The New Great Game in Central Asia: India's Interests and Challenges

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By

Parvaiz Ahmad Thoker

Supervisor

Dr. Bawa Singh (Assistant Professor)

Centre for South and Central Asian Studies

School of Global Relations

Central University of Punjab, Bathinda

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "The New great Game in Central Asia: India's Interests and Challenges" has been prepared by me under the guidance of Dr. Bawa Singh, Assistant Professor, Centre for South and Central Asian Studies, School of Global Relations, Central university of Punjab. No part of this dissertation has formed the basis for the award of any degree or fellowship previously.

Parvaiz Ahmad Thoker
(Signature of candidate)

Centre for South and Central Asian Studies
School of Global Relations
Central University of Punjab
Bathinda-151001
Punjab, India

Date:

CERTIFICATE

I certify that Parvaiz Ahmad Thoker has prepared his dissertation entitled "The New great Game in Central Asia: India's Interests and Challenges", for the award of M.Phil. degree under my guidance. He has carried out this work at the Centre for South and Central Asian Studies, School of Global Relations, Central University of Punjab.

(Dr. Bawa Singh)
Assistant Professor
(Signature)

Centre for South and Central Asian Studies,
School of Global Relations,
Central University of Punjab,
Bathinda-151001.

Date:

ABSTRACT

The New Great Game in Central Asia: India's interests and challenges

Name of student : Parvaiz Ahmad Thoker

Registration Number : CUPB/Mph-PhD/SGR/SCA/2012-13/10

Degree for which : Master of Philosophy (M. Phil)

Name of supervisor : Dr. Bawa Singh

Centre : South and Central Asian Studies

School of Studies : School of Global Relations

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The Great Game which divided Persia into a Russian-controlled northern zone, a nominally independent central zone, and a British-controlled southern zone, officially ended with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. After the end of Cold War, Central Asia became the central point of attention by the world powers, US, Russia and China, EU etc and many other regional players. Possessing divergent interests, the competition among external powers in the region is popularly termed as the New Great Game. Central Asian governments are working to use renewed external involvement to their sovereign advantage, extract economic benefits and political support where possible.

India considers the region as geo-strategically and economically vital to fulfill its various interests like energy, trade and investment, security etc and both the regions own multifaceted historical ties. Apart from economic and other commercial interests, India also considers the region vital for the security and stability of Afghanistan. At present Middle East region accomplishes the required energy imports of India but in recent times, the region turned more unstable. Hence Indian policymakers started thinking about an alternative source and identified Central Asia as the best option. Therefore, economic diplomacy remains India's basic policy thrust towards the region and needs no clash but a compatibility of interests with the new states.

India has to face many challenges to get connected with Central Asia like the New Great Game, lack of proper road link, religious extremism and terrorism, drug trafficking, small arms proliferation and the most challenging one that is NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014. India has to take lead to overcome the significant influence made by several regional powers and to make its own position extremely strong in the region. Hence this study will make an assessment about diverse interests that India possesses and various challenges due to role of external major powers in the region and also India's strategy to protect its interests in energy rich Central Asia.

Parvaiz Ahmad Thoker — Dr. Bawa Singh (AssistantProfessor)

(Signature of Student) — (Signature of Supervisor)

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Parvaiz Ahmad Thoker

(Signature)

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LISTOFABBREVIATIONS

Sr. No.	Full form	Abbreviation
1	Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited	BHEL
2	Brazil Russia India China South Africa	BRICS
3	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation	CAREC
4	Central Asian Republics	CARs
5	Conference on Interaction and Confidence in Asia	CICA
6	Confederation of Indian Industry	CII
7	Commonwealth of Independent States	CIS
8	Collective Security Treaty organization	CSTO
9	European Development bank	EDB
10	Economic cooperation Organization	ECO
11	European Union	EU
12	Free Trade Zone	FZT
13	Government of India	GOI
14	Georgia Ukraine Azerbaijan Moldova	GUAM
15	Hindustan Machine Tools	HMT
16	Hizb-ul-Tahrir	HUT
17	Indian Council for Cultural Relations	ICCR
18	International Energy Agency	IEA
19	Inter-Governmental Commission	IGC
20	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	IMU

21	International North South Transport Corridor	INSTC
22	Iran Pakistan India	IPI
23	International Security Assistance Force	ISAF
24	Inter-services Intelligence	ISI
25	Lashkar-e-Toiba	LET
26	Ministry of External Affairs	MEA
27	Most Favored Nation	MFN
28	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation	NATO
29	National Hydroelectric Power Cooperation	NHPC
30	Oil and Natural Gas Company	ONGC
31	Pak Occupied Kashmir	POK
32	Purchasing Power Parity	PPP
33	Regional Anti Terrorist Structure	RATS
34	Shinghai Cooperation Organization	SCO
35	Turkmenistan Afghanistan Pakistan India	TAPI
36	Tajik State Technical University	TTU
37	United Nations Security Council	UNSC
38	United States of America	USA
39	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics	USSR

Chapter 1
Introduction

During the nineteenth century, Britain and Russia vied with each other to enhance their influence in Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Persia (now Iran). This competition was termed as the 'Great Game'. The term "Great Game" was given by the British intelligence officer Arthur Conolly, but was popularized by the British novelist Rudyard Kipling in his novel 'Kim'. The Great Game was an intense rivalry between the British and Russian Empires in Central Asia, beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing through 1907. Britain sought influence or control in much of Central Asia, to buffer the "Crown Jewel" of its empire - British India. Tsarist Russia, meanwhile, sought to expand its territory and sphere of influence, in order to create one of history's largest land-based empires. The Russians would have been quite happy to wrest control of India away from Britain, as well.

As Britain solidified its hold on India (including what is now Myanmar, Pakistan and Bangladesh), Russia conquered Central Asian khanates and tribes on its southern borders. The front line between the two empires ended up running through Afghanistan, Tibet and Persia. Britain's attempts to conquer Afghanistan ended in humiliation, but the independent nation held as a buffer between Tsarist Russia and British India. In Tibet, Britain established control for just two years after the Younghusband Expedition[1] of 1903-04, before being displaced by Qin Shi Huang, the then ruler of china. The Chinese emperor fell just seven years later, allowing Tibet to rule itself yet again.

The Great Game officially ended with the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 which divided Persia into a Russian-controlled northern zone, a nominally independent central zone, and a British-controlled southern zone (Ira, 1974). The

[1] Younghusband expedition was British expedition to Tibet that began in December 1903 and lasted until September 1904 under the leadership of Francis Young Husband. The main motive behind this expedition was to counter Russia's perceived ambitions in the East side of British India. For more details see Mehra, Parshotam. (2005). *The Younghusband expedition (to Lhasa): An Interpretation.* Gyan Publishing House: New Delhi.

Convention also specified a border line between the two empires running from the eastern point of Persia to Afghanistan, and declared Afghanistan an official protectorate of Britain. Relations between the two European powers continued to be strained until they allied against the Central Powers during the World War I.

Emergence of Central Asia

The fall of Soviet Union in 1991 gave birth to many independent states including five Central Asian countries. Central Asia is a region that occupies an important place in the Asian continent. The region stretches from the Caspian Sea in the West to the China in the East, from Afghanistan in the South to the Russia in the North. The names of all the five Central Asian Republics ending with the Persian suffix “stan” means, “land” and in the modern period the five republics, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan cover the definition of Central Asia. Central Asia also became the homeland of many Turkic people and hence it is sometimes identified as Turkestan. Central Asia has been divided into four zones by the geographers: steppe zone, semi desert zone, desert zone and the southern mountains. The total land area of Central Asia is 4003400sq.km and the total population is approximately 65338330 as per World Bank statics 2012. Among five Central Asian Republics (CARs), Kazakhstan is the largest country covering 2717300sq km. area and Tajikistan is the smallest with an area of 143100sq.km. Uzbekistan is the most populous (29776850) among Central Asian republics (CARs) and Turkmenistan, least populous with a population of 5172931. Islam is the main religion of Central Asia and Russian, Kazakh, Tajik, Uzbek, Krygz, Turkmen are the major languages spoken in the region. Ashgabat, Tashkent, Astana, Dushanbe, Bishkek are the capital towns of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan respectively (Shafi, 2007). Further some other towns which are famous around the world are Samarkand, Bukhara and Fergana. Central Asian states can be said to be the gift of two rivers Syr Darya and Amu Darya which fall in to the Aral Sea. Central Asian states share their borders with Russia, China, Afghanistan, Iran, and Azerbaijan.

Central Asia is strategically located in the heart of Eurasian region. Central Asia is in the middle of three super civilizations—the Islamic, the Christian and the Buddhist and is seen by many experts as one of the most vulnerable areas of instability between them. The region may become a natural, historically formed buffer zone as well as hub of Islamic extremism. Being placed in the middle of the Eurasian Continent, it is also one of the most convenient routes of transit. The Central Asian Republics are situated on the eastern side of the Caspian Sea and is endowed with plenty of oil and natural gas reserves. These energy resources are going to be a possible source of diversification particularly for those countries which are heavily dependent on energy imports from West Asia and other energy rich places (Foshko, 2012). Therefore its geo-strategic location and vast energy resources lead to increasing interest by the various major powers as well as some regional powers in the Central Asian Republics and many experts point out that in the 21st century, Central Asia will occupy an important position from both international and regional perspective.

Central Asia is highly rich in hydrocarbons and being strategically located, the world has started taking more notice of Central Asia during the last few decades. For the United States and its allies, the region is a valuable supply hub of logistic and strategic for the Afghanistan war efforts. Washington has three main policy goals in the region: first, to ensure the sovereignty and independence of the countries of the region; second, to exploit their oil and gas reserves, and third to concentrate on neutralizing Russian influence in the region. Besides these interests, US policy towards Central Asia also contains many long-standing objectives. Iran has become the chief opponent of United States and after the Gulf War Iran emerged as a decisive regional player which for obvious reasons America did not want. To offset Iranian influence in the region, USA, Turkey, Israel and Europe have come under a common umbrella to prevent Islamization of Central Asia (Romman, 2012). Economist Shafiqul Islam is of the view that oil and natural gas in Central Asia have attracted the attention of Americans, Japanese and other foreign investors. The political targets of USA in Central Asia include stability, democratization and free market economy to enhance commercial activities, control nuclear weapons and to

settle human rights standards. The Islamic fundamentalism which is being exported by neighbouring countries like Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, figures top priority in US policy towards the region.

After the dissolution of the USSR, Russia identified Central Asia as an area of crucial importance to retrieve its position and influence in the region. However Russia's geopolitical strategy is not intended to produce an imperial resurgence or re-Sovetization of this part of the world. Among the external players in the region, Russia identifies China that can only be problematic to Russia in longer term in Central Asia. Moscow hopes that regional players like Iran, Turkey and Pakistan are not able to displace Russian superiority in the region. The Central Asian countries feel comfortable with Russia than others because the leaders of Central Asian republics know very well how to deal with their Russian counterparts. Russia hopes to fortify the Central Asian regimes against democracy promotion from the outside and to resist any American military or political presence in the area. Russia's involvement in the region is also compelled by its concerns about the possible Islamist threat in the North Caucasus and the Volga region[2] as well as the extremely porous border with Kazakhstan (Markedonov, 2013). Russia's economic presence in Central Asia is much lower as compared to those achieved during Soviet period because more players like China and EU have made their entry in the region. Therefore Russia moves more towards Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to maintain strong grip over the region and recently bilateral trade has shown rapid increase with trade volume stands at US$27.3billion in 2011. Russia has initiated a number of economic institutions in order to pursue its various economic interests in the region like the Customs Union (CU); the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC); Eurasian Development Bank (EDB); Anti-Crisis Fund; CIS Free Trade Zone (FTZ). Besides economic motive, the other vital aspect of the Russia's engagement in Central Asia is that of large scale labour migration from Central Asian republics to Russia. Russia has also made a significant military presence in the region, predominantly to thwart

[2] It is a historical region in Russia including the territories adjacent to the flow of Volga River. This region has been divided into four sub regions but in the modern Russian Federation, the Volga Region is associated with the Volga Federal District and Volga economic region rather different entities. For more details see Peterson, Phillip A. (1996). *Russia's Volga Region.* Potomac Foundation.

any security challenges like drug trafficking, transnational crime, illegal migration, small arms proliferation, terrorism etc to its territory from the region[3]. In fact Russia is more close to Central Asian republics than other players as all of them were part of former USSR and in turn Central Asian countries are also closely linked with Russia for military, technical, and economic assistance.

China: the other major external power in Central Asia is a close neighbour of the region sharing similar culture and a long history of communication possess geostrategic and geo-economic interests. Since their independence, Central Asian states have been victim of terrorism, national separatism, religious extremism, smuggling, drug trafficking, arms dealing, that pose serious threat not only to Central Asian countries but also to neighbouring countries including China. China is also active in Central Asian region because of close ethnic links between China's Xinjiang province and Central Asian people. Due to presence of external powers in the region, China fears about the instability in both Xinjiang and CARs. Central Asian countries are economically less developed as compared to other former Soviet states and hence China has made huge investments in various commercial sectors. To counter the possible threats of terrorism from Afghanistan after the fall of Taliban Regime, China along with Russia and four Central Asian states except Uzbekistan, formed SCO that provided China an opportunity to make engagement in Central Asian security affairs as well (Huasheng, 2012). SCO is also a best mechanism for cooperation between Russia and China and through such organization China has begun to display its strong position and potential in Central Asia. At present there is no border dispute between China and Central Asian states and China has maintained regular political relation with all CARs. However China is more concerned about the growing US-Central Asia relations and the presence of US military in the region that will have severe consequences upon security of neighbouring countries like that of China.

[3] Oliphant, Craig. '*Assessing Russia's Role in Central Asia*', 6 November 2013, Foreign Policy Centre (FPC). Available at http://www.isn.ethz.ch/Digital Library/Articles/Detail/?lng=en&id=172418. Accessed on January 3, 2014.

The main purpose behind Chinese involvement in Central Asia is economic. Both China and CARs are now focusing on enhancement of trade and commercial relations and the bilateral trade volume has increased rapidly over the last decade. The total trade volume between China and Central Asia climbed in 2012 to US$ 46 billion about 100 times more than it was in 1992. China prefers direct and close engagement with the region to fulfil its energy requirements and to minimize her dependence on Russian and Iranian imports (Yong, 2012). China has made significant position in the global market regarding their finished products and because of comparatively low purchasing power of CARs, China identifies Central Asia as one big market for their products. CARs have potential to accomplish the growing energy demand of China. China has also become successful in constructing various energy pipelines that will transport Caspian gas from Central Asia to China.

On the other hand Iran is making best use of its traditional and geographical proximity to come closer to the region and get benefitted economically and culturally. Turkey offers safest and cheapest route for transporting Caspian gas from Central Asia to European markets and thus to earn transit fees. Both India and Pakistan are also engaged to have cooperation with CARs in the fields of trade, commerce, industries, education etc. Germany, Norway, Japan, France and some other countries are co-partners of Central Asian Energy resources through private and business firms. Hence the Soviet Collapse opened a path to various big and regional players for competition to obtain maximum economic benefit from the Central Asian region (Kaw, 2010). Some commentators have referred to Washington, Moscow, and Beijing's renewed activity in the region as a **The New Great Game**. The fundamental objective of energy diplomacy of all the big and regional powers in Central Asia is to get the lead and to reduce the influence of others.

Unlike the British and Russian empires in their era of competition and conquest, the running phase of struggle in Central Asia is entirely different. The Central Asian governments are also making use of external involvement to their own advantages through bidding and to harvest utmost profit. Most dramatically, in 2009,

President Kurmanbek Bakiyev of Kyrgyzstan, host to the Manas Transit Centre[4], initiated a bidding war between the United States and Russia by threatening to close the base. He extracted hundreds of millions of dollars from both sides, in the form of a Russian assistance package and a renewed lease at a higher rent with the United States. Since 2008, the United States has also paid transit fees, about $500 million annually, to the Uzbek and other Central Asian governments to ship equipment bound for Afghanistan through the Northern Distribution Network (Cooley, 2012). Central Asian case today is not a throwback to the past but a guide to what is to come: the rise of new players and the decline of Western influence in a multi-polar world. In fact the 'New Great Game' is in favour of Central Asian Republics who obtain maximum advantage through energy politics and rivalry among external powers.

The importance of Central Asia to India is not merely civilizational and historical, but also geostrategic and economic. The subject of Indo-Central Asian relations is not a new one, but the bilateral cultural and historical relationship dates back to the very dawn of history as there has been constant flow of culture and commerce between the two regions. A large number of immigrants consisting of scientists, scholars, technicians and artisans came to India from Central Asia contributed to the rich tapestry of Indian culture and life. However from Indian side, Indian missionaries and merchants transmitted religion, art and merchandize to Central Asian region. In other words the relationship between India and Central Asia evolved not in isolation, but evolved through reciprocal cultural enrichment.

India enjoyed cordial relations with former USSR and therefore the country was more close to Central Asian republics than any other regional nation states. In modern times India as an extended neighbour of CARs, has major geostrategic and economic interests including energy, trade and investment, and the beginning of a military relationship. India established diplomatic economic and cultural relations with all the five Central Asian states immediately after the end of Cold War. India's Ministry of Defense in its Annual Report 2009-10 considered Central Asian region as an area

[4] US military installation at Manas International Airport near Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, operated by US Air Force. For full details see Nichols, Jim. (2010). *Kyrgyzstan: Recent Developments and U.S. Interests*. Diane Publishing: Darby.

of vital importance to India, not only because of its geographical proximity and historical and cultural links with the region, but also because of the common challenges that both face from religious extremism, drug trafficking, arms proliferation, terrorism etc (Mehmood, 2011). The Central Asian region is considered by India as an area of utmost significance so far as the security situation in Afghanistan is concerned. However the main motive behind India's engagement with Central Asia is economic and in order to strengthen its economic relation, a roundtable was held in New Delhi in 2005. Four energy Consuming Asian countries like India, China, Japan and Republic of Korea identified the core areas including Central Asia to attain energy (Ahmad, 2010). The future prospects for cooperation between Central Asia and India in the field of energy security seem to be very important. Over the past few years India has stepped up its relationship with Central Asian republics and also expressed its desire to play a more meaningful role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) including its full membership.

Indian manufacturing and investment companies are very apprehensive about entering the new, unfamiliar markets of Central Asia. Most of the Indian business communities are enthusiastic to find out the possibilities that lie in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan by virtue of increased interaction with those countries. There is also scope for cooperation in the field of civil nuclear power between India and Central Asia. Recently there is 10-fold increase in power capacities of the nuclear power stations in India and by considering 5-fold increase in output of uranium in Kazakhstan, the field of cooperation becomes vast. Banking sector is another promising area where India eyes more in Central Asia and in this regard the Punjab National Bank's acquisition of controlling state in Kazakh Danabank will not only facilitate Indian businesses transactions on the market of Kazakhstan but in other Central Asian countries as well. There is realistic bilateral cooperation between India and CARs in the field of IT (Khairi, 2012). Many Indian multinational companies are enthusiastic to enter in the region, like Tata is interested in setting up a power plant in Kazakhstan, while BHEL is looking at restoring some Kazakh thermal power plant stations. There is more possibility of Cooperation in Hydroelectric power cooperation between India and Tajikistan.

Central Asia is a huge consumer market, hungry for a range of goods and services, which India can provide. Both India and Central Asia have economic complementarities in terms of resources, manpower and markets. These diverse resources can be pooled for a broader regional cooperation in Asia and to realise the potential of both the regions fully. Certain Indian commodities, for example, tea and drugs, pharmaceuticals and fine chemicals have established a foothold in the Central Asian markets.[5] In fact, it was only after 2001 India put more interest to Central Asia and the region became and an area of high priority to India and the core areas identified by India in the region include key issues, advantages and various challenges.

The involvement of the external powers in Central Asia has left indelible imprints on Indian interests in various fields. Comparatively, India is in a weaker position and it has to face major powers over bidding there. India lags significantly behind all the major players in the region (Russia, China, Iran, US and Turkey) in trading volumes with the Central Asian countries and has failed to exploit the vibrant consumer market. In this regard India lacks active and committed movement towards New Silk Road vision of intercontinental connectivity.

The major powers in Central Asia are making huge investments in various sectors and on account of this, the region has become a chessboard for such major powers and this energy struggle among major powers in the region poses immense strategic challenges before India. Through SCO, China has been trying to replicate its Pakistan and Myanmar policies with regard to Central Asia. Both China and Pakistan design to encircle India with a pan Islamic arc by promoting fundamentalist groups and China's Xinjiang has the potential to become an area where Islamic forces will try to pin India down. Pakistan-China cooperation in the region can affect India's interests in Central Asia to a larger extent (Dwivedi, 2006). After 9/11 episode, the US has increased its military presence in the region and on account of this, India suffered a lot due to spill over of extremist and terrorist groups towards Indian territory. Apart

[5] Roy, Meena Singh. '*India's Interests in Central Asia'*. Available at http://www.idsa-india.org/an-mar-9.01.html. Accessed on January 15, 2014.

from having better traditional relationship with Russia, the later is also opposing Indian presence in its vicinity particularly the security aspects like Indian military presence.

