken by CCP was the elimination of Islamic taxes in during 1950-1951, after which, it introduced land reforms and then eradicated the institutional setup of Islam by expropriating WAQF<sup>22</sup> lands, which used to be the major source of revenue for such religious institutions. Furthermore, CCP enforced that all judicial powers were to be transferred to People's Courts, and it also made the China Islamic Association to diminish religious sites and mosques, and phase out imams (Starr 2004:87-89; Millward 2010: 251; Ryono and Galway 2014: 241). However, these policies of religious and cultural control in the early years of the PRC were relatively liberal as compared to the policies which CCP followed later (Millward 2004: 5-6).

The Great Leap Forward of 1958 until 1961 was a radical move to infer robust industrialisation and collectivization. It was followed by a wave of culture-based assimilation thrust and political attacks over the Uyghurs of Xinjiang. During the same time huge inflow of Han in-migrants was seen in Xinjiang and they settled in northern Xinjiang. All these factors collaboratively, along with the famine of 1963 caused by the 'Great Leap', led to a massive exodus of around 600,000 people, mostly Uyghurs and Kazaks along with other minorities, to the Soviet Union. A violent demonstration followed in Yining due to this exodus (Millward 2004: 6-7).

Mao had taken over and CCP leadership took the charge of administration to bring the economic chaos of early 1960s back to normal. The CCP officials addressed the fact that the cultural and linguistic differences are going to prevail for a longer period of time, hence they relaxed the cultural policies in Xinjiang. The oppression over religious actions

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<sup>22</sup> It is an Islamic law under which any moveable or immovable property is dedicated to religious activities.

since 1957 was lifted and Muslims were once again allowed to celebrate their religious festivals (Benson and Svanberg 1998: 139; Dawson 2016: 86).

But by the mid-1960s, the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) brought demands for “cultural conformity to a new extreme”. Mao’s main aim behind launching the Cultural Revolution was to make his party members realize the mistakes they have committed and help him get a clear understanding of all the political rivalry. His prime instrument to achieve his goals through this move was the youth of China. In 1966, he gave a call to the youth of China and urged them to lead a movement to destroy the impediments which are restraining China from developing and asked them to weed out the “four old” evils of – “old culture, old thoughts, old customs and old habits”. The youth responded to his call with extreme enthusiasm. However, this idealistic enthusiasm soon degenerated into fanaticism, as groups of young people proclaiming themselves to be “red guards” rampaged through cities and attacked whom so ever they considered as “bad elements” without any restriction or control (Bovingdon 2010: 49-52). The hard-line (coercive) and intolerant policies of the Cultural Revolution were perceived by the Uyghurs as grossly unfair and an assault on their political rights and core religious identities.

During the Cultural Revolution, government jobs were taken away from many Uyghurs, because the red guards opposed the policies of providing autonomy and accommodation and saw Uyghurs as ‘bad elements’. “In 1962, there were 111,500 Uyghurs working for the provincial government holding various posts such clerks, polices, district and county chairmen. However, in 1975, there only 80,000 non-Hans left working in the government” (Millward 2006: 270). This brought about intense discontent and therefore, instability (Bovingdon 2010: 49-52).

After the death of Mao Zedong in 1976, the leadership of China was given to Deng Xiaoping in 1978. However it is considered that after Deng came into power the situation of China improved in that there was more political stability as compared to the earlier years of endless communist political campaigns. The non-Han people who were purged during the Cultural Revolution and ‘the Great Leap forward’ were brought back in the government and the party. Hu Yaobing, a high ranking leader of CCP brought some reforms in terms of nationality policies, in order to mellow down the assimilationist

aspects of the cultural policy followed to subdue Xinjiang and China. However, these relaxations made people feel free to speak about their grievances, which further led to the advent of demonstrations. In 1985 around 2000 non-Han students mostly from Xinjiang University and few other higher education institutes protested in Urumqi against the nuclear testing, PRC's policy of family planning in regard to minorities, and the Han immigration. In "1989, Muslim students marched in Urumqi in a demonstration organized by Hui students to express rage at the publication in Shanghai of *Sexual Customs*, a book containing insulting misrepresentations of Islam. This demonstration turned ugly in People's Square, where cars, motorbikes, and windows were smashed and rioters clashed with police, leaving almost 200 injured" (Millward 2004: 8).

Since 1990, there has been a shift in Beijing's strategy to deal with Xinjiang's separatist voice. PRC has adopted an essentially two-fold policy. While there has been suppression of any unofficial religious activity, there has also been an "ambitious program of economic reform, on the assumption that the principal underlying reason for the disaffection of the Uyghurs is not ethnic nationalism but poverty and underdevelopment," (Dillon 2009: 181-182).

Yet despite the state's efforts, cultural integration between the Han Chinese and Uyghurs in Xinjiang has still been minimal <sup>23</sup>(Hyer 2006: 75-86). In particular, state-directed Han migration into Xinjiang has roused unhappiness as it has been perceived by the Uyghurs as a move to exterminate their culture. The population of Xinjiang increased from 3.6 million to 21.3 million between 1945 and 2008; the growth rate can be seen to increase at an average rate of 2.9 percent annually, which is quite high as compared to the national figure of 1.5 percent. "In 1945, Han and Uyghurs made up respectively 6.2 and 82.7 percent of Xinjiang's population. Since 1982, the percentages have changed (See Table 2), in other words, for the past three decades the population of Han in Xinjiang have been comparable to (although still lower than) that of Uyghurs. In 2008, the number of Han and Uyghurs in Xinjiang was, respectively, 8.3 million and 9.8 million" (Howell and Fan 2011: 122-123).

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<sup>23</sup> During the many demonstrations over the years in Xinjiang, slogans calling for the Chinese Communist Party and the People's Liberation Army to get out of Xinjiang and calls to establish "Xinjiangstan" or "Uyghuristan" are common. The common cause is Pan-Turkic nationalism, Hyer argued.

Table 3: Demographic Profile of Xinjiang

	1945	1982	1996	2008
Han (%)	6.2	40.3	41.1	39.2
Uyghur (%)	82.7	45.7	50.6	46.1
Hui (%)	2.8	4.3	4.9	4.5
Kazak (%)	1.1	6.9	8.0	7.1
Others (%)	7.2	2.8	2.8	3.1
Total (million)	3.6	13.1	16.8	21.3

*Source:* Debashish Chaudhuri (2005), “A Survey of the Economic Situation in Xinjiang and its Role in the Twenty-first Century”, China Report, 41(1): 2.

Meanwhile, because of the precedence of East Turkestan independence, there have been simmering hopes of being free of Chinese rule. This was especially the case in the 1990s, in the wake of the implosion of the communist Soviet Union where several regions with similar ethnic populations gained independence. Uyghur Ethnic identity, which came under extreme pressure during the Cultural Revolution, experienced resurgence in the more relaxed era under Deng Xiaoping. Economic development brought a huge influx of Han Chinese, who threatened Uyghurs, while the disintegration of the Soviet Union facilitated links with co-ethnic Central Asia. During 1990s, trade between the newly created states of Central Asia and Xinjiang expanded. This created a free flow of not just goods but also ideology between the Uyghurs of Xinjiang and the geographically proximate Turkic people of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan (Belacqua 2010: 263). “The authorities allowed the reopening of mosques and the use of funds contributed from some Islamic countries to build new mosques, found Quranic schools and import religious materials. Many Muslims were allowed again to travel to Islamic countries, and contacts with Muslims abroad were encouraged” (Bhattacharya 2003: 371).

As the new independent Central Asian states emerged, new trade linkages were formed with them, which also created an atmosphere of regional communication between Xinjiang and Central Asia. This further led to the separatist Uyghurs coming in touch with the extremist religious elements of Central Asia. During the decade between 1990 and 2001, 41 incidents related to religious extremism or Uyghur separatism occurred in China which led to 58 dead and 179 injured. Some of the major incidents were: the January 1990 Talip incident of Yarkand, the Baren uprising of April 1990, the February 1990 Urumqi bus bombings, in which two buses were blown in explosions, along with this several other cases of bomb explosions that were noticed during the February 1992 to September 1993. Besides all these incidents a series of bomb blasts happened between 1997 and 1998, in Urumqi and other parts of Xinjinag, which shook the administration of Urumqi (Clarke 2008: 284). In this politico-historical context, the Uyghurs' contention with Chinese rule arguably arises from nationalistic inclinations, not militant intentions or religious differences (Bovingdon 2010: 3-4; Dillon 2004: 23-24).

Ultimately, this is also a display of the conflict arising from the opposing rights of sovereignty and self-determination, with these urges stemming from very different sources. As Rupert Emerson said, as cited by Gardner Bovingdon in his book *The Uyghurs, Strangers in Their Own Land*, "The state has an indisputable prerogative and duty to defend its own existence, and the nation comes likewise to be endowed with a right to overthrow the state" (Bovingdon 2010: 163)

Considering the above mentioned arguments, the Uyghur frustration has also led to the proliferation of secessionist activities and voices both inside and outside China (Clarke 2007; Millward 2004). Taking into account PRC's "one China" policy, it is clear that these separatist movements by Uyghurs is a serious concern for them and is also totally unacceptable, just like it is in the case of Taiwan and Tibet. China perceived the Xinjiang problem as detrimental to its growth, especially when it was planning to open its western front economically with OBOR initiative.

## **Chinese policies to integrate Xinjiang with China**

### *Economic Policies*

Economic policies enacted in Xinjiang after 1949 were aimed to bring considerable benefits to the region and its inhabitants, including growth in GDP, with improved industrialization, and infrastructure. Soon after absorbing Xinjiang into PRC, CCP invested heavily in capital construction in this region. Local army units were deployed to restore the old network of transportation along with the construction of new roads and highways, keeping Urumqi as the centre. In 1958, Kashgar-Tashkhurgan and Urumqi-Korla highways were renovated. In 1955, the Xin-Lan railroad construction was started and till 1961, this link was established till Urumqi. “The gross value of industrial output was 81 million Yuan in 1949, which increased to 446 million Yuan in 1957 and to 636 million Yuan in 1965” (McMillen, 1979: 166). In the “first Five Year Plan (FYP) period (1953–57), 63.1 per cent of the total state capital investment went into the interiors, and 68 per cent of the 694 industrial projects were located in the central and western provinces. This trend continued during the third and fourth FYP periods” (1966–75) (Weimer 2004: 169; Chaudhuri 2005: 7). The living standards of the people of Xinjiang also improved considerably along with the economic development of the region, while the substantial amounts of subsidies were also being provided by Beijing. “The subsidies did not end with the high socialist era after Mao’s death in 1976 but continued into the reform era, regularly providing half of annual government expenditures and reaching nearly 12 billion Yuan in 2000” (Bachman 2004: 172; Weimer 2004: 175).

The massive socio-economic policies launched in Xinjiang also came with some drawbacks, including fractured development, not divided equally among the urban and the rural spaces, badly planned policies also led to environmental degradation like soil deterioration, drop in the region’s water table, desertification. There were also reports of nuclear fallout at Lop Nor, during testing, which led to the contamination of water (Bovingdon 2004: 38).

Observing the reform policies in Xinjiang, it seems to have brought mixed benefits for the people. Agricultural reforms helped the Uyghur along with Hans to prosper. The internal trade and later extended trans-border trade also brought benefits to the Uyghurs.



Domestic Uyghur traders used to bring walnuts, fruits, raisins and shish kebabs to other major cities of China. With the opening of the Central Asian Border in 1980s, a lot of merchants ushered in with the shuttle trade, traded housewares and textiles, and imported steel along with other industrial materials. Xinjiang's first millionaire Uyghur business-woman Rebiya Qadir, also became very successful through cross-border trade in Central Asia from 1993 to 1999 (Mackerras 2009: 142). Aggregate economic growth raised per capita income considerably. By 2000, it had reached 1,699 yuan (Weimer 2004: 169).

Simultaneously, reform policies came at a cost. "Reforms of state owned enterprises (SOEs) eliminated at least 600,000 jobs between 1995 and 2000" (Weimer 2004: 179). Uyghurs were the ones who were getting fired prior to Hans in many cases (Becquelin 2000: 85). "Though the state sector has continued to contribute a disproportionate share of regional GDP, private enterprise has expanded dramatically; however, Uyghurs and other non-Hans have much greater difficulty than Hans in finding jobs in the private sector. Preferential policies prevailed in private organizations; in fact, job advertisements and job fairs in the late 1990s indicated either explicitly or tacitly that Uyghurs need not apply" (Bovingdon 2004: 39).

In 1990s the government officials framed economic priorities which appeared to discriminate Uyghurs and marginalize Southern Xinjiang. The focus was diverted to "one white, one black" policy which meant prioritizing the production of cotton and oil, while Xinjiang being already the largest cotton producer in China, Beijing in 1998 decided to push the limits further to fetch more cotton from this region. Hans took most of the benefit of this policy, as they were in charge of the highly mechanized Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (XPCC) farms, who were entitled to state subsidies for the production of cotton. "There is evidence that cotton farming mandated by the state is leaving small-scale Uyghur cultivators worse off, as they confront high factor prices and below-market procurement prices without the protection of subsidies" (Bachman 2004: 172; Becquelin 2000: 80-82). Furthermore, to grow cotton huge amount of water is required, which took a toll on the limited water resources of Xinjiang. The ground water table of Xinjiang has already dropped significantly over sixty meters in the last thirty

years and this overstress on extended production of cotton is going to cause more damage to the ecology of this region (Toops 2004: 272-73).

The oil industry of China is predominantly being run by the majority Hans, and Uyghurs feel discarded when it comes to this sphere of engagement. They further have their resentments growing because they feel that the oil resources of Xinjiang are being exploited by China and they are being warded off their own wealth, without being given any compensation. Out of the taxes and benefits earned from the trade of oil, not even a miniscule percent of those profits are shared with Xinjiang. Many Uyghurs consider the subsidies they get from China as “a disguised form of payment” for mineral exploitation they are doing in Xinjiang (Becquelin 2000: 71-72; Pei Minxin 2002: 324). In any case, an economist has concluded on balance that, despite the subsidies and tax rebates, most of the profits from energy and mineral exploitation in Xinjiang enrich Beijing rather than the region (Starr 2004: 174).

In May 2010, CCP organized a conference on Xinjiang’s development, a first time initiative, in which it was decided that the government would focus on the development of Xinjiang to enhance the “Great Western Development Strategy”. The then President Hu Jintao during the conference also declared the goals of this new approach: “which are establishing a basic public health system by 2012; leveling the region’s per capita income with the Chinese average by 2015; and eliminating absolute poverty and achieving a moderately prosperous society by 2020” (Shujun 2010). It was further mentioned in the conference that a stipulated amount of “fixed asset investment” would be made in Xinjiang during the period of 2011-2015 and the investments of the FYP would be doubled as compared to the previous ones. Moreover, access required by industries to reach market demands would be provided, construction would be started over under developed land and taxes would be reduced.

Assessing the policy of heavy investment in Xinjiang with the Great Western Development Strategy and other major projects of infrastructure development have been initiated, one underlining motive of China can be seen here. As there is ethnic diversity in Xinjiang, China’s policies are aiming to boost the material wealth in the region so that it can have a greater cooperation with the minorities, which would further lead to the

enhanced assimilation with the Han Chinese and silencing of the separatist demands. As Michael Clarke argues, “the Great Western Development Strategy suggested that while the state continues to stress the need to address the problems of uneven development in ethnic minority regions, it nonetheless maintains that this will be done on the basis of preserving ‘national unity’ and ‘social stability’ with the dominant ethnic group ‘the Han’ as the leading agents of modernization” (Clarke 2007: 339).

### **Language Policy**

In another indication of the Chinese state’s attempts at influencing the periphery, processes aimed toward “cultural standardization” within the polity are put in place. This includes a national language imposed throughout the country. Mandarin has replaced indigenous Uyghur language as the medium of instruction in higher education. It happened for the first time in Xinjiang University ceasing to offer courses taught in Uyghur since 2002 (Grose 2010: 99-100). Uyghur is still offered in primary and secondary education, but Mandarin is introduced to Uyghur students from about the third grade and is clearly the language of economic upward mobility (Grose 2010: 100). With the focus on learning Mandarin in schools, the possibilities for the national minorities, especially the Turkic ones to get jobs would increase exponentially and simultaneously it would also facilitate the process of acculturation (Becquelin 2004: 375).

Local populations have mixed feelings about this shift towards a Chinese education. On one hand, Uyghur parents are also realizing that learning Mandarin would enhance their Children’s chances to receive better education and thus getting better job opportunities. On the other hand, there are also considerable amount of Uyghurs who think that this policy is just another side approach taken up by Chinese government to dilute their culture (Becquelin 2004: 376)

### **The Production and Construction Corps**

In August 1954, the Xinjiang Production and construction Corps (XPCC) or the Bingtuan was created from the demobilised army units which were assigned labour work in Xinjiang. Ministry of Agriculture in Beijing was the main authority over this organization and its subordinate offices in Xinjiang regarding the matter of livestock and farms, and in

case of military action it was obligated to take orders from Xinjiang Military District (XJMD). However, in practice CCP was the in charge of this organization and in matters of immediate consent the provincial units of CCP used to supervise XPCC (McMillen 1981: 70-71).

XPCC units are strategically placed at cities which are travel hubs, along the main road transport links and at the margins of regions which have been prone to troubles in the past. To counter the demographic concentration of Uyghurs in the districts of Kashgar, Qumul and Aksu, XPCC was also placed along in these districts. Although being billed as a production and construction force and in extreme case protect the sovereignty of China at the borders, XPCC's positioning in Xinjiang depicts that its there to keep a vigil over the activities of Uyghurs. Hans overwhelmingly constitutes the majority of the XPCC, which further underscores the above mentioned point. "A recent publication praises the bingtuan not only for quelling the 1990 Baren uprising and similar disturbances but for "preventing over 8,600 people from leaving" during the mass exodus of Qazaqs and Uyghurs in 1962" (Bovingdon 2004: 27).

Compared to any other entity in Xinjiang, XPCC possess an unchallenged autonomy. It's a mini state unit on its own, with its own security apparatus, judiciary, jail and administers its own affairs internally, only accountable to CCP and not even to the government of Xinjiang (Bovingdon 2004: 27). Demographically also its a huge force. In 1974, XPCC was 2.26 million strong, which was one-fifth of the total population of China at that time and comprised of two-fifth of Hans of Xinjiang. However, XPCC was dissolved in 1975, six years later considering the increasing incidents of ethnic violence and on the advice of Wang Zhen, former head of XPCC it was reassembled. By the 1990s "it had almost returned to its former size, claiming 2.22 million members, of which 88.3 percent (1.96 million) were Han- 35 percent of Xinjiang's total Han population in 1994" (Bovingdon 2004: 27). Both the strategic positioning of XPCC farms and their system of having uninhibited autonomy has provided Hans a dominant stake over Uyghurs in Xinjiang in the current system.

## **Economic and political disparities**

The basic factor behind the political Han dominance and Uyghur's relative marginalisation in Xinjiang is the way China's system of "national regional autonomy" functions. According to that system only a limited territorial autonomy is granted to the ethnic minorities. In Xinjiang three levels of "autonomous government" were established between 1952 and 1955: the autonomous region (equivalent to provincial status), autonomous districts and autonomous counties/prefectures. As per Chinese government's White Paper on Regional Autonomy for Ethnic Minorities in China, "autonomous government could be established in a particular locality: (1) when inhabited by one national minority, (2) when inhabited by one large national minority including certain areas inhabited by other smaller nationalities and (3) when jointly established by two or more areas each inhabited by a different national minority" (Information Office of the State Council 2005).

Assessing these three points, it can be ascertained that, the first requirement doesn't fit within the case of Xinjiang. Considering the multi-ethnic population of Xinjiang, the second point falls into place. However, the population of Xinjiang in 1955 was estimated to be around 4.5 to 5 million, out of which 75 percent were Uyghurs, and there were 13 ethnic groups in total. Following this, the representation and power of Xinjiang was to be divided among thirteen constituent ethnic groups, despite the fact that the Uyghurs were in majority. "The establishment of these "sub-autonomies" served the major goals of entrenching the idea that Xinjiang belonged to the thirteen officially recognised ethnic groups and of countering the demographic and potential political weight of the Uyghur" (McMillen 1981: 66-70; Bovingdon 2004).

Although the state's policy on national minorities clearly says that the member of the ethnic group who is exercising autonomy can be the head of the respective autonomous region or county, significantly in reality, CCP has been denying this legal boundary and has been wielding the powers of this region. "One recent account observed that ethnic minorities are underrepresented in the CCP comprising around 37 per cent of the 958000 party members in Xinjiang" (Clarke 2008: 280-281). "As such the CCP apparatus in Xinjiang is dominated by Han, a phenomena that is highlighted by the fact that all first

Party secretaries across the one hundred and twenty-four prefectural, municipal, and county levels of the Party in Xinjiang, none are from an ethnic minority” (Becquelin 2004: 363).

Moreover, compared to other provinces and being a strategically important region with minority ethnic population, still Xinjiang is suffering under extensive control of the central government. Vast inter-ethnic and regional economic disparities can be seen in Xinjiang after the application of economic development strategy. “The vast bulk of central government investment in the region is channeled into infrastructure development, with the government reporting that by 2003, 70 billion Yuan (US\$8.36 billion) had been invested in building highways, power plants and telecommunications. As Weimer notes, massive resource transfers have been directed towards Xinjiang since the early 1990s and more so towards largescale infrastructure or mineral extraction projects that have had a mixed impact on the conditions of the region’s ethnic minorities” (Starr 2004: 188).<sup>24</sup>

Comparing the rural and urban per capita GDP, of the figures from the year 2003 which goes as: 14.3 percent (7,300 Yuan) for the urban region and 8.8 percent (1,861 yuan) for the rural region, clearly illustrates the economic disparity. The reason behind this unequal division is that the Hans comprise a significant number in the urban population as compared to other ethnic minorities (Becquelin 2004: 371; Bachman 2004: 161-173). The quasi-military organisation of the XPCC is also responsible for disturbing the economic balance in Xinjiang.

The XPCC has been utilised by the CCP as an instrument of integration as well as helping the Hans to colonise Xinjiang. As is already mentioned, XPCC being a huge force dominated by the Hans, is also in control of a third of Xinjiang’s total agricultural land, which generates 13.2 percent of the region’s GDP. Furthermore, “the XPCC’s operation directly under the State Council of the PRC makes it, virtually independent from the Xinjiang Autonomous Region’s government, while around 80 percent of its

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<sup>24</sup>Better communication and transport facilities confer genuine and broad benefits yet at the same time facilitate Han in-migration. This in turn provides economic stimulus but gives rise to competition over resources. Construction projects create jobs, yet often these go to Han immigrants rather than local minorities.

budget also comes directly from the central government” (Becquelin 2004: 366-70). Thus XPCC can be considered to be “a powerful colonising force through its absorption of Han migrants, securing territory through a string of cities, farm complexes and industries, and ensuring security through its paramilitary functions” (Becquelin 2004: 366-70)

### **Environmental problems**

The challenges of environmental degradation have to be understood in context with the social security of the ethnic minorities of Xinjiang as well. The sources of government itself have noticed and admitted that there has been a significant amount of desertification of Xinjiang since the inflow of Han population, especially since the 1990s. As a result of extensive irrigation and urbanization, around 300 kms of the Tarim River basin along with its tributaries has completely dried up since the 1970s. “The state’s response has been to embark upon a rehabilitation program for the Tarim River by diverting water from northern Xinjiang to the south in order to restore water to 240 kms of the dried up river bed” (Becquelin 2004: 366; Clarke 2007: 335).

The effectiveness of such initiatives remains uncertain, as to how much of these efforts can actually limit the depletion of the water resources of Xinjiang. It should be considered that the population density in Xinjiang is on a high at over 207 people per square kilometer (Warikoo 2016: 71) and only 4.3 percent of agricultural land (South China Morning Post 19 July 2002). Unhindered depletion of the water resources and environmental hazards are likely to increase in the near future, which is going to exert more pressure on the population of Xinjiang. Continuously depleting resources would also intensify the competition to gain a hold over them, which will, in turn, worsen the already fragile security of Xinjiang’s environment. Finally, the nuclear facility at Lop Nor and the environmental impacts of the tests done there have also been affecting the ethnic minorities of this region. China should definitely take some steps to address these environmental issues, as they are connected with the lives of the ethnic minorities of the region (Dillon 1995: 19; Clarke 2008: 21).

## **Evolution of Extremism among the Uyghurs**

After the annexation of the Uyghur province of 'East Turkistan', PRC transformed the province of Xinjiang into an autonomous region, in 1955. Since then China furthered its policies to consolidate its control over this region and also initiated the demographic change by infusing Han population in this region, to foster an extensive domination over this region and its resources. The native Uyghurs were agitated and dissatisfied against China's oppression under Mao Zedong's rule but their resentment didn't really come up in any violent form (Finley and Zhang 2015: 6).

However, the 1980s could be considered to be a turning point because Beijing eased out over its suppressive policies against the ethnic minorities, and also relaxed control over the borders which gave access the Uyghurs for the pilgrimage to Mecca, unlike during the 'cultural revolution' in China. It was this period, when some Uyghurs established contacts with radical Islamic extremist groups of Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. These Sunni Islamic counterparts had received their education from *madrassas* and were associated with Islamist movements (Finley 2013: 248-251). The Islamic revival of the 1980s in Afghanistan and Central Asia has also been considered to be a reason behind the increasing fundamentalism in Xinjiang (Starr 2015: 226), which coincided with the political reforms of Deng Xiaoping. To some extent, this brought down the propagation of atheism and revoked the restraints on performing of religious practices that was widespread during Mao's rule (Dmin 2009: 110).

Considering this, it could be ascertained that only after the Uyghurs came in touch with the radical Islam from Central Asia and the Af-Pak region, did they start coming up with the idea of forming more extremist associations to fight the Chinese oppression in Xinjiang. However, there were few other factors which fostered the proliferation of radical Islam in Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. For example the funds which were flowing from the US to support the *Mujahideens* in Afghanistan to counter the soviet army were utilised to provide weapons to them (Raman 2002). On the other hand, the majority of the Saudi funding was channeled towards the establishment of *madrassas* in the border areas of Pakistan. This can be linked to the sudden rise in the number of *madrassas* in Pakistan from 1971 to 1988. It is estimated that during this period, the



number of *madrassas* in Pakistan proliferated from 900 to 8000 (official ones) and 25000 (unofficial ones) (Bell 2007: 15). “These new *madrassas* served as a transit point for the citizens of every Muslim country that had volunteered for the anti-Soviet struggle and more importantly promulgated the ideas of ‘*Jihad*’ and radical Islam” (Siddique 2009: 8).

In the mid-1980s another development was simultaneously taking place in Central Asia,- the increasing admiration and support for the *Mujahids* in the Central Asian region of Soviet Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (Karrar 2006: 45). At the same time, religious books were being published in Pakistan and were sent to the Soviet Central Asia through Afghanistan to promote the Islamic extremist propaganda. Additionally hundreds of central Asians also travelled covertly to Pakistan, either to study in the *madrassas* or to volunteer in the Soviet war. According to an Afghan observer Ahmed Rashid, “scores of Uyghurs supported by the *Jamait-ul-ulam-i-Islam* in Pakistan made their way to Afghanistan to fight against the soviet forces along with the mujahideens” (Karrar 2006: 74). In a report published by “a Kazakh newspaper *Vremya Po* on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2002, an unnamed Uyghur expert also claimed that, during the soviet occupation of Afghanistan, the Chinese had established training camps in Tashkorgan, which is situated in western most Xinjiang, close to the Afghan border. Uyghurs who got trained in these camps were supposedly sent to Afghanistan to fight the Soviet Union” (Karrar 2009: 45).

However, being quite sceptical about the claims about China involved in training Uyghurs, still it could be ascertained that China had enough good reasons to support the anti-Soviet war in Afghanistan. Since, the Sino-Soviet split in the early 1960s, protecting the western border for China against the Soviet advances was extremely taxing. It was estimated that by the mid-1980s Soviet Union deployed about 500,000 soviet red army forces along the Chinese border and to counter this threat China did deploy somewhere from 800,00 to 1.5 million PLA soldiers in the northern and western borders facing the Soviet Russia (Lanteigne 2005: 119).

However, the first active rebellion that took place after Xinjiang’s absorption into the Chinese state occurred in the town of Baren on April 5, 1990. “Chinese sources have determined that the uprising was initiated and led by the Free Turkestan Movement under the leadership of Abdul Kasim” (Gladney 2004: 390). The brutal and oppressive policies

of China in Xinjiang over the ethnic minorities served as a fuel for rebellion, “Kasim reportedly assembled a force of approximately 200 men armed with advanced weaponry and initiated attacks against para-military forces throughout the city; Accompanying reports indicate that the weaponry they carried and precise synchronization of attacks could be attributed to direct involvement of an Afghan militia” (Wayne 2008: 81)

Much agitation was fostered in Xinjiang before the Baren uprising took place. Ethnic minorities were already protesting and staging their grievances regarding issues like the imposition of family planning policy, the conduction of nuclear tests in Lop Nor, along with the issues of religious freedom. The situation was already intense. And this time, due to the presence of the influence of religious extremism from the neighbouring Central Asia, the discontent got a *jihadi* angle. “The official account described a rather impromptu uprising, with a crowd of Kirghiz radicals storming a group of local officials and security forces, stealing their weapons, killing six armed officers, and then entrenching themselves before being chased and eliminated by local security forces” (Rodrigues 2013: 137). However, according to the local reports, the Islamic Party of East Turkistan, a separatist extremist organisation was held responsible for the violent attacks for the first time. “Its leaders had an explicit Islamist discourse with references to a ‘sacred war to eliminate the heathens. Besides, the Afghan connection, with *mujahedeen* guerrillas supplying the weapons from across the border was supported by local resident accounts and considered feasible by Western diplomats” (Rodrigues 2013: 137).

It was reported that in the villages of Turand and Baren, some Afghan-trained religious extremists with the help of loud-speakers from the mosques gave speeches to instigate people for *jihad* and motivating them to stand up and fight against the Chinese oppression to establish their own free Islamic Republic (Gunaratna 2003: 230). As a result Chinese forces further unleashed their brutality and implemented coercive measures which led to the death of around 3000 Uyghurs (Starr 2004: 316).

In contrast to the official Chinese account, according to the Uyghurs, the Baren incident was overtly hyped by the Chinese and without following up on facts, some serious human rights were violated. As per the Uyghur account, there was just an assembly of Uyghur students, who were peacefully protesting at a mosque, raising their concern about the

religious persecution of China. As an effect of the heavy handedness of China in dealing with the Uyghurs regarding the Baren uprising, the perpetrators of the incident fled to Pakistan and it is believed that the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) was formed after that by the same people. This organization was formed with the sole idea to wage a 'holy war' against China (Starr 2004: 318).

Considering these circumstances, it's quite evident how extremism got introduced to the Uyghurs through Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan, and how Uyghurs utilised these external lands as the launching pad for their violent undertakings in China. It could also be stated that the politico-security conditions of this region actually accentuated the advent of radical Islam in this region.

### **Uyghur extremist activities post-9/11**

Prior to 9/11, there were very few incidents which were categorised as terror attacks and which were considered to have happened because of foreign involvement. According to a report published by the US sanctions committee, the Uyghurs, after getting in touch with radical Islam carried out terroristic activities in China. The committee's report also mentioned that ETIM "have used bases outside China (especially in Central Asia and Afghanistan) to launch numerous violent attacks in China in May 1998, February 1999, March 1999 and May 1999- incidents that resulted in 140 deaths and 371 injuries"<sup>25</sup> (Smith 2009: 630). Xinhua also reported the presence of ETIM Uyghur leadership in Pakistan, along with the information that the same group has bases in Afghanistan as well.

However, China started to claim officially that the Uyghurs had forged linkages with extremist elements outside China only after 9/11. China made these claims public only after the UN submitted a State Council document in 2001 entitled as "Terrorist Activities Perpetrated by Eastern Turkistan Organizations and their Ties with Osama bin Laden and the Taliban"<sup>26</sup>. China alleged quite directly, in this document, that "ETIM has over forty

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<sup>25</sup> ETIM, a summary by UN, (Online: Web) Accessed on 25<sup>th</sup> April 2017, URL: [https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/qa\\_sanctions\\_list/summaries/entity/eastern-turkistan-islamic-movement](https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/qa_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/eastern-turkistan-islamic-movement)

<sup>26</sup>Terrorist Activities Perpetrated by "Eastern Turkistan" Organizations and Their Links with Osama bin Laden and the Taliban, URL: <http://www.china-un.org/eng/zt/fk/t28937.htm>

organisations engaged to varying degrees” of violent activities within China and also in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Uzbekistan. This document also singled out ETIM for having links with the terrorist network of Al Qaeda.

“The United States’ designation of ETIM in 2002 as a “terrorist organization” affiliated with Al Qaeda added significant credibility to the State Council document” (Small 2015: 82). This decision of U.S. also fetched criticism and was seen as an attempt to secure Chinese backing for the War against Terrorism, along with NATO’s mission in Afghanistan. This charge could be considered credible because the same figures were cited in the 2002 White Paper given by China, as were given by the US.

However, UN Security Council did not add any actions or incidents in the profile of ETIM from 2002 to 2007.<sup>27</sup> In this period there was a sudden decline in the violent activities in Xinjiang, so it could be ascertained that the extremist links the Uyghurs had in Afghanistan were under threats which is why they were not able to launch any attack. However in 2007, ETIM re-emerged as Turkestan Islamic Party (TIP) after Abdul-Haq-al-Turkistani took over the leadership of the group in 2003. This long period of silence has raised questions over the origins of TIP. Some analysts also believe that TIP could be a splinter group of the main organization ETIM or even “a false-flag operation designed to establish ties between Uyghur separatists and Al-Qaeda” (McGregor 2010). “The TIP has also been reported to be a Uyghur split of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), an Uzbek movement which was renamed Islamic Party of Turkestan (IPT) different from TIP in 2001” (Raman 2011) .

However, an interesting factor should be noted down here, to understand the dynamics of these extremist organizations. While ETIM refers to Xinjiang province of China, Turkestan denotes an extended area including Xinjiang and areas of Central Asia, for which the calls have been given by organisations like IMU to bring this region under the Islamic Caliphate (Raman 2011). Further details regarding the extremist activities of Uyghurs and their cross-national linkages are dealt with detail in the next chapter.

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<sup>27</sup> “Easte Turkestan Movement”, Narrative Summaries of Reasons for Listing, United Nations Security Council Subsidiary Organs, [Online: Web] Accessed 16 March 2017, URL: [https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/qa\\_sanctions\\_list/summaries/entity/eastern-turkistan-islamic-movement](https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/qa_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/eastern-turkistan-islamic-movement)

## **Extremism, drug trade and HIV/AIDS**

China constructed the KKH with Pakistan for extending its economic imperatives; it also facilitated the extremists for transferring the extremist ideology and drugs along with them.<sup>28</sup> Prior to this development, drugs arrived from the South-East Asian Golden Triangle (Burma, Laos and Thailand). In the 1990s a new development took place with the sudden exponential supply of drugs from the Golden Crescent (Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran) (Beare 2012: 251).<sup>29</sup> For Pakistan and Afghanistan drug-smuggling is a serious regional problem, as most of the opium and heroin comes from Afghanistan and are easily circulated. The smuggling of drugs is, in many cases, the only sources of raising funds by some Islamic militant groups in this South and Central Asian region.

Through the same extremist linkages the drug business found its way into Xinjiang, which led to a massive drug addiction rate in this region. With the increased consumption of drugs, HIV/AIDS rates have also increased drastically because these addicts mostly use the same contaminated needles. The infection is the second highest in the country. “A total of 85 percent of all reported people living with HIV/AIDS in Xinjiang are Uyghurs.”<sup>30</sup> “96 percent of reported infections have been detected among intravenous drug users and in some border communities, the infection rate among them now exceeds 70 percent” (Haider 2005: 534; Kaufmann and Jing 2002: 2339-2340). However, the Chinese authorities have not taken any substantial steps to curb this problem.