Among other major challenges that India faces while connecting with the region includes lack of proper road link. India is not having proper road, rail or air connection with the energy rich Central Asia. India lacks faster, more hassle free and less expensive way to transport goods through Iran to the Central Asian countries and further north to Russia (Sikri, 2008). Drug trafficking particularly from Afghanistan is another major challenge that both India and Central Asia faces today. The huge amount of money obtained through illegal drug trafficking is chiefly used by various terrorist agencies against India (Sarma, 2012). The religious extremism and terrorism continue to threaten and challenge the territorial integrity of India and can destabilize the whole Central Asian region. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Hizb-ul-Tahrir, Lashkar-e-Taiba and many other terrorist groups are hindrances in the way of successful cooperation between India and Central Asia. Another major challenge to India comes from possible US led NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan. The proximity of Central Asia to the Afghan border has raised the possibility of spill over of extremist activity in the region. If Taliban becomes successful to get control of Kabul once again it will encourage not only Pakistan but also extremists in Xinjiang in China, Indian Occupied Kashmir and all over South Asia.

Therefore there are many possibilities of mutual cooperation between Central Asia and India, but the need of hour is to overcome some hurdles and to initiate such programs and policies that will help India to counter these possible challenges. In short the real and profitable engagement between India and Central Asia possess enormous scope for the peace and stability in the whole South Asia.

Program of Work

This research proposes to analyze the role of major powers like US, China and Russia in Central Asia and various challenges posed by the presence of external powers on the regional players like India. Hence this research will analyze various opportunities and interests that India can avail and also various challenges that India can face in the Region.

Objectives of the Study

After the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991, the Central Asian region became the hotspot for the major power's rivalry like the United States of America, Russia and China. The involvement of big powers in the region will have a greater impact upon the region. The New Great Game in CARs will affect India to a larger extent. Accordingly the main objectives of my study include:-

- To assess India and Central Asia's historical moorings.
- To assess the geopolitical and geostrategic involvement of external major powers such as United States, Russia and China in Central Asia.
- To examine the role of regional players such as Pakistan, Iran and Turkey in the central Asian region.
- To analyse various geopolitical and geostrategic interests as well as policies and options of India.

Methodology

The methodology to be used for this research would be descriptive and analytical. The data for the research is mainly collected from the primary and secondary sources. The primary sources will be comprised of white papers available in embassies, external affairs ministry annual reports of respective governments and other international organizations etc. The secondary sources of data will include

books, journals, magazines, articles, periodicals, and working papers of various academic and research institutions working in respective regions. Web sources were also used during the research.

Significance of the Study

New Great game in Central Asia means involvement of the major powers such as United States, Russia and China in the region particularly after the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991. The study will primarily examine the overall geopolitical environment of Central Asia and the various interests of India like economic, political, social and cultural and also some major challenges before India.

The presence of big powers in the Central Asian Region and the possibility of their control over the region's natural resources like oil and gas etc. can go against the interests of the regional economies like that of India which is an energy deficient country. India could have an easy and cheaper access to energy resources in Central Asia but the involvement of major powers in the region poses major hindrances. Therefore there are several options available for India to triumph over these challenges. This study will make recommendations in order to achieve Indian geopolitical and geostatic interests in the region. Therefore, this study will hold considerable significance for Indian policy makers to reorient its foreign policy to achieve these goals.

Organisation of the Dissertation

The dissertation has been studied under the following parts.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter contains the introduction that includes overview of the work, significance, methodology, objectives and organisation of the dissertation.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

In this chapter ideas and views of experts on this research topic will be focussed upon**.** This chapter also contain knowledge gap found in the reviewed literature.

Chapter 3: India And Central Asia: Evolving Relations

This chapter will examine the historical background of relationship as well as its current engagement with the central Asia in various areas such as political, economic etc.

Chapter 4: The New Great Game in Central Asia: Challenges before India

This chapter will examine the major imperatives for the external powers such as US, Russia and China's involvement in the region, conflicting interests of these powers after the end of Cold War in 1990s, assessment of the role and interests of some regional players such as Pakistan, Turkey and Iran, NATO withdrawal and some other potential challenges that India can face.

Chapter 5: India's Interests In Central Asia: Strategy And Options

This chapter will make an assessment of various Indian interests in the region such as geo-strategic, geo-economic and geo-political interests. Joint efforts to fight terrorism, religious extremism, drug trafficking, small arms trafficking. This chapter will also focus on various strategies employed by India to protect such interests in the region.

Chapter 6: Summary and Recommendation

This chapter will make efforts to find out conclusion and make recommendations.

CHAPTER-2

Review of Literature

From the last few years many books, research papers and articles have been written about “The Role of major powers in Central Asia”. Reviewing the literature, most of the literature mention role of external powers (USA, China and Russia) in the region. Role played by some regional players like Turkey, Iran and Pakistan in the region also finds appropriate place in most of the literature. Some of the most important books and articles which I reviewed for this topic include:-

Akbar, Zehra. (2012). *“Central Asia: The New Great Game”*

Zehra in this article addressed that the great power contest is going to happen among big powers like US, Russia and china etc. in the Central Asian region. Russia continues to exert its importance in the region in political and economic domains while planning to maintain its stronghold in its backyard. Iran is making waves through its trade routes and with Iran Central Asia can see many lucrative trading and pipeline options available through them. On the other hand, it may be difficult for Central Asia to tilt towards Iran without displeasing the world hegemon US that maintains its military presence in the region. On the other hand both Turkey and India are also competing for influence in the region. The neighbouring country Pakistan has also witnessed improvement in their relationship with the Central Asia. This paper also outlines that with the progress in the war on terror and improved security conditions in its neighbouring countries, it is important that Pakistan makes strategic moves, to regain its strength in the area. Pakistan can still struggle to improve its position in the New Great Game; a move that it desperately needs to maintain in order to fulfil its energy and trade requirements, while also maintaining its political and regional importance, especially against rival India.

Awasthy, H.K. (2012). *Afghanistan: Quest for Survival.* Delhi: Sumit Enterprises.

The author in this book gives us complete information about the growing turbulence in Afghanistan. About half a million Afghan civilians have lost their lives in

various civil wars from the period of 1990s till date. No doubt the history of Afghanistan is full of wars but recently 'Operation Enduring Freedom' was launched as a new phase of the war in Afghanistan. This book provides information about the rise and fall of Taliban in Afghanistan and brief history of NATO presence in the country since 2001. H.K. Awasthy then turns to the possible consequences of the NATO withdrawal in the year 2014. The Taliban is still active in the country and its re-emergence can create problems not only to South Asian countries like India but will affect Central Asian countries, as Taliban has strong links with various extremist groups present in the region. The author then turns to the main question about the survival of Afghanistan after NATO withdrawal in 2014.

Blank, Stephen J. (2011). "*Challenges to Russia in Central Asia"*

This article discusses about various challenges to Russia and their implications for Central Asian security. Russia seeks to reintegrate Central Asia around its power and authority and to that end deploys all the instruments of power available to it. But Russia faces several challenges in Central Asia like possibility of terrorism or a Taliban victory in Afghanistan, domestically generated instability in Central Asia that could be the result of a succession of domestic crisis or due to the influence of events like the Arab Spring of 2011. Some other challenges come from major actors like China and the United States who possess vital interests in Central Asia and can prevent Russian interests in the region. Central Asian states are not able to resist Russia on their own and also not able to form strategic alliances with governments like China or the United States.

Blank, Stephen. (2003). "*India's Rising Profile in Central Asia"*

In this article, Stephen Blank is of the view that India's presence in Central Asia is galvanised by terrorism and also India's rising profile in Central Asia has not received the attention it deserves. Being one of the major powers of the region, no

discussion about the Central Asian region can be fruitful without discussing India. Undoubtedly, India's policies towards Afghanistan and the former Soviet republics of Central Asia reflect changing perspectives in its long-standing rivalry with Afghanistan, perspectives that have been affected by years of warfare in Afghanistan, the terror campaign in Kashmir, and the events of September 11, 2001 and afterwards. India's policies towards Central Asia dispose of all the instruments of power economics, diplomacy, and military power. The military instrument is used directly in the form of arms sales and security assistance to key states of the region. There is no doubt that India continues to exert and expand its "investment" in Central Asia and will deepen its connections to the area in terms of economics, diplomacy, and defence cooperation.

Cooley, Alexander. (2012). ***The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia: Great Games, Local Rules.*** **New York: OUP**.

This book charts how in the past quarter century, a new 'great game' has emerged in Central Asia between great economic power America, a newly aggressive Russia and a resource-hungry China, all of them struggling for influence over one of the most volatile areas in the world. Cooley challenges easy generalizations about foreign competition in Central Asia and the U.S. Russia and China not only compete in Central Asia, but frequently cooperate, to the backdrop of "new transnational networks that link local elites, deal brokers, foreign companies, government actors, and offshore financial vehicles". Cooley offers a compelling account of U.S. engagement in Central Asia, in the context of its War on Terror and the search for new supply routes to Afghanistan but the U.S. has faced trade-offs between promoting democracy and security. So far as the chapter regarding Russia is concerned, Cooley describes how Vladimir Putin has seen dominance in Central Asia as a means to great power status for Russia, yet how it has often been side-stepped by the United States and eclipsed by China. The book then turns to China, "the most nuanced and skilled" of the three. It initially looked towards Central Asia in order to stabilize its adjacent Xinjiang region, home to China's Uighur minority. According to

Cooley, the game's real winners are the Central Asian regimes who set the "local rules" for foreign presence in the region. Each one of them has pursued some form of "multi-vector foreign policy", playing the three powers off against one another – as the examples in this book show.

Gopal, Surrender. (**2005).** ***Dialogue and Understanding Central Asia and India; the Soviet and the Post-Soviet Era*****. New Delhi: Shipra Publications.**

The book is a narrative of India and central Asian contacts from November1917 (revolution in Russia) to 2002 that is a decade following the emergence of Central Asian sovereign nations. The book provides a brief history of Indo Central Asian relations during Soviet and post-Soviet era. At first only Indians were allowed in Central Asia by the Soviet regime but later Indians were debarred from entering into the region for next three decades. The situation changed during Second World War when Soviet Government tried to protect Indians from harmful effects of war and to win their sympathies in their struggle against Nazi Germany. After the end of Second World War India Central Asia relations revived and both came closer to escape the challenge from political and economic hegemony of United States. Therefore after the death of Stalin the bilateral relationship between India and Soviet Russia were improved particularly with the soviet republics of Central Asia being nearer to India. Tashkent emerged as the important Centre of Indian Studies in Central Asia and students from several communist countries came here to learn Indian languages and complete their study in Indian history. Tashkent relationship with India further cemented with the help of admissions of students in various institutions and universities in each other's countries. Further the collapse of Soviet Union provided an opportunity to newly independent states of Central Asia and India to put their relationship on a new pedestal of current political economic and strategic situation.

Hawkins, Charles and Robert Love (Ed.). (2012). *Chinese Strategies on Central Asia: The New Great Game.* Delhi: Manas Publications.

This book is an outcome of a symposium organized by FMSO (Foreign Military Studies Office) to analyze the Chinese perspective on area's problems and potential solution with its New Great Game. Since 9/11 attack, US involvement in this region has taken a renewed importance. Russia views the region as its traditional sphere of influence and ties between Russia and many other central Asian countries like Kazakhstan reinforce this view. China has had a stake in the region via trade routes for centuries but has recently made a concerted effort to apply its influence. This book also highlight some key issues of the region include transnational crime, drug trafficking, energy resources, trade, stable governance, border disputes etc. The book also focus on China's Central Asia policy and its impact on China and also the various security issues in the region, SCO and role of China, common interests of US and China in the region. This book also provides an outline of china's competition for Caspian energy development and image building in Central Asia.

Kleveman, Lutz. (2004). *The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia.* New York: Grove Press.

Kleveman in this book speaks about the history, passion, and politics of oil and gas resources, and the struggle to control them in this critical part of the world. Kleveman makes the interesting argument that the challenge to U.S. primacy will in fact take place to the west of China's vicinity province Xingjiang over the resources of the energy-rich Caspian Sea and the surrounding Central Asian Republics. The central idea is that, the U.S China, Russia and Iran are now engaged in a New Great Game, a power struggle for control of the region's vast oil and gas reserves, is thinly woven through the narrative in what is largely a war zone travel diary. It becomes clear after going through this book that Kleveman has selectively presented interviews with oil ministers and locals that lend his argument the most weight, while giving short confession to those with opposing views. The work draws attention to a

little understood and increasingly important part of the world where oil, Islam and terrorism converge to create havoc. At the end of the book, Kleveman fails to show that competition can mark the development of the region's resources.

Laruelle, Marlène and Sébastien Peyrouse (Ed.). (2011). *Mapping Central Asia: Indian Perceptions and Strategies*. Surrey: Ashgate Publishing, Ltd.

This collection provides a rare and comprehensive overview of India's international interactions with Central Asia. The book skilfully guides us through the importance of the historical links between the Indian sub-continent and Central Asia, the development of Indo-Central Asian relations since the fall of former Soviet Union. The book also highlights the precise domains of Indo-Central Asian cooperation and three conflict zones that frame Indo-Central Asian relations: the Kashmir question; the situation in Afghanistan; and fear of destabilization in Xinjiang. This book offers a wealth of unique insights into how Indians themselves understand the shape and dynamics of the accelerating contest among big powers in Central Asia. This volume also provides information about the Indian approach and cutting edge insights on the tools needed to understand the solutions for the decade to come.

Sarma, Angira Sen. (2010). *India and Central Asia: Redefining Energy and Trade Links.* New Delhi: ORF-Pentagon Press.

This book studies India's economic relations with Central Asian Republics like Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. India being energy deficient and Central Asia being endowed with rich hydrocarbon reserves can provide India with a reliable alternative source of oil and gas. Hydroelectric projects with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the two republics rich in water resources, are also worth exploring. Although the share of trade with these republics in India's total trade basket is meagre but besides energy, there is scope for expanding cooperation to other areas for mutual benefit as well. One of the major weaknesses in developing energetic trade with the region is the lack of direct

transport links. Recently the region has attracted international attention because of its strategic location and rich resources. Hence India's position in the region has to take into account the greater geopolitics of oil and gas and also the presence of the major external players in the region like Russia, China and the United States.

Singh, Kudip (Ed.). (2005). *South-Central Asia: Emerging Issues.* Amritsar: Guru Nanak Dev University.

The book gives us information about the changing dynamics of Central Asia after the fall of Soviet Union and its geo-strategic importance to India. Not only regional countries took keen interest but the region became central point of influence by the major powers like US, Russia and China. Scholars in this literary work attempted to present an in-depth study of emerging socio-political and economic scenario in the Central Asian region. The contents in this book highlighted the importance of energy rich Central Asian region from the Indian perspective. There are many options available to India to have a significant and economically beneficial cooperation with the region. The book also include information about the security situation in the region after 9/11 episode.

Stobdon, P. (2004). "*Central Asia and India's Security*"

The author attempts to analyze some important issues in Central Asia in the context of India's security. Stobdon in this paper poses a question as to what the region of Central Asia means for India today. The region has now gained international attention focused on redefining the importance of Central Asia in the changing regional and international context. Since its reappearance, many suitors have been seeking affinity, proximity and legitimacy with the region on political, strategic, cultural and economic grounds. The paper mentions that Central Asia still holds importance not only to those areas that are around it but it also compels other regions and areas to think in a zero-sum game of who will control the region next, following Makinder's thesis of "he who controls the heartland controls the world". There are already signs

of geopolitical actions being applied in this direction, though the stage is not yet getting set for a clash of major power interests, but the persisting situation is an indication that the Power Struggle among the big players is certainly going to take place in near future. In this context, the paper deals with the current debate on Central Asia, which involves complex issues and the answers, are ambiguous, often linked to events in Russia and elsewhere. The dynamisms evolving in the region would inevitably have implications far beyond what one might have imagined a decade ago. This paper emphasizes the geopolitical importance of the Central Asian region and also the concerns to India mainly in the context of its strategic relevance to India's security. P. Stobdon not only analyses the various issues in a historical perspective but also assesses the current tendencies and interests that are at stake for India and also offers some suggestions for India's policy options with regard to Central Asia.

Knowledge Gap

Although many books, journals, papers, articles etc. are available on the role of major powers in Central Asia. However, in case of India, appropriate literature about India's real interests in Central Asia and the challenges to be faced by India due to New Great Game, is lagging. Presence of US, Russia, China and some other players in the region is going to be in favour or against the interests of regional countries particularly that of India, has not been clearly revealed in most of the literature that I reviewed. Hence in the context of New Great Game, India's role in the region is lagging. So the main focus of this study will be upon the various interests that India possesses in Central Asia and also the main challenges that India is going to face, like the New Great Game, NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan and possible Talibanisation of the region etc. This study will also try to focus on various policies and programs that India can employ to maintain harmonious and more positive cooperation with Central Asia to protect its interests and also to overcome the challenge due to major power's presence in the region.

Chapter 3

India and Central Asia: Evolving Relations

India and Central Asia had long traditions of social-cultural, religious, political and economic contacts since the recorded history. Both the regions had geo-cultural affinity since then. There has always been uninterrupted flow of people, material and the ideas between the two. So much so, some ancient literary sources trace common lineage for Indians, Pakistanis, Iranians, Afghans, and other nationalities of Central Asia. Central Asia is a vast region and due to India's geographical proximity with Central Asia from the ancient times till the British occupation of India, there was cross-regional and social interaction which led to forging of highly significant linkages (Kablukov, 2004). Dazzling impressions of these interactions are visible in classical Indian literature, poetry and the Sufi strand of Islam. A large number of immigrants consisting of scientists, scholars, technicians and artisans came to India from Central Asia contributed to the rich tapestry of Indian culture and life. However, from Indian side, Indian missionaries and merchants transmitted religion, art and merchandize to Central Asian region.

During the periods of Greek and Saka[6] rule, the bilateral cultural and commerce transmission had become very stronger and the apex of such transmission reached under the Kushana Empire, included territories of Central Asia and a large part of Northern India. Under Kushana Empire, joint cultural exchange was seen between India and Central Asia and the carriers of such cultural influence were Kushana authorities, functionaries, and soldiers in India and in Central Asia they were the Buddhist missionaries and monks (Dash, 2012). Al-Biruni had visited India and wrote an encyclopedic work on India called "Tarikh Al-Hind" (History of India). In this book he explored very extensively every aspect of Indian life, including religion, history, geography, geology, science, and mathematics. He says, "I shall not produce the arguments of our antagonists in order to refute such of them, as I believe to be in the wrong. My book is nothing but a simple historic record of facts. I

[6] The Sakas were the foreign conquerors who set up their rule in the central and western India. For more information on Saka rulers follow the link http://www.indiavideo.org/text/saka-dynasty-318.php.

shall place before the reader the theories of the Hindus exactly as they are, and I shall mention in connection with them similar theories of the Greeks in order to show the relationship existing between them". Indians didn't travel to Central Asia to stay there as there was no scarcity of land in their own country. Moreover, the unfriendly mountainous topography and severe climatic conditions of central Asian region did not attract them rather the region provided them with the opportunity for lucrative trade and the spread of Buddhism (Dash, 2012). According to Devahuti, "there are stray instances of politically ambitious settlers, but the overall picture of Central Asia is that of predominantly Indianized-not Indian-population".

After the end of cold war, the region's strategic location and rich energy resources have attracted international attention and the major powers like the US, Russia and China made an entry in to the region. Although India also connected itself with the region but quite late as compared to the big three (US, Russia, China), and some other regional players like Iran, Turkey and Pakistan. Despite India's late entry in to the region it has framed its foreign policy towards the region in such a manner to compensate the loss of this delay.

1. Historical Background

In the ancient period, India was known for its richness in many fields. Its culture, religion, philosophy, trade and commerce had influenced not only its neighbourhood but far eastern parts of the world also. Throughout the recorded history, both the regions left indelible imprints on each other which could be substantiated by these proofs. The archaeological excavations had carried out in the Amu valley in Southern Uzbekistan, in Afrasiab on North-Eastern edge of Samarkand and some other places in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Tak-mak in Kirghizstan had given many evidences of links between ancient India and Central Asia since remote antiquity (Roy, 2007). The discovery of manuscripts in Xinjiang (China) and many other valuable excavational findings revealed that India and eastern Central Asian region of Xinjiang were also in extensive political, cultural

and religious interaction with each other. The recent researches also reveal that there existed contacts during Harappan period between Sindh river valley and Central Asia.

Hence during ancient period, Indo-Central Asian relations were marked through Kushan, Indo-Scythians and Indo-Greeks (via Bactria). Various tribes in India like Shakas, Yavanas, Kambojas, Pahlavas, Paradas etc. are also supposed to have been coming as invaders from Central Asia to India and were all finally absorbed into the community of Kshatriyas of Indian society. This period was followed by an era of some more invaders such as the Kushanas, Huns, Turks, Mongols and Pashtuns coming to the subcontinent. There was much similarity among various materials like iron swords, disk shaped bronze mirrors and many other materials between two regions (Peyrouse, 2011). Ethnic-cultural contacts between Central Asia and India became more intensified and regular in the period of emergence of the first large state formations on the territory of India (the Mauryas and Kushan empires), Buddhism and the campaign of Alexander the Great. In fact India enjoyed multi faceted relationship with the neighboring Central Asian countries through the ages.