The increasing problem of HIV/AIDS in the Xinjinag society should also be understood keeping in mind the socio-political situation of the region. Because of the economic and political marginalization of a lot of Uyghurs, there is high rate of unemployment in certain areas of Xinjiang and the youth of these areas are easily drawn under the influence of extremist elements and subsequently fall prey to drug addiction. As a 1999

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<sup>28</sup>“Global Illicit Drug Trends 2002,” Report by the United Nations International Drug Control Program, [Online: Web] Accessed 16 March 2017, URL: [https://www.unodc.org/pdf/report\\_2002-06-26\\_1/report\\_2002-06-26\\_1.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/pdf/report_2002-06-26_1/report_2002-06-26_1.pdf)

<sup>29</sup>World Drug Report: Highlights - the United Nations, [Online: Web] Accessed 16 March 2017, URL: [http://www.un.org/ga/20special/wdr/e\\_hilite.htm](http://www.un.org/ga/20special/wdr/e_hilite.htm)

<sup>30</sup>China U.N. Theme Group on HIV/AIDS for the U.N. Country Team in China, [Online: Web] Accessed 16 March 2017, URL: <http://www.hivpolicy.org/Library/HPP000056.pdf>

UNESCO report, the 'Globalization of the Drug Trade' expands, "Since the availability of supply creates a dynamic of demand, consumption today is exploding not only in the North (Xinjiang, Qinghai, Ningxia, and Gansu) but also in producer countries from Pakistan to Vietnam, a vicious circle fueled by poverty and unemployment."<sup>31</sup>

### **Uyghur Separatist Organisations**

China has listed most of the Uyghur organisations as separatist, even though they proclaim openly that they profess non-violence and do not associate with any terroristic tactics. There are many Uyghur organisations spread around the globe but they remain politically fractionalized and disorganized over the issues ranging from violence to separatism. "Many Uyghurs, including Erken Alptekin, Nobel Prize nominee Rebiya Kadeer, and Anwar Yusuf, president of the Eastern Turkestan National Freedom Center, are working with international institutions to secure increased freedom and better living conditions for the Uyghur people" (Shichor 2007).

Germany-based East Turkestan Information Center (ETIC), is another Uyghur group which has been labeled by China as a terrorist group. Abdujelil Karakash leads this group. "Karakash was also personally included among eleven individuals wanted for terrorism-related crimes by Beijing" (Schichor 2013: 617-618). The World Uyghur Youth Congress (WUYC), another one on China's top list of alleged terrorist groups, has the same stand of no links with violent tactics and is also based in Germany (Peerenboom 2008: 102). Its leader, "Dolkun Isa, joins Karakash on China's list of terrorists, as does Mehmet Emin Hazret, leader of the East Turkestan Liberation Organization (ETLO)" (Amnesty International 2004). The ETLO, is a secular group and also denounces violence, it proposes the peaceful methods of seeking independence from China but regards to military action as a final resort, which might be "inevitable" (Boehm 2009: 104). Whereas, Chinese authorities blame this group for arson crimes of 1998 and further claims that the member of this organization has received military training abroad and had infiltrated Xinjiang to execute violent attacks.

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<sup>31</sup>UNESCO, The Globalization of the Drug Trade (UNESCO, April 1999), , [Online: Web] Accessed 25 March 2017, URL: <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0011/001158/115833e.pdf>

East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), as discussed earlier, is one of the most dreaded and top listed terrorist organization filed by China. Presently the whereabouts of ETIM are unknown but it has been linked by the Chinese government with various attacks which have taken place in China. According to a White Paper published by China in 2002, ETIM is reported to have executed over 200 violent attacks in China from 1990 to 2001 which resulted in the deaths of around 162 people from different ethnic groups. It has also been accused of arson attacks, assassination and explosions. China also claims that ETIM had links with Osama bin Laden and its founding leader HasanMahsun had received promises of enormous financial support from Al Qaeda (Holdstock 2015:159-160). The PRC's 2002 report on terrorism also mentions that ETIM has developed more than 150 training centres for terrorists, stationed at various places, along with workshops for producing weapons and explosive. Chinese police have recovered detonators and anti-tank grenades from one of such workshops. On 5<sup>th</sup> January 2007, China reportedly destroyed a terrorist camp, capturing 17 terrorists and killing 18 and recovered a stockpile of improvised explosives and guns (Wayne 2007: 44).

The Eastern Turkistan Islamic Party (Sharki Turkistan Islam Partiyesi) ETIP was established with the aim to seek independence and create Eastern Turkistan. Its support base comes from religious fundamentalists and other similar conservative forces, it has bases in Hotan and Kashgar. It professes armed struggle as the way to achieve independence and was formed in early 1980s (Castets 2003).

The Home of East Turkistan Youth: also termed as 'Xinjiang's Hamas', is another radical group with similar ideology to gain independence through violent means. It is believed that it has a membership of around 2000 people and some of them have also received training in Afghanistan in manufacturing explosives (Boehm 2009: 106).

The Free Turkistan Movement is another such Islamic fundamentalist group, led by Zahideen Yusuf. It also claimed responsibility for the April 1990 Baren uprising (Davis 2007: 53).

### *Uyghur organizations active outside Xinjiang*

The Committee for Eastern Turkistan is considered to be one of the most radical extremist groups in Central Asia. It is based in Almaty. It was formed by the Uyghur guerillas who fought the last war with China between 1944-1949. Its goal is to free Xinjiang from the China's rule (Reed and Raschke 2010: 40).

The Xinjiang Liberation Organization/Uyghur Liberation Organization (ULO), has bases in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, but in general is dispersed in the whole of Central Asia. (Wayne 2007: 46). According to the PRC's 2002 terrorism report, Kyrgyz government holds this organization responsible for a series of violent attacks in Kyrgyzstan, which included kidnapping of Chinese businessman, attack on Chinese delegation and setting fire in a market. "Ten Uyghurs, including Kyrgyz, Chinese, Uzbek, and Turkish nationals, were arrested in connection with these events. They are said to have confessed to membership in ULO, and have had training in terrorist camps, fighting in Chechnya, and engaging in terrorist activities in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and China" (Clarke 2008: 288-289).

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) has been recruiting Uyghurs from their own diasporic communities. It is considered to be founded by the Taliban itself as an armed auxiliary force in 1991. The members of IMU have trained in the Al Qaeda camps and have been funded by it. Its functional and operational base has been the Ferghana Valley (Davis 2007: 53). The group's funding is sponsored by trafficking opium and heroin in Central Asia (Cornell 2007: 626-629). It is also believed that IMU has links with the "Islamic Movement of Eastern Turkistan" in Xinjiang and has been providing financial and military assistance to them (Xu et al. 2014). In June 2001 it changed its name to Islamic Party of Turkistan. After changing its name it has also expanded its domain and now aims for establishing Islamic Caliphate in Central Asia including Xinjiang. With this new ideology, it started recruiting people from various religio-cultural backgrounds like Pakistan, Uyghur, Uzbek, Chechen etc. Its base has expanded and now it works beyond Uzbekistan. Its membership is estimated to be around 5000 people in the armed wing, whereas the number of Uyghurs involved is unknown (Davis 2007: 54).



### *Cyber-separatism*

Most of the East Turkestan and Pan Turkic groups are based in Turkey, Germany and United States. They promote and propagate the message of Uyghur plight and struggle under the Chinese regime in the light of the restrictions posed by China to field work in Xinjiang. They serve as a source of information for human rights groups on what is happening in the province. Most of their activities are limited to online social media campaigns and are considered as mostly vocal, to raise awareness about their cause. Such groups include:

The East Turkistan Information Center (ETIC): It runs a website imparting news on Uyghur affairs in English language and is based in Germany. However, China claims that its identity portrayed as an information center is a sham and that it is linked with violent groups and sends information to extremists to perpetrate violence in China (NurMuhammad 2016: 487-488).

The East Turkistan National Congress: It claims to be the legitimate body for the Uyghur people residing in outside China and further claims to be themore real representative of this community, and thus justifies speaking and acting on their behalf. It operates in 13 different countries and 18 organisations. “It claims to abhor violence of terrorism as an instrument of policy and declares its unconditional adherence to the internationally accepted human rights standards as laid down in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and International Covenant and Political Rights and Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; adherence to the principles of democratic pluralism and rejection of totalitarianism and any form of religious intolerance” (Shichor 2013: 615-616). ETNC’s first general assembly was held in Istanbul in 1992. It was declared officially as the “international democratically elected representative body of the Uyghur people” in its second meeting in 1999 in Munich (Reversion and Murer 2013: 235).

The Uyghur American Association (UAA): It denounces the use of violence in order to achieve political objectives. As per this group the military approach followed by China in Xinjiang is actual state sponsored terrorism, which would keep sowing the seeds of

violence in the Uyghurs. This organization focuses on raising awareness regarding the Uyghur oppression in China and keeps publishing information online to garner support from the international organizations working in the domain of human rights (Davis 2006: 55).

### **China's Policy to Counter Separatism**

After absorbing Xinjiang, PRC has followed a policy of control. According to Millward and Tursun (2004), the methods implemented for establishing control included: “1) political integration by Chinese style administration, 2) Development of party structure that was dominated by the ethnic Han and, 3) Cultural assimilation through Confucian education” (Starr 2004: 63).

The spurt of violence and extremism as discussed earlier, increased in the 1990s after the formation of new Central Asian states. To counter this sudden surge in religious extremism, China initiated a ‘hardline approach’ to weed out “the three evils of terrorism, separatism and religious extremism” and unleashed its “strike hard” campaign in Xinjiang. This policy was adopted to safeguard China’s “one nation” predicament.

The religious activities in Xinjiang were forcefully banned. It also increased pressure over the Turkic Muslims to not conduct *mashrap* (a religious social get-together of young men to celebrate and have musical performances). This became an issue of serious contention between the Chinese authorities and Uyghurs in Xinjiang. “The state failed to realize that these gatherings were primarily aimed at discussing and resolving local problems, mostly drug addiction and alcohol abuse amongst the Uyghur youth, and were not typically involved in illegal religious activities”(Millward 2004:17).

Chinese authorities implemented stringent measures to “eradicate illegal mosques and religious schools, to increase political training amongst clergy as well as to combat religious practices among party members” (Waite: 2006: 225). After the Baren incident Chinese officials started clamping down on illegal mosques and religious schools, and either closed them down or brought them under the central authority. The religious clerics and Imams who were not registered and qualified were stripped off their designations. “Fifty mosques described as ‘superfluous’ were closed down and the construction or

planning of new mosques was halted. Also, all imams were required to write a letter to the government pledging their loyalty” (Dillon 2003: 30). “The cross-border contacts of ethnic minorities have given rise to government fears that Islamic fundamentalism will erode Chinese solidarity” (Christiansen, Rai 1996: 307)

China unleashed its military and para-military might in Xinjiang as soon as the violence started erupting in the 1990s. PLA in 1995 played a crucial role in enforcing Beijing’s grip in the region by quelling the separatist voices. People’s Armed Police (PAP) was also deployed along with PLA to keep the situation in control in Xinjiang. The government authorities in Hotan in July 1995, in order to keep a vigil on the religious activities of Uyghurs kept on replacing and arresting religious clerics. When the local people got infuriated because of such repression and encircled local government offices “Riot police trapped the demonstrators in the compound, deployed tear gas, and arrested and beat many of them. Official reports mention injuries to 66 officials and police but supply no figures regarding demonstrator casualties” (Millward 2004: 15)

In order to enhance its military deployment across Xinjiang and to connect the north and south of this region, China opened a highway running across the Taklamakan desert in 1995. The prime objective behind commencing this highway was to provide rapid movement in terms of emergency. It made the journey from north to south limited to a span of hours, which was crucial for military reinforcements. Since the completion of this project, China also ushered a massive compilation project of constructing and upgrading rail links, roads and developing other transportation systems. “The events of 1995 mark a shift in tactics: PLA and PAP forces are used in concert, yet only the PAP are effective in dealing with the population. When the PLA was used directly the situation was enflamed” (Wayne 2007: 83).

In Yining, riots broke out between Uyghurs and Chinese authorities in February 1997, with the report of Uyghurs being arrested and executed in secret in regard with some bombings (Dillon 2004: 93). A lot of Uyghurs protested to release the arrested Uyghur students and these protestors were also arrested by the PAP. The PLA also assisted PAP and moved army combat corps from Gansu along with PAP’s anti-riot troops (Dillon 2004: 94-95).

Assessing the change in the regional security environment, China immediately deployed its army (in heavy numbers) along the borders of Pakistan and Afghanistan. This action was taken in order to seal the border so as to not let any fleeing terrorists from the fields of Afghanistan to enter China and also to work along with the US to keep an extended surveillance over the region. These actions could also be considered as a mighty show of force to the restive Uyghurs, in order to instill fear in their minds. However, it cannot be assessed whether the presence of PLA and PAP has undergone any significant change within Xinjinag in the aftermath of 9/11.

China was way ahead in the 1990's, as it already assessed the extremist threat which might arise from Central Asia. After the disintegration of USSR and the formation of CARs, the *jihadi* element and religious sentiment was strong in these newly formed nations and China was aware that Uyghurs would get in touch with those extremist forces to get support to counter China. Hence, China stepped forward with the idea of promoting regional cooperation under the initiative of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Futhermore, considering the rise of extremism and unstable security conditions in Central Asia after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, China took the initiative and along with Kzakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan signed "The Treaty on Deeping Military Trust in Border Regions" in 1996, also known as the "Shanghai Five" (Hu 2014; 14). The members of Shanghai Five, gave a joint statement to address the problems of non-state terrorist actors, in their meeting in 1998 in Almaty, which goes as:

"The parties are unanimous that any form of national split-ism, ethnic exclusion and religious extremism is unacceptable. The parties will take steps to fight against international terrorism, organized crimes, arms smuggling, the trafficking of drugs and narcotics, and other transnational criminal activities and will not allow their territories to be used for the activities undermining the national sovereignty, security and social order of any of the five countries" (Mckerras and Clarke 2009: 136).

With the inclusion of Uzbekistan in the Shanghai five in 2001, it paved way for extended regional cooperation and formation of SCO, which then signed the: "Shanghai Convention on Combating Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism." The SCO also agreed over the formation of a regional structure in 2002, with the capability to speedily

intervene in any case of crisis in Central Asia. Therefore, in 2003 a “Regional Anti-Terrorism” center was opened in Tashkent. Numerous anti-terrorism joint military exercises were executed in Central Asia. Kyrgyzstan border troops along with the Chinese Xinjiang Military District forces jointly held exercises in 2002. “In particular, in 2003 over 1,000 soldiers from five SCO countries (Uzbekistan did not participate) initiated their first-ever joint anti-terrorism exercise, held in Kazakhstan and Yili in Chinese Xinjiang” (Cho 2013: 310-311)

Therefore, SCO has a range of functions to perform in the changing security situation in Central Asia. These functions include, promoting economic development, maintaining safe and secure borders and most importantly for Beijing “to combat its three evils of separatism, extremism and terrorism in Xinjiang as well as Central Asia through SCO multilateralism” (Yuan 2010: 855-869).

#### *Legal Instruments of Control*

Along with the policies of coercion, China has also institutionally framed laws to constrain Uyghur separatism and legitimize cracking down on separatists. An amendment on PRC criminal law was passed on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2001, by the 9th National’s People’s Congress of the PRC. According to this statement terrorism has been defined in a way to extend its scope of giving capital punishment easily, in order to “punish the crimes of terrorism, safeguard the security of the State and of people’s lives and property and maintain order” (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC 2001). One of the noticeable changes according to Article 120, states that “a person who forms or leads a terrorist organization shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not less than 10 years or life imprisonment” and also includes anyone who “actively participate in a terrorist organization”<sup>32</sup> (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the PRC 2001). As terror acts are responsible for “causing harm to state security, social stability, lives and property under the amended Criminal Law Article 120, it can be extended to criminalize not just a broad variety of potential terrorist crimes but political dissent in general, among groups or

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<sup>32</sup>Third Amendment to the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China, [Online: Web] Accessed 12 June 2017, URL: <https://www.cecc.gov/resources/legal-provisions/third-amendment-to-the-criminal-law-of-the-peoples-republic-of-china>

religious organizations the state deems to be a threat” (Clarke 2010: 549). The conditions on which maximum punishment would be given is not clear, “so even the funding of a terrorist organization can constitute a capital offence” (Amnesty International 2002). Thus harsh laws are framed in such a way that they can be used as a deterrent against the people who have any separatist inclinations.

Apart from these legal procedures, China has also been accused by the ‘human rights watch’ that it has been using ‘black jails’ to torture detainees in harsh conditions for indefinite period of time without anybody having any knowledge about it (Richardson 2014). CCP’s policy to amend the Criminal Procedure Law can be seen as a smart move to counter extremism in China, but consequently it is continuously alienating the population, as more and more coerce measures are making the natives of Xinjiang feel bitter towards the Chinese.

However, the situation in Xinjiang has changed since the official launch of CPEC by China in 2014. Xinjiang’s stability has again gained additional imperatives in China’s economic index. Xinjiang being the ancient hub of trade since the silk route times and now being starting point of this corridor due to geographical proximity with Pakistan, the importance of a conflict free Xinjiang has surmounted. Thus China is furthering its approach of heavy economic development in this region to dispel the grievances of Uyghurs by providing the economic dividends of CPEC.

To achieve these goals, in the 2017 annual session National People’s Congress along with Xinjiang delegation proposed to develop this region even further, being the originating point of CPEC, a huge amount of investment is promised to develop high speed railway linkages to connect Kashgar with Urumqi, and Urumqi with Horgos in northern Xinjiang. In addition to that construction of a land port at China-Kazakhstan border is also on the list. Beijing has also decided “to inject record funding of 170 billion yuan (\$24.8 billion) into new roads, up nearly six fold from 2016, and investment in roads, railways and airports from 2017, which will top the total funding for transportation infrastructure from 2011 to 2015” (Weihua and Jia 2017).

According to Siegfried O. Wolf a researcher at the South Asia Institute of the University of Heidelberg, China is investing tremendously in CPEC, and it is going to be in the radar

of the Uyghur extremists in the region. These Uyghur extremists who have their extremist linkages in Afghanistan and Pakistan would surely try to target this project (Online Interview September 2015).

In this context, a stable and peaceful Xinjiang is imperative for the national security of China and also its regional growth, as it shares borders with eight countries and especially with Central Asia and Pakistan, which are pertinent for China's growing needs. Considering the geo-strategic narrative of Xinjiang, its importance has relatively increased after China's official announcement of OBOR and CPEC. Xinjiang provides an eminent western front for trade and energy security. With the rising Islamic threat from the West Asia to Central Asia and Pakistan, the proximity of restive Uyghur Xinjiang with these regions is a matter of grave concern for China. Therefore China is working regionally and domestically to limit the span of religious terrorism which could be a great hindrance for its own rise.

**CHAPTER FIVE:**  
**Security Implications for India**



The geo-strategic importance of Xinjiang has been explained in the previous chapter, and its imperative for China to have a stable Xinjiang to further its economic excursions and growth. However, on the other side this move by China to enter Gilgit-Baltistan is more than welcomed by Pakistan, as it serves Pakistan coherently to maintain deterrence against India. Additionally, China is also investing in a lot of infrastructural Projects across Pakistan which is quite a boon for its dwindling economy. The security environment gets complicated, as Pakistan is promising China to not let its territory to be used as a launching pad by any extremist elements against China. But the problem arises because of Pakistan's dubious stand over the presence of terror outfits in its territory. As Pakistan wants to support China by countering terrorism in its own land to maintain its "all-weather" friendship but it doesn't want to brush off the bases of all the terror outfits completely, because they assist Pakistan in its proxy war against India in Kashmir. To have a nuanced understanding of this complex collision and convergence of political and economic interests, this chapter would elucidate the security aspect and how its getting affected with spanning of extremist linkages across these regions.

### **Development of terror linkages in the region**

The Afghan war could be considered as the turning point in the history of South and Central Asia, as it brought the global powers to a face off and consequently led to the cultivation of religious extremism in this region. The geo-strategic positioning of Afghanistan has to be kept in mind to understand the power struggle which is happening in this region. Its proximity with the South, Central and West Asia while being right in the middle of these crucial zones, makes it imperatively important for global and regional powers. Due to its contiguity with the above mentioned regions, it has also a role to play in the spilling over of ideology and conflict in the adjoining areas (Kapila 2001).

Assessing the possibility of such spill overs and considering the lessons from the past, China has been trying to isolate Xinjiang which also shares border with Afghanistan. This measure is taken to inhibit the Uyghurs from securing any linkages with the extremists in the adjoining areas to garner material and ideological assistance for their separatist struggle. However, considering the Chinese perspective, the geographical proximity of

Xinjiang with the CAR's and the opening of the Karakoram Highway can be ascertained to be the source of the inflow of extremist Islamic ideology in Xinjiang.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the relaxation given in the 1980s for enhancing regional trade, also opened gates for the Uyghurs to Central Asia and Afghanistan, which got them exposed to religious extremist and they drew financial and ideological funding from the extremist groups. Saudi Arabia was the main sponsor, who poured money to spread *Wahabi Islam* and for the construction of *madrassas* and mosques (Dreyer 1993: 292). Under the relaxed government policies and ascending Islamic consciousness, Uyghurs travelled in the 1980s and 1990s to countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan and got enrolled in *madrassas*. This opened the doors to sudden extremist Islamic exposure for Uyghurs.

In recent years, due to changed policies of Pakistan and increased crackdown by Chinese government in Xinjiang, the number of Uyghurs who used to get enrolled in *madrassas* have fallen. These centres of religious learning still managed to infer a strong sense of Muslim identity in the Uyghurs. "Many of these *madrassas*, however, promoted more radical views, and some Uyghurs studied under the patronage of groups such as the *Jamiat-i-UlemaIslami*" (Rashid 2002, 140). These *madrassas* played a crucial role during the Soviet-Afghan and 2001 Afghanistan war, as they served as recruitment centres for the extremist organization to pick fighters, and there have been reports about Uyghurs being involved in both these wars. Since 1980s, the time they started travelling to Afghanistan and Pakistan, Uyghurs have known to be involved in *jihadi* activities in the region. According to Ahmed Rashid, a veteran author on Pakistan and Afghanistan, "Scores of Uyghurs began to study in Pakistani *madrassas* and honed their battle skills in Afghanistan, first with the Hizb-i-Islami Party and later with the Taliban" (Rashid 2002: 204).

According to John Cooley, author of the book, "Unholy Wars: Afghanistan, America, and International Terrorism", the Chinese government was also involved in training and arming Uyghurs in collaboration with Pakistan to counter the Soviets in the war. However, China was didn't calculate the probability of these Uyghur cadres to come back and strike them after gaining battle skills and forming linkages with the *jihadi* elements

of Afghanistan. Hence, China paid a heavy price by facing a “renewed and spreading revolt of the Uyghurs” (Cooley 1999: 66). Despite, Chinese government’s concerted efforts to keep a check on Uyghur movements across the border, the extremist Uyghurs made their way into Xinjiang along the KKH. These extremists then carried violent activities in China with the aim gain popular support and subsequently gain independence. The construction of highway and opening of borders during the ‘reform era’ in China led to the proliferation of cross border terror linkages among Uyghurs and other extremists, spanning from Central Asia to Pakistan.

China’s worries got even worse with rise of Taliban in Afghanistan. With the presence of a new ultra-Islamic extremist organization, Beijing feared that the network of terror around the region would elevate further. However, these possibilities started becoming real when, “Taliban, along with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), an Al-Qaeda auxiliary, began to recruit Uyghurs from the vast network of Pakistani *madrassas*, many of which follow the conservative Deobandi teachings and advocate jihad” (Rashid 2002: 204). In the 1990s, China with the increased Uyghur violence in Xinjiang, China started pressurizing Pakistan and Taliban to stop providing support to the Uyghurs, after which “the latter, locked in battle with the forces of Ahmed Shah Masood, simply moved its Uyghur troops from the front lines to Mazar-Sharif in the north to join the IMU. At a later meeting in Kandahar between the Chinese ambassador to Pakistan and Taliban leader Mullah Muhammed Omar, the Taliban denied that Uyghurs were part of their forces” (Rashid 2002: 176). According to some Chinese sources around 1000 Uyghurs were fighting in the 1990s in Afghanistan. Whereas, some 300 were caught by the Afghan forces and approximately over 100 were handed over to China, while the whereabouts of the rest are unknown (Separatist Leader Handed 2002).

China renewed its “Strike Hard” campaign, in the wake of ‘war on terrorism’ launched by the US. US also extended support to China and the Information Office of the State Council on 21<sup>st</sup> January 2002 issued a report stating, “terrorist forces from Xinjiang jeopardized . . . social stability in China, and even threatened the security and stability of

related countries and regions.”<sup>33</sup> In the same report US also alleged the ETIM of having strong links with Al Qaeda. Human rights watch condemned the generalization and labelling of all Uyghurs as terrorists professing Islamic extremism. Human Rights Watch in its report also mentioned that China is trying to “blur the distinctions between terrorism and calls for independence by the ethnic Uyghur community . . . in order to enlist international cooperation for its own campaign, begun years earlier, to eliminate ‘separatism’.”<sup>34</sup>

Few incidents that took place in the 1990s strained relations between Pakistan and China, e.g. the after the Baren incident in 1990, China closed the KKH for few months. “In an agreement signed in 1995, China and Pakistan agreed to upgrade the highway to facilitate bilateral and transit trade among Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan; however, Beijing displayed visible hesitancy in implementing the agreement” (Brown 2014: 151). Mentioning Beijing’s stance, in 1995 Ahmed Rashid wrote, “Beijing’s reluctance stems from the fact that the proposed road would run across Xinjiang and the Chinese fear that the route would increase the traffic in fundamentalism” (Haider 2005: 532). To counter the cross border movements of extremists along with Uyghurs, China announced to raise a security fence along the Pakistan-China border on 1997 (Debata 2007: 195).

It was being alleged by the Chinese authorities that the extremists who infiltrate into Chinese territory provide arms and training to the Uyghurs. In report by Xinjiang Legal Daily published in February 1998, “There is also evidence of trade in heroin and weapons over Xinjiang’s borders with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, Afghanistan and three Central Asian Republics” (Debata 2007: 195). China on 6<sup>th</sup> January 1999, filed an official complaint to the Interior Ministry of Pakistan, after it got hold over 16 Uyghurs who claimed to be trained in Pakistan. “The Chinese stated that the arrested persons had admitted during interrogation that they had received guerrilla warfare training in camps at

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<sup>33</sup>“East Turkestan Movement”, Narrative Summary of Reasons for Listing, United Nations Security council Subsidiary Organ, [Online: Web] Accessed 27 April 2017, URL: [https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/aq\\_sanctions\\_list/summaries/entity/eastern-turkistan-islamic-movement](https://www.un.org/sc/suborg/en/sanctions/1267/aq_sanctions_list/summaries/entity/eastern-turkistan-islamic-movement)

<sup>34</sup>“ In the Name of Counter-Terrorism: Human Rights Abuses Worldwide”, Human Rights Watch, [Online: Web] Accessed 27 April 2017, URL: [https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/counter-terrorism-bck\\_0.pdf](https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/counter-terrorism-bck_0.pdf)

Jalalabad in Afghanistan and Landi Kotal in the Pakistani Khyber Agency” (Debata 2007: 195). In November 2003 by People’s Daily published an article stating, “small numbers of separatist Muslims from Xinjiang have reportedly trained in Al Qaeda camps in Pakistan.” Whereas, the authorities in Pakistan clearly denied the presence of any training camps facilitating Uyghur extremists in any form. These incidents led to ruptured Sino-Pak relations.

### **Extremist network and linkages in Pakistan**

The US-led proxy war against the Soviet troops in Afghanistan led to the mass mushrooming of *jihadi* extremist elements in Afghanistan and that further ushered the rise of the demand of separatism and terror in the sub-Asian region (Bell 2007: 14-15). Although the so-called Afghan *Mujahideen* were trained in camps across Afghanistan, it were the camps in *Azad* Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, where many of them acquired the skills in guerrilla warfare. Terrorist camps began mushrooming in Muzaffarabad, Kotli and Balakot which hosted terrorists either returning from Afghanistan for rest and recuperation or for advanced training (Singh 2009: 334; Alexander 2002: 644) These camps largely operated as recruitment offices and as training campuses for the Afghan jihad (Sharma and Behera 2014: 5). In the late 1980s, when Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) was created as a military wing of MarkazDawat-al-Irshad, which was founded in 1986 and was a centre for Islamic preaching and learning, (Hoffman and Reanares 2014: 576). The first sets of recruits of LeT were sent to two camps, Muaskar-e-Aqsa in the Kunar province and Muaskar-e-Taiba in Paktia province of Afghanistan (Rao, Bollig and Bock 2011: 137). The first LeT training camp in Pakistan was set up in Muzaffarabad and was named Baitul Mujahideen, or the House of the Holy Warrior (Warikoo 2014: 308-309).

During 1990 Mujahideen from Kashmir started reaching the Taiba camp in Afghanistan for military training. So a different camp, called Aqsa Camp, was established near Taiba Camp just for their training. Baitul Mujahideen training camps were established in Muzaffarabad. Here Pakistani and Kashmiri Mujahideen received training together in the beginning of 1991, the first batch of Mujahideen trained in Aqsa Camp reached Muzaffarabad (Sharma and Behera 2014: 169; Rao, Bollig and Bock 2008: 136-137). To refine their training, Badar Post was founded and a camp named Ummul Qara was

established in Muzaffarabad. In August 1992, the first batch of Lashkar-e-Taiba mujahideen was launched in Kashmir” (Warikoo 2014: 309).

According to Arif Jamal, author of *Shadow Games*, an insightful study of Pakistan’s in the proxy war against India, three of Lashkar’s military training camps or cantonments functioned in PoK: “It has trained over 100,000 Mujahideen in the military craft in these camps while those waiting for their turn to start their military training may exceed the number of the trained Mujahideen. Only one of its military training camps, UmmulQara, in Muzaffarabad, churns out over 500 Mujahideen. The other two functional training camps are smaller. The Markaz has set up a huge network around the country with over 2,000 unit offices. There are few places in Pakistan where the workers of the Markaz Dawat al Irshad are not present” (Sareen 2005: 256).

Similarly, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HuM) has a wide network of training camps in PoK and the adjacent North West Frontier Province (NWFP) besides the tribal areas which straddle the Durand Line. Other smaller groups had their little corners in the mountains and valleys of the region, surviving on the munificence of the ISI and Pakistan Army. Most of these groups shared common logistics and communication networks that linked them with their “handlers” in ISI (Warikoo 2014: 309; Raman 1999).

The area flourished as a *jihadi* campus when new recruits began pouring in for Kashmir. Large segments of these new *jihadis* came from universities and colleges across Pakistan, particularly from Punjab. One of the primary recruiting group for jihad was Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), it also used to work with Islami Jamiat Talaba (IJT) its student wing (John 2010). The volunteers “include young college and university students with aggressive tendencies who are responding to what they regard to be a religious call”(Frontier Post 1994). Most of them were first sent to the military training facilities set up by the JI called Markaz-e-Islami in Afghanistan. The exploits of *jihadis* in Kashmir were published in JI’s fortnightly Jihad-e-Kashmir, and monthlies Ham Qadam and Bedar Digest. The group ran a systematic campaign to mobilise public opinion for the Afghan jihad and took part in militant activities with full zeal, producing 72 “martyrs” between 1980 and 1990 (Sareen 2005: 72; Nasr 1994).

Although JI was the prime group who was steering the Kashmir jihad, a considerable number of IJT members wanted to join Al Badr, a similar group with the aim of annexing Kashmir with force based in PoK. “An important reason why Al Badr drew recruits from colleges and universities across Pakistan was that educated youth preferred to work with people from a similar background and inclination”, (Rehman 2013: 5) and not *madrassa* students who largely went to Afghanistan. They were “at ease in the company of engineers, doctors, computer scientists, and social scientists who made up the Al-Badr Mujahideen” (Frontline 2000). The group was more relaxed regarding maintaining a dress code, or offering *namaz* and keeping long beards. Religious indoctrination was the prime part of the training schedule in those camps in PoK along with the physical training (Warikoo 2014: 310).

The terrorist cells of various extremist organisations like Jaish-i-Mohammad, Al Qaeda, Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizb-i-Islami, rely over promoting extremist tendencies through religious propaganda to capture the minds of youth from the urban and semi-urban areas for recruitment. Most of the religious organizations despite having varying stands on militant extremism focus on doctors, teacher, lawyers and traders. They target these middle class people as their ideology carriers. “They consistently rely on radical literature and publications and disseminate the message not only through the printed word but also through CDs, DVDs and the internet. Militant organisations in Pakistan increasingly use the internet to promote extremism and spur recruitment, with the youth from middle-income groups as their specific target” (Rana 2015).

With the end of Cold War, the rapid growth of these terrorist groups went largely unnoticed except by India which bore the brunt of a wave of terror that brought the spectre of endless violence to the streets of Kashmir and other states of India. These groups remained in the shadow of global attention as the US began its military operations in the Middle East and a global terrorist group Al Qaeda began to emerge from the ashes of Afghan *jihad*.

However, there was one other incident which focused global attention on these training camps, before 9/11 happened: the 1999 Kargil War. General Pervez Musharraf launched a motley group of *jihadi* groups across the Line of Control to infiltrate into the heights in

Kargil and other areas studded along the crucial Srinagar-Leh Highway in Kashmir. The objective was to camouflage a military offensive as an infiltration and thus avoid a closer scrutiny by the Indian security forces and the global community. “Cadres from Al Badr, LeT and other groups occupied some of the key areas along the ridges and mountain tops overlooking the Indian defences before the regular Army moved in to consolidate their positions along the Line of Control” (Warikoo 2014: 310-311).

There are, however, differing opinions on the participation of the *jihadi* groups in the Kargil War. However, later reports came out that the terrorist participation was merely a ploy to cover up what was essentially a military operation, and it was discovered that the Northern Light Infantry of Pakistan Army fought alongside the *Mujahids* (Fair 2014: 152). Others pointed out that “at least four such (terrorist) organisations were involved in Kargil. Initially, it was Tehrik-e-Jihad which openly claimed that their men had taken control of large parts of Kargil. Later, three more groups, Al Badr, Harkatul Mujahideen and Lashkar-e-Taiba came out with similar statements” (Lavoy 2009: 240). It was a well planned move on the part of General Musharraf, but it backfired when the Indian army responded with alacrity and determination, and the global community intervened to prevent a possible nuclear conflagration.

The global scrutiny on the terrorist groups operating out of PoK and the state complicity in supporting and sustaining them against India, however, remained short-lived as the then Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, under the then US President Bill Clinton’s emphatic advice, ordered the withdrawal of the troops and the restoration of status quo at the Line of Control.

One of the most significant developments which occurred after the Kargil War was the hijacking of the Indian Airlines IC-814 on 24<sup>th</sup> December 1999, which was on the way from Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu, Nepal to Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi, India. The passengers were exchanged for the freedom of three hard core terrorists, two of them from Harkat-ul-Ansar Masood Azhar and Syed Omar Sheikh and one from Al Mujahideen, Mushtaq Ahmed Zargar. In January 2000, Azhar announced the setting up of Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) with the sole objective of “liberating Kashmir” (Behera and Sharma 2014: 46; Dixit 2003: 16-20). PoK thus saw a spurt in terrorist



activity during the period with JeM taking over some of the HuM/ HuA assets and setting up new camps in Balakot and Muzaffarabad, all with the active assistance of ISI (Dulat and Sinha 2015: 23-24; Warikoo 2014: 311)

Within months, JeM's Balakot training camp became the biggest centre of terrorist recruitment and training in PoK. Over 7,000 trained at Balakot and other training centres in 2000 (Rana 2005). Azhar wrote in the JeM magazine about the camp named as "Madrasah Sayeed Ahmed Shaheed Rahimullah Ta'la", had a mosque, huge water reservoirs, rooms for trainees and ground for Physical training. The campus soon became the biggest terrorist camp in the region, supervised by Azhar and his confidant and trainer, Qari Shah Mansur. Besides physical training and other guerrilla tactics, the recruits were taught to use rocket launchers, automatic guns, explosives besides shooting from various positions including from moving vehicles (Warikoo 2014: 311-312; Khan 2002).