1.1 Religious Relations

The early medieval period witnessed the spread of Buddhist teachings and worship that initiated one of the greatest cultural movements in history – the passage of Buddhist thought and philosophical ideas from one civilization to another. Such type of movement was evident from the fact that Kyrgyzs knew Tibetan version of Buddhism – Lamaism, Lamaist terminology may be found in epic of -Manas[7] and nowadays a part of Kyrgyzs in China confess Lamaism. Buddhism spread to Central

[7] The Epic of Manas is a traditional epic poem of the Kyrgyz people dating to the 18th century but it is claimed by the Kyrgyz people to be much older. For full details see Nienke Van der Heide's Spirited Performance: The Manas Epic and Society in Kyrgyzstan. For full details see Nienke van der Heide. (2008). *Spirited Performance: The Manas Epic and Society in Kyrgyzstan*. Rozenberg Publishers: Amsterdam.

Asia from India and Dharmaguptaka one of the Buddhist schools made more efforts to spread it outside India. Later the followers of Dharmaguptaka School made use of Silk route for the spread of Buddhism across Central Asia and China. One of the Russian scholars who visited India in the 19th century was Ivan Minaev and studied Buddhism. Hence Buddhism flourished in Central Asia till Kushan Empire came in to power during which some other religions like Islam and Zoroastrianism made appearance in the region. It is common knowledge that Hinduism pervaded several countries of South-East Asia which witnessed the rise and fall of several Hindu dynasties. The rulers of these dynasties constructed many temples for Hindu gods and goddesses particularly that of Shiva and Vishnu (Thrower, 2004). Therefore Shiva and Vaishnava religions were followed in these Central Asian countries. However as compared to Buddhism, Hinduism was not so much popular in these countries of Central Asia and most of the non Muslim art and architectural remains were destroyed by the Arab Muslims who entered in the region in 8th century.

Islam came to Central Asia not through military means but through Islamic missionaries mostly from Persia and it was the time when many Sufi scholars, poets and saints came from Central Asia and settled in Delhi, Kashmir and elsewhere in India (Kablukov, 2004). Therefore we can say that Islam came to India mainly through Central Asia in three successive waves: the Arabs in the eighth century, various Turkish peoples starting around 1000 C.E., and the Mughal dynasty that entered India in 1526. The Mongol invasions in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries seriously disrupted Muslim civilization, especially in Central Asia. With the arrival of Islam, the influence of Buddhism as a religion disappeared in both India and Central Asia, but the bilateral cultural and trade relations further intensified during the period when Turks established their control over Northern India in the early 13th century[8]. As a result, Muslims left on their own in India built an independent kingdom, the Sultanate of Delhi (1206-c.1500). Mughal dynasty also contributed significantly towards the spread of Islam in India and during early Mughal period cultural homogeneity among various communities was prevalent in India.

[8] The coming of Islam to India (711-c.1800), available at http://www.flowofhistory.com/units/asia/7/FC52. Accessed on February 4, 2013.

1.2 Political Relations

India and Central Asia enjoyed political relations from very ancient period. During the 1st and early 2nd centuries CE, the Kushans expanded across the northern parts of the Indian subcontinent as far as Saketa and Sarnath near Varanasi (Benares). Another splash in relations between India and Central Asia was during Mahmood Gaznevi who ruled India from 997 BC to 1030 BC, during which Persian language and literature was introduced to India and mostly it has been done through Central Asia. There were also political and diplomatic contacts between many parts of India and Central Asia during Timur dynasty. Babur a Timurid prince from Ferghana now Uzbekistan, established Mughal Empire in India and Afghanistan. The Mughal Empire in India gave a boost to India's interaction with Central Asia, as political and economic stability flourished under such Empire. India's trade with the region also boosted because of presence of increased number of Indian merchants and investors there (Pandey, 2010). India-Central Asia relations witnessed progress under Mughal rule especially under Babur and few early Mughal Rulers. It is also a well known fact that there were about eight thousand Indian settlers in 19th and early 20th century in Central Asia. Every market and village had Hindu moneylender in Turkestan in1860s and also the trade of books was monopolized by Indians (Ozkan, 2010). However colonization of India by the British and annexation of Central Asia to the Tsarist Empire resulted in deteriorated trade, political and other cultural attachment between India and Central Asia. However, after the independence of India, these historical and civilizational relations with the region and with some other neighbors like Iran, Afghanistan became enervated.

The direct political relationship between India and Central Asia was lagging during the period from1947 to 1991 and the bilateral relations were arbitrated through Moscow. USSR tried to keep Central Asia remote from rest of the world but India was among few countries which had access to these republics (Varol, 2013). As a result of the historical ties and influence of soft power in Central Asian region, there was substantial goodwill for India among the people of the region. The fall of Soviet Union led great impact on India Central Asia relations as USSR was not only

the leading supplier of arms to India at highly discounted prices but also extended immense political support to India in the international arena, thus removed the main anchor of India's foreign policy.[9]

1.3 Cultural and Linguistic Relations

Apart from historical, commercial, political and religious relations, India and Central Asia had rich cultural and linguistic dealings. Indian literature like Atharvaveda, Vamsa, Mahabharata, Rajaratrangini, Puranas etc contain the details about the people of Central Asia. There were centers in Central Asia where great works of Indian art and architectures flourished, viz. Varaksha, located near Bukhara, Afrasiab, the ancient site of the capital city of Sogdiana, in the outskirts of Samarkand, and Penjikent, an ancient small city, around 60kms East of Samarkand.[10] Asoka and Kanishaka spread Indian art and culture to neighboring countries including Central Asia. Persian language and literature was introduced in India during the reign of Mahmood Gaznevi who ruled India from 997 BC to 1030 BC. Indians had a monopoly in the field of publication and circulation of the books. Many Muslim scholars are of the opinion that Mongol onslaught to India not only channeled to an active sea-borne trade with Southeast Asia, East Africa, and the Middle East but also led to flowering of Muslim culture in India. The Sultanate of Delhi witnessed a gradual blending of Muslim and Hindu cultures and many Hindus learned Persian and Muslim bureaucratic procedures.[11] During the time of Romanov Dynasty, G. S. Lebedev, a great musician and dramatist, who lived in Bengal for twelve years (1785-1797), studied Sanskrit and Bengali drama. The translation of Bhagavadgita by Russian writer in 1792 was followed by the

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[9] Kablukov, Evgeni. '*India and Central Asia: Cultural Relations in middle Ages'.* Available at http://www.asthabharati.org/Dia_Oct04/Kablukov.htm. Accessed on September 7, 2013.
[10] Gupta S.P. *'Hindu Gods in Western Central Asia: A Lesser Known Chapter of Indian History'*, Available at http://www.oocities.org/bharatvarsha1947/Feb_2003/godswestasia.htm. Accessed on February 4, 2014.
[11] *The coming of Islam to India* (711-c.1800), available at http://www.flowofhistory.com/units/asia/7/FC52. Accessed on February 9, 2013.

establishment of chairs in Oriental Languages and Sanskirit at Moscow and St. Petersburg Universities, which later published the so-called St. Petersburg Sanskrit Dictionary. Later schools for the study of Oriental languages, libraries and museums, with collection of oriental manuscripts were also founded. During 1830s, Alexander Burnes, Britain's envoy to the court of Shah Shujah said, “Turbans of Punjabi white cloths were used by whole of the natives of Bokhara and Turkistan". Throughout the history there has been uninterrupted flow of people, material and ideas between two culturally rich regions, India and Central Asia (Kosambi, 1964). The flow of people also led to the spread of languages like Persian, Sanskrit etc. India enriched Central Asia with art and culture and in turn Central Asia preserved Buddhist manuscripts and texts of medicinal, religious and astronomical and most of which were lost long ago in India.

1.4 Trade Relations

Historically, India and Central Asia had very strong economic relations. These economic relations had been flourished through the Silk Route which was also known as the Shahra-i Abrasham or Shahra-i Caravan during medieval period. The term Silk Road was first coined by a famous geographer from Germany, Ferdinand von Richtofen in the year1877, but the history of this route goes back to antiquity as far as second to third millennium. The silk route is the longest route in human history and at one point of time it was viewed as a road along which silk from China was brought to Turkey and thereby sold to Europeans.

India’s trade relations with the Central Asia are as ancient as the legendary Silk Route, connecting China, Central Asia Northern India and the Parthian and the Roman Empires. Silk Route was, in fact, a web of many routes connecting different regions and among the network of routes like the Lapis Lazuli, Sogdian, Karategin, and Pamir (Kaw, 2009). During early times Indian Sub Continent was connected to the Grand Silk Route through a network of sub-routes crossing through Kashmir. Through the famed silk route and periodic spurts of invasions, India has been closely

linked to Central Asia resulted in unleashing the movement of people, goods, and culture.[12]

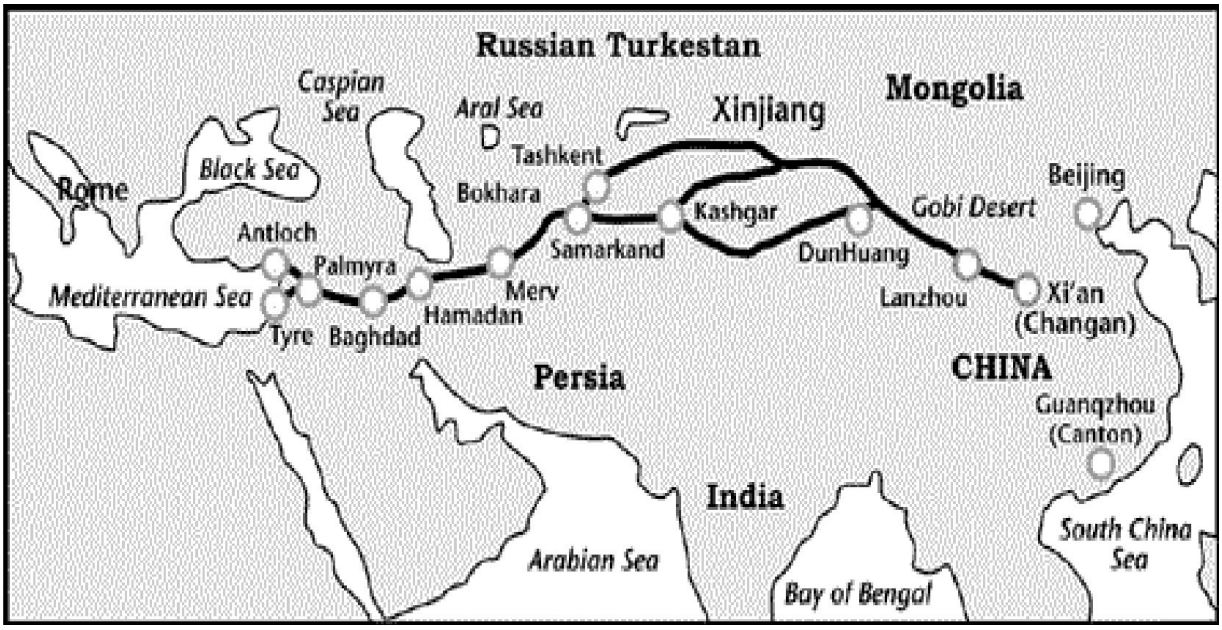
The Silk Road was not only the ancient world's most strategic trade route, but was also the information superhighway carrying knowledge and ideas between the East and the West that shaped entire civilizations. Trade on the Silk Road was a significant factor in the development of the great civilizations of China, India, Egypt, Persia (Ancient Iran), Arabia, and Rome, and in several respects helped lay the foundations for the modern world. For the most part, goods were transported by a series of agents on varying routes and were traded in the bustling markets of the oasis towns.

No doubt silk was the main item that was traded through this route but apart from this main item many other items also formed a part of exchange on the Silk Road. Domestic animals such as horses, camels, mules, domestic dogs, plants and medicines, dates, sacred boddhi trees from India, pharmacological items, citraghanda a kind of drug, cardamoms, jewels, trade of human beings like slaves etc. were traded through these ancient Silk Roads (Schafer, 1985). Silk Route has also played vital role in the exchange of knowledge, culture, religion, and technology between the East and the West. Different religions like Buddhism, Islam, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Zoroastrianism had also spread through the route and also Algebra, astronomy, Arabic numerals, medical techniques, and architectural styles also spread through the Silk Route to different regions including ancient India (Wood, 2002). The trade and other cultural exchange that once prospered along the Silk Road declined with the opening of the world's sea-lanes in the 16th and 17th centuries.

[12] Sharma, Raghav. '*India in Central Asia: Interests and Challenges'*, available at http://www.ipcs.org/pdf_file/issue/579834852SR63-Ragav-CentralAsia1.pdf. Accessed on October 3 2013.

Figure 1

The ancient Silk Road



Source: http://www.asian-studies.org/eaa/silkroad.htm.

2. India-Central Asia Relations in the Post-Cold War Era

The end of the Cold war and the demise of Soviet Union in 1991 and other external and internal dynamics have brought geopolitical and geostrategic changes in the world. In such scenario, India was also forced to reorient and readjust it's economic and foreign policies to adjust itself in the changing world. With the demise of Soviet Union, the newly independent central Asian countries have to engage themselves in regional cooperation not only at regional level but with the other regions also. During 1991-1992, India established diplomatic relations with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and worked with these newly independent states to develop frameworks for diplomatic, economic and cultural cooperation.

Apart from the long history of cultural ties with this region, India sought good relations with the Central Asian region for several reasons: to prevent Pakistan from

developing an anti India coalition with the Central Asian States in the dispute over Kashmir, to persuade those states not to provide nuclear assistance to Pakistan for developing nuclear weapons, to ensure long-standing commercial and military suppliers, to provide new opportunities to Indian businesses and above all to improve its profile in the region in order to exploit its energy reserves and to establish a mutually beneficial security and economic relationship.[13] India's Ministry of Defense in its Annual Report 2009-10 considered Central Asia as an area of vital importance to India, not only because of its geographical proximity and historical and cultural links with the region, but also the common challenges that both face from extremism and terrorism.

During the early nineties diplomatic and trade relations were the central point in Indian goal in relations with the Central Asian republics. Recently, economic and cultural ties formed the focal point of Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narahimsa Rao's official visit to Uzbekistan and Kazakstan in May 1993. During the Kazakh defense minister's visit to India in February 1995, Security matters were the main issues as witnessed during his journey. Adherence to democracy and secularism by these countries was regarded by India as desirable in order to ensure stability and social development.[14] The geopolitical competition among India and Pakistan for influence in Central Asian republics is likely to be a long-term factor. India also attempted to recover some influence in Afghanistan by cooperating with Iran to provide backing to Dari[15]-speaking and other minorities against the Pashtun groups backed by Pakistan in the subsequent civil war.

Relations between India and Central Asia were marked by high level dignitaries from both the sides from 1996 to 1999. The Indian vice president Mr.

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[13] Sehgal Arun and Vinod Anand (2010). '*Strategic Environment in Central Asia and India'.* Available at http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/1004joshi-v-strategic.pdf. Accessed on November 23, 2013.

[14] '*India-Russia Central Asia'*, available at http://www.mongabay.com/history/india/india-russia_central_asia.html. Accessed on November 23, 2013.

[15] Dari is a variety of Persian spoken in Afghanistan, where it is one of the two official languages, along with Pashto. It is also used as a medium of instruction in Afghan schools and is spoken by about 5 million people. For more details see Sinha, Mukesh Kumar. (2005). *The Persian World*. Pinnacle Technology: New Delhi.

Krishna Kant visited Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in September 1996 followed by the return visit of Kazakh President, and his stay in India witnessed signing of many bilateral and mutual agreements. A pharmaceutical plant was constructed with the use of Indian credit line in Dushanbe and it became operational in 1996-97. During the visit of Tajikistan president to New Delhi in 1999, both the sides agreed to set up economic and commercial cooperation. In august 1999, Indian External Affairs Minister Mr. Jaswant Singh visited Turkmenistan and during his visit he stressed upon possible pipelines from the region and also the possibility of alternative routes for such pipelines that can bypass Afghanistan and Pakistan (Mohanty, 2012). India and Uzbekistan stressed on increasing economic and trade relations and both are natural partners in combating international terrorism, religious extremism and drug trafficking. A military base has been established by India at Farkhor[16] Tajikistan, close to Afghan border which is used as funnel relief assistance that India promised to Kabul after the Taliban's expulsion.

With the launch of 'people to people' initiative by India, parliamentarians, diplomats and opinion makers are invited from Central Asia to visit different industrial and technological centers and also to interact with senior politicians, officials and businessman in India. Former Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee during his visit to Kazakhstan in the year 2002, stressed on Delhi's membership of SCO and in turn Kazakhstan wants Indian information technology expertise to develop software parks.

India has stepped up its relationship with Central Asian republics over the past few years and also expressed its interest for more meaningful role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) including its full membership. During the last few years, the high level visits from both the sides, like Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's visit to Delhi and President Pratibha Patil's visit to Tajikistan in 2009; Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Kazakhstan in 2011; Uzbek

[16] India's first military base outside country located near the town of Farkhor in Tajikistan, 130 Km South East of the capital Dushanbe. Indian Air Force operates this base in collaboration with the Tajikistan Air Force. For more details visit http://www.defenceaviation.com/2008/01/farkhor-an-indian-air-force-base-in-tajikistan.html.

President Islam Karimov's visit to India in May 2011; and the two-day visit by SM Krishna to Tajikistan on 2-3 July 2012, are specific reflection of growing political ties between India and Central Asia (Gupta, 2012). In yet another partnership building initiative with the Central Asian region, Track-II initiative[17] was organized on 12-13 June 2012 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan to start a regular annual dialogue forum among academics, scholars, government officials and business representatives from India and the CARs.

Recently, from 1-4 September 2012, the fifth official visit of Tajikistan President Emomali Rahmon to India is a step towards more cooperation between India and the Central Asian region. The visit is useful step towards strengthening of bilateral relationship as India signed strategic partnership agreement with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Tajikistan is strategically more important to India because of its geographical location as it is located close to Kashmir and shares longest border with Afghanistan. Instability in Afghanistan was the focal point of the bilateral discussion and for this cause both the sides agreed on bilateral counter-terrorism cooperation.[18]

3. India Central Asia Economic Cooperation

Central Asia is wealthy in energy reserves, existence of gas and oil pipelines connecting china, Russia, Europe and Trans-Caspian region highlight geostrategic importance of the region (Warikoo, 2012). The strategic location and rich energy resources of the region have attracted international attention like Russia, China and the United States (New Great Game). The main purpose behind the involvement of

[17] It is a kind of diplomacy in which non officials like academic scholars,retired civil and military officials, public figures, and social activists engage in dialogue, with the aim of conflict resolution, or confidence-building. For more details follow the link http://asialink.unimelb.edu.au/research_and_policy/track_ii_diplomacy.

[18] Sharma, Angira Sen. '*India's Connect Central Asia Policy*: *Moves a Step Forward'*. Available at http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/VPangira.pdf. Accessed on October 4, 2013.

major powers in the region is to have power over the production of oil and gas and also to have control of the gas pipelines originating from the region.[19]

India being one of the energy deficient states of the region undertook various constructive steps in order to have useful economic cooperation with the Central Asian republics. Recently New Delhi is making economic and political contact with each of the Central Asian states to exploit rich energy reserves of the region but simultaneously India has to take into account the greater geopolitics of oil by the major external players in the region.

Various studies about the estimates of total energy reserves in the region suggest different opinions. According to well known scholar of the Heritage Foundation, Ariel Cohen, Kazakhstan has possible deposits of 170.5 billion barrels of oil and 15.3 trillion cubic metres of natural gas. However Wood Mackenzie a Scottish firm provide different figures of 26.01 and 56.64 billion barrels of oil and natural gas respectively. The Kashagan offshore oil field discovered in the year 2002 is referred to as an 'elephant' is one of the largest oil field in Asian continent. Turkmenistan being the fifth largest depository of natural gas in the world is estimated to hold 1.5 billion barrels of proved and 8.9 trillion cubic meters of both proven and possible oil resources (Joshi, 2012). At present China is the main investor in Turkmenistan with one major operational gas pipeline and other proposed one to China and Western Europe. The Caspian Sea is rich in energy resources but its legal status is yet to be fixed and therefore extraction of energy resources has become difficult.

Uzbekistan own 230 known oil and gas fields and the country has a potential of 3.1trillion cubic metres of oil from proven and possible resources. Though Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have minimal deposits of oil and natural gas resources but both the countries are endowed with perennial rivers-Syr Darya and Amu Darya and thus possess hydro power potential. Kyrgyzstan has a capacity to generate huge amount of hydroelectricity sufficient to meet the domestic needs as well as to export to neighbouring countries through high transmission lines (Joshi, 2012). No doubt

[19] Arvanitopoulos, Constantine. '*The Geopolitics of Oil in Central Asia'*, A Journal of Foreign Policy Issues. Link http://www.hri.org/MFA/thesis/winter98/geopolitics.html. Accessed on November 3, 2013.

Tajikistan has also huge potential to generate hydroelectric power but due to controversy with neighbouring Uzbekistan, many projects are in queue to be finalised. In other words we can say that once the inter-state conflicts and investment difficulties among Central Asian republics comes to an end, there is huge scope for regional countries including India to get benefited from the electricity trade.