It is important to understand a particular chain of events that unfolded in Pakistan immediately after the US came down heavily on Al Qaida and the Taliban strongholds in Afghanistan. Fleeing Al Qaida and the Taliban leadership found easy shelter in Pakistan with the help of the ISI and religious and sectarian outfits like JI and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), a rabidly Sunni organisation which has been the ISI's instrument in subjugating the Shias since the early 90s. Many of the LeJ leaders had trained at terrorist training camps in Afghanistan along with the Taliban and Al Qaida recruits. Some of them had come to PoK where they took shelter in HM's camps in Kotli (Sareen 2005), According to Abdul Hamid Khan leader of the Balwaristan National Front, after Operation Anaconda in March 2002 in Afghanistan, more than 1000 *Mujahids* escaped to Pakistan and more than half of them were believed to located in Tangir and Darel villages of Gilgit-Baltistan, and around 200 more were sent into the Pir-Panjajal range of J&K (Khan 2002; Zaidi 2010: 2).

The Pakistani *jihadi* groups like JeM and LeT remained quiet but active in supporting the Al Qaida regrouping in Pakistan even as General Pervez Musharraf joined the US-led Global War on Terror as a "strategic ally" and promised to come down heavily on the terrorist entities sheltered in his country. ISI hastily put together a team of JeM and LeT cadre to launch an audacious attack on the Indian Parliament on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2001,

right after the 9/11 attack of 2001 (Fact Sheet on Jammu and Kashmir 2012). Although the attack failed in its objectives, it provoked an unprecedented anger among the Indians and triggered a massive deployment of troops along the Line of Control, raising the possibility of a military conflict in the region. After a concerned international community leaned heavily on Pakistan, and India, to avoid such a confrontation, Musharraf was persuaded to ditch the *jihadis*, reform the *madrasas* and roll back his military dictatorship for a democratic frame up of governance.

In the ‘Northern Areas’, General Musharraf’s regime played a diabolical game. His regime systematically began driving the sectarian divide deeper by inserting objectionable chapters and sentences in school textbooks to Shias (Stober 2007) and by encouraging *Sunnis* to settle down in otherwise Shia-dominated areas. In order to have a better control over this region by infusing Sunni population which is considered to be more trustworthy than *Shias*, this part has been dealt in detail in Chapter three. A closer scrutiny of the *jihadi* networks in PoK would prove to be instructive in understanding how the dynamics of terrorism has changed in the region after 9/11, and is likely to change further in the future. In the post 9/11 crackdown, a large number of the 2,200 centres run by LeT across Pakistan were forcibly shut down and even though some of them were revived clandestinely on a smaller scale subsequently (Warikoo 2014: 314).

However, these changes were only shown on paper to escape more US sanctions. Given the support the group enjoyed from the military establishment, it was not surprising that LeT managed to retain its four training centres in PoK even after the global sanctions of all manner: “Muaskar Taiba located in Muzaffarabad with a capacity to train 500 recruits; Muaskar Aqsa near Muzaffarabad which can accommodate and train 150; Muaskar Ummul Qura near Muzaffarabad with a capacity for 500 trainees per month and Maskar Abdullah bin Masood camp which can accommodate 300 recruits” (Rana 2005: 332-333).

The October 2005 earthquake in PoK saw an exponential growth and power of LeT. Jamaat-ud-Dawa (JuD) was the organization which superceded all other organisations while providing the relief to the earth quake victims. Even Musharraf indirectly in one of his statement appreciated the work done by religious groups, he said- “everyone is

motivated right now to help the quake victims. And I am not going to prevent anyone from helping the people” (Syed 2010) JuD reached even the far flung sites of devastation quite swiftly as compared to the army troops, who were officially deployed for relief. This also gives an indication of how much they knew about the region and their ability to move rapidly in that terrain. They also provided food and medical aid to the victims. Through widely appreciated, the relief and rehabilitation measures in the region, LeT gained enormous popular support and attracted both donations and volunteers from Pakistan and abroad. In a report published by Daily Times on 12<sup>th</sup> August 2006 that a UK based charity organization having Islamic inclination remitted a massive amount of money to three individuals in Azad Kashmir in 2005. The main purpose of these donations was to help the extremist organizations working in PoK to execute the aircraft bombing plan in the UK (Stobdan and Chandran 2008: 46-47; Walsh 2005; Chadha 2014).

Along with an extensive social network in the area, LeT was able to restore and strengthen its terrorist infrastructure. It managed to strengthen its network in PoK. Along with mobile dispensaries, health centres and refugee camps, LeT revived its original campus, Baitul Mujahideen, or the House of Holy Warrior, at Shawai Nala, barely five km from Muzaffarabad, to train new recruits for terrorist missions into India and Afghanistan (Singh 2011: 11).

Despite the crackdown by Pakistani forces either under the pressure of China or US, LeT continues to run a vast network of schools, colleges, hospitals, ambulance services, seminaries, publications and charity organisations throughout Pakistan as freely as before the Mumbai attacks. “Its headquarters at Muridke, Lahore, remained open, guarded by armed LeT men, as late as mid-January 2009” (Fair and Ganguly 2016: 78-79; John 2009) until the Punjab government decided to appoint an administrator for the complex. In any case, the Muridke complex, once the hub of trans-national terrorism, has long ceased to be of any critical importance to LeT and the restrictions imposed on its functioning remain at best symbolic (Warikoo 2014: 318).

The “true intentions of the Pakistan Government are portrayed by its lack of action against LeT’s new operational headquarters on Lake Road, Lahore, a double-storied

mosque complex called Masjid Jamia Qadisiya” (John 2007: 157; Rodrigues 2010). LeT has constructed another establishment in Shahadpur in Sindh, named as Markaz Mohammad bin Qasim, “It is built like a fort with high walls and has been one of the three LeT training camps in interior Sindh” (Sareen 2005: 259).

Seven months after the Mumbai attack, the Multi-Agency Centre (MAC), “a nodal agency which accumulates intelligence on terrorist groups and their activities set up by the Indian Government, found 34 active and eight holding camps across the border” (Prakash 2011: 391). The ‘Northern Areas’ and Azad Kashmir are hosting 17 active, and four on hold camps. The agency said “there were over 2,200 recruits in these camps, out of whom 300 were affiliated to LeT, 240 to JeM and 130 to HuJI. The report said these camps were located in Tattapani, Garhi Dupatta, Barnala, Sensa, Forward Kahuta, Peer Chinasi, Shawai Nalla, Bhimber, Kotli, Skardu, Abdullah bin Masud, Nikial, Gulpur, Samani and JhandiChaustra” (Warikoo 2014: 319).

Further evidence of the terrorist regrouping in PoK after the Mumbai attacks came in a BBC Report of June 30, 2009. The report, quoting a confidential report sent by the police to the government in Muzaffarabad on March 25, 2009, said HuM, JeM and LeT were active in Muzaffarabad. In the light of above illustrations, it is apparent that terrorist groups, despite global pressures and proscriptions, remain a “strategic asset” for Pakistan Army. These groups have considerable presence and clout in several parts of Pakistan, including ‘Azad Kashmir’ and ‘Northern Areas’, and these groups have become closer to Al Qaida and the Taliban and hence should be seen as part of the global *jihadi* movement (Hasan 2009).

These developments must be read with the ongoing military offensive launched against the Taliban in NWFP and the tribal areas by Pakistan Army. After months of heavy-handed military offensive (May 2009 onwards), the operations in Swat and other areas in the Frontier till now have had only a limited impact. Although the security forces were able to regain large parts of the areas controlled by the Taliban, the top leadership of the group remain intact and ready to move in and strike back at the first given opportunity. In short, the problem of the Taliban and its allies remains as grave as it was before the military operations. In fact, there are growing fears that the Taliban might emerge much

more stronger if the state failed to, first, protect the citizens who are moving back to the “freed areas”, and second, if the development packages are not implemented sincerely and with urgency (Pape and Feldman 2010: 155-158).

This quite clearly raises the possibility of a prolonged round of military offensives in area in the months ahead, particularly in view of the fact that the real core of the Taliban in Waziristan is yet to be tackled. Likewise, Al Qaida and its allies in Afghanistan and Pakistan are likely to face increasing pressure from the Pakistan Military as well as China. Especially since the launching of OBOR and CPEC initiatives, a stable security environment is something China is going to strive for. Hence, this would raise the possibility of these groups looking for an alternate sanctuary and PoK fits the bill.

Here it would be relevant to underline the linkages that exist between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and ‘Northern Areas’. Swat valley, for instance, where the security forces were pitted against the Taliban and its allies, borders Chitral which is adjacent to the ‘Northern Areas’ and the corridors that lead to Xinjiang province in China. There are reports that the Taliban was trying to institute its presence in Battagram and Kohistan districts of Hazara division and the Kala Dakha area of Manseradivisions (Shah 2010: 6). Since the Taliban are already aligned at the operational level with groups like LeT and JeM with bases in Azad Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan, it would be easier for them to find ready-made launching pad to establish their presence along the strategically important Karakoram Highway that links Pakistan with China. Likewise, the eastward movement of the Taliban has raised concerns among the Chinese, as it poses a serious threat to China’s security if these extremists in PoK establish a substantial link with the Uyghurs, whom China blames of spreading terror related violence in Xinjiang (Sulaiman and Bukhari 2009; Wong 2016).

As established earlier with the given facts, China has been saying that Uyghurs have been involved in the war of Afghanistan and have fought alongside the extremists of the other neighbouring nations of Central Asia. There have been reports of Uyghurs returning back to Xinjiang after the Afghan-Soviet war got over. This period of instability and war in Afghanistan has created a pool of militarily trained, religiously indoctrinated fighters along with huge lots of weapons in the region. “There is a virtually uncontrollable trade

in weapons from Afghanistan to the border regions of Pakistan, Kashmir, Tajikistan and to criminal elements elsewhere in the region. Smuggling of all kinds of contraband is endemic throughout the area and centuries old tribal connections make it unreasonable to dismiss the influence of outsiders in the Xinjiang conflict” (Karrar 2010; Fayaz 2012: 244).

Beijing has been striving to foster regional cooperation and bilateral ties with the states on its western front to curb the influence of the Islamic extremists, who have the capability to fan the separatist tendencies of Uyghurs (Giglio 2004: 21). This need for the first time emerged when Afghanistan descended into civil-war in the 1990s and the spreading of religious extremism in the newly formed Central Asian states. China in order to protect its western frontier from the spill over effect decided to take the diplomatic initiative in Central Asia and proceeded with the formation of Shanghai-5, which included- China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. During the Shanghai-5 summit in Shanghai in 26<sup>th</sup> April 1996, China and Kyrgyzstan both agreed to oppose any form of separatism besides strengthening bilateral economic cooperation (Debata 2007: 203). Similarly, since 1990s Beijing is trying to push Pakistan to eradicate the religious extremists from its land, as China believes that they are serving as a support base for the fundamentalists in Xinjiang. As since the opening of Karakoram Highway along with the movement of goods, religious ideologies and drugs also found its way into Xinjiang (Clark and Smith 2016).

Pakistan handed 12 Uyghurs to China on 5<sup>th</sup> May 1997, who were wanted in China in relation to a bombing in Xinjiang. According to Pakistan they first entered in Gilgit and then got themselves enrolled in a *madrassa*, and also received training (Raman 1999; Sinha 1997; Debata 2007: 195).

The material and financial support to the Uyghur extremist comes predominantly from the extremist terrorist organization situated outside China, a considerable amount of the funding for the terror attacks that had taken place in Xinjiang have been funded from overseas (Raman 2002). Uyghur diaspora has always been the main source of funding for the Uyghur separatists and ETIM is one of the major beneficiaries of these clandestine funding. The organization has used this money to acquire wide range of weapons (Debata

2007: 161). On the other hand China claims that ETIM receives money from “Drug trafficking, arms smuggling, robbery and other organized crimes”. Osama bin Laden reportedly gave a total of \$270,000 to both ETIM and IMU in 1999 and unspecified amount to ETIM exclusively in 200. The Taliban also provided tacit support by allowing the ETIM to train in Afghanistan from 1999 to 2001 (Reed and Raschke 2010: 72).

Beijing has been trying to seek the help of Pakistan to curb the menace of Islamic extremism among Uyghurs even preceding 9/11. While being fully aware of the fact that ISI has been helping to fund and train Uyghur extremists, China claimed that after the 9/11 attack, “there were 100 Uyghurs in Afghanistan, with around 1000 in Xinjiang trained by Al Qaeda and Taliban. This claim was also backed by the United National Revolutionary Front of East Turkestan (UNRF)” (Davis and Azizian 2007: 46-47).

In the latter half of 1995, “a three day convention was organized by the Jamaat-e-Islami in Lahore where the Jamaat leaders promised to lead and ‘Islamic revolution’. It was attended by militants from 30 countries, including Algeria, Afghanistan, America, Bangladesh, Tunisia, France, Tajikistan, of course, Pakistan and several other Arab and European countries, Xinjiang and Kashmir” (Becquelin 2000; Sinha 1997: 1020-1025).

“The Jamaat-e-Islami runs the Syed Maudoodi International Institute at its headquarters in Lahore that trains and financially helps Islamists. In the latter half of 1995, some 100 Uyghur Muslims from Xinjiang (China) were said to be receiving training in that Institute. The Islamic University in Islamabad and a host of other madrassas across Pakistan are actively engaged in producing hard-core Islamists” (Sinha 1997: 1021; Laruelle and Peyrouse 2011: 227). The above mentioned illustrations about different incidents decipher the evolution of linkages between the Uyghur extremist and the other Sunni Islamic extremist forces in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

However, the first big attack by the Uyghur extremists post 9/11 which also showed cross-border terror linkages of Uyghurs happened in 2008, bus bombings took place in two different cities, first on 5<sup>th</sup> May in Shanghai and second on 21<sup>st</sup> July in Kunming, resulting in two deaths and numerous casualties (Zenn 2011). Few days after the Kunming bombings, “a video got uploaded on YouTube dated July 23 entitled “Our Blessed Jihad in Yunnan”, in which a figure called Commander Seyfullah claimed the

bombings were TIP (Turkestan Islamic Party) operations. He also claimed responsibility of the incidents which took place in Wenzhou and Guangzhou on July 17” (Jeffries 2010: 837). However, China completely denied Turkistan Islamic Party’s claims of being responsible for the blasts in Kunming and Shanghai prior to Olympics (Reuters July 2008). Thus far, the group’s ability was somehow limited when it came to launch attacks abroad and the incidents which were carried out were poorly organised. The possibility of a change regarding the same emerged in 2009.

After breaking out of massive riots in Urumqi July 2009, a few incidents worth considering took place. Firstly, “a prominent Al Qaeda ideologue, Abu Yahya al Libi, released a video in October in which he highlighted the plight of the Uyghurs” (Zambelis 2010). Around that time only, another video was released online, in which an extremist named “Sayfullah threatened the Chinese government for its actions during the rioting.” The noteworthy and interesting point about both of these videos was that they were released by the same media source, Al-Fajr Media Centre, which is a *jihadi* media house having linkages with Al Qaeda (Pantucci 2012: 3).

Until early 2011, ETIM didn’t claim the responsibility of any terroristic activity in China. “In July 2011, a group of men launched an attack by driving a vehicle borne bomb into the crowd before jumping off and ramming it into Police and other civilians in downtown Kashgar” (Richburg 2011). A day after, “an arson and knife attack was launched in a restaurant. Police killed almost a dozen assailants over the following two days with an unclear number of civilian casualties” (Wei and Yinan 2017). After this incident, a video was uploaded on Al-Shumukh, a *jihadi* forum, in which Memteili Tilwadi was seen, a member of TIP, who claimed to be in Waziristan in a training camp. “The video supported the Chinese government’s claim that the attack was directed from outside the country (widely interpreted as somewhere in Afghanistan and Pakistan)” (Zenn 2014).

Another connection of TIP with some terror attacks came in front in 2013, “when the group’s new spokesman, Abdullah Mansour released a pair of videos praising incidents that had taken place in China” (Mehsud and Golovnina 2014). These attacks included “an April 2013 incident in Bachu county during which 15 local police and officials were killed” (Holdstock 2015: 220) and the “October 2013 incident in which a car filled with



petrol was driven into a crowd under the Mao Zedong portrait in Tiananmen Square. The group praised both incidents as *jihad*, but did not claim responsibility for them” (Kaiman 2013).

Chinese authorities are concerned that Uyghur fundamentalists are present in Pakistan and Afghanistan and they are constantly using these regions as a launching pad for their extremist terror related activities in China; as the above mentioned facts back this claim up. Recently, Chinese state authorities “have begun to focus on the fact that such links also flow through Syria and Iraq (where there is evidence that ethnically Chinese and Uyghur extremists are fighting)” (Clarke 2016) and there are also reports coming up stating that Uyghurs are travelling to Indonesia to get in touch with extremists groups like East Indonesia Mujahidin, to seek help reach Syria and also launch attacks in China (Sangadji 2016). Alongside, the ever increasing and evolving linkages between extremists in Pakistan and Afghanistan with Uyghurs is a source of serious concern for China.

### **Impact on the regional security**

The existence of terror linkages among various terrorist organisations in this region around Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang, the extension of these linkages reaching the *jihadist* melting pot in Syria and Afghanistan and Pakistan still being safe sanctuaries for these fundamentalists is disturbing the security implications for this entire region terribly. It’s just not about India and China, the situation is getting detrimental for the whole region, as the terror linkages are making a huge mesh in this region of South and Central Asia, and the attacks are not sparing anyone’s boundaries.

Considering, the case of Afghanistan we have already seen the repercussions of radical Islam in this land and how it has disrupted the democratic setup of this country, evaluating ISIS’s call for Global Jihad and Afghanistan being used as a transit and training base, it’s quite apparent that such factors are going to be even more disadvantageous for this state.

Afghanistan has been trying long to convince China to play a more constructive regional role in their country and use its influence over Pakistan and make them stop supporting

the Taliban. In October 2014, the newly elected Afghan president Ashraf Ghani visited China and tried to persuade China to pressurize Pakistan to curtail its terror funding in Afghanistan and help in building peace in his country and the region (Panda 2014). Simultaneously, Afghan officials have also attempted to warn China about Pakistan's double face and how it is not really addressing the threat of Uyghurs having linkages in Pakistan. For example, "Afghan officials announced that they had repatriated fifteen Uyghurs discovered within their territory- three in Kabul and twelve in Kunar Province" (Pantucci 2015; Shalizi 2015). Apparently, they were trained in the Waziristan area of Pakistan.

The fact that Uyghurs are still getting training in Waziristan and have been moving across easily between Pakistan and Afghanistan, with objective to launch attacks in China, evidently shows the efforts China have been putting to contain them are failing. "The reported presence of Uyghurs in Kunar, in particular, suggests a failure of China's relations with the Taliban, while the presence of individuals training in Waziristan shows a simultaneous failure by its trusted ally Pakistan" (Pantucci 2015).

However, Pakistan has also brought a change in its measures to deal with extremist Uyghurs. The operation at the Red Mosque of summer 2007 in Islamabad, where Pakistani army freed kidnapped Chinese citizens after neutralizing the militants stands as an example. However, the continued attacks by the Uyghurs in China have left Beijing dissatisfied with Pakistani efforts to combat terrorism from its soil (Jafferlot 2016: 292).

Considering the recent developments in the globe regarding extremism and radical Islam, the rise of ISIS in the middle-east and its global call to all the Muslims for *jihad* has changed the security dynamics in south and Central Asia. Since 2015, there has been a surge in reports claiming increased numbers of Uyghurs are fighting in Syria. According to a report posted by Metin Gurcan in September 2015, a columnist in Al Monitor, a Turkey based media house, "Ankara intelligence source have estimated 1500 recruits from Central Asia including Uyghurs, were already fighting for the Islamic State in Syria and Iraq" (Gurcan 2015). On 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015, Lebanon based Meyadeen TV, aired a report showing "Uyghur fighters of the TIP engaged in the conquest of the town of Jisr

al-Shughur alongside the settlement of Uyghur militants and their families in nearby villages” (Clarke 2016).

Even the official Chinese authorities have claimed that “hundreds of Uyghurs since 2013 have travelled to Iraq and Syria to join the Islamic State and other *jihadist* organizations; such claims have been used as justification for new counter-terrorism policies” (Clarke 2016b). On 27<sup>th</sup> December 2015, National People’s Congress (NPC) unanimously passed its first ever counter-terrorism legislation. This move was taken in consideration with the fact that there has been a rise in extremist linkages between Uyghurs and ISI and similar terrorist organization like Al Qaeda, and violent attacks in China. Mei Jianming China’s security czar, before the passing of the ‘counter-terrorism legislation’ said that “in formulating the new approach, the government explicitly took the growing influence of Islamic State into consideration after it planned to recruit Muslims from all ethnic groups in China, posing new challenges for the country” (Jia 2015).

On the other hand, even though ISIS and Al-Qaeda is losing ground in the war in Syria they are still continuously intensifying propaganda activities through virtual sources. In February 2017, both groups released media targeting China specifically.

One of the first videos was prepared by the Islamic State on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2017.<sup>35</sup> The video was published on the ISIS website, Furat Media, which was designed mainly to target citizens of Central Asia and China’s Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The second video, published on 27 February 2017 was prepared by the Turkestan Islamic Party<sup>36</sup> (Botobekov 2017).

However, the new jihad against Beijing unites the two rival Islamist factions. The leader of Al Qaeda, Ayman al-Zawahiri, has labelled China an enemy (Keck 2014). Baghdadi,

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<sup>35</sup>New video message from The Islamic State: “It Is Those Who Are The Truthful: Coverage of the Life of Emigrants From Eastern Turkistān In the Land of the Caliphate – Wilāyat al-Furāt”, [Online: web] Accessed 10 April 2017

<http://jihadology.net/2017/02/27/new-video-message-from-the-islamic-state-it-is-those-who-are-the-truthful-coverage-of-the-life-of-emigrants-from-eastern-turkistan-in-the-land-of-the-caliphate-wilayat-al-furat/>

<sup>36</sup>New video message from Hizb al-Islāmī al-Turkistānī in Bilād al-Shām: “A Call From the Front Lines of Jihad, [Online: web] Accessed 10 April 2017

<http://jihadology.net/2017/02/27/new-video-message-from-%E1%B8%A5izb-al-islami-al-turkistani-in-bilad-al-sham-a-call-from-the-front-lines-of-jihad-29/>

the head of ISIS, has also threatened China by stretching the boundaries of the Islamic Caliphate from Morocco to Xinjiang. The leader of the TIP, Abdul Haq following the lines of his predecessor Monsour, said that “China is not only our enemy, but also the enemy of all the Muslims. Therefore, the fight against China is our Muslim responsibility and we will discharge it” (Botobekov 2017).

Beijing has responded to these videos through Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Geng Shuang, who said at a press conference on March 1 that he has not seen the video, yet noted that “East Turkestan terrorist forces pose a grave threat on security and stability of China and the region. We will work with the international community in jointly fighting East Turkestan terrorist forces.”<sup>37</sup>

According to the Shanghaiist media house, the authorities of China held a large-scale military parade in Urumqi on February 28 with 10,000 armed police officers in order to intimidate Uyghur terrorists and separatists (Linder 2017). At the rally, Chen Quanguo, Xinjiang’s Communist Party secretary, urged the assembled ranks of armed police to realize “the grim conditions” facing the region’s security. “Bury the corpses of terrorists and terror gangs in the vast sea of the people’s war,” Chen said. According to the South China Morning Post, China is planning to increase its military budget by 7 percent this year and it will exceed \$144 billion. Much of this increase is expect to be allocated to combat Uyghur separatists in Xinjiang (Chan 2017). However, this can be ascertained as a move by ISIS and Al Qaeda to propagate Islamist propaganda to attract new militants from the Uyghur population of Xinjiang and Central Asia.

According to Ahmed Rashid, a journalist and author of several books on Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia, states that in the current scenario Uyghurs are spreading around the globe. They are in Afghanistan, Pakistan, CARs, Malaysia, Indonesia, Syria, they are fighting along ISIS. This is becoming a huge concern for China and the only way they are working on curbing is by clamping down on the whole Uyghur population, which is further aggravating the problem. These Chinese actions are depicted among the Muslim extremists around the world as a war against Islam, hence garnering expanded

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<sup>37</sup>Foreign Ministry Spokesperson GengShuang's Regular Press Conference on March 1, 2017, [Online: web] Accessed 10 April 2017  
[http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/xwfw\\_665399/s2510\\_665401/2511\\_665403/t1442469.shtml](http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xwfw_665399/s2510_665401/2511_665403/t1442469.shtml)

support for the Uyghurs. It's the Chinese policies which have pushed Uyghurs to escape China and join hands with Islamic extremists. For nearly two decades Uyghur militants have been training and fighting in Pakistan and Afghanistan (Online interview May 2017).

Considering the above mentioned security imperatives, Beijing have to be willing to play a role in Afghanistan's future, while it is maintaining pressure over Pakistan to control the religious extremist activity in its country. However, in Kapil Kak's assessment, China should be wary of Pakistan's willingness to oblige. As it is the same country which used to take US aid annually and used that money to fund Afghan Taliban, who further used to kill US soldiers in Afghanistan (Personal Interview April 2017).

At the same time, in seeking to ensure the region's stability (of which Afghanistan is a key part), China is primarily focused on denying Uyghur extremists safe havens to operate from, as well as developing its Silk Road Economic Belt trade corridors

The ultimate outcome of the struggle in Xinjiang is by no means certain. The resurgence of Islamic identity throughout Central Asia has added a new dimension to the conflict and repression will only give sustenance to the separatists as time passes. Region-wide movements to reassert traditional cultural, religious and trade linkages compound Beijing's difficulty in controlling the situation. Moreover, the larger Islamic community already lends support, both material and moral, to the separatists in Xinjiang and this will inevitably increase in the future. Under these fluid conditions, the challenge for Beijing is not to crush the independence movement but to find a way to negate its influence through carefully structured measures designed to provide meaningful autonomy for the Muslims of Xinjiang within a more flexible Chinese polity.

### **India's security concerns**

#### *Terror hubs in Gilgit-Baltistan and the Chinese presence*

As dealt with in detail about the presence and growth of a well-established network of different *jihadi* extremist groups like HuM, LeT and JuD in Gilgit-Baltistan. It is quite evident the threats which could haunt India's security. Especially, after facing the impact for more than two decades long Pakistan's proxy war in the Indian part of Kashmir with

the help of these extremist proliferating across the LoC and carrying on regular infiltration bids into the Indian side of Jammu and Kashmir. The brunt of *jihadi* presence was apparent in the Kargil war 1999, when these extremists helped the Pakistan's army regulars to capture the heights of Kargil. The most recent and major blow which was borne by India was the Mumbai attack of 2008, all of which was planned and carried out by LeT. The lone survivor out of all the attackers revealed that they got training in the Mirpur district of PoK. All these facts and instances distinctly illustrate the nefarious security threats emanating for India from Gigit-Baltistan.

Apart from the terror hubs in the whole PoK as a challenge to India's security, the growing foothold of China in the region adds yet another strategic dimension to the discourse on POK. India's security environment on the Northern and Western frontiers facing China and Pakistan acquired ominous and threatening military overtones, with China succeeding in establishing a strategic presence in the Northern Areas of PoK. Pakistan facilitated the Chinese military presence in this crucial region under the guise of flood relief and reconstruction in the year 2010 (Krishnan 2010). China, so far, had studiously avoided getting involved in Pakistan's disputes with India in Kashmir and has moved in with involvement with multiple infrastructure-development projects in Occupied Kashmir under Pakistan's control (Kapila 2011).

China is marking its prominence in the region against India, with its economic initiatives and projects of infrastructural developments. the presence of Chinese troops have also increased in Gilgit-Baltistan under the garb to provide security to Chinese projects and its officials has heralded a new era of surged security threat for India (Beijing to fund, Firstpost 2017).

Karakoram Highway, carrying immense strategic significance for both China and Pakistan, has grave security concerns for India. Since its opening in 1979 it has helped evolve the Sino-Pakistan collaboration and served as the route for covert Chinese nuclear and missile transfers to Islamabad. The Karakoram Highway has been used by China for sending arms and ammunition and even the forces. In the 1971 Indo - Pakistan war it was used for this purpose (Chellaney 2008: 27-28).

The Karakoram Highway enables the Chinese not only to move, when necessary, their troops to the Himalayan border with India, but it also enables them, in coordination with Pakistan, to declare their military presence in the region of PoK. With the completion of CPEC, huge amount of trade is going to take place through this passage, regulars from the Chinese army as mentioned already are guarding the highway and the other important projects are being undertaken by China in the region

Therefore, the umbrella One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative is the main cause of unease for New Delhi. Announced in 2013 by Chinese president Xi Jinping, the OBOR project, which will bolster China's economic and geopolitical footprint, has challenged India on two fronts- the first in the form of large Chinese investments announced for Pakistan, and second, a fast increasing strategic and economic presence in the Indian Ocean (Taneja 2016). The main point of contention for India for the time being is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The development of more projects such as Gwadar could significantly trouble India's current dominance in its backyard, the Indian Ocean region. External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj said in May 2015 that Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his visit to China, had "very strongly" raised the issue of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor going through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. This, along with China's growing clout in the Indian Ocean, remain the two main concern spots for New Delhi to give any sort of precedence to OBOR in its own foreign policy narrative (Laskar 2016).

In March 2016, reports surfaced suggesting that troops from China's People's Liberation Army had been sighted on the other side of the Line of Control in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. It is being suggested that the Chinese troops are there to build infrastructure to protect and aid commercial Chinese projects (Chinese Army spotted, TOI 2016). Similar reports had surfaced in 2015 as well. In the future OBOR may provide potential economic opportunities to India but as of now its only threatening India's security interests.

According to Retired Air vice Marshal Kapil Kak (IAF), CPEC "is a strategic earthquake for India", as it opens one more front for India in the Arabian Sea with both China and Pakistan together. He further raises questions about the real motives behind the execution

of CPEC. He argues that maintaining a high speed road link from Beijing to Arabian Sea via Gwadar, compared to the existing maritime route from Malacca straits which makes no sense at all economically (Personal Interview April 2017).

Taking his argument further and after observing the projects undertaken by CPEC from the official website of Pakistan government, it becomes evident that CPEC is far more beyond than just an economic trade corridor. According to CPEC Pakistan website, this initiative has undertaken 17 Power projects in Pakistan, which raises further questions about the hidden motives behind this initiative.<sup>38</sup>

The military implications for India are arising because of China's increasing profile in Gilgit-Baltistan. It can be viewed at multiple levels, firstly, in the overall context of increased Chinese presence in PoK, secondly in the context of India's defence postures in Ladakh, and finally in the scenario, of a combined military threat by Pakistan and China in Arabian Sea post CPEC.

Further, China was militarily most vulnerable in its Western military deployment opposite India's Ladakh region due to logistic limitations, especially in terms of fuel supplies necessary to prosecute sizeable military operations against India. With the development of infrastructure in the Karakoram Corridor, China's military deployments against India would now be strongly sustainable logistically. These statements are finding their credibility in the recent Chinese incursions in the Ladakh province of Indian Jammu and Kashmir, which has been increased in the last few years, the most recent attempt was made on 8<sup>th</sup> March 2016 in the Daulat Beg Oldi sector of Ladakh (Chinese incursion in, HT 2016).

Taking into consideration India's defence postures in Ladakh, the challenge of China's growing presence in PoK and its involvement in roads network emanating from the Karakoram Highway and running towards Skardu and other locations opposite Ladakh and Siachen Sectors opens up the possibilities of China surpassing Indian military deployments in Ladakh. In any future confrontation, China could open a direct route to Leh along the Indus Valley without fighting India's main defensive deployments opposite

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<sup>38</sup> "CPEC-Energy Priority Projects", [Online: Web] Accessed 22 June 2017, URL: <http://cpec.gov.pk/energy>



the Tibetan border. Such an outflanking move from the rear could unravel India's entire defence shield in Ladakh.

Finally, in the context of a combined China-Pakistan military threat against India, the development of strategic infrastructure by China in the Gilgit-Baltistan region running eastwards towards Indian defences in the Ladakh Sector would facilitate speedy and enlarged Pakistan Army deployments, which were earlier limited by infrastructural inadequacies. This would enable the Pakistan Army to complement China's main military offensives against Ladakh to the consequent military advantage of both. It could also facilitate China in opening up a direct outflanking front against India by Chinese troops acting in concert with the Pakistan Army (Kapila 2010).

### *Uyghur threat*

The future of the Uyghur movement is critical to India's security. Events in the region have scarcely engaged India's concerns so far. With the changing regional political scenario India should draw its attention towards this region, as Xinjiang directly shares borders with the disputed and sensitive parts of Jammu & Kashmir state, Aksai-Chin and Gilgit-Baltistan. India needs to be closely monitoring the events and have a contingency plan accordingly. As the rise of Extremism in Central Asia, which is deriving its sanctity from the global call given by the ISIS to establish the rule of Caliphate and bring all the Muslim states under one banner is a matter of grave concern for all the regional players of Asia. The reason why surfacing of Central Asian extremist groups should be considered as a security concern for India is because of their primary focus to carry out terror related activities outside Central Asia.

The largest Central Asian militant group operating Pakistan and Afghanistan is the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). According to a Pakistani Taliban statement, the IMU played a key role in the attack on the Karachi airport in Pakistan that killed 36 people in June 2014 (Uyghur Militant Group 2014). The IMU and Pakistani Taliban also coordinated the December 2012 attack at Peshawar airport (Fitz 2016: 11) and the Bannu Prison Break in April 2012 (Dangerous Militants among 2012).

The IMU is active in northern Afghanistan, especially in assassinations, but the IMU only occasionally expresses its plans to attack Central Asia from those northern Afghan provinces. For example, considering most of the video-taped sermons given by the IMU's spiritual leader Abu Zar Al-Burmi since 2013 avoided discussing Central Asia and instead threatened that China is the "next number one enemy" after the U.S. withdraws from Afghanistan. He also promises revenge on his native Burma for its treatment of the country's Muslim Rohingya people, which Al-Burmi says is part of a Chinese plot to evict the Rohingya from lucrative oil-producing regions. Al-Burmi also often appears in videos of Al Qaeda's As-Sahab media and with Uyghur militants in videos of the Turkistan Islamic Party. In one video, Al-Burmi said that the IMU plans to conquer lands in an operation called "Ghazwat-ul-Hind," which translates to the "military expedition of the Indian subcontinent" (Zenn 2014: 6-7).

Like Al-Burmi, Al Qaeda is showing interest in South Asia. As-Sahab has in 2014 posted Urdu-language messages that are tailored to South Asian audiences, giving them a call to join the global *jihad* under the brand of "As-Sahab Organization, sub-continent." (Yasir 2014) In January 2014, Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri also highlighted the victimization and "weakening of the Muslim *ummah* in the subcontinent" and called on South Asian Muslims to "confront the alliance" of India and the West (Zenn 2014: 6).

One of the major reasons behind the Extremist groups like IMU not focusing over Central Asian is that it remains impervious to militancy, with the region's governments preserving political stability and cracking down on Salafist groups that are sympathetic to the militants, such as Tablighi Jamaat and Hizb al-Tahrir (Zenn 2014: 7). Moreover, other regions of the world are more favourable environments for the militants to spread their propaganda and operations for the time being, especially Xinjiang and India, while Syria and Iraq continue to attract Central Asian recruits because of the Islamic State's military successes and influential propaganda campaign online.