Geo-political importance of Central Asia gave a sharper edge to the competition among various regional and external players to secure and control the energy resources of Central Asian region. Indian External Affairs Ministry has taken various measures to enhance trade and economic relations with Central Asia like trilateral trade treaty joining India, Russia and Kazakhstan. Through this treaty India will be able to feed into licensed trade agreement already operational between Russia and Kazakhstan with preferential trade terms and also agreed to remove all custom hurdles among the member countries and also envision common currency by the year 2012 (Foshko, 2012). With the passage of time more and more Central Asian republics will join the union and thus India's trade with the region will grow up. Maintaining and improving trade links with Russia and Kazakhstan should definitely provide an opportunity to India for both energy and commerce linkages with the central Asian region.

During the last few decades, Indian economy showed rapid growth and if India becomes successful in maintaining such a high level of growth, then it could become the fourth largest consumer of energy. In February 2000, Government of India published 'Hydrocarbon Vision 2025'[20] clearly highlights the issue of energy security faced by the country. Self Sufficiency in the field of oil declined from 63% in 1989-90 to 30% in 2000-2001 and thus demand for the oil will increase from 122million tons in 2001-2002 to 364 million tons in 2024-2025. During this period such rapid increase in the demand of oil will not be balanced by the domestic production that is merely 15%, although it will increase. During this period the demand for natural gas

[20] A long term strategy adopted by India to assure energy security by achieving self-reliance through increased indigenous production and investment in equity oil abroad for the next 25 years. For more information see Singh, Bhupendra Kumar. (2010). *India's Energy security: The Changing Dynamics.* Pentagon Energy Press: New Delhi.

is expected to rise from 49bcm in 2006-7 to 125bcm in 2024-5. India is in need of such an energy system that can ensure supply, deal with demand, balance pricing to facilitate sustainable economic growth (Joshi, 2012). Although India is fulfilling its most of energy requirements from the Middle East, but recently the region became more turbulent and impulsive and hence look for new alternative sources of energy acquired much importance.

Many Indian delegations are engaging with Central Asian states over the last couple of years. In this connection the visit of Indian vice president Mohammad Hamid Ansari visited Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan and meeting regarding the gas pipeline held in Islamabad, Pakistan by the officials from Afghanistan, Pakistan, India and Turkmenistan. Energy is the main component of India's foreign policy towards Central Asian republics and that is why India has accorded the status of 'extended strategic neighbourhood' to offer more attention to the region (Foshko, 2012. India has signed a treaty on Principles of Inter State Cooperation with Uzbekistan and a Declaration on Principles and Direction of Cooperation with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan.

India wishes to become a construction sector player in the utilization and distribution of Central Asian energy resources. India is having a sound technology in refinery sector and thus there is scope for modernizing refineries in Central Asian republics (Warikoo, 2012). TAPI gas pipeline project which is scheduled to be completed by the year 2017, would answer the energy deficiency in India to a larger extent but the project is still some distance away. The second option available before India after TAPI is IPI (Iran, Pakistan and India) gas pipeline that will transport Iranian gas from Iran to Pakistan and India (Joshi, 2012). India needs considerable investment in Iran to make International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC)[21] and Chabahar Port in which India has proposed to invest US$100 million and will provide access not only to Iran but Also to Afghanistan and greater Central Asia

[21] A ship, rail and road route from South Asia to Europe through Central Asia, the Caucasus and Russia. This route is primarily meant for transport of goods from India to Iran via ship then across Caspian Sea to Southern Russia and from there to Northern Europe. For more details visit http://defenceforumindia.com/forum/foreign-relations/32567-international-north-south-transport-corridor-instc.html.

(Gupta, 2013). In order to have a better trade relations with the region India needs to speed up the implementation of various policies like Connect Central Asia Policy to boost its current trade volume of US$ 746 million (2012-13) which is meagre as compared to China US$ 46 billion.

Kazakhstan

India recognised Kazakhstan in 1992 after its dissolution from former USSR and diplomatic relations between India and Kazakhstan though remained passive during the period of 1990's, increased significantly in the 21st century. Kazakhstan occupies central position in Eurasia and it is like a bridge between Europe and Asia and enjoys economic relations with Russia, Kyrgyzstan, china, Turkmenistan (Sari, 2011). President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazrbayev visited India in 1992 that was his first visit outside the CIS to any country and thus marked the beginning of bilateral trade and economic cooperation. In a step to boost energy security and rapid economic growth, India joined KazMunaigas[22] to have 25 per cent stake in Satpayev oil reserves and this project will require US$ 9billion of investment. India's (OMEL) that is ONGC Mittal Energy Limited and KazMunaiGaz signed an agreement for the exploration of oil and gas in the Satpayev block in the Caspian Sea (Warikoo, 2012). Both India and Kazakhstan also agreed on the supply of uranium, pharmaceutical and oil refining agreements and if they work well India will be able to have worthwhile energy cooperation with Kazakhstan. At present Kazakhstan supplies India with nuclear fuel from its Uranium deposits and hence India plans to increase the number of its nuclear reactors to generate more and more energy to boost economic growth.

The main items exported to Kazakhstan include coffee, tea, spices, pharmaceuticals, electrical machinery, machinery and mechanical appliances, articles of leather, ceramic products, rubber, and organic chemicals. Among main

[22] Founded in 2002, KazMunaiGaz is the state owned oil and gas company of Kazakhstan. For more details visit http://bakerinstitute.org/media/files/page/9820ee52/noc_kaz_olcott.pdf.

items that are imported from Kazakhstan include zinc and zinc related articles, salt, sulphur, iron and steel, inorganic chemicals, lead, gums, resins and chemical products etc.

India's exports to Kazakhstan increased sharply since 2000-2001 from US$50.08 million to US$286.23 million and its imports also increased during this period from US$ 14.04million to US$139.99million. The total volume of imports and exports between India and Central Asia since 2000-2001 is given in Table 1 and table 2.

Tajikistan

The relationship between India and the republic of Tajikistan developed soon after its dissolution from former USSR as both the nations cooperated on both security and strategic issues. Among all Central Asian republics, Tajikistan occupies central position to India because it is very close to Indian border and also share border with Pakistani controlled Kashmir and Afghanistan. Since India is trying to weaken Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan to make its position strong there and also India's continuing strategic rivalry with both China and Pakistan have made India-Tajikistan relations more important. Tajikistan, therefore achieved vast importance to India and hence it has renovated one overseas military base in the country (Singh, 2005). The Ayni air base renovated by India possesses three big structures and among them two will be used by Indian Air Force and one by Tajik air force. The main aim of Ayni air base is not only to counter Pakistani influence in the region particularly in Afghanistan but also to project power in Central Asia.

The vice president of India Hamid Ansari said that there is a great scope for trade between India and Tajikistan like micro, small and medium industries where Indian expertise can come in handy. He said that India is working on finding an easy

route to enhance the bilateral trade, because lack of proper connectivity remains the main hurdle.[23]

During his visit to India president Emomali Rakhmonov of Tajikistan signed several important pacts on strengthening cooperation in the field of energy, science and technology, foreign office consultation and cultural exchange and India also offered to rehabilitate the Varzob-1 hydropower plant in Tajikistan through Indian companies like BHEL and NHPC. India proclaimed a grant on India Tajikistan Modern Engineering Workshop which was launched on 02 June 2011 at Tajik State Technical University (TTU) in Dushanbe.[24] India also extended a grant of US $ 0.6million to set up a Fruit Processing Plant in Dushanbe for which HMT(Hindustan Machine Tools) and also provided technical support and therefore its products acknowledges the scientific contribution of HMT. Indian government also announced a grant of US$ 600,000 for setting up of an Information Technology Centre and a grant of US$ 2 million to overcome harsh winter conditions and damages caused due to heavy rains, floods in April-May 2009.

Tajikistan is one of the poor countries in the world and thus India has launched ITEC[25]programme of which Tajikistan is a beneficiary and as many as 381 personnel from Tajikistan have been trained under this programme till date. Direct trade between India and Tajikistan is hampered due to lack of land route for the transportation of goods. At present bilateral trade between India and Tajikistan takes place through Bandar Abbas port in Iran via Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Tajikistan chiefly imports meat and meat products, pharmaceuticals, iron and steel and articles of apparel and clothing accessories from India. India mainly imports Organic

[23] India, Tajikistan working on an easy for trade: Hamid Ansari', *The Economic Times* (April 17, 2013). Link http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2013-04-17/news/38616144_1_top-tajik-leadership-cross-border-terrorism-afghan-wakhan-corridor. Accessed on November 7, 2013.
[24] '*India-Tajikistan Relations',* available at http://mea.gov.in/Portal/Foreign Relations/tajikistan-aug.pdf. Accessed on November7, 2013.
[25] ITEC (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme) is a demand driven response programme that focuses on the needs of developing countries through technological cooperation between India and partnering nations. Till date it covers 158 countries across the world and more than US$ 2 billion spent that benefited thousands of students and professionals around the globe. For more details see Chopra V.D. (Ed.) (2006). *India's Foreign Policy in the 21st Century*. Kalpaz Publications: Delhi.

chemicals and essential oil, cotton and aluminum from Tajikistan. MakhmadiTuraev, General Director of trading company Orion-2001 has been appointed as trade representative by Tajikistan to look after trade issues between India and Tajikistan.[26]A detailed trade volume between India and Tajikistan since 2000-2001 till 2012-13 is given in the table 1 & Table 2.

Kyrgyzstan

India had close links with Kyrgyzstan as the country was a part of ancient silk route. Kyrgyz republic was also visited by former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in 1985, however during Soviet Era; India had limited political, economic and cultural contacts with all the five Central Asian republics. But the diplomatic relations with Kyrgyzstan was established only after its independence in 1992. Kyrgyzstan is a country that supports India's stand on Kashmir, India's bid for permanent seat in UNSC and also its role in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).[27] Since the establishment of diplomatic relations with Kyrgyzstan, many agreements on economic cooperation, trade, investment promotion and protection, avoidance of double taxation were signed. Bilateral diplomatic relations were further strengthened by the frequent ministerial visits from both the sides.

In order to boost the trade and investment links between India and Central Asia, the fifth session of India-Kyrgyz Inter-Governmental Commission on trade, economic, scientific and technological collaboration was held in New Delhi on 4th March, 2010. A set of rules was signed for the cooperation and investment in mineral exploration and development, food processing sector, information technology sector, chemical and petrochemical sector, science and technology, healthcare, education,

[26] '*Indo Tajikistan Bilateral Trade',* available at http://www.indianembassy.tj/en/trade/trade.php?id=33. Accessed on November 3, 2013.
[27] '*India-Kyrgyzstan Relations',* available at http://mea.gov.in/Portal/Foreign Relations/kyrgyzstan-aug.pdf. Accessed on November 7, 2013.

sports and culture. India has launched CIS programme[28] of which Kyrgyzstan is one of country to be covered in order to strengthen India's trade with CIS region, is expected to boost trade and investment flows between two countries.[29] There are huge opportunities for Indian investors to invest in mining, energy, food processing, tourism and both the countries can encourage business level contacts including that of exchange of trade information.

On the occasion of 20th anniversary of India-Kyrgyzstan diplomatic relations, a symposium was held at Bishkek where minister of Economy and Antimonopoly policy of Kyrgyzstan Temir Sariyev met Indian Ambassador to the Kyrgyz Republic Phunchok Stobdan. During the symposium the main focus was on enhancing trade and economic relations between the two countries and desire was expressed from both the sides to organize a trade exhibition with the participation of businessmen. At the end of symposium, both the sides agreed to solve visa related problems so that Kyrgyz-Indian relations will continue to grow fruitfully.[30]

With the increase of 16% in bilateral trade, India's exports with the country rose from US$ 17.59 million in 2000-01 to US$ 34.99 million in the year 2012-13. On the other hand country's imports from Kyrgyzstan decreased from US$ 4.43 million in 2000-01 to US$ 2.09 million in 2012-13 (MEA, Govt. of India). A detailed level of India's exports to Turkmenistan is given in the table 1 and India's imports from Kyrgyzstan are shown in the table 2.

[28] CIS Programme was launched by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Govt. of India which became active from March1, 2003. This programme aimed to focus on enhancing trade relations with 12 CIS countries including five Central Asian republics and Russia. For more details visit http://commerce.nic.in/trade/international_tpp_cis_2.asp.

[29] India, Kyrgyzstan to Enhance Trade Ties 3rd Indo-Kyrgyz Joint Commission Meeting Begins', New Delhi. Link http:// commerce nic.in/pressrelease/pressrelease_detail.asp?id=194. Accessed on November 9, 2013.

[30] Symposium held on, '*India is interested in expanding trade and economic ties with kyrgyzstan'*, at Bishkek. \Link http://kabar.kg/eng/economics/full/3335. Accessed on November 5, 2013.

Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan was proclaimed as an independent state on 27 October 1991, in a nation-wide referendum and the name Turkmenistan was adopted. India is mainly interested in Turkmenistan's hydrocarbon reserves as the country is endowed with huge reserves of hydrocarbons. Hydrocarbons mostly gas is the backbone of Turkmenistan's economy because it contains world's fourth largest gas reserves. The possession of abundance of natural resources is imperative for India and to exploit these resources in a useful way, India has taken many practical steps to make TAPI gas pipeline operational by early 2017. This pipeline will act as a nerve to boost Indian economy to address its energy deficits to a larger extent. At present Turkmenistan exports gas only to Russia, but through TAPI, it will have alternative for exporting its energy resources to Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan (Kundu, 2012). In this way Turkmenistan is very important so far as India's energy security is concerned as the country is richest not only in natural gas but also possesses abundance of iodine, potassium and rock salts. The 3rd Meeting of the India-Turkmenistan Inter Governmental Commission (IGC) on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Consular and Cultural cooperation was held in Ashgabat in February 2010. Trade, energy and economic cooperation were the main areas of focus during fourth meeting of India-Turkmenistan Inter Governmental Commission held in New Delhi on 21-22 January, 2013.during the meeting it was also realized that work on TAPI gas pipeline has made remarkable progress and both sides agreed to take necessary steps for early realization of the project.[31]

There is vast scope for cooperation in pharmaceutical sector and in this regard a joint initiative was taken by the ministry of Health and Medical Industry of Turkmenistan and the Ajanta Pharma Ltd. and a pharmaceutical Joint Venture Plant was inaugurated in Turkmenistan. India has made a payment of US$5 million for the project and this plant manufactures 70 different forms of medicines. In order to

[31] 'India, Turkmenistan agree to fast-track TAPI project: Both sides agreed to take necessary steps for early realization of the project, January 2013'. Available at http://www.livemint.com/Politics/JJJheXZvZUUSD5ouYRLvCM /India-Turkmenistan-agree-to-fasttrack-TAPI-project.html. Accessed on November11, 2013.

felicitate profitable relations between India and Turkmenistan, many significant agreements were signed like bilateral investment promotion and protection agreement in 1995, agreement on avoidance of double taxation, trilateral transit agreement among Turkmenistan, Iran and India in 2000. Both the sides recognized the importance of communication for momentous economic cooperation and in the year 2000, MOU was signed that provided Turkmenistan Airlines right to fly to Amritsar (Sarma, 2010). Among the main items that are exported to Turkmenistan from India include electrical machinery, articles of apparel, pharmaceutical products, meat and edible meat offal, rubber, chemical products, organic chemicals. India's imports from Turkmenistan include cotton, inorganic chemicals, mineral oils, wool, animal hair, oil seeds, grains etc.

The total trade volume between India and Turkmenistan improved and bilateral trade and proportion of foreign trade increased by 67% that reached to US$60 million in the year 2011-12.[32] In the year 2011-12, total exports by India to Turkmenistan increased from US$43.95 million to US$69.92million and during the same period India's imports from Turkmenistan decreased from US$16.89 million to US$8.33 million (Ministry of Commerce and Industry, GOI 2013). Table 1 shows India's total exports to Turkmenistan and table 2shows imports by India during 2000-01 to 2012-13.

Uzbekistan

Both India and Uzbekistan enjoy close and friendly relations with each other and grows stronger with the passage of time as both share common views on bilateral, regional and global issues. There has been regular exchange of visits from both the sides like the visit to Uzbekistan by Prime Minister of India; Dr. Manmohan

[32] 'India is gaining a new dimension to relations with Turkmenistan: Turkmenistan is developing its relations with South Asia's rapidly developing state of India', *Haber Monitor*. Available at http://www.habermonitor.com/en/haber/detay/india-is-gaining-a-new-dimension-to-relations/52371/.Accessed on November 11, 2013.

Singh in April 2006, and in December 2011, President of Uzbekistan Mr. Islam Karimov visited India. During these high level visits, many vital agreements were signed relating to the bilateral cooperation.[33] Seventeen Indian pharmaceutical companies were accredited with the Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations Investments and trade of Uzbekistan and 53 firms and companies in Uzbekistan were established with the participation of Indian investment. Being the member of ITEC programme of India, 107 Uzbek students have been trained in the different fields till February 2005. In the field of tourism, Indo-Uzbek cooperation is also growing with Indian tourists in Uzbekistan grew 2.5 times during last couple of years. The bilateral trade relationship is governed by the agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation signed in May 1993, that contains mutual MFN treatment, promotion of economic, industrial, scientific and technical cooperation, avoidance of double taxation (Embassy of Uzbekistan in New Delhi, 2013).

There is need for setting up joint ventures in textile, leather, sericulture, food, pharmaceuticals and machinery. Spintex, an Indian textile company has three mills in Uzbekistan and recently MOU was signed between ONGC Videsh Ltd. and Uzbekneftegaz in gas and oil exploration and its production (Warikoo, 2012). India occupied 15th place so far as the trading partners of Uzbekistan are concerned covering 0.7% of the total trade turnover of the Uzbekistan. India's main exports to Uzbekistan include drugs, pharmaceutical products, paper, wood products, machinery, garments and fabrics, tea, plastic items, chemicals, surgical items and consumer goods. Among the various items being largely imported from Uzbekistan by India includes beans, chemicals and non-ferrous metals (MEA, 2013). India is also close to import uranium and an agreement in this regard is about to finalise. During the last several years, the bilateral trade both imports and exports, though showed fluctuations, but in case of exports from India it increased significantly. Table 1 shows data of India's total exports and table 2 shows data of India's imports from the country since 2000-1 to 2012-13.

[33] 'Uzbekistan-India relations are growing stronger', *The Governmental Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan,* July, 2011. Available at www.gov.uz/en/press/society/1033. Accessed on 12 November, 2013.

Table 1: India's total exports to Central Asian Countries

(Values in $US Million)

Years	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
2000-01	50.08	17.59	3.55	2.71	9.39
2001-02	45.70	10.97	1.22	4.35	6.53
2002-03	46.88	14.67	8.65	10.29	5.08
2003-04	74.81	38.20	4.47	19.21	15.14
2004-05	81.42	49.57	6.59	15.26	21.55
2005-06	90.86	28.09	6.24	18.83	24.44
2006-07	83.18	37.08	7.46	33.99	26.69
2007-08	111.99	31.52	12.40	36.09	40.32
2008-09	131.68	22.92	16.71	41.40	45.53
2009-10	136.54	26.84	15.71	36.15	54.03
2010-11	172.16	25.79	18.31	26.16	60.42
2011-12	244.39	30.55	21.28	43.95	89.39
2012-13	286.23	34.99	35.16	69.92	124.90

Source: Export Import Data Bank, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, Government of India.

Table 2: India's total Import from Central Asia

(Values in $US Million)

Years	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
2000-01	14.04	4.43	0.54	1.12	10.58
2001-02	7.39	0.56	1.34	1.95	17.27
2002-03	12.73	0.47	0.08	5.40	20.54
2003-04	9.26	0.54	3.95	9.34	27.70
2004-05	15.39	0.63	4.09	10.87	31.46
2005-06	26.30	1.47	5.89	12.35	26.13
2006-07	88.30	0.76	7.95	11.95	33.91
2007-08	76.78	0.91	9.81	8.55	16.20
2008-09	159.03	1.03	17.47	12.10	70.74
2009-10	154.91	0.64	16.85	10.00	29.97
2010-11	138.42	1.20	23.02	9.73	20.63
2011-12	166.35	0.67	7.09	16.89	61.58
2012-13	139.99	2.09	12.86	8.33	31.85

Sources: Export Import Data Bank, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, Government of India.

India Central Asia Strategic Cooperation

India and central Asia are not only cooperating with each other in the economic and political matters but the collaboration in security field is also gaining momentum with the passage of time. The strengthened Indian presence in the area is driven by New Delhi's desire not only to protect its emerging investments in Central Asia, but also its interests in Afghanistan after NATO withdraws in 2014. India provides training facilities to the military personnel from various countries of the region. Drug trafficking, small arms proliferation, religious extremism, terrorism and the deteriorated situation in Afghanistan are among some major security challenges

that both the regions face. Indian Army chief Gen. V.K. Singh's recent visit to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan signals the maturing of India's ties with the two largest Central Asian republics. Deeper strategic cooperation with Astana and Tashkent will not only help New Delhi to secure its economic engagement, but also to increase its own geopolitical space more broadly.

In the year 2002, India entered into a defense agreement with Tajikistan under which it agreed to renovate the dilapidated air base. India spent around US$70 million for renovation that included building new hangars, repairing and extending the runway, construction of an air traffic control tower and the base's perimeter fencing. India already has over 100 military personnel stationed at the Ayni airbase in Tajikistan. India has also quietly airlifted a military hospital, with doctors, paramedics and equipment, to Tajikistan as a part of the deepening "strategic partnership" with the energy-rich central Asia. The presence of Ayni air base can trigger in China and Pakistan but was opposed by Moscow in 2007 over India's growing proximity to the Americans. Since US, Russia and China possess significant military presence in Central Asia and obviously they will oppose other country's military presence in the region.[34] However, Indian Air Force in collaboration with Tajikistan Air Force manages Farkhor Air Base which is very close to Pakistan.

In the context of future strategic cooperation, India is making useful efforts to make a strong military presence in the region. India offered to establish a joint high-altitude military research centre in Bishkek the capital city of Kyrgyzstan. This centre will host 20 Indian soldiers at a time. While based in Bishkek its field station will be in the mountains outside the city. Therefore, the relationship with Kyrgyzstan is based on defence industrial cooperation, with plans mooted for India to take over the Dastan plant, which produces rocket-propelled Shkval torpedoes. India is also in talks

[34] Ramachandran, Sudha. India air base grounded in Tajikistan, Asia times on line, Dec 1, 2010. Available at http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LL0.1Df02.html. Accessed on December 4, 2013.

with Uzbekistan for procuring uranium for growing requirement of fuel for its nuclear plants, expected to increase in number in coming years. For this purpose a delegation of Department of Atomic Energy recently visited the country to discuss the modalities of a possible contract.[35]

The strategic partnership between India and Central Asia will acquire more weight with the possible US led NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan. However, both the regions have discussed about this possible security threat in the series of India-Central Asia Dialogue. During the course of dialogue, the matter was thoroughly discussed by all the participants and an attempt has been made to check such mutual security challenge.

To conclude, India and Central Asia shared geo-cultural affinity and a long tradition of historical contacts that dates back to antiquity. By the time the bilateral relationship strengthened and establishment of Islam in Central Asia and in India lent a new dimension to these ties. The period of Anglo-Russian rivalry in the region restricted the contacts between India and Central Asia. But after India gained independence in 1947, her relations with Central Asian region renewed in the overall spirit of Indo-Soviet relations. India enjoyed an edge over other countries in reaching out to the region. Republics of the Central Asian region are significant to India's objective of attaining strategic depth in its wider neighborhood.

[35] Gorenburg, Dmitry. *External Support for Central Asian Military and Security Forces.* Available at http://www.sipri.org/research/security/afghanistan/central-asia-security/publications/SIPRI-OSFno1WP.pdf. Accessed on November 23, 2013.

Chapter 4

The New Great Game in Central Asia: Challenges Before India

The New Great Game is a term frequently used to describe the concept of modern geopolitics in Central Asia among various major players who try to acquire, influence, hegemony and profits through competition among themselves. Unlike Great Game, that was the political rivalry between British India and Russian Empires during 19th century, the New Great Game is a multiplayer and multidimensional competition in Central Asian region where the people of the region act as both subject and the object (Cooley, 2012). There are three main players of the New Great Game like the US, Russia and China apart from EU, Turkey, Japan and few other regional countries.

Among all the big players of the game, the role of the United States is of vital importance. The US troops have already planned to leave Afghanistan by the year 2014, and thereafter two possible threats will emerge, first Taliban will again take over power and second there will be absence of US leadership (Khawaja, 2003). In the absence of such leadership, the Central Asian countries will undergo Moscow's or Beijing's dictates to join one or other bloc.Russia occupied prominent position among the Central Asian countries prior to the cold war as well as after the fall of USSR in 1991. Most of the routes that connect Central Asia with the outside world pass through Russia and therefore it would like to play most significant role in the region to reduce the role of outside players. Among other main interests that Russia possess in Central Asia include protection of Russian communities in the region, preservation of traditional influence, preventing security threats from rising Islamic Fundamentalism, stop drugs inflow to Russia from the Southern side etc. China is mainly interested in oil and gas in the region and therefore gas pipelines from the region figure top priority in its foreign policy objectives towards the region (Sarma, 2010). Apart from energy, railways, transportation, health care, construction and trading constitute some other areas where China is keenly interested in the region. Central Asia is also a critical partner for stabilizing and developing the restive Xinjiang province of China.

Turkey and Central Asian countries are close neighbours and therefore, there are cordial relations between two. After the collapse of former USSR, Turkey concluded a number of political, economic and military agreements with the Caucasian and Central Asian states. Iran is also keen to play greater role in the energy rich Central Asia as its own oil resources are becoming depleted. On account of its extensive political isolation, Tehran has become increasingly active to amplify economic and political contact with the Central Asian region. EU and other western and developed countries are also making their presence in the region through humanitarian and technical assistance (Forsythe, 1996). The European Union expressed its interest in Central Asia only after the region's energy resources captured the attention of the world, leading to increasing engagement in the exploitation of oil and gas deposits.

Although India had vibrant trade and other relations with the region through ancient Silk Route days, but today its economic presence in the region is far below the potential. There are many reasons as to why Indian influence in Central Asia decreased. However, the main reason is obviously the presence of major powers in the region (Sarma, 2010). Apart from New Great Game, India faces many other challenges like lack of proper route link, cross border terrorism, drug trafficking, Muslim extremism, Pakistan's influence. US led NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan will be major worries to India. Stability in Afghanistan is crucial for India, as the situation in Afghanistan have spill over effect and hence unstable government in Kabul could create serious problems for both India and Central Asia.

1. The Great Game

Arthur Conolly (1807–1842), an intelligence officer of the British East India Company's Sixth Bengal Light Cavalry was the first who used the term "The Great Game"(Hopkirk, 1992). This term was introduced and popularised in the mainstream consciousness by British novelist Rudyard Kipling in his novel Kim (1901). Central Asia had been remained the pivotal of international relations history. Even during the

period of colonialism, strategic rivalry for the possession of the Central Asia, has been remained the most important underpinning in the Asian history. Here, the Great Game refers to the strong strategic rivalry and conflict between the British Empire and the Russian Empire for supremacy in Central Asia covering the period running approximately from the Russo-Persian Treaty of 1813 to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. A less intensive phase of strategic rivalry was followed after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 (Morgan, 1973). In order to reenergize their economies which have met with shocks on account of World War I, these strategic rivalries became more intense among the colonial powers in general and USA and USSR in particular. Even, throughout the Cold War period, this term has been continued in use since its inception to describe the geopolitical machinations of the Great Powers and regional powers as they compete for geopolitical power and influence in the Central Asia.

Throughout the colonial history, almost all the colonial powers have been remained fighting each other for respective empire's expansion. In the perspective of Great Game, Britishers were worried about the Russian Empire expansion and the threat to lose "jewel in the crown" India. Central Asia had become battle field for the Great Game on account of respective side as both were moving to control each other's respective colonies. Tsarist Russia, meanwhile, sought to expand its territory and sphere of influence, in order to create one of history's largest land-based empires. With apprehensions in mind from the Russian side, the British had launched the First Anglo-Afghan War in 1838 and attempted to impose a puppet regime in Afghanistan under Shah Shujah Durrani. But due to pressure from Russia and other dynamics, the Indian British government curbed their ambitions in Afghanistan following humiliating retreat from Kabul (Penzev, 2010). The Indian rebellion of 1857 had increased many strategic and economic problems to British government and in this way they had to recognize Afghanistan as a buffer state between Russia and Indian British government.

2. Centrality of Central Asia: Geostrategic, Geopolitical and Geo-economic Perspective

Central Asia holds very significant location in the Asian continent and because of its central location; it has access to trade routes to all the parts of the world. The region has remained continuously vulnerable to attacks from all divisions throughout its recorded history. Central Asia holds geostrategic, geopolitical and geo-economic importance because of possession of large quantities of mineral resources.

Geo-strategist and former United States National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski, has analysed the geostrategic importance of Central Asia in his book entitled: The Grand Chessboard, terming the post-Soviet Region as the "Black Hole" and the post-Soviet Central Asia (the Caucasus, former Soviet Socialist Republics, and Afghanistan) in particular the "Eurasian Balkans". In the beginning of the 20th century, Sir Hartford Mackinder postulated his "Heartland Theory". This theory has dwelt upon the geopolitical importance of the Eurasian heartland. Mackinder holds the view that the distribution of power on the Eurasian continent would prove panacea for America's global primacy as well as America's historical legacy. According to Mackinder, Uzbekistan has been the linchpin of Central Asia and its independence being critical to the survival of other Central Asian states (Dhaka, 2005). Along with the geostrategic importance, Central Asia holds geo-economic importance not for only regional powers but other major external powers such as USA, Russia, China and European Union. This geo-economic salience of Central Asia has been underscored by two main factors, the discovery of hydrocarbon reserves and a major transportation hub for gas and oil pipelines and multi-modal communication corridors connecting China, Russia, Europe, the Caucasus region, the Trans-Caspian region and the Indian Ocean.

After the withdrawal of USSR from Afghanistan and following the independence of Central Asian countries, the geo-strategic importance of Afghanistan to Central Asia and India enhanced. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan share borders with Afghanistan, Iran lies to its West and Pakistan to the East and South (Tadjbakhsh, 2012). Afghanistan, which links Central Asia and South Asia, is a

strategic bridge of great geopolitical significance. Central Asia and South Asia are intimately connected not only geographically but also strategically.

3. Major Challenges to India in CARs

India expresses its desire to obtain economic advantages and therefore put more weight to the Central Asian region in its foreign policy objectives. The region is also important because of its proximity to Afghanistan where India is actively engaged in various rehabilitation missions. It is clear indication that energy rich Central Asia will be an area of increasing power rivalry in future and hence India also desires to be one of the main candidates of the New Great Game in the region. [36]At the same time India faces a number of challenges in its way to get involved in to the region. A brief analysis of various challenges that India faces or can face in future during its engagement with the Central Asian republics (CARs) is discussed below.

3.1 New Great Game

During late 1980s, USSR introduced many economic and political reforms and on account this, there was very strong upheaval started in the country. Spontaneously, break up of USSR took place and as a result, the Cold War came to an end in 1991. With the breakup of USSR, geopolitically important new region, Central Asia emerged on the international scene. Endowed with rich mineral resources, the region became battle field for strategic rivalry among external powers. In this scenario, the New Great Game became a conceptualization of modern geopolitics in Central Eurasia as a competition among the external powers, USA, Russia, the People's Republic of China for influence, power, hegemony and profits in Central Asia and the Transcaucasus (Kavalski, 2010). In view of its geostrategic and

[36] 'India and the future global order', November 2009. Available at http://www.regjeringen.no/upload/FD/Dokumenter/India-studie_ssek_301109.pdf. Accessed on November 22, 2013.

geo-economic significance, many scholars and analysts are viewing that the New Great Game is hovering around regional energy politics.

The world powers started taking more notice of Central Asia only after 1990s that is after the end of bipolarity. Some factors like its geostrategic location, rich energy and natural resources, bridge between the Europe and Asia and its crucial role in maintaining peace and stability in the region attracted many external major powers in the region. The diverse strategic Interests of various external powers in the region include:-

United States

The United States of America took serious note of Central Asia after it declared war on terror and got itself involved in Afghanistan. Afghanistan became the focal point in US policy towards Central Asia as Taliban hosted Al-Qaeda, the main culprit of 9/11 episode. In spite of major objective to curb the spreading of terrorist activities in the Central Asian region, American oil companies also joined multinational oil consortium emerging around Caspian basin.[37] The geo-strategic location of Central Asia is also important to US because of its proximity to Russia, China, Iran, India, and Pakistan.

By recognizing the importance of Russia in the region, the US is also eager in promoting regional integration and maintaining good relations with Russia as both the countries have some common geopolitical interests. Jeffrey Mankoff, Deputy Director and fellow with Center for Strategic and International studies (CSIS), focuses on ways in which Russia and US can cooperate in Central Asia and without Russia, US cannot accomplish anything in the region. But on the other hand in some areas both the countries have some conflicting geopolitical interests (Blank, 2007). It is also widely debated that after US withdrawal from Afghanistan, there is hardly any interest left for US in Central Asia and if there is any interest left that is yet to be spotted by

[37] Menon, Rajan. '*The New Great Game in Central Asia*'. Available at www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/00396338. Accessed on December 10, 2013.

Washington. Apart from this it is also fact that US has many other goals to achieve like to neutralize anti US attitude of Iran, Islamic fundamentalism and brutal nationalism (Kucera, 2013). To achieve its longstanding military objectives in Central Asia, US maintain many air bases like Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan, Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan. Both China and Russia possess common goal that is energy and their growing influence in the region is also worry to US and also one best reason to stay in competition with them in the region.

China

China made dominance in the region through SCO and with the signing of China-Russia Friendship Treaty in 2001. Like Russia, China also share borders with the five Central Asian Republics and after the disintegration of Soviet Union, the role of China in the region has been amplified. Apart from energy motive, China's close interaction with Central Asia is also based on its own problems in autonomous Xingjian province that lies on the border with CARs. China is also in a mood of reviving Silk Route trade to establish wide-ranging energy cooperation with the energy rich region of Central Asia (Dwivedi, 2006). China has made fabulous progress in maintaining trade and economic links with almost all Central Asian countries and it is evident from the fact that many gas pipelines operate from the region towards China.

Afghanistan problem has also become one of the reasons for China to get itself involved in the region to fight terrorism and also to protect itself against these threats (Forsythe, 1996). In fact China has joined New Great Game, already in progress in Central Asia in order to stabilise and develop the restive Xinjiang province, to enjoy cordial relations with Russia, development of transportation corridors to felicitate the flow of bilateral trade and to limit the role of extra regional

powers in the region.[38] The total volume of bilateral trade between China and Central Asia climbed to US$ 46 billion in the year 2012. China being one of the largest economies of the world and thereby its energy requirements are mounting. As per one estimate the Caspian region comprise world's 8 percent energy reserves and that is why China eyes more on energy rich Central Asian region. China is well aware about the importance of energy in 21st century and whosoever will control Central Asia will dominate 21st century global energy market. In fact China anticipates becoming a global power and hence try to achieve as much economic benefits as possible from the region but at the same time considers the involvement of US, Japan, Europe as major challenges to achieve its desired economic goals (Yong, 2012). In short China's strategy towards Central Asia remains to seek influence and to maintain political stability through mutual cooperation in developing the economic welfare of the region and in turn CARs are also eager to cooperate with China on the principle of mutual interests. Apart from better trade relations, China maintains fruitful political relations with the region as there are no border disputes among them.

Russia

Russia is more close to Central Asian republics than other players as all of them were part of former USSR. In turn, Central Asian countries are also closely linked with Russia as it provided military, technical, and economic support to them. Many factors have forced Russia to make its presence significant in the region in order to play a decisive role to counter the influence of other big players active in the region. Russia has its own concerns like to prevent the rise of ethnic conflicts in the region that can spill over to Russia as well, fear of growing influence of Iran, Turkey and Pakistan, presence of western investors, millions of Russians in Central Asia and millions of Central Asian workers in Russia. Russia is one of most prominent external

[38] Linn, Johannes F. '*China's and Russia's Interests in Central Asia: Connecting the Dots in Kazakhstan',* available at http://www.brookings.edu/research/opinions/2013/09/17-china-russia-interests-kazakhstan-linn. Accessed on December 12, 2013.

powers in Central Asia as it possesses wide range of investment projects in these countries (Forsythe, 1996). Russia aims that Caspian oil should be exported only through Russian domestic pipelines and became successful to make entry in almost every energy deal with little or no cash investment on their own part. The dominance of China and US in the region is being examined cautiously by Moscow, but on the other hand Central Asian Republics are also not in favor to be dominated by only one but to keep options open with all of them.

CARs lack well established military and therefore they are prone to any aggression and hence Russia-Central Asia military cooperation has become a necessity. To achieve its strategic objective in Central Asia, Russia is developing military cooperation with the region. However after the collapse of Soviet Union, Russia's approach to strengthen military cooperation with the region to achieve its national interests, became sluggish and twisted (Morques, 2005).The role of external powers in the region also weakens the Russian defense mechanism in the region. Russia is also facing major challenges to its territorial security from various sides emanating mainly from Central Asia. Many security challenges to Russia include deteriorating political situation on the southern borders of the CIS, notably in Afghanistan; a rapid growth in activity by Islamist organizations stirred up from Afghanistan, and including armed incursions in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan; and the strengthening position in the region of foreign powers, especially the USA and NATO countries (Paramonov and Stolpovski, 2008). The present context of bilateral military cooperation which is more specific and practical and based on mutual trust, avoids international arguments and aspirations that come to fore in more multilateral contexts.

4. Role and Interests of Regional Players in CARs

Central Asia share many commonalities with its immediate neighbours. Geo-culture, ethnic, religious many other commonalities bounded these regions. In a wider view, Central Asia comprised of many ethnic groups such as the Uzbek, Kazak, Tajik, Turkmen, and Kyrgyz, Mongolia, Turkic, Indo-Iranian, and Mongolic. At the same time many countries such as Turkey, Iran and Pakistan are sharing commonalities such as

religiosity, linguistic etc. On account of these commonalities, these regional players have geopolitical and geostrategic interests in Central Asia.

Turkey

Turkey is the first country that recognised the independence of the Central Asian countries. Despite for a brief Soviet period, Turkey had strong ties to the Caspian region particularly to Turkic ethnic groups there. After the collapse of Soviet Union, Turkey get an opportunity to renew historical ties with its ethnic groups in Caucasus and Central Asia. Ankara has made significant efforts in forming sound relations with many of Central Asian countries including neighbouring one Uzbekistan. After 1991, Turkey has concluded a number of political, military, economic and commercial agreements with Central Asian states. Ankara has also expressed its interest to build a pipeline to carry Caspian oil out through Turkey but any such pipeline has to pass through politically unstable states like Armenia or Georgia (Forsythe, 1996). Central Asian countries expected Turkey to play a role of big brother soon after the independence of these states. But like Iran, Turkey had not managed to achieve a position of major player in Central Asia during 1990s, but though late, managed to find a significant position in the region (Cornell, 2003). The basic motive of Turkey's policy towards Central Asia is military establishment and immediately after 9/11 episode, Turkey actively participated in International Security Force in Afghanistan (ISAF). Turkey has already established military relations with Uzbekistan and launched anti terrorism training programmes in this country.

Turkey has also established strong economic relations with the Central Asian Republics and significant progress has been achieved in the fields of trade, transportation and communication. Turkey is also one of leading loan and aid provider to these countries. Recently the trade volume between Turkey and CARs has increased many folds.[39] Turkey has achieved its various foreign policy goals towards

[39] Turkey's Relations with Central Asian Republics', Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Republic of Turkey. Available at http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-relations-with-central-asian-republics.en.mfa. Accessed on December 21, 2013.

the region. Being the close neighbour of Central Asian Republics, Turkey is vigilant about the happenings in the region. In short through extensive aid, technical assistance, trade, political and economic relations, Turkey is now one of the main players in Central Asia. Turkey has also strong backing from the US, NATO and Israel that encourage Turkey to play a greater role in the region.

Iran

Like other regional players, Iran has also historical ties with the Central Asian region as 16 million ethnic Azeris live in Iran. Like Turkey, Iran also has been slow to take the advantages offered by the disintegration of the Soviet Union. The main policy goals of Iran towards the region include political, economic and commercial relations, spread of religious ideology, acquisition of nuclear expertise and materials. Iran's religious leaders and business community have visited all the countries of the region and thereby increased contacts with the people and governments of these countries. Iran desires to play a leading role in Central Asia to have an easy access to energy resources in the region as its own oil reserves are getting depleted. Although Iran has not provided any kind of significant aid to Central Asian countries, rather focussed on economic contacts and joint ventures in the field of oil and gas. Both Iran and Central Asian republics are enthusiastic about the revival of Silk Route to have transportation links through Iran to the Persian Gulf (Forsythe, 1996). Iran and Turkmenistan have signed a number of agreements for the cooperation in oil and gas including large scale gas pipeline proposals. Iran has also close ties with Uzbekistan but they have undergone many fluctuations. Iran became successful to have economic and commercial cooperation with Turkey, Russia, and some other western European countries involved in the Caspian region.

The operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan benefited Iran as it removed anti Iran or anti Shia regime in Afghanistan. At the same time Iran is worried about the presence of America at its doorstep as there is possibility of a military action by the US against Iran because of Iran's nuclear programme. Iran is also in competition with Russia in the region over the export issues both short term and long term. No doubt Iran is now one of the leading regional players in Central Asia enjoying cordial

political, economic and commercial relations (Rashid, 2002). At the same time the US has pressurise other countries to punish Iran for its harsh behaviour of not stopping its ongoing nuclear programme. Iran is major supplier of arms and ammunition to the anti Taliban alliance and Tehran's willingness to stand up to the Taliban has won it greater appreciation in Central Asian Capitals as well.

Pakistan

Pakistan established bilateral relationship with the Central Asian states in the early 1990s, took the advantage of the fact that it is the only Sunni neighbouring country to share Sunni faith with CARs. Pakistan portrayed itself as a natural trade route for Central Asian states and practical efforts were made by the second government of Benazir Bhutto in the early 1990s to translate this policy into practice to identify the most suitable trade routes. Pakistan also provides a link between SCO countries and Eurasian heartland with the Arabian Sea and South Asia (Cornell, 2003). The fall of former USSR and the civil war in Afghanistan resulted in the lawlessness situation in Afghanistan and made it unsuitable route for trade. On the other hand, the continuous war in Afghanistan deteriorated the situation in the region and thus created problems for Pakistan to maintain productive relations with the Central Asian region.