If the Taliban comes to power in parts of Afghanistan, it would also need some degree of legitimacy and economic cooperation from neighbouring Central Asian countries, which makes it likely that the Taliban will encourage the IMU and Central Asian militants to proliferate their operations in China and South Asia. Another reason why China and India

face greater threat is that the extremist elements propagate their propaganda under the garb of religious sentiments and hence there are chances that their efforts would resonate among the Muslims population in Xinjiang and India. Before 2001, China also had leverage over most Taliban factions through its “all-weather friendship” with Pakistan, but now that the Pakistani Taliban is a sworn enemy of the Pakistani government, it is unclear whether China can exercise leverage via Pakistan to contain them.

Therefore it is quite apparent that India and China are confronted by a similar threat-Islamic extremism and terrorism. China confronts it in its restive Xinjiang province and India in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. While the mechanism to fight terrorism jointly is yet to be worked out, that the two countries are on the same side in a fight in which Pakistan’s role is dubious is immensely significant. The decision to work jointly to tackle terrorism comes at a critical time.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Conclusion**

The significance of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang in terms of geo-strategy only seems to be rising, considering the changing strategic equations in South Asia. Especially after the official launch of the CPEC initiative between Pakistan and China, it has further consolidated China's presence in Gilgit-Baltistan, which started with Pakistan ceding 5,180 kilometres of trans-Karakoram tract to China under the Pakistan-China border agreement of 1963. Furthermore the presence of Uyghurs in Syria, fighting along the Islamic State forces and their call of waging a war to establish Islamic caliphate in Central and South Asia has definitely raised the security concerns of India and China. As both of these countries have been facing the brunt of extremism in Kashmir and Xinjiang respectively.

Considering the geo-strategic imperatives mentioned by Everett Carl Dolmann, the ability of a state "to recognise the geographically advantageous positions and capacities that enhance state power and will attempt to control those positions- or at a minimum deny control of those positions to an opponent- to ensure the continued health and growth of the state" (Dolmann 2012: 80). Simultaneously also taking into account Andre Gyorgy's explanation of geo-strategy which goes as, "It is ignoring the strategic impossibilities and willing to exploit militarily any phase of human life, any reality of the natural man-made world" (Gyorgy 1943: 348). Pakistan and China have recognised the importance geo-strategic positioning of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang and have furthered policies to accentuate their control over these areas (dealt in detail in third and fourth Chapters) to serve their individual and cumulative state interests. Moreover, Pakistan by illegally occupying Gilgit-Baltistan denied India to have a control over such an advantageous location. Furthermore by inviting China into Gilgit-Baltistan by signing the 1963 Border agreement and then construction of Karakoram Highway, Pakistan and China also breached the steel wall of Karakoram Range of mountains. Hence, considering these arguments the imperatives laid according to the theory of geo-strategy are proved and applied by Pakistan and China in Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang.

This research has compared the strategic importance of these two regions with each other and how important these regions are together. Ancient Silk-routes used to pass through these regions, hence they have been geo-strategically important historically as well, and

as trade has been the main component of achieving economic prosperity for any empire or state. China turned towards an economy driven by and based on trade, during the time of Deng Xiaoping and has been furthering the same economic endeavours by connecting Kashgar to Gwadar under CPEC.

The policies enforced by Pakistan and China in Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang have resulted in creating social unrest in these regions, as was discussed in third and fourth chapters. Pakistan has intentionally denied the people of Gilgit-Baltistan both, the right to vote and access to apex courts in Pakistan and AJK- all in defence of the Kashmir issue. AJK is permitted a president, prime minister, supreme-court, legislative assembly, senate, constitution, national anthem and state flag. Gilgit-Baltistan is not even included in the constitution of Pakistan and has no constitution of its own. Which means that there is no structure to guarantee civil rights, and democratic representation to the people of this region. This further proves how Pakistan didn't initiate the process to install democratic institutions in Gilgit-Baltistan. Further, to enhance its control over this region Pakistan permeated Sunni Muslims from the mainland Pakistan in order to change the demography of this Shia dominated region, as being a Sunni majority country they wanted to keep the power of this crucial area in their hands. This led to the beginning of sectarian violence in Gilgit-Baltistan and promoted unrest in this region.

Along with altering the demographic profile of Gilgit-Baltistan, Pakistan has also used this region as a base for the religious extremists since the Afghan-soviet war, to launch its proxy war against India in Kashmir. The details given in the third and fifth chapters explicitly portray the amount of *Jihadi* activity prevailing in the region. This presence of religious extremists has further aggravated the discontent among the people of this region. Although it's just not the presence of extremist outfits, which is affecting the security aspect of this region and made the people feel alienated. Pakistan government has also marginalised the people by warding them off the benefits and dividends of the projects being initiated in the region. Taking an example of Diamer-Bhasha dam, just to take the royalty away from the residents of Gilgit-Baltistan, Bhasha (village in NWFP) was included in the project, although the whole dam is being built in Diamer. Similarly discontent among the people of Gilgit-Baltistan also rose again after they were shelved

from sharing the boon of CPEC, the people or government of Gilgit-Baltistan have not been included in any share of the project. All these factors including failed policies of governance, economic exploitation, sectarian divide and induced religious extremism aggregately have led to a sense of alienation among the people of Gilgit-Baltistan.

Similarly, China has followed strategies to have control over Xinjiang and suppress the Uyghurs. The conflicts of Uyghur and Chinese have been centuries-old and China has ever been trying to maintain its sovereignty over this territory. Xinjiang's political past is a story of repression and revolt, marked by two brief periods of Uyghur independence (1933-34 and 1944-49). The anti-Han sentiment has been generally prevalent among the Uyghurs due to harsh rule by Han warlords and local officials prior to the formation of PRC. Hence becoming a part of PRC in 1949 was conceived as falling under a foreign rule by the Uyghurs. China has also followed a similar approach in Xinjiang, like Pakistan applied in Gilgit-Baltistan to gain authority over this region. Hans being the dominant ethnic group in China altered the demographic set up of Xinjiang after its accession into the PRC. The drivers to move Han population to Xinjiang from other parts of China were mostly regarding economy and the development of the far west of China. As we have noticed that forced demographic change led to a sectarian divide and strife in Gilgit-Baltistan, likewise heavy Han in-migration into Xinjiang led to the conflict between Uyghurs and Hans.

China furthered the policies of economic development to integrate Xinjiang extensively with the mainland. Although, these economic policies proved futile as the state continued to address the problems of uneven development in ethnic minority regions, under the purview of preserving 'social stability' and national unity' with the dominant ethnic group 'the Han' as the leading agents of modernization. China's policies of control over religious and cultural expressions have disenchanted the Uyghurs even more. Uyghurs feel that their religion and culture is under threat. China sees the observance of religion as a "threat" to security, especially when it comes to Islam. Imposition of mandarin language over them is again an attempt to culturally assimilate the Uyghurs with the Hans.

China's attempt to impose mandarin language is perceived as a threat to the Uyghur language. Similarly Uyghur's are disturbed by the policies of the Chinese government on religion in general and Islam in particular. These policies of exclusion and coercion have led Uyghurs on the path of separatism and violent extremism. To subdue the Uyghurs and their demands for a separate state, the Chinese government has followed a top down approach with harsh measures such as 'strike hard' campaigns.

While comparing the policies of Pakistan and China in Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang, several similarities could be drawn to understand the political situation and security aspect of these regions. Firstly, the native populations of both these regions are ethnically different from their parent Country, Uyghurs in Xinjiang against the Hans in China and Shias in Gilgit-Baltistan against Sunnis of Pakistan. Secondly, both Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang were occupied with force by Pakistan and China respectively, as Xinjiang was annexed by China in 1949 and Pakistan occupied Gilgit-Baltistan with the help of tribal invasion in 1947 along with other parts of the erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.

The people of Gilgit-Baltistan have been living under forced occupation with no basic democratic rights or constitutional representation. Furthermore, Pakistan has occupied this region as a colony and utilized its resources without paying any royalty to the natives. Pakistan's neglect regarding the development of this region has resulted in extreme poverty, low literacy rates, deficiency in healthcare facilities, lack of democratic structure and discrepancies in the prevalence of law and justice (see assessment of socio-economic trends in Gilgit-Baltistan, Table 2 Chapter 3)

Similarly, since the beginning there was a kind of resentment among the people of Xinjiang against the Chinese, due to the history of experiencing harsh Han warlords reigning over them. Taking into account the iron fist policies of China, be it cultural revolution, 'strike-hard campaigns' or the onslaught over religious and cultural freedom to control Xinjiang have further accentuated discontent among the Uyghurs against the Hans.

Thirdly, the geo-strategic importance of both these regions is immense for Pakistan and China individually and cumulatively. For Pakistan, Gilgit-Baltistan is a region which has



bountiful of natural resources and a strategic location which provides a land link with China, has been used to further its economic and military interests. At the same time it gives Pakistan an upper hand over India, because the control over this region denies India a direct access to Central Asia. Similarly Xinjiang is a key region for China, as it has oil reserves in Karamay which meets a substantial amount of energy needs of the country. In addition to that the geographical proximity with Central Asian states and Pakistan provides China access to the less explored energy sources of Asian heartland and also to the energy rich west-Asia from the Gwadar port in Pakistan. China's OBOR and CPEC initiatives would not have been possible without it not having the control over Xinjiang.

Fourthly, both Pakistan and China have followed similar policies to alter the demographic profile in order to gain control over these regions have led to the rise of sectarian and ethnic violence. Pakistan also has altered the demographic equation of the Shia majority Gilgit-Baltistan by implanting Sunni Muslims from the mainland Pakistan. This move by Pakistan was crafted to quell the Shia voices demanding democratic rights and equal treatment from Pakistan. The first wave of sectarian violence hit Gilgit-Baltistan in 1980s when Zia-ul-Haq sent hordes of *wahabi* Pakhtoon tribesmen from NWFP and Afghanistan to Gilgit to suppress Shias. This led to the killing of hundreds of Shias and since then sectarian violence has become an endemic in this region.

Similarly, China has encouraged Hans to migrate and settle in Xinjiang which was ethnically dominated by Uyghurs, Hans occupied the major share of economic opportunities which further led to disfranchisement of Uyghurs in their own land. Further the policies to restrict the religious and cultural freedom of Uyghurs, and assimilate them in the Han culture have made them feel even more stranded. The historical oppression from the mainland China and the execution of such suppressive policies led to the brewing of serious frustration against the Chinese rule and it often has resulted in the form of ethnic violence between Uyghurs and Hans.

Fifthly, the policies followed by Pakistan and China in Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang have led to the rise of separatist voices in both these regions. However, the separatist voices among some marginal sections were there since the time these regions were annexed by

Pakistan and China but they have further aggravated with time due to their exclusionary and repressive policies.

Whereas in the case of Gilgit-Baltistan the separatist people never resorted to violence to achieve independence. There are marginal voices who talk about separatism and having an independent Gilgit-Baltistan, e.g. BNF. Although, these people also with the idea of forming a separate state have never resorted to any form of extremism against the Pakistani state. Gilgit-Baltistan suffers from religious extremism because Pakistan itself has introduced extremism in this region. As discussed in the third and fifth chapters Pakistan has used Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK as base for the religious extremists since the beginning of Afghan war. Especially with the idea to wage proxy war in Kashmir and liberate it from the Indian control. The most evident example was the Kargil war where the Jihadis fought alongside the Pakistani troopers against the Indian forces after capturing Indian military posts in Drass, Batalik and Mushko valley.

The presence of these Jihadi elements is continuously being resented by the Indian government as well as the residents of both Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK. As the presence of these Jihadis and terrorist groups like HuM, LeT, AL-Qaeda etc. is leading to the proliferation of *wahabi* extremist Islam among the resident (mostly Sunni) which in turn enunciates the sectarian divide in the region and has also led to the killings of Shia people. Although, this presence of terrorist outfits in AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan is not just affecting the security of India and the conditions in Indian side of Kashmir, along with the natives of PoK but it's also menace for China.

On the contrary, some of the separatist forces have taken up the path of violent extremism in Xinjiang, for e.g. ETIM and TIP. They have taken up the resolution that the only good for Uyghurs is to have their own state and live independent of China in East-Turkestan. Although, these separatist and extremist voices still don't represent the majority of Uyghurs in China and continue as fringe elements. However, there are also chances that a lot of Uyghurs who reside in China don't speak openly about separatism due to the fear of persecution.

As discussed in fourth and fifth chapters, the Uyghurs have always looked among their Sunni Muslim brethren in Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan for help, sometimes to

seek refuge from the Chinese oppression and sometimes to get along with the religious extremists to carry out violent extremist activities to keep the war against the rule of China going on. Hence as long as these Jihadi elements are present in Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK, the probability of Uyghurs using these linkages to lash out against China would remain high. Getting rid of the existence of such extremist forces from Pakistan as a whole is a priority for China now especially after the launch of CPEC. As this project passes through quite unstable provinces of Pakistan like Baluchistan and parts of NWFP, and China is investing billions of dollars, the elimination of religious extremism is of prime concern for China. While Pakistan was formed on the basis of religion, Islam has been an inevitable part of the politics and with weak democratic institutional set up, it's going to be quite challenging for the Pakistani establishment to eradicate religious extremism completely. Pakistani forces have initiated their crackdown over such elements, especially after the increased diplomatic pressure from China.

This research has also achieved its objective respectively. The first objective of the study was to comprehend 'Geo-strategy' as a concept to contemplate the strategic importance of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang. It has briefly been addressed in the beginning of this chapter and has been elucidated in detail in the second chapter of this research. The second objective to examine the policies carried forward by Pakistan and China in Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang to gain control over these regions, has also been dealt with in detail in` third and fourth chapters. The third objective was to analyse the dynamics of ethnic conflict in both Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang and to trace out any linkages in between them, if any. The linkages comparing the policies of Pakistan and China in Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang and drawing have been explained while drawing the similarities and differences in the political situations of these regions already in this chapter. The final objective has also been achieved in the fifth chapter, where the security threats due to political instability in these regions and their impact on the security of India has been explained precisely.

The study proposed three hypotheses. Taking in account the first hypothesis, the arguments entailed with the facts provided in the chapter clearly states that Pakistan and China has utilized the geo-strategic location of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang respectively

and collaboratively. Since the occupation of both these regions by China and Pakistan respectively, they have exploited the natural resources and marginalized the people of these regions. China, to be specific, has focused its policies to exploit Xinjiang with the exclusive approach to reap economic benefits, be it utilizing the natural resources of Xinjiang, formation of SCO, enhanced bilateral ties with Central Asian Republics or the CPEC initiative. Moreover, the presence of religious extremism in Pakistan in general and in Gilgit-Baltistan in specific is something China detests because of the fear of Uyghur linkages with such *Jihadis*. Hence, it can be assessed that China hasn't utilized the geo-strategic location of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang with the aim to destabilise the security environment of India.

On the contrary, Pakistan since its occupation of Gilgit-Baltistan has utilized this region to outflank India's security in the region. This can be assessed from the fact that Pakistan ceded a part of disputed PoK illegally to China under the 1963 China-Pakistan border agreement, with the sole aim to include a third party (UN security council member) in the Kashmir conflict and dilute India's claim over the region. After inviting China into the then 'Northern Areas', Pakistan negotiated with China over the construction of a link between the two countries and consolidated this idea with the construction of KKH. Pakistan's primary motive behind getting the KKH built was to have better alliance with China to gain militarily. Secondly, along with the construction of KKH, China also helped Pakistan in building a network of feeder roads in Gilgit-Baltistan (discussed in chapter three) which again benefitted Pakistan to have improved military movement along the LoC.

Furthermore, Pakistan has been utilising Gilgit-Baltistan as a base for launching terroristic activities in Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir since the end of Afghan-Soviet war. Therefore, it can be comprehensibly said that Pakistan has been utilising the geo-strategic location of Gilgit-Baltistan to destabilise India's security environment. However, this brings us to a puzzle as both Pakistan and China has utilised the strategically advantageous positions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang to further their respective national interests but their interests diverge when it comes to the question of India. China distinctively is against religious extremism and has not been an ally of

Pakistan in sponsoring any kind of extremist activity in India but the presence of Chinese security forces in Gilgit-Baltistan under the guise of infrastructural development, especially after the launch of CPEC has intelligibly raised the security concerns for India. Particularly if one sees these developments along with the incursions attempted by Chinese security forces in the Ladakh district of J&K, the presence of Chinese troops in Gilgit-Baltistan has destabilised the security environment for India in this region.

Considering the second hypothesis, the sectarian strife in Gilgit-Baltistan started with the pre-meditated inflow of Sunni Muslims from the mainland of Pakistan to change the demographic profile of this region which had Shia majority. The purpose behind this move was to suppress the Shia demands of autonomy and democratic representation in the Pakistani constitution. The move of infusing Sunnis in Gilgit-Baltistan was drafted in a way to also plant religious extremists in this region. Pakistan allowed the religious extremists like Taliban to use Gilgit-Baltistan and AJK as a sanctuary since the Afghan-Soviet war time period, which further led to the mushrooming of *Jihadi* outfits in this region and these Terrorists backed by ISI and Pakistani army have been waging a war in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir. The absence of any legitimate democratic institutional set up in Gilgit-Baltistan has devoid the natives of this region any voice, or political rights to get their grievances addressed by the Pakistan government. Hence, the people of Gilgit-Baltistan cannot compel the government to crack down over these terrorist camps. Therefore, the absence of any representative democratic set up in this region has made it easier for the extremists to carry on their activities without any major hindrance. This proves the second hypothesis that sectarian strife and political disempowerment of Gilgit-Baltistan is affecting the security of India.

China's policies of control over Xinjiang began from the Mao era, with the launch of Mao's 'Hundred Flowers Campaign' asking for feedback from the intellectuals of the Society of China. To which Uyghurs responded in a way which Mao wasn't expecting along with other sections of Chinese society and denounced the nominal system of autonomy and demanded a far greater role in local governance. CCP acted swiftly and quelled all such critic voices and charged them as separatist voices.