Pakistan's policy towards Central Asia is also driven by Islamabad's fears of Indian hegemony in both South and Central Asia. Zia ul Haq, the former Pakistani president was in favour to grant greater significance to Afghanistan and also to have a strategic depth in Central Asia. Following this strategy the Pakistani civilian governments tried to follow more positive policies and to build economic ties with Central Asia. Pakistan has made significant progress in building of the deep-water port at Gwadar in Baluchistan, which is now to be linked with Pakistan's rail and road network as well as with Afghanistan and Central Asia. This port has potential to boost trade in raw materials and other manufactured goods from Central Asia to other leading economies. A number of bilateral agreements were marked by the frequent visits of higher officials from both the sides. Pakistan provides training facilities

including courses from English language, banking and accountancy to diplomacy to CARs. In fact Pakistan has improved relationship with almost all the countries of Central Asia by making use of cultural links with the region.[40] Pakistan is also member of many regional organizations like Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC), the main purpose of which is to promote development through cooperation that will accelerate growth and reduce poverty.

Pakistan sought to enhance its involvement in Central Asia in order to fulfill its energy and trade requirements and for that purpose it can also use religious affinity with the Central Asian countries to solidify its involvement there. The policy makers of Pakistan are now formulating a comprehensive policy *vis-à-vis* the Central Asian republics in order to turn challenges into its favors. China is supporting Pakistan in all respects in the region because of US military presence, viewed by China as an attempt to encircle it. Therefore Pakistan is getting full support from China and to some extent from Russia to play a leading role in energy rich Central Asia.

Implications for India

The involvement of the external powers in Central Asia particularly after the fall of former Soviet Union has left indelible imprints on Indian interests in various fields. India faces bidding by major powers in Central Asia and is therefore in a weaker position in comparison to other big players in the region. Being economically very strong, the major powers in Central Asia are making huge investments in the region and as a result of this, the region has become a chessboard for such major powers and this fighting among major powers in the region produces immense strategic challenges for India (Roy, 2005). The 9/11 episode and the US war on terror benefitted Central Asian countries as they reaped maximum benefits by cooperating with US. The big powers control maximum trade and market in Central Asia and therefore leave little space for India to set up its footsteps there. Because of security concerns, New Delhi has chosen the path of going alone in Central Asia and

[40] Roy Meena Singh, '*Pakistan's Strategies in Central Asia'*, available at http://www.idsa.in/strategicanalysis/PakistansStrategiesinCentralAsia_msroy_1006. Accessed on December 23, 2013.

Afghanistan in securing its interests. Central Asian republics also want India's cooperation in the fields of education, health, technology trade and industrial joint ventures, but lack of transportation and involvement of major powers is the main hurdle. South Asian countries suffer energy security problem and the growing relations between CARs and world powers add further fuel to their problems. The future of SCO will definitely have implications for India's policy as China has been trying to replicate its Pakistan and Myanmar policies with regard to Central Asia (Stobdon, 2008). Both China and Pakistan design to encircle India with a pan Islamic arc by promoting fundamentalist groups and China's Xinjiang has the potential to become an area where Islamic forces will try to pin India down. Pakistan-China cooperation in the region can affect India's interests in Central Asia to a larger extent.

Russia has been longstanding ally to India and its presence in the region could benefit India but India is not in a mood to depend on Russia to advance its Central Asian interests. Recently Moscow has also opposed India's air base at Ayni in Tajikistan and made it clear that it will oppose any foreign bases regardless of which they belonged to. The US has made its presence strong in the region in the name of 'war on terror' and its involvement in Afghanistan is a great challenge before India. The proximity of Central Asia to the Afghan border has raised the possibility of spill over of extremist activity in the region and because of this, the various terrorist activities took place and still taking place mainly in Indian administered Kashmir and other parts of India. The presence of US military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan is not only challenge to India but to Russia and China and both have pressured US to remove its forces from Central Asia. Central Asia is gaining global attention and hence after the end of cold war, the involvement of global players increased and thereby creating problems for regional players like India.

Apart from the greater role and influence made by big three (Russia, China and the US) in Central Asia, recently the role of some other players like EU, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan has also developed. Among the regional players, India was expected by the CARs to play a decisive role in the region, but due to India's policy failures it failed to stand in the same line with other major powers in the region. So far as the challenges to India from the involvement of regional powers is concerned, the first

and foremost concern to India is from Pakistan-China nexus and with both of them India is having border problems. Both the countries want to limit the role of India in Central Asia and in Afghanistan. The TAPI pipeline project has doubtful economic feasibility as India is reluctant to have Pakistan as a transit country for its energy resources from Central Asia (Warikoo, 2012). The experience shows that Pakistan has not granted India any transit access to send even humanitarian assistance in the form of food grains to Afghanistan. In the similar manner Pakistan has been consistent in its policy of blocking the overland Central-Asia-Afghanistan-Pakistan corridor to India for import of energy resources and export of Indian goods. Pakistan posed a grave challenge to India through its multipurpose Gwadar Port that will connect Pakistan not only with China's Xinjiang province but also will provide Pakistan an easy access to Central Asia.

Turkey is making huge investments in the region and is one of the rising powers in Central Asia. No doubt, India is the third largest economy in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) in the world but is the late player of new chessboard in Central Asia and therefore far behind Turkey in the region. Turkey has invested several billion dollars on education, telecommunication and transportation sectors in the region and thereby compels regional players like India to move in the same line. India's relations with Turkey blistered at certain times due to its close relationship with Pakistan.

The presence of regional players like Turkey, Iran and Pakistan will surely affect the supply of oil and gas to India. India is not sharing border with the energy rich Central Asian region while as Iran and Pakistan share border with it and therefore possesses an advantage of direct surface link with the region. India and Iran have friendly relations in many areas but became slightly weak after Delhi Police found evidence that members of Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps had been involved in the February 13 bomb attack in the capital. Iran provides challenges to India in Central Asia through obtaining pipelines, accords and through promotion of Muslim Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) (Dhaka, 2005). India is also not in a position to maintain traditional friendly relations with Iran because it will have severe consequences on the growing Indo-US strategic cooperation. The involvement of regional players in Central Asia is seen as major challenge by India and becomes one

of the major resistances for India to maintain traditional political, cultural and economic ties with the region. European Union is also making powerful entry in Central Asia and in future can create problems for Indian engagement there because EU possesses strong economic and political power.

Turkey, Iran and Pakistan have already made significant position in economic, political and commercial sphere in the Central Asia, thereby creating challenges before India to have similar kind of engagement in the region. In short, India became conscious about the importance of CARs after a long gap of two decades. Hence the New Great Game as well as regional power's involvement in the region has presented a variety of challenges before India, like to set up political and economic ties and to have an uninterrupted access to energy resources of these countries. A new Indian strategy towards Central Asia should conceive of the region beyond Pakistan and China, and develop a policy of building inroads of cooperation with the middle-tier players, especially with Turkey and Iran (Ozkan, 2012). India's cooperation with Russia and the US in Central Asia is beneficial, but it is unlikely to secure the foreign policy posture India desires. In fact India is knocking at Central Asia's door, wants to get its portion of energy and mineral resources, invest in the regional countries and establish trade routes by passing Pakistani territory.

5. NATO Withdrawal: A New Challenge to India-Central Asian Relations

On 11 September 2001, the United States of America witnessed a series of coordinated attacks when hijackers crashed two airlines into the twin towers of World Trade Center, third airline into the Pentagon and the fourth one crashed in to a field. According to New York State Health Department, nearly 3,000 people, 19 hijackers, 836 responders including police personnel and fire fighters, have died as of June 2009. The al-Qaeda movement led by Osama Bin Laden, based in Afghanistan was held responsible for 9/11 attack in USA. Immediately after attack, the United States of America led a military campaign in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom) without caring about non authorization by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). The US provided legitimacy to the act on the ground that military action

against al-Qaeda in Afghanistan was an act of collective self defense provided under article 51 of the United Nations Charter (Awasthy, 2012). On 20th December 2001, the UNSC authorized the creation of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) with the main purpose to train the Afghan National Security Forces and also to rebuild key government institutions. However command of the ISAF passed to NATO on August 11, 2003.

After a period of about 10 years the major goal of the US to kill Osama bin Laden come to an end. The 'Operation Neptune Spear[41] conducted by the CIA and the US navy SEALs in Abbottabad, Pakistan on 1st May 2011, resulted in the death of the most wanted Bin Laden. In the same year on 22nd June, president Obama addressed the nation and informed about the shift wise withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. Along with USA, all the members of NATO agreed to quit Afghanistan completely by 2014.

It is noteworthy to mention here that the last ten years of US led NATO military intervention in Afghanistan has provided vital space for India to extend its political and economic influence in the country. One of the prime objectives of India in Afghanistan is to counter the influence of Pakistan to get strategic depth in the country. India became successful to perform various rehabilitation projects in the country without having direct military presence in the country (Khan, 2011). Indian priorities in Afghanistan include to watch, balance and to protect its various strategic interests. India is too much worried about the rise of religious extremism and therefore its policy towards Afghanistan is based on containing Islamist extremism. India is the fifth largest donor to Afghanistan in terms of assistance given for the various purposes like building of dams, colleges, schools, roads and hospitals etc. India is also very keen to train soldiers of the Afghan National Army and also giving scholarships to thousands of Afghan students every year. The New building of Afghanistan parliament is being built by India and there are more than 3000 Indian workers working in Afghanistan. The President of Afghanistan Mr. Hamid Karzai during his recent visit to India focused

[41] Operation Neptune Spear is a code name for killing Osama bin Laden. This operation was carried out by CIA, US Navy SEALs, US Army Special Operation Command's 160th Special Operation Aviation Regiment (Airborne), on Bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan. For full details visit "*Death of Osama bin Laden*", available at http://www.charlesayoub.com/life-style/index.php/more/1/8850.

on cooperation at a critical time when NATO forces are leaving the country.[42] In fact India's involvement in Afghanistan is primarily based on two factors, that is, to check the dominance of Pakistan in the region and also to get trouble-free access to energy rich Central Asia.

India will face a number of challenges after the US led NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan by 2014. The first and the foremost challenge will be the re-emergence of Taliban as they always articulated anti India stance. Pakistan is providing full support to this group and could provide strategic depth to Pakistan in Afghanistan and can check New Delhi's influence in Kabul. If Taliban will share power in Kabul it will encourage not only Pakistan but also extremists in Xinjiang in China, Kashmir and all over South Asia (Pant, 2012). One of the top ranked Indian army official also revealed that the American withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014 will definitely influence the security situation in Indian Kashmir.

The crisis in Afghanistan is the single most important external factor for the growing instability in Central Asia. Afghanistan is linked very close to Central Asia both ethnically and historically. Taliban has close links with Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and Hizb ul Tahrir; both are extremist groups in Central Asia. Taliban can make use of these extremist groups to have full grip over the region and thus can pose a security challenge to India. Therefore there is possibility of spill over of terrorist activities from Afghanistan to Central Asia as the region has bent to become the bases of terrorists, fundamentalist and separatist elements. The various energy pipelines operating through the region will become the prime target of these terrorist groups (Sikri, 2007). Similarly the TAPI pipeline that is proposed to be operational by the year 2017 can also get the question mark. India seeks to have a firm foothold and significant influence in Central Asia along with other great powers so that this strategically located region does not become an area dominated by anti Indian elements. But the US led NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan can make the region not appropriate where India can show its dominance.

[42] 'India's Stakes in Afghanistan Post Withdrawal of NATO Forces: India Braces for the Challenges after the U.S. Pull-out from Afghanistan', Indian Military Review (IMR), available at http://www.prlog.org/12161785-indias-stakes-in-afghanistan-post-withdrawal-of-nato-forces.html. Accessed on December 19, 2013.

From Indian stand point, the NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan will be untimely. India is yet to make its footprints strong in Central Asia as these countries were hopeful of India to play a prominent role but India failed to convert traditional goodwill into contemporary influence. Undoubtedly NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014 will put not only negative impact on Indian security rather it will deter India's policy approach towards Central Asia. Hence NATO withdrawal will be a major obstacle for India to be in motion with the external major powers and also with regional players in the region.

Thus to conclude, India's growing demand for energy can be addressed by the energy rich Central Asia but geography, geopolitics and security in India's neighbourhood are challenges that India has to overcome. The New Great Game and NATO withdrawal are the main challenges that India has to keep in mind while entering in energy rich region. Apart from these grave challenges, regional players also test the potential of India to come more close to CARs. To be sure, India has strong potential to overcome various challenges that appear in the way of acquiring its various interests in the region like economic, political, cultural, commercial etc. to make its presence felt in the region.

Chapter- 5

India's Interests in Central Asia: Strategy and Options

The discovery of large reserves of hydrocarbons and other resources in the region compel not only India, rather many other major powers across the world to compete for capturing energy in this region. Central Asia figures the practical basis of Sir Hartford Mackinder's "Heartland Theory",[43] highlights the strategic importance of the region. The main purpose behind the involvement of major powers in the region is to have power over the production of oil and gas and also to have control over the gas pipelines originating from the region.[44] Besides their economic motive, they also want to convert the region into their military bases. As a consequence, India's engagement and foreign policy objectives in the region affected to a larger extent.

So far as the geopolitical and geo-economic interests are concerned India lags behind the great powers in the region and therefore India require to maintain profound strategic, economic and security cooperation in Central Asia. Although India remained puzzled and uncertain with regard to this region for some time but recent developments in its neighbourhood as well as in the global politics forced India to make its priorities and policies obvious in Central Asia. In recent times India has made fruitful efforts to develop relations like economic cooperation, trade and investment, energy cooperation with Central Asian republics (CARs) (Usha, 2012). In fact it is obvious that energy supplies are the crucial component of larger number of activities between India and greater Central Asia. In future, the Central Asia being a part of India's "extended strategic neighbourhood" is expected to gain more attention in its foreign policy.[45] India has redesigned and reoriented its foreign policy vis-*a-vis*

[43] The theory about global powers and continents was devised by British geographer, Mackinder in 1904. As per the theory, land based power, not a sea power, would ultimately rule the world. For more details see '*The Heartland Theory and the Present-Day Geopolitical Structure of Central Eurasia',* available at http://www.silkroadstudies.org/new/docs/publications/1006Rethinking-4.pdf. Accessed on October 4, 2013.

[44] Arvanitopoulos, Constantine.'*The Geopolitics of Oil in Central Asia'*. A Journal of Foreign Policy Issues. Link http://www.hri.org/MFA/thesis/winter98/geopolitics.html. Accessed on November 3, 2013.

[45] 'Engaging with Central Asia: India's Engagement with Central Asia is going beyond the need of oil and gas', *Economic and political weekly.* Available at http://www.epw.in/editorials/engaging-central-asiahtml?ip_login_no_cache=08d36a06328bd517d211ce93eb9ed3e. Accessed on October14, 2013.

Central Asia in order to re-energise its historical and civilizational relations. The main focus of this chapter is to find out what are the Indian interests in the region and what are the implications out of presence of the external powers in the regions. Also its will analyse the Indian options and strategy to cope with the challenges.

India's interests in Central Asia

India and Central Asia have been sharing common civizational relations since antiquity. With the onset of the Old Great Game, bilateral relationship between both the regions became enervated. But with the end of the Cold War and the demise of Soviet Union, some internal and external dynamics brought both the region closer to each other on account of some mutual interests. At the same time, Central Asia because of its strategic location and having mineral wealth, many external powers as well as some other regional powers have divergence of interests in central Asia. Various studies about the estimates of total energy reserves in the region suggest different opinions. According to well known scholar of the Heritage Foundation, Ariel Cohen, Kazakhstan has possible deposits of 170.5 billion barrels of oil and 15.3 trillion cubic metres of natural gas. However Wood Mackenzie a Scottish firm provide different figures of 26.01 and 56.64 billion barrels of oil and natural gas respectively (Joshi, 2012). The Kashagan offshore oil field discovered in the year 2002 is referred to as an 'elephant' is one of the largest oil field in Asian continent. Turkmenistan being the fifth largest depository of natural gas in the world is estimated to hold 1.5 billion barrels of proved and 8.9 trillion cubic meters of both proven and possible oil resources. The Caspian Sea is rich in energy resources but its legal status is yet to be fixed and therefore extraction of energy resources has become difficult.

Uzbekistan own 230 known oil and gas fields and the country has a potential of 3.1trillion cubic metres of oil from proven and possible resources. Though Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have minimal deposits of oil and natural gas resources but both the countries are endowed with perennial rivers Syr Darya and Amu Darya and thus

possess hydro power potential. Kyrgyzstan has a capacity to generate huge amount of hydroelectricity sufficient to meet the domestic needs as well as to export to neighbouring countries through high transmission lines (Forsythe, 1996). No doubt Tajikistan has also huge potential to generate hydroelectric power but due to controversy with neighbouring Uzbekistan, many projects are in queue to be finalised

Apart from oil and natural gas reserves, Uzbekistan has large gold deposits and it is also most important cotton producing country. Tajikistan is endowed with large aluminium deposits. Hence a constructive cooperation between India and these Central Asian states is possible. Central Asia can also gain from India in many ways like assistance in the areas of automobiles, hotel industry, textile, drugs and pharmaceuticals, banking and insurance, electronics and also India has potential to offer training to Central Asian students, journalists, diplomats etc (Valen, 1999). India has also assisted in the construction of various projects in the region like a railway segment connecting Mashad and Sarakha in Iran and Turkmenistan. India is having numerous interests of varying degrees in energy rich Central Asian region like geo-political geo-economic etc.

1. Geopolitical Interests

India own great interests in Central Asia to look for balancing the growing Chinese influence and stabilising the turbulent Afghanistan and above all to utilize the massive energy resources of the region. The possible US led NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan has sent warning signals to all its neighbours in both Central Asia as well as in South Asia. India and Pakistan can play an important role in stabilizing Afghanistan but have pursued policies marked by mistrust and antagonism towards each other and both parties try to restrain each other's influence in both Afghanistan and Central Asia (Sharan, 2012). The Central Asian region is a key transit route for western exports of oil, bypassing Russian routes and it has also resulted in pipeline politics in the region. The 9/11 episode and its aftermath, the war on terror in Afghanistan, the presence of NATO forces in Central Asia and Middle East, the

region's importance as a key area of global interest and involvement boosted. However there is massive scope for convergence of interests between India and the Central Asian republics like dealing with global economic changes and multi-polar world dominated by few powers, to tackle ethnic and cultural diversity and the menace of religious fundamentalism, to stop trans-border terrorism etc (Usha, 2004). Hence the geo-strategic importance of Central Asia entails India to have an excellent bilateral relationship that could benefit them in several ways. To counter balance Pakistan, constructing oil and natural gas pipelines, to counter narco-terrorism initiated by Taliban that affected both India and Central Asia and many other common challenges could be resolved through practical cooperation between India and Central Asia.

India's policy towards the region witnessed an upward drift by providing more priority to Central Asia under various policies like immediate and strategic neighbourhood policies. Due to Strategic and geopolitical importance of Central Asia to India, the debate is on India's Look North Policy in order to have better economic, political and cultural exchange between India and Central Asia. The rising priorities from Indian side are therefore connected with developments in Afghanistan and South Asian region. The growing demands of energy in India compels her to move to energy rich Central Asian region and therefore these priorities are reflected in India's efforts to develop diplomatic relations, economic cooperation, trade and investment, and energy cooperation with Central Asian countries.[46]

2. India's Economic Interests

The basic objective of India's foreign policy towards Central Asia is obviously economic. The future prospects for cooperation between Central Asia and India in the field of energy security seem to be very important. Recently India's interest and prominence in the Central Asian region has enhanced and India's growing energy needs and the potential energy resources that Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan,

[46] Usha. K.B. '*India's Foreign Policy Priorities in Central Asia'*, FPRC Journal. Available at http://www.fprc.in/pdf/j-10.pdf. Accessed on October 31, 2013.

Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have to offer is one of the main driving forces for India's involvement in the region.

India took various economic liberalisation initiatives in 1990s that resulted in the rapid economic growth and hence the demand for energy requirement amplified. If India becomes successful in maintaining such a high level of economic growth, then it could become the fourth largest consumer of energy in coming years. India is among the top five countries in the world on the basis of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). India is emerging as an economic powerhouse who required lot of energy and most of which is coming from the Middle East but presently it has become very turbulent and incessant energy supply has become uncertain. The domestic production of gas and natural resources in India is meagre. However few oil reserves found in Bombay High off the coast of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan and in Eastern Assam meet almost 20% of country's demand. In February 2000, Government of India published 'Hydrocarbon Vision 2025'[47]clearly highlights the issue of energy security faced by the country. Self Sufficiency in the field of oil declined from 63% in 1989-90 to 30% in 2000-2001 and thus demand for the oil will increase from 122 million tons in 2001-2002 to 364 million tons in 2024-2025. During this period such rapid increase in the demand of oil will not be balanced by the domestic production that is merely 15%. The demand for natural gas is expected to rise from 49 bcm in 2006-7 to 125 bcm in 2024-25. India is in need of such an energy system that can ensure supply; deal with demand, balance pricing to facilitate sustainable economic growth (Joshi, 2012). Former Petroleum Minister M Veerappa Moily said in August, 2013 that we have to import almost 79% of crude oil requirements and the estimated demand for petrol, diesel and LPG is 16,335 MT, 73,500 MT and 16,712 MT, respectively for the year 2013-14. The minister said 78.75% of crude oil required in India for petroleum products has to be imported. However, some products like LPG and Lubes are in deficit and are being imported. The minister said that net import of LPG and Lubes

[47] A long term strategy adopted by India to assure energy security by achieving self-reliance through increased indigenous production and investment in equity oil abroad for the next 25 years. For details see Chaturvedi, Ajay Kumar. (2013). *Role of Pakistan in India's Energy Security-: An Issue Brief*. Vij Books India Pvt. Ltd: New Delhi.

was 6,093 thousand metric tonnes and 1,409 TMT respectively, during 2012-13. India is mainly dependent on Gulf and Middle East countries particularly Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar etc for its energy requirements.[48]

In the present age of globalization, the uninterrupted supply of energy is critical for keeping every nation's economic wheels in motion. Central Asia is wealthy in energy reserves, existence of gas and oil pipelines connecting china, Russia, Europe and Trans-Caspian region highlight geostrategic importance of the region (Warikoo, 2012). India is also well aware about the mounting demand of energy and hence imports almost three quarters of its oil consumption from Middle East. India can no longer remain completely dependent on Middle East for energy imports as the region has now became more turbulent. Therefore Energy security forms the central component of national foreign policy of India. Indian policy makers have identified energy rich Central Asian region as one best alternative sources of energy import.

Since trade and economic relations between India and CARs remain the most unsatisfactory aspect of an otherwise potentially beneficial relationship. The ground situation portrays a very low level of trade, limited number of joint ventures and no worthwhile investment in Central Asia by Indian business and industry, though there are small government credit lines. Indian manufacturing and investment companies are very apprehensive about entering the new, unfamiliar markets of Central Asia. Being rich in hydrocarbons, Central Asia contains an estimated 4% of world's natural gas reserves and 3% of oil reserves. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are very rich in these resources while as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan has also potential for generating hydro-electric power. Central Asia also contains huge reserves of uranium ore and thus can be a source of uranium for India's civilian nuclear programme.[49]

Central Asia is of vital importance for India's energy security policy and recently India's state-owned Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has sought to invest in Kazakhstan which has world's richest oil fields. Kazakhstan has also

[48] '*Nearly 80 percent of India's crude oil needs imported',* Indo-Asian News Service (IANS), 27 Aug, 2013. Available at http://in.finance.yahoo.com/news/nearly-80-percent-indias-crude-095222192.html. Accessed on February 6, 2014.
[49] Dikshit, Sandeep. '*Nuclear pact with Kazakhstan likely during PM's visit'*,Thursday, Oct 16, 2008. Available at http://www.hindu.com/2008/10/16/stories/2008101659261200.htm. Accessed on February 6, 2014.

expressed its willingness to increase supplies for India's civilian nuclear program, with the Kazakh state-owned company Kazatomprom set to extend the current contract to supply Indian reactors with Uranium beyond 2014, the expiration date of the present contract. Various initiatives to transport oil from the region to the Indian, markets are yet to be shaped. Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline intended to transport 30 billion Cubic meters (bcm) of gas from natural gas fields in Turkmenistan via Afghanistan and Pakistan to India. India hopes that Russia will provide expert knowledge to the project and also act as negotiator of any disputes between India and Pakistan (Foshko, 2012). Indian hopes associated with the project may go in vain as Chinese Premier Xi Jinping's visit to Turkmenistan in September 2013 may derail it altogether Right now, a tool-room center in Turkmenistan by Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT) has been set up and also technical cooperation programmes have begun. New Delhi viewed to invest US$ 5 billion in Kashagan, the largest oil discovery in last 30 years and also world's most expensive oil extraction project.[50] Recognizing the mutual benefits of deeper relationships, India has now signed Strategic Partnership Agreements with three CARs, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. Apart from seeking to bolster defense ties, these strategic agreements, envisage deeper cooperation in telecommunication, information technology, food processing and pharmaceutical sectors. These prospective engagements highlight a mutual desire between India and Central Asian governments to involve a broader range of stakeholders in the development of Central Asia's energy resources.

3. Commercial Interests

Indian External Affairs Ministry has taken various measures to enhance trade and economic relations with Central Asia like trilateral trade treaty joining India, Russia and Kazakhstan. Through this treaty India will be able to feed into licensed trade agreement already operational between Russia and Kazakhstan with

[50] '*No international pipeline firm ready to implement TAPI gas project'*, The Economic Times, October 16, 2012. Available at http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-10-16/news/34498967_1_tapi-gas-turkmenistan-afghanistan-pakistan-india-gas-pipeline. Accessed on February 6, 2014.

preferential trade terms and also agreed to remove all custom hurdles among the member countries and also envision common currency by the year 2012 (Foshko, 2012). With the passage of time more and more Central Asian republics will join the union and thus India's trade with the region will grow up. Maintaining and improving trade links with Russia and Kazakhstan should definitely provide an opportunity to India for both energy and commerce linkages with the central Asian region.

India is slowly and gradually gaining market in Central Asian Republics with Indian tea and pharmaceuticals already acquired a foothold in the region. Central Asian republics have little to choose from highly priced imported Western products and cheap but lower-quality Chinese manufactured goods that have flooded the region. Under such circumstances, Indian consumer goods can find an untapped market in Central Asia. There is also huge potential for investment in various sectors like IT, banking, construction and food processing. Central Asian republics are newly born and hence India can assist in small and medium-scale enterprises.[51] India is providing assistance in some of these areas as a part of its long run programme that is Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC). Indian entrepreneurs and business chambers have been assisted by India to organize trade fairs under its CIS programme and in this regard a joint business council has been set up with Kazakhstan.

India's economic and commercial engagement with the region is limited because of India's late economic reforms. This is reflected in the bilateral trade figures which show that Central Asia's share of Indian exports is 1.07 per cent, while imports stand at an even lower 0.08 per cent. India's actual bilateral cooperation with Tajikistan is very small as compared to economic engagement of neighboring country China. China has also far more trade and investment with other Central Asian republics than India (Kavalski 2010). India is keen to have multi dimensional cooperation with Central Asia and in this regard India's vice president visited Tajikistan in April 2013. Both the states signed many bilateral agreements to have cooperation in IT, energy, health, education, trade, commerce, mining, and

[51] Campbell, Ivan. '*India's role and Interests in Central Asia'*. Available at http://www.saferworld.org.uk/downloads/pubdocs/indias-role-and-interests-in-central-asia.pdf. Accessed on January 23, 2014.

agriculture. Both sides have plans to collaborate with each other to establish an IT centre of excellence and Central Asia e-network.

India own lots of interests like political, cultural, commercial, and economic in the geo-strategically important Central Asian region. Indian interests in parts of Central Asia are also driven by a desire to help diversify economies of the region and to increase India's soft power in the region by addressing humanitarian concerns. In turn Central Asian countries also have strategic reasons for pursuing deeper relations with India. Greater engagement with India could allay fears of Chinese or Russian influence in the region rendering any of the five CAR nations too dependent on Beijing or Moscow. An engaged India promises "a more benign geostrategic partnership for economic and political development in Central Asia than China, Pakistan, Iran or Russia.

No doubt India can gain a lot from Central Asia particularly in the field of energy sector but India has to keep in mind various challenges. India has to depend on Iran and Pakistan for direct access to Central Asia and hence lack of connectivity and common borders remain as a major challenge for importing energy resources from Central Asia to India as expressed by former External Affairs Minister, S. M. Krishna. He said, "The lack of appropriate communications, especially transportation linkages with this region has acted as a major challenge to us. The proposal for a New Silk Road Initiative, which would enable the countries and more importantly the peoples of Central and South Asia, is therefore, of paramount importance for us".[52]

4. Common Problems and Their Impact on Indian Interests

The New Great Game is mostly not in favour of India and is major challenge for India to establish significant position in the region. Apart from New Great Game, there are many other common challenges that both India and central Asia faces. These common problems retard the Indo-Central Asia bilateral cooperation to a larger

[52] India's External Affairs Minister S M Krishna's address on *'India's External Environment and Current Foreign Policy Challenges'* on 9 March 2012, at the Institute of South Asian Studies, Singapore. Available at http://www.mea.gov.in/mystart.php?id=530119102. Accessed on November 2, 2013.

extent. Among the various common challenges include drug trafficking, religious extremism and terrorism, small arms proliferation and lack of proper transport link**.**

4.1 Drug Trafficking

There were many anti-social activities going on in Central Asia which are playing destructive role in strategic stability. Drug trafficking is one of rising challenges that both South and Central Asian countries face. Drug trafficking is almost controlled by the anti-social elements and money coming out of it is being used in various anti social activities. Poppy from Afghanistan traverses a long route of Central Asia, mainly through the old Silk Road, before reaching to Russia and European countries. Some other routes pass through Pakistan and Iran, before reaching to other parts of the world. Poppy cultivation is backed by Taliban insurgent group as it is the main source of income to them. It is also the fact that besides Taliban, Al Qaeda and Haqqani network are also involved in this trade.[53] Dawood Ibrahim, one of notorious mafia also generated huge amount of money through this trade and then funded terrorist activities against India.

Some of the Central Asian countries like Uzbekistan and Tajikistan also started farming opium cultivation because of having ethnic links with Afghanistan. The amount of money obtained through drug trafficking accounts for what is by far the most important category of illicit trade flows in the Indian Ocean. The President of Germany's Federal Office of Criminal Investigation revealed at a conference in Berlin in 2000, that the 'Golden Crescent' of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan has replaced the 'Golden Triangle' of Myanmar, Thailand and Laos as a major source of illegal drugs for Eastern Europe and the 'silk route'. Among South Asian countries Myanmar, Afghanistan and Pakistan accounts for US$ 200 billion trade through drugs smuggling. It is also important to mention here that Pakistani intelligence agency ISI also supported drug smuggling as a means to meet heavy expenses on various fronts like in Afghanistan and India's states of Punjab and Kashmir (Biswas, 2003). Apart

[53] Mahapatra, Aurobindo. '*Drug Trafficking: A rising menace in Eurasia,'* available at http://indrus.in/articles/2013/01/17/drug_trafficking_a_rising_menace_in_eurasia_21687.html. Accessed on December 18, 2013.

from transporting narcotics to Central Europe via the Balkans, the Indo-Pak border is extensively used for transporting drugs first to India and then to other countries. In order to sustain militancy in Kashmir, much of heroin is transported from Afghanistan to Pakistan via tribal areas and in this way ISI successfully generate money through this trade to finance these activities.

Drug trafficking is a major challenge that India faces while dealing with Energy rich region. The most frequently used route for drug trafficking is Afghanistan-Tajikistan border from where drugs are smuggled to different countries of region. The labs that convert opium to morphine to heroin are located in the border areas of Afghanistan. The huge amount of money obtained through illegal drug trafficking is chiefly used by various terrorist agencies against India. India not only became the victim of drug smuggling but it also became one of centres of drug trade with New Delhi as a centre.

The Silk Road which brought prosperity to Central Asia has now become highway for drugs and thus created economic, political and social problems in the region. Three of the Central Asian countries share borders with Afghanistan and thus the region became the hub for the drug trade throughout the world. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), classified as a terrorist organization by the Clinton administration in 2000, is deeply involved with drug trafficking. Not only militant groups, many government officials are involved in the unlawful drug trade in Central Asia. Due to the prevalence of corruption in Central Asia, the government is not able to control this menace rather it increases gradually (Das, 2012). Therefore, the widespread drug trafficking in the region that poses great challenge to India as it is eager to move towards the region for the utilization of energy resources of the region. There has been tremendous increase in HIV/AIDS cases and through legal as well as illegal migration can spread to India as well. Drug trafficking is also accompanied with illegal arms dealing to supply arms to terrorist groups active in the region.

4.2 Religious Extremism & Terrorism

India and Central Asia are facing major challenges of terrorism as both the regions are sharing long borders with those countries where this menace is raising its

ugly head. The major security challenge to both India and Central Asian Republics is taking place due to the rise of Taliban in Afghanistan in the mid 1990s. Taliban possess close relation with some extremist groups in Central Asia like Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hizb-ul-Tahrir and also with extremist groups in Kashmir province of India. IMU was established with the aim of toppling President Karimov's secular regime in Uzbekistan and apart from this, it has done a series of terrorist activities in Central Asia (Mukhamedov, 2004). Stressing upon the links between the extremist groups in Central Asia and Taliban, the president of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov in 2000 said, "Fugitives from Uzbekistan have undergone training in Afghanistan and also Tajikistan and have become professional militants and terrorists." The IMU guerrillas supporting the Taliban suffered severe blow with the onset of US led war in Afghanistan. In fact, it is said that till country is facing war, the stability in Central and South Asia cannot be guaranteed.

Pakistan played and is currently playing an active role in propagation of religious extremism in Central Asia. Soon after their independence from Soviet Union, Pakistan, UAE and Saudi Arabia were actively propagating religious agenda in Islamic dominated region. Former President of Pakistan, General Zia-ul- Haq, was in favour of Islamisation of Central Asia and pro Pakistani Islamic government in Kabul. But all these activities evoked a negative response from Central Asian republics and instead they began to look to India for guidance and help. Pakistan is making best use of religious affinity with the region in order to weaken the influence and dominance of non Islamic states like India in CARs (Joshi, 2009). The porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan has become hub of terrorist activities and Pakistan is not in favour of resolving Durand line issues. It was Pakistan who supported fully the Taliban regime that did many terrorist activities in India and also sponsored such activities in Central Asia.

The religious extremism and terrorism continue to threaten and challenge the territorial integrity of India and Central Asian Republics. After the US led NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan, there is possibility that extremists and terrorists may shift their bases to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. It can destabilise the whole Central Asian region and can have severe consequences for Indian security. The religious

extremism emanating from Afghanistan is often accompanied by various terrorist events in the neighbouring countries particularly in India. The 2001 Parliament attack and 2008 Mumbai attacks serve as a scary reminder of the fact that safe havens for terrorists have yet to be eradicated. Pakistan based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) has been the master mind behind various terrorist attacks in India, Chechnya and Central Asia. Hizb-ul-Tahrir (HuT) though established its presence in the Fergana Valley[54] but is mostly active in Kazakhstan and the main aim of this group is to establish caliphate rule in the region (Sarma, 2013). In fact the various terrorist organisations active in the region can create many challenges to India to establish bilateral relationship with Central Asia. Stable Afghanistan is essential for the security of both India and Central Asia, but after NATO withdrawal by 2014, the country can again become the centre of extremism and terrorism and thus will create a serious security challenge before India.

4.3 Small Arms Proliferation

Religious extremism and terrorism is often accompanied with illegal arms trade across the borders of various nations. Small arms trade is a major challenge for the present race which causes a lot of human rights abuses and violations. The proliferation of small arms and ammunition is a major issue that threatens the security of India and Central Asia. In India there occurred about 75,000 deaths by such weapons, while around 4500 illegal arms have been seized. Apart from homemade weapons, foreign made weapons are also smuggled through Mumbai via air and sea routes (Gorea, 2006). Small arms proliferation caused huge damage to the country like assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi; terrorism shattered Punjab; problem in North-east India; Kashmir violence; and the People's War Group, the Naxalites and other smaller terrorist groups are causing havoc in India with these weapons.

[54] It is a region spread across Eastern Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan and is ethnically diverse and also an ethnic conflict was seen in the early 21st Century. It is one of the most industrialised and densely populated regions of the Central Asia. For full details see Starr, S. Frederick (Ed.). (2011). *Ferghana Valley: The Heart of Central Asia*. M.E. Sharpe: New York.

After the collapse of Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries are involved in selling and buying of small arms. Countries like Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan's Taliban are enthusiastic to gain access to nuclear, chemical and biological materials and weapons in these republics. Even after the fall of Soviet Union, remnants of the Soviet nuclear, chemical and biological arsenals and industries are still functioning in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. During civil war in Tajikistan, arms were supplied from various countries like Pakistan, Iran, Belarus, Chechnya, India and Russia. At present arms trafficking still remains one of the main problems with these republics. Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), Hizb-ul-Tehrir and other extremist groups continued to purchase weapons for the use of terrorist activities. The illegal arms trade opens avenues for these groups and they can either be middleman or engage in arms smuggling itself. Arms trafficking become a serious threat to national security because once the people get weapons through illegal means; they do their work as per their own ways.[55] India is also one of the major victims of small arms proliferation and through which more than 200 districts in the country have been disturbed. Therefore both India and Central Asia face the problem of arms trafficking and both should approve a common agenda to tackle this challenge. If the problem remains as such, it will pose a major challenge to Indo-Central Asia bilateral cooperation. The chances of cooperation both regional as well as state wise become lesser, whenever there persists any security threat.

4.4 Lack of Proper Transport Link and the Revival of New Silk Route

India's connection with Central Asia has been about three thousand years old, that is, from ancient Silk Route times. Silk Route was not only a single route rather a mesh of several routes. Traders from India took three routes to join with the main Silk Route like Kashmiri traders used Leh-Yarkand-Kashgar-Kokand route, while Punjabi

[55] Cohen, Ariel. '*The Arms Trade Flourishes in Central Asia',* September 4, 2001. Available at http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav090501.shtml. Accessed on February6, 2014.

traders used Kabul-Balakh-Khotan route and rest others preferred Multan-Kandhar-Kabul route to get connected with the region (Ganguli, 2011). The height of the importance of the Silk Road was during the Tang dynasty[56] and from 14th century to 17th century, the route lost its significance as many incidents during this period contributed to its decline.

Soon after independence from British, India successfully revived relations with Central Asia but these relations have not been fully realized on account of lack of proper transport connectivity. Since all the Central Asian countries are landlocked and thus they lack the cheapest sea route facility for trading and other political and cultural transformation. Due to absence of rail connectivity, India lacks faster, more hassle free and less expensive way to transport goods through Iran to the Central Asian countries and further north to Russia (Sharma, 2008). India has also been slow in realizing the potential of the strategic Chabahar Port in Iran that can provide an alternative route to Central Asia via Afghanistan bypassing Pakistan. Most of the Central Asian countries share borders with China and Afghanistan and India have not in good relations with the former and the latter is also politically not stable country.

Presently, India's main focus is on International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and air links to have an access to the region. The road will start from Iran to Russia via Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan and India will get connected with the region possibly by 2013.[57] Mani Shankar Aiyar has proposed in 2010: "Our failure has been to recognize that though we ourselves have hydrocarbon deficiency, our immediate and proximate neighbourhood is simply soaked in hydrocarbons… We are geographically fortunate in being able to potentially access by pipeline the gas resources of not only Turkmenistan and Afghanistan but also Uzbekistan, Russia and other Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries."

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[56] The Tang dynasty (618 AD-907 AD), was an imperial dynasty of China, with its control ranging from Korea, southern Manchuria, and Northern Vietnam. In the west, the Tang influence was felt as far away as present-day Afghanistan. During the Tang dynasty, Buddhism declined, and Confucianism became more popular, even though Buddhism was at its peak during the early Tang dynasty. For full details see Benn, Charles D. (2002). *China's Golden Age: Everyday Life in the Tang Dynasty*. OUP: New York.

[57] '*International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)',* Indian Defence Forum (IDF), Available at http://defenceforumindia.com/forum/foreign-relations/32567-international-north-south-transport-corridor-instc.html. Accessed on December 17, 2013.

In recent times, there is a debate on the issue of New Silk Route. India's interests in the New Silk Route are evident from the fact that India has engaged with Iran to have direct access to the route and also made financial investment in the Iranian Eastern Corridor. This road passes from Chabahar Port on the Arabian Sea through Iran's Sistan-Baluchistan and Khorasan provinces, and onward to the town of Milak on the Afghan border. Afterward it connects with Zaranj-Delaram highway made by India in Afghanistan and then links up with the Afghan ring road. In order to have an easy access to Central Asian mineral resources and to boost trade with Afghanistan and Iran, all the three countries India, Afghanistan and Iran have planned a railway line along the entire route. Like Turkey, India is coming with innovative methods to overcome disciplinary action by the United States in its engagement with Iran (N. Padukone 2012). However, Andrew Kuchins is of the view, 'The New Silk Road is more of a vision than a strategy, since it lacks adequate analysis to guide its development and implementation'.

The most important aim of the New Silk Road is to bring more and more economic activities in Central Asia, South Asia and finally within Eurasia. In brief India has backed this multinational initiative in order to have an easy and direct link towards resource-rich Central Asia as well as Afghanistan and from there on to Russia and European Markets (Roy 2011). New Silk Route is much more economically viable route and is also envisioned as an initiative that will help in bringing stability and prosperity to Afghanistan- a continuing goal of India.

Hence both the regions face these common challenges and both are anxious to curb such problems. No doubt a common strategy has been established by India with most of the Central Asian Republics (CARs) and has shown enthusiasm to undertake many other useful steps to remove these hindrances in the way of useful bilateral cooperation. Therefore, there is an urgent need to check these difficulties if both India and Central Asia has to move forward to witness significant progress in multifaceted bilateral ties.

5. India's Strategy to Protect Its Interests in Central Asian Region

Soon after the independence of Central Asian states, India has accorded the status of 'Extended strategic Neighborhood' to the region. The rising priorities from Indian side are therefore connected with developments in Afghanistan and South Asian region. The growing demands of energy in India compels her to move to energy rich Central Asian region and therefore these priorities are reflected in India's efforts to develop diplomatic relations, economic cooperation, trade and investment, and energy cooperation with Central Asian countries.