The land reforms in Xinjiang (1950-1951) were initiated with the target to attack the Islamic establishment in Xinjiang, which was a well-established clerical organization that deeply penetrated the society. It was through the land reform policy that the party undermined the independence of institutionalized Islam in Xinjiang.

The policies of the Great Leap Forward (1958-61) and the Cultural Revolution (1966-76) brought demands for cultural conformity to a new extreme, with more assimilation based cultural thrust, political attacks on the natives of Xinjiang. Difference was not tolerated and mosques were destroyed, Muslims were forced to shave their beards, and frightened Turkic people were made to shed their religious clothing and rituals.

The hard-line (coercive) and intolerant policies of China were perceived by the Uyghurs as grossly unfair and an assault on their political rights and core religious identities. These policies led to the further alienation of Uyghurs and bred separatist sentiments among. In the late 1980s with the beginning of the Soviet-Afghan war, US's entry in the region, mushrooming of religious extremism in the shape of Taliban changed the political scenario in the region. During that time Uyghurs came in touch with the idea of religious extremism (discussed in detail in chapter four) and which served as the base for the extremist incidents like 'Baren uprising' of 1990 or the 'Gulja incident' of 1997. Many more incidents of violent extremism happened during the 1990s in China. China in response came out with the 'strike-hard' campaign in 1996, to crush separatism. Since then China has been using similar strategies of force and coercion to curb the extremists along with suppressing the Uyghur voices demanding autonomy and equal opportunities.

However, along with these hard lined approaches China has also tried integrating Xinjiang and Uyghurs by ushering economic development in this region, especially with launch of the 'great western development strategy' in 2000. The economic approach of developing this region so that Uyghurs would forget their grievances in the shadow of infrastructural development and economic opportunities, has failed to woo people. This is happening because the economic policies promoted by China are Han centric. Michael Clarke also observes, that although China tries to address to the problems of ethnic minorities but from the perspective of dominant ethnic group with the aim to maintain 'national unity' (Clarke 2007: 339).

For example, the US Congressional Executive Commission in China found 800 out of 840 civil service openings in Urumqi were reserved for Han Chinese in 2006 (Congressional-Executive Commission on China Annual Report 2007).<sup>39</sup> According to Hopper and Webber, after the launch of the ‘great western development strategy’ Uyghurs were still found to make 200 Yuan less per month than the Han in Urumqi, and consequently have lower standards of living. The Han’s entry into Xinjiang has caused the Uyghurs to be economically left behind (Hopper and Webber 2009: 183-184). The failure of these economic policies to include Uyghurs in the stream of development is further disfranchising them. This suppressed and frustrated lot of Uyghurs often resorts to violence against the Hans in Xinjiang. A huge number of Uyghurs have also been migrating from China to escape this oppression. According to an article published by Quartz media in March 2017, some 300,000 Uyghurs escaped to Turkey (Kennedy, Paul 2017). Till the time China would continue with such oppressive policies, Uyghurs would keep resorting to violence and escaping China. The disenchanted mass of Uyghurs would be exploited by the religious extremists to propagate violence, which can be seen in Syria, as more and more Uyghurs are pouring in to fight along the ISIS. Taking into account the above mentioned arguments it evidently proves the final hypothesis that is because of the policies of China, Uyghurs are forming linkages with the extremist forces.

The security environment in Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang has significantly changed, due to the factors like growth of religious extremism and proliferation of the linkages of extremist groups like ISIS, Taliban and Al-Qaeda, and the enhanced foothold of China in South Asia with the launch of CPEC. The developments are posing serious security challenges not only along the Northern frontiers facing China and Pakistan but also in the Arabian Sea, as CPEC has linked Gwadar to China. Unlike earlier, when China had logistic limitations on India’s western front in terms of fuel supply for troops, but the expansion of KKH and the ongoing infrastructural development at Gwadar port under CPEC will facilitate both Pakistan and China to launch any military operations against India. China’s intensified engagement in the region which started in 2010 with the

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<sup>39</sup>“2007 Annual Report”, Congressional-Executive Commission on China, [Online: Web] Accessed 12 June 2017, URL: <https://www.cecc.gov/publications/annual-reports/2007-annual-report#791a>

expansion of KKH, and accentuated even more with the inauguration of CPEC, has raised concerns for India's security.

India's claim over the region of PoK (AJK and Gilgit-Baltistan) has been very clear since the state princely state acceded with India in 1947. With the beginning of 1990s, terrorist violence in the J&K increased. Both houses of the Indian Parliament unanimously adopted a resolution on February 22, 1994, emphasizing that Jammu and Kashmir was an integral part of India, and that Pakistan must vacate parts of the State under its occupation (see Appendix III). This resolution reiterated India's stand over PoK came, which it has maintained since 1947. Whereas, after the launch of CPEC, which is passing through Indian Territory, India has started raising its voice in the International fora condemning Pakistan and China's move as illegal, as that region is under the illegal occupation of Pakistan. The first official statement came from Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj in October 2015, while addressing United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) stated that "India's reservations about the proposed China-Pakistan Economic Corridor stem from the fact that it passes through Indian territory illegally occupied by Pakistan for many years."<sup>40</sup>. Over the question of CPEC, MEA also came out with a statement in April 2017, stating that "Government's position on the so-called 'China-Pakistan Economic Corridor' (CPEC) has been consistently conveyed to the Chinese side. It has been pointed out to them that Pakistan has been in illegal occupation of parts of the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir since 1947. Government has conveyed to the Chinese side, including at the highest level, its concerns about their activities in PoK and asked them to cease these activities"<sup>41</sup>. Hence, it can be seen that recently India has been taking up a stand in the International forum to stake its claim in Gilgit-Baltistan, openly.

Recently in March 2017 British Parliament declared that Gilgit-Baltistan, currently under Pakistan's control, belongs to India. A motion was passed by the British parliamentarians announcing Gilgit-Baltistan as a legal and constitutional part of Jammu and Kashmir

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<sup>40</sup> Haider, Suhasini (2015), "US-Pakistan joint statement: Multitude of concerns for Indian strategic interests", URL: <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/uspakistan-joint-statement-what-india-should-watch-out-for/article7795346.ece>

<sup>41</sup>Ministry of External Affairs (2017), "QUESTION NO.3849 CHINA-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR", URL: [http://www.mea.gov.in/rajya-sabha.htm?dtl/28342/QUESTION\\_NO3849\\_CHINAPAKISTAN\\_ECONOMIC\\_CORRIDOR](http://www.mea.gov.in/rajya-sabha.htm?dtl/28342/QUESTION_NO3849_CHINAPAKISTAN_ECONOMIC_CORRIDOR)



illegally occupied by Pakistan since 1947. It condemned Pakistan's move to declare it as its fifth province. The British Parliament also called the construction of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor as illegal. India can utilize this move by British parliament to raise this issue in United Nations to consolidate its claim over PoK including Gilgit-Baltistan.

Considering, the reports of ISIS recruiting people from Gilgit-Baltistan and the history of presence of terrorist camps in the whole of PoK. It is indiscriminately imperative for India to work with international agencies and put pressure over Pakistan to stop sponsoring terrorist groups and letting them use its territory to launch terroristic activities in India in specific and other countries in general.

After understanding the political conditions of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang, in correlation to the policies followed by Pakistan and China, It becomes evident that policies of states have led to instability in the regions. Similarly, there is also simmering unrest in the valley of Kashmir since more that two decades. Although, efforts are being made to maintain peace in the region, a change in the policy can also be adopted to dilute the coercion and enhance engagement with the masses. Ther have been initiatives like 'operation sadbhavna' to build trust between army and civilians, more of such campaigns can be initiated to accentuate interaction between the two. A railway project to connect Kashmir with the rest of India is under process, after its completion more of economic investment can be done in the valley with ease of transportation. Hence, increased economic engagement can enhance the integration of the region. As it has been assessed that Pakistan and China are not addressing the needs of their people residing in peripheral regions, India can exactly follow an opposite approach and integrate the people to maintain its control over immensely geo-strategically important Jammu and Kashmir.

## **Appendix I**

### **ARTICLE 370 OF THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION**

Temporary provisions with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir

(1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution,

(a) The provisions of article 238 shall not apply in relation to the State of Jammu and Kashmir; (b) The power of Parliament to make laws for the said State shall be limited to,

(i) Those matters in the Union List and the Concurrent List which, in consultation with the Government of the State are declared by the President to correspond to matters specified in the Instrument of Accession governing the accession of the State to the Dominion of India as the matters with respect to which the Dominion Legislature may make laws for that State; and

(ii) Such other matters in the said lists as, with the concurrence of the Government of the State, the President may by order specify.

Explanation For the purposes of this article, the Government of the State means the person for the time being recognised by the President as the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir acting on the advice of the Council of Ministers for the time being in office under the Maharaja's Proclamation dated the fifth day of March, 1948;

(c) The provisions of article 1 and of this article shall apply in relation to that State;

(d) Such of the other provisions of this Constitution shall apply in relation to that State subject to such exceptions and modifications as the President may by order specify: Provided that no such order which relates to the matters specified in the Instrument of Accession of the State referred to in paragraph (i) of sub-clause (b) shall be issued except in consultation with the Government of the State: Provided further that no such order which relates to matters other than those referred in the last preceding proviso shall be issued except with the concurrence of that Government.

(2) If the concurrence of the Government of the State referred to in paragraph (ii) of sub-clause (b) of clause (1) or in the second proviso to subclause (d) of that clause be given

before the Constituent Assembly for the purpose of framing the Constitution of the State is convened, it shall be placed before such Assembly for such decision as it may take thereon.

(3) Notwithstanding anything in the foregoing provisions of this article, the President may by public notification, declare that this article shall cease to be operative or shall be operative only with such exceptions and modifications and from such date as he may specify: Provided that the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State referred to in clause (2) shall be necessary before the President issues such a notification.

In exercise of the powers conferred by Article 370 the President, on the recommendation of the Constituent Assembly of the State of Jammu and Kashmir, declared that as from the 17th Day of November, 1952, the said Article 370 shall be operative with the modification that for the Explanation in Cl. (1) thereof, the following explanation is substituted namely.

"Explanation - For the purpose of this article, the Government of the State means the person for the time being recognized by the President on the recommendation of the Legislative Assembly of the State as the Sadr-i-Riyasat (now Governor) of Jammu and Kashmir, acting on the advice of the Council of Ministers of the State for the time being in office."

(Source: Ministry of Law and Order No. C. O. dated 15th Nov. 1952. Constitution of India.)

## **Appendix II**

### **Gilgi-Baltistan Self Governance Order 2009**

#### **GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN MINISTRY OF KASHMIR AFFAIRS AND NORTHERN AREAS**

**Islamabad, the 9th September, 2009**

#### **AN ORDER**

to provide greater political empowerment and better governance to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan;

WHEREAS it is expedient to undertake necessary legislative, executive and judicial reforms for granting self-governance to the people of Gilgit-Baltistan and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Government of Pakistan is pleased to make the following Order:- Short title, extent and commencement.- (1) This Order may be called the Gilgit-Baltistan (Empowerment and Self-Governance) Order, 2009. (2) It extends to the whole of areas Gilgit-Baltistan. (3) It shall come into force on at once.

#### **PART. I-PRELIMINARY**

2. Definitions.- (1) In this Order, unless there is anything repugnant in the subject or context.-

(a) "Assembly" means the Gilgit-Baltistan Legislative Assembly;

(b) "Citizen" unless otherwise expressed in this Order "citizen" means a person who has a domicile of Gilgit-Baltistan;

(c) "Council" means the Gilgit-Baltistan Council constituted under this Order;

(d) "Chairman" means the Chairman of the Council who shall be the Prime Minister of Pakistan;

(e) "Financial year" means the year commencing on the first day of July and ending on the thirtieth day of June;

(f) “Gilgit-Baltistan” means the areas comprising districts of Astore, Diamer, Ghanche, Ghizer, Gilgit, Hunza-Nagar, Skardu and such other districts as may be created from time to time;

(g) “Governor” means the Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan and includes a person for the time being acting as, or performing the functions of the Governor;

(h) “Government” means the Government of Gilgit-Baltistan

(i) “Joint Sitting” means a joint sitting of the Assembly, the Federal Minister in-charge of the Council Secretariat and the members of the Council;

(j) “Judge” in relation to the Gilgit-Baltistan Supreme Appellate Court or the Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Court, includes the Chief Judge of the Gilgit-Baltistan Supreme Appellate Court and the Chief Court;

(k) “person” includes any body politic or corporate;

(l) “prescribed” means prescribed by law or rules made thereunder;

(m) “Property” includes any right, title or interest in property, movable or immovable, and any means and instruments of production;

(n) “remuneration” includes salary and pension;

(o) “Service of Gilgit-Baltistan” means any service, post or office in connection with the affairs of Gilgit-Baltistan including the Council, but does not include service as Chairman of the Council, Governor, Speaker, Deputy Speaker, Chief Minister, Minister, Federal Minister in-charge of the Council Secretariat or Advisor, Parliamentary Secretary, Advisor to the Minister or a member of the Assembly or member of the Council; and

(p) “Speaker” means Speaker of the Assembly and includes any person acting as the Speaker of the Assembly.

(q) “Vice Chairman of the Council” means the Governor of Gilgit-Baltistan.

PART. II-FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS 3. Security of person.- No person shall be deprived of liberty save in accordance with law.

4. Safeguard as to arrest and detention.- (1) No person who is arrested shall be detained in custody without being informed, as soon as may be, of the grounds for such arrest, nor shall he be denied the right to consult and be defended by a legal practitioner of his choice.

(2) Every person who is arrested and detained in custody shall be produced before the nearest Magistrate within a period of twentyfour hours of such arrest excluding the time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the Court of the Magistrate, and no such person shall be detained in custody beyond the said period without the authority of a Magistrate.

(3) Nothing in Clauses (1) and (2) shall apply to any person-

(a) who for the time being is an enemy alien, or

(b) who is arrested or detained under any law providing for preventive detention.

(4) No law providing for preventive detention shall authorize the detention of a person for a period exceeding three months unless the review board set up by the Government has reported before the expiration of the said period of three months that there is, in its opinion, sufficient cause for such detention.

(5) When any person is detained in pursuance of an order made under any law providing for preventive detention, the authority making the order shall as soon as may be, communicate to such person the grounds on which the order has been made, and shall afford him the earliest opportunity of making a representation against the order:

Provided that the authority making any such order may refuse to disclose facts which such authority considers it to be against the public interest to disclose.

5. Slavery and forced labour prohibited.- (1) No person shall be held in slavery, and no law shall permit or in any way facilitate the introduction into Gilgit-Baltistan of slavery in any form.

(2) All forms of forced labour are prohibited. (3) Nothing in this clause shall be deemed to affect compulsory service-

(a) by persons undergoing punishment for offences under any law; or

(b) required by any law for a public purpose.

6. Protection against retrospective punishment.- No law shall authorize the punishment of a person-

(a) for an act or omission that was not punishable by law at the time of the act or omission; or

(b) for an offence by a penalty greater than, or of a kind different form, the penalty prescribed by law for that offence at the time the offence was committed.

7. Freedom of movement.- Subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the public interest, every citizen shall have the right to move freely throughout the Gilgit-Baltistan and to reside and settle in any part thereof.

8. Freedom of assembly.- Every citizen shall have the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of morality or public order.

9. Freedom of association.- (1) Subject to this Order, every citizen shall have the right to form association or unions, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of morality or public order.

(2) No person or political party in the area comprising GilgitBaltistan shall propagate against, or take part in activities prejudicial or detrimental to the ideology of Pakistan.

(I have just mentioned a section of this order, which I referred to in the thesis. The whole ordinance is quite long and for further reference could be accessed from the below mentioned source.)

(Source: Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Kashmir and Northern Areas, [Online: Web] Accessed 9<sup>th</sup> February 2017, URL: <http://www.gbchiefcourt.gov.pk/downloads/self-governance-order-2009.pdf>)

### **Appendix III**

#### **Parliament Resolution on Jammu and Kashmir, 1994**

“This House note with deep concern Pakistan’s role in imparting training to the terrorists in camps located in Pakistan and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, the supply of weapons and funds, assistance in infiltration of trained militants, including foreign mercenaries into Jammu and Kashmir with the avowed purpose of creating disorder, disharmony and subversion:

reiterates that the militants trained in Pakistan are indulging in murder, loot and other heinous crimes against the people, taking them hostage and creating an atmosphere of terror;

Condemns strongly the continued support and encouragement Pakistan is extending to subversive and terrorist activities in the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir;

Calls upon Pakistan to stop forthwith its support to terrorism, which is in violation of the Simla Agreement and the internationally accepted norms of inter-State conduct and is the root cause of tension between the two countries reiterates that the Indian political and democratic structures and the Constitution provide for firm guarantees for the promotion and protection of human rights of all its citizens;

regard Pakistan’s anti-India campaign of calumny and falsehood as unacceptable and deplorable.

notes with deep concern the highly provocative statements emanating from Pakistan urges Pakistan to refrain from making statements which vitiate the atmosphere and incite public opinion;

expresses regret and concern at the pitiable conditions and violations of human rights and denial of democratic freedoms of the people in those areas of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, which are under the illegal occupation of Pakistan;

On behalf of the People of India,

Firmly declares that-



(a) The State of Jammu & Kashmir has been, is and shall be an integral part of India and any attempts to separate it from the rest of the country will be resisted by all necessary means;

(b) India has the will and capacity to firmly counter all designs against its unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity;

and demands that -

(c) Pakistan must vacate the areas of the Indian State of Jammu and Kashmir, which they have occupied through aggression; and resolves that -

(d) all attempts to interfere in the internal affairs of India will be met resolutely.”

The Resolution was unanimously adopted. Mr. Speaker: The Resolution is unanimously passed.

February 22, 1994

(Source: South Asia Terrorism Portal, [Online: Web] Accessed 12 February 2017, URL: [http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/document/papers/parliament\\_resolution\\_on\\_Jammu\\_and\\_Kashmir.htm](http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/india/document/papers/parliament_resolution_on_Jammu_and_Kashmir.htm)]

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