In the context of New Great Game, India at first adopted a policy of Look East policy in the decade of 90s to overcome the fear of rising fundamentalism and economic crisis. India joined many influential regional organizations to go through around its region that are conventionally controlled by regional and global powers. India adopted two centric policies that is immediate and extended neighborhood. Due to lack of direct border links with Central Asian republics and its geographical proximity makes the region to be considered as a part of India's Extended Neighborhood. India is therefore more enthusiastic towards Central Asian region due to its geo-strategic and geo-political significance from the Indian standpoint (Pratibha, 2012). The petroleum sector in Central Asia provides employment opportunities to the talented Indian workers and technicians as the chances are becoming less in the gulf region. India has potential to express competence in service sector and thus can compete with the Chinese Infrastructure development. India's dealings with its minorities (Muslims) and its longstanding better record of democracy can make it more attractive to the Muslim dominated region.

India has many advantages in the Central Asian region but at the same time these countries soon after their independence were hopeful of India to play more significant role in the region, but India failed to convert conventional goodwill into modern-day influence. Hence India occupies lower priority in the foreign policies of Central Asian countries as other major powers like the US, Russia and China have made their clout more considerable in the region. India and Russia possess better traditional and contemporary bilateral relationship and thereby Central Asian republics have some expectations that India will play a much superior role in the region. India

needs to act in a more significant way, not only to make oil and gas investments but also to act as key transit country for Eurasian oil and gas to the global markets (Sikri, 2007). India can cooperate with Russia, Iran and Turkey to isolate Pakistan's negative political trends and its influence in Afghanistan and the region. India's interests in Afghanistan include both security and access to Central Asian energy either through Turkmenistan and Afghanistan or through Iran and Afghanistan.

In order to promote cultural linkages with the Central Asian countries, India has taken several specific measures like setting up of Institute of Excellence in IT Education in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. India offered 30 full scholarships by the ICCR to students from Central Asia and also provided training to thousands of professionals from the region. Therefore we can say India is in the process of creating a niche for itself through aid, investment and cooperation in the number of fields without caring about the ongoing New Great Game in the region (Sahai, 2005). India in recent times has initiated Connect Central Asia policy to enhance country's strategic space and engagement with the Central Asian republics. With the possible NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014, India is expected to play a bigger role in the region and hence India launched its Connect Central Asia Policy in 2012 (Pratibha, 2012). The Indian policy makers felt the need to have a perception of understanding of the ground realities of this region to frame policy in such a manner of suiting the present international stature and historical cultural and political relations with the region.

The only opposition to India's membership to Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is from China and therefore India has to frame its strategy accordingly to cooperative with China. A better Sino-Indian relationship based on cooperation and trust would provide an opportunity to Central Asian republics to get benefitted from both the rising economies of the world (Huchet, 2010). Many scholars are of the opinion that India should take necessary steps to make modification of their interests and policies for improving bilateral relations as well as to protect its various interests in the energy rich Central Asian region. There is need to make political presence possible and in this regard regular contacts between higher officials from

both the sides should be made possible. To make bilateral trade and economic relations more lucrative, the status of Most Favored Nation (MFN) would be an effective option to serve business communities. India should adopt policies to enhance security cooperation and more and more emphasis on people to people contact. India has to neutralize and diffuse the anti Indian designs by Pakistan and to find out the other possible transit routes to make an effective and easy access to the region (Pratibha, 2012). India is not in position to go to the level of major powers in the region but India can engage itself in the region with the help of Russia, Iran and Turkey, to develop a secular model of Islam, counter Pakistan's anti Indian attitude, to find out land route options through Iran and China.

India has set up working groups with many Central Asian countries like Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan where information and experiences are shared about various groups and organizations which are involved in this activity. To counter nontraditional threats such as religious extremism, terrorism, drug trafficking that pose biggest threats to both India and Central Asia, India is cooperating with the Regional Anti Terrorists Structure (RATS) of the SCO in Tashkent. India has also promoted the level of its communication by signing Strategic Partnership Agreements with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and with Afghanistan (Joshi, 2012). Both India and CARs agree that the NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan could possibly see a wave of violence in the region in a civil war like situation. Refugees and terrorists can enter Tajikistan and there could be spill over in to the Fergana Valley. Therefore the need of hour is that these partnership agreements have to be introduced with even greater vigor and dynamism.

5.1 Recent Developments

The various interests of India in central Asia are at stake on account of the New Great Game as well as the emerging conventional and nonconventional threats in Central Asia. In order to promote bilateral cooperation and to protect their respective interests, both the regions have started political dialogues. Till date two

rounds of talks have already taken place. During the first round of talk, India proposed Connect Central Asia policy.

5.1.1 Connect Central Asia Policy

In a useful move to strengthen political, economic and cultural engagements with Central Asia, Minister of State for External Affairs of India, Mr. E. Ahmed announced 'Connect Central Asia Policy' during his visit to Kyrgyzstan in June 2012, on the occasion of completion of two decades of diplomatic relationship with Central Asian republics. As a part of 'Connect Central Asia Policy' think tanks, research organizations and experts on a platform hold annual India –Central Asia dialogue in each Central Asian republics on rotation. Central Asia is rich in energy resources and that is why India looks towards the region as a long term partner in energy and also as a potential area for medical cooperation by setting up civil hospitals and clinics in Central Asia.[58] Among some other fields of cooperation between two regions include education, setting up of universities to impart world class education in the field of information technology, management, philosophy etc.

External Affairs Minister SM Krishna paid a two-day visit to Tajikistan on July 2-3, 2012, and his visit is considered as maintenance of India's new policy approach towards Central Asian republics. During his visit, energy, counter terrorism, communication, situation in Afghanistan and some other important bilateral issues were discussed. Krishna's visit is viewed in the context of India's growing interest of cultivating stronger ties with the region through India's policy of 'Connect Central Asia' (Roy, 2012). India's concerns about Afghanistan and US military drawdown in 2014, is also shared by Central Asian republics. Krishna's visit to Tajikistan is important because it is close neighbour of Afghanistan and also supported Northern Alliance along with Russia and India.

[58] Keynote address by '*MOS Mr. E Ahmed',* at first India-Central Asia Dialogue, June 12, 2012.Available at http://www.mea.gov.in/speechesstatements.htm?/19791/keynote+address+by+MOS+Shri+E+Ahmed+at+IndiaCentral+Asia+Dialogue. (October 7, 2013).

Perhaps the most important area of cooperation between India and Central Asia is Economic ties and in this regard S M Krishna's two day visit to Central Asia is considered as a step towards the advancement of bilateral economic cooperation. As a part of Connect Central Asia policy, Krishna asked 11 Indian heads of mission in the region to work on converting India's enormous goodwill into substantial and strategic advantages, the current status of India's trade with these countries, which is pegged at a mere $500 million, indicates the most unsatisfactory part of an otherwise excellent relationship with the region.[59] Lack of Connectivity remains a major impediment for India to reach out the region to enhance economic cooperation and during his visit Krishna said that "India needs to explore innovative and practical solutions in consultation with local Government". To improve connectivity to the region, India is working on the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) among other options. India has made some progress in the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline and also an important energy related agreement was signed between ONGC Videsh Limited[60] and the Kazakh State Company. Useful steps were taken from both the sides for cooperation in hydro electric power and India also is providing help for Varzob- I Hydro power station.[61]

Connect Central Asia Policy is recent development in the field of bilateral cooperation initiated by India but as India moves ahead with its policy to fortify its relations with the Eurasian region, it is extremely significant to get the Central Asian perspective on India's role in the region. Equally important would be to debate how India-Central Asia relations can be further strengthened.

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[59] Roy, Meena Singh. '*S M Krishna's visit to Tajikistan and India's Connect Central Asia Policy',* Available at http://idsa.in/idsacomments/SMKrishnasVisittoTajikistan_MeenaSRoy_050712. Accessed on October 2, 2013.

[60] ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL) is the international arm of Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Limited (ONGC) that was relaunched on 15 June 1989 and it has currently 14 projects across 16 countries. For more details visit http://www.ongcvidesh.com/default.aspx?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1.

[61] '*India's Engagement with Central Asia: Exploring Future Directions- Concept Note'*. Institute for Defense Studies and Analysis. Link http://www.idsa.in/event/IndiasEngagementwithCentralAsia. Accessed on November3, 2013.

5.1.2 India-Central Asia Dialogue II

In order to explore new areas for enhancing bilateral cooperation between India and Central Asia, the two day second India-Central Asia Dialogue was inaugurated on 17 June 2013 by Mr. E. Ahamed, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs, Government of India. Mr. E. Ahamed highlighted the need for greater cooperation between India and Central Asian countries on energy, regional security, economic issues, and nation-building, e- networking etc. The need was felt to have improved connectivity between India and the region that would foster greater political, economic and people-to-people contacts. The issue of NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan and its consequences on the whole region was also thoroughly discussed. The participants from Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan focused on economic issues and several ways were suggested to improve India's economic profile in the Region.

During the dialogue, a number of recommendations were made to enhance the engagements in different fields between India and Central Asian countries. To develop a common understanding in the field of security so as to deal with various common security challenges. Main focus was also laid to build up the regional initiatives on Afghanistan reconstruction and to find out alternative routes to transport energy from Central Asia to India. All the participants were agreed to provide more priority to TAPI energy pipeline connecting energy deficient South Asia to energy surplus Central Asia. In the discovery of other new sources of energy in the region, India is expected to play a vital role. Proposals were also introduced for enhancing trade relationship like easing visa regimes and to identify other potential sectors for trade like pharmaceuticals, IT, textiles, automobiles etc. To establish an 'India-Kazakhstan Stability Fund' or 'India-Central Asia Stability Fund' to support the countries of the region in case they face economic hardships was another important recommendation which was suggested.

All the participant countries felt the urgent need of regular exchange of scholars, Joint bilateral academic research projects for multi disciplinary research, to

initiate a 'scientific dialogue' between India and Kazakhstan, promote the popularity of Indian culture like Bollywood in Central Asia. Media in both India and Central Asia have a greater role to play to promote intellectual and institutional connectivity. In fact, India and Central Asia should mutually explore and benefit from the synergies in their development patterns and both should cooperate to find out combined response to the evolving situation in Afghanistan.[62]

To conclude, India being the world's largest democracy and one of the fastest growing economies has many strategic interests in the region and to defend these interests India has to think in more planned manner to secure them. The vast and rich energy resources of Central Asia have compelled India to rethink its policies towards the region and India also accorded greater prominence to the region in its foreign policy objectives towards the region. The volume of trade between India and Central Asia experienced a remarkable progress during the last few years and will grow further in the coming years as both sides are eager to enhance trade and economic relations. India needs to renew its link with the Silk Route and has to take part in the ongoing process rather to remain out of it. India needs to have a comprehensive proactive policy and not a reactive one and for this purpose India needs to have access, besides being part of regional institutional mechanisms.

[62] Report on India-Central Asia Dialogue II*, Indian Council of World Affairs (ICWA)*, New Delhi, India. Available at http://www.icwa.in/pdfs/ReportonCADII.pdf. Accessed on December 2, 2013.

Chapter 6
Summary and Recommendation

Summary

The five Central Asian states, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan were part of the USSR before its disintegration in 1991. With the collapse of Soviet Union, the bipolarity ended and the Soviet influence declined massively with the US emerged as the sole proprietor in the world politics. The US popularised the process of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation worldwide and it also affected the Central Asian Republics. The post Cold War era witnessed strategic and security equations in the region and the major powers like the big three (United States, Russia and China) are trying to strengthen their political, economic and military power in the region. The other players also try to get maximum share of energy and natural resources and often try to reduce each other's influence in the region. This competition among the major powers and many regional players for the quest of energy is termed as the **New Great Game** in Central Asia. Although USA is not having historical engagement and was absent from the region until 1991, but September 11 attack gave US an opportunity to increase its entanglement and influence in the region. In this way the US interests in the region are quite recent and also after their liberation from Soviet Russia, CARs were badly in need of foreign capital investment to sustain their economic growth. US made entry in the region to encourage democratization of these republics and to combat rising Islamic fundamentalism being exported to the region from Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Denuclearization of Kazakhstan was seen by the US an utmost priority and currently its policy includes the containment of Iran and to reduce Russian influence. United States has pumped massive humanitarian aid into the region and to discontinue Islamization of the region, USA shares common umbrella with Turkey, Israel and Europe.

No doubt all the Central Asian republics share close affinity with Russia, but still Russia is not in a mood of taking any risk to lose its influence in this strategically

important region. Russia fears about the recent Muslim unrest in the region that can spread to the heartland of its territory. Now what Moscow wants to do is to preserve the status quo, namely the regional authoritarian regimes, which are modelled after Russia; establish beachheads for military bases and the right of intervention if necessary through the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO); to get connected with Central Asia economically, Russia has made major investment deals particularly with Kazakhstan; and build the Eurasian Customs Union as the centrepiece of the integration that Russia believes is taking place there.

During the last 30 years there has been low level of violence and the region might erupt and thus China adopted few important policies towards the region with regard to Central Asia. China hopes to stabilize the situation through offering increased investment and trade opportunities on Chinese terms if the Central Asian countries renounce any possibility of support for Uighur organizations. China has framed its policy towards the region in such a manner where Central Asian states have to follow China's rules if they want economic and political support from China. China is also a natural choice to Central Asian states because of its consumer goods. Both China and Russia have convergence as well as divergence of interests in the Central Asian region. Islamic Extremism, drug trafficking, arms smuggling and cross border terrorism are common concerns for both the countries and hence for the stability of the region both are playing the role of big brothers in SCO. Being close neighbours of Central Asian republics, both are concerned about the eastward expansion of NATO and also the US military presence in the region. To create multipolarity and to reduce unipolar hegemonism of the US, both Russia and china are working together and both have solved most of their boundary problems with the CARs.

Both Pakistan and Iran share religious affinity with these republics and apart from that both try to gain maximum economic advantages as well. Pakistan always has anti India attitude and therefore it also tries to reduce India's approach towards the region. There is apprehension in Central Asia because of perceived Turkish Big Brother behaviour in the region. Turkey being a member of NATO actively

participated in Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and is also establishing military presence in Central Asia. European Union has made its presence in the region through huge amount of humanitarian and technical assistance and it has proposed to construct gas pipelines to carry gas from the Caspian region to Europe.

India's economic policy of 1992 envisaged liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation of Indian economy. The main policy objectives of the new economic policy could be achieved only through the consumption of coal, petroleum and natural gas. Hence the rising demand of energy became wide and to cope with the problem of supply and demand, India adopted various policies and identified Central Asia as a region that can fulfil India's future energy demands. The pipeline factor between India and Iran has not been resolved and therefore bilateral trade in gas is not taking place in spite of eagerness from both the sides. Under such circumstances the Central Asian republics offer India new opportunities mainly in economic sphere to diversify its oil imports. Central Asia and Caucasus region are considered to be the next oil and gas frontier and thus became the focus of major power's attention mostly after the end of cold war.

Despite India's late entry in to the region, it formulated many constructive policies towards the region in order to speed up its engagement with the region. Realising the importance of Central Asia, India's Minister of State for External Affairs Shri E. Ahmed on 12 June 2012 announced Connect Central Asia Policy that include broad based political, security, economic and cultural connection with the region. India is well aware about the necessity of stable Afghanistan not only because of its own security but for the security of the whole region including Central Asia. India is devoted to establish military presence in the region to thwart any future security threat. As a result India in order to guard against the growing instability in the region opened an air base in Ayni, Tajikistan in 2002. India's ties with regional states are growing and moderate Islam of the region makes it imperative for India to engage the region more substantively. No doubt India is mainly interested in economic cooperation but there are many other important areas like pharmaceuticals, textiles, IT, tourism, infrastructure building and food processing etc in which bilateral

cooperation can take place. India can regain its traditional status in the region through the alternative routes that can bypass both Pakistan and Afghanistan, the two politically unstable nations.

India's interests in the Central Asia are considerable and in coming years it will seek to maximize its power and influence in the region to a possible extent. Though India desires to play an active role in Central Asia but at the same time terrorism, Islamic fundamentalism, energy security, drug trafficking, lack of proper transport link, US led NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan constitute major concerns that India faces. Moreover the great power competition and the influence of regional players in Central Asia will also make it harder for India to pursue its interests.

In fact Central Asia is very significant to India not only because of civilisational and historical ties but also because of geopolitical and economic factors. The great power politics in the region is underway and thus India has to increase its security and military maneuver as a priority. In order to gain the significant economic ground in the region, India needs to think in a positive manner and discontinue seeing the region in the light of its rivalry with Islamabad. Through increased security and economic move, Indian business community will look at Central Asia as a region of vast opportunities rather simply as a region of returns.

Recommendations

The major powers like US, Russia, China and a few regional players like Turkey, Iran and Pakistan have already made their presence physically powerful in Central Asia. Besides having civilisational and cultural ties with the region, India realized the importance of Central Asia relatively late. India couldn't solely depend on the Gulf region for its oil imports and due to rising demand of energy in India, Central Asia is a region that has potential to accomplish India's needs in energy, mineral and other resources to sustain growth and stability of Indian economy. Consequently there is an urgent need for India to move in same line with the other players already competing for the quest of energy in Central Asia.

Cooperation with the active players in the region

India should cooperate with US in the region so that its war against terrorism will ensure not only stable Afghanistan and Central Asia but also to curtail Pakistan and Iran. Iran can provide India alternative routes like North South Transport Corridor (NSTC) and Chabahar port. India's collaboration with Russia will enable India to renew its traditional ties with the region and to obtain energy pipelines from the region. Pakistan can provide India time and cost saving route link to the region. India's cooperation with both Pakistan and China would benefit India to remain watchful about the possibility of their joining pro-Western regional grouping, GUUAM. Moreover cooperation with China can also benefit India to obtain membership of SCO, which is one of the strong instruments to play a vital role in the region. India and Turkey share common interests in ensuring peace and political stability in Afghanistan and Central Asia and many Turkish companies are willing to collaborate with Indian partners in the region.

Peaceful settlement of disputes with Pakistan

Since their independence both Pakistan and India are staunch rivals of each other and therefore failed to spot various opportunities of mutual interest. Therefore India should take an initiative to settle all disputes with Pakistan and forget about the past happenings/incidents. Improved relationship with Pakistan will facilitate India to find cost and time saving passage to CARs and also to perceive stable Afghanistan. Increased India Pakistan dialogue is necessary for democratic Afghanistan to bring stability in both countries and also in the entire region. India's longstanding dream of energy pipelines like TAPI has to pass through both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan-China nexus in the region could also be checked through India's significant collaboration with Pakistan.

To assist in resolving interstate and intrastate disputes among CARs

India can play an active role in solving various internal problems between and within the Central Asian states. In this way India can gain the confidence of all the Central Asian republics to build its position strong mainly in the economic field. India

being a trustworthy nation can resolve a variety of problems like Water, energy and various border issues among Central Asian states. Moreover India should maintain strong ties with ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks to build a coalition against religious extremism and terrorism and should support Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in counter insurgency measures.

Afghanistan, NATO withdrawal and India's Central Asia policy

India is well aware about the importance of Afghanistan in order to maintain cooperation with Central Asian republics and has provided over $ 2 billion in economic investment, training and infrastructure. Throughout the history, Afghanistan has been a major victim of internal disturbances and being considered as gateway to Central Asia, India needs to play a significant role in bringing peace and stability in the country. The stable Afghanistan will enable India to find a path towards energy rich Central Asia and will also provide a transit route for energy and other resources from the region. Moreover realistic steps taken by India towards peace and stability in Afghanistan will check extremist activities and also Pakistan's influence in the region.

India's ambitions to have trouble-free access to Central Asia through Afghanistan will be challenged by the possible US led NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2014. Therefore it is imperative for India to reframe its foreign policy towards Afghanistan and Central Asia to deal with future challenges.

Need for comprehensive economic relationship

Apart from oil and natural gas, India should also focus on manufacturing and industrial activities, commercial farming, banking sector, mutual trade fairs, construction of mini hydro-power plants, selling of small arms. India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world and there is huge scope for comprehensive economic activities between India and Central Asia.

Renewal of traditional Indo-Russian relations

India was having cordial relationship with Russia during Cold war period and the zenith point of this relationship was the conclusion of the Indo-Soviet "Treaty of

Peace, Friendship and Cooperation" signed in 1971. Now the current situation demonstrates the expansion of traditional spheres of cooperation. There is wide scope for cooperation in energy sphere and both India and Russia can tackle mutual problems of terrorism, separatism and drug trade. The multilateral cooperation between Russia, India and Central Asian states in the security sphere may have quite a sufficient ground if India supports Russian initiatives.

SCO as an instrument of influence

India has been very keen to acquire membership of SCO that has acquired increasing significance as an important platform for cooperation on regional economic and security issues. India has been keen to engage with Central Asian countries in a wide variety of issues. Counter terrorism, energy security, economic integration with Central Asian Republics (CARs) and improving connectivity are some of the key objectives of India while it pursues its interests under the platform of SCO.

In fact India should pursue the policy through which it gets the freedom to safeguard its interests both in Central Asia and Afghanistan without getting into any disagreement with the major players in the region. Hence in future both India and Central Asia should move in partnership against the backdrop of their shared concerns, common problems and in the context of very obvious economic and trade opportunities.

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