

LOCATING RUSSIA IN THE EMERGING GEOPOLITICS OF CENTRAL ASIA: MAPPING INDIA'S OPTIONS

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BY

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August, 2019

CERTIFICATE

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ABSTRACT

Locating Russia in the Emerging Geopolitics of Central Asia: Mapping India's Options

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Russia's relationship with the Central Asian region has been established since the recorded history. The former had colonized the region and established its exclusive control for more than 200 years. India on the other hand, had been sharing long historical and civilizational bonds with the region as it has been falling on the old Silk Route. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991) and the subsequent emergence of Central Asian countries as sovereign states led to a saga of drastic changes in the geopolitical milieu of the region. Russia had lost its superpower status, as it had been entrapped in political, economic and security conundrum. Consequently, Russia had altogether ignored the CARs and drifted towards the West and supranational institutions to restore its state machinery. Thus, the former had adopted a passive approach towards the latter in response to the Euro-Atlantic tilt that had drastically impacted the bilateral and regional engagements. On the other hand, India's engagements with Russia and the Central Asia had undergone a paradigmatic shift. In this milieu, power vacuum was created in Eurasia that led to New Great Game in the region, which again obligated both Russia and India to engage with the Central Asian region given their multifaceted interests at stake.

Given the geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economic significance of the Central Asia as well as the power vacuum left by the Soviet retreat, enticed the major powers and regional actors towards this region. Indeed, the interests of the US, China, Turkey, Iran, India, and Pakistan, have been counterpoising with each other to enhance their respective influence. The battle for gaining their multifaceted interests has turned the region into a strategic fulcrum, wherein China has been increasingly strengthening its geopolitical, geostrategic and geo-economic leverages and thereby, challenging the US, Russia and India in the region. Unlike China, the US has been also consistently trying to restrict the multifaceted interests of Russia and rising influence of China. On the other hand, Russia has been considering the region as its backyard and an area of privileged interests. Furthermore, the regional countries like Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan have been playing their cards to enhance their respective footprints in the Central Asian region. To protect and promote their respective multifaceted interests, the regional actors have also been taking sides with the major stakeholders.

In the changing geopolitical dynamics, the time-tested friends India and Russia, have realized their reciprocal interests to rejuvenate their ties both at bilateral and at regional levels. For India-Russia relationship, the regional developments present the compatibility of mutual interests, particularly in Central Asia. Simultaneously, Indian strategic maneuvering has been taken by other way around by Russia. It creates a

peculiar situation between India and Russia in the Central Asia. Moreover, the growing strategic proximity between Russia and China and in recent times with Pakistan has been posing a significant challenge for India in the region. In this background, the present study, therefore, examines changing relationship between Russia and CARs in the post-Cold War era. It also evaluates the multifaceted interests of the US, China, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and India in the region and how Russia has been reciprocating their strategic maneuvers has also been examined. Moreover, given Russia's leading geostrategic leverage in the CARs, it becomes more interesting to see, how India-Russia relationship has been going in general and in context of Central Asia in particular. Furthermore, the study examines about how Russia acts as a bridge between India and Central Asia.

At last, it is difficult to say with certainty that either it is only lack of political willingness or geopolitics of the region which is responsible for the low level of engagements amongst Russia, Central Asia and India. At this juncture, it is argued that lack of regional connectivity is the major challenge of the low level of engagements. Moreover, the existing lack of political will as well as the rising geopolitics of the region could be held responsible for the same. In order to come out of this quagmire, the three regions needed to come together on one platform geopolitically, geo-economically and geo-strategically. The three might potentially turn the regional geopolitical conundrum in their favor, which may become one of the most gigantic economic zones by exploiting the untapped sea of opportunities. In this way, a new world order would be created that may be more suitable for promoting regional peace, harmony and development which has been a prerequisite for safeguarding their multifaceted geostrategic interest in the region.

Key Words: *Russia, Central Asia, New Great Game in Central Asia, Russia's Rebalancing Reciprocations, India's Challenges and Options.*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Srl No.	Content	Page No.
1	Title	I
2	Certificate	II
3	Declaration	III
4	Abstract	IV
5	Acknowledgment	V
6	Table of Contents	VI
7	List of Tables	VII
8	List of Figures	VIII
9	List of Abbreviations	IX
10	Chapter- One Introduction	1-15
	1.1 Introduction	1
	1.2 Theoretical Conceptualization	2-3
	1.3 Significance of Central Asian Region	3-4
	1.4 The Changing Dynamics of Russia-Central Asia Relationship	4-5
	1.5. Geopolitics in Central Asia: Russia's Reciprocations	5-6
	1.6. India's Interests in Central Asia	7-8
	1.7. India-Russia Convergences and Divergences in Central Asia	8-10
	1.8. India's Foreign Policy Towards Central Asia: Challenges and Options	10-11
	1.9 Research Objectives	11-12
	1.10 Research Questions	12
	1.11 Research Methodology	12-13
	1.12. Significance of the Study	13-14
	1.13 Organization of the Chapters	14-15
11	Chapter- Two Review of literature	16-32
	2.1-2.4 Literature Review	16-31
	2.5 Knowledge Gap	32

12	Chapter- Three Profiling Central Asian Republics (CARs): Conceptualizing in Geopolitical Settings	33-57
	3.1 Introduction	33
	3.2 The Collapse of the Soviet Union: Emergence of the Central Asian Republics (CARs)	33-37
	3.3. Defining Central Asian Republics (CARs)	38-39
	3.4. Profile of Central Asia: An Overview	40-41
	3.5 CARs in the Barbs: Sea Saw Polity Model	41-44
	3.6 The Economies of the CARs	44-46
	3.7 Socio-Cultural Composition of Central Asia	47-48
	3.8. Conceptualizing Geopolitics	48-49
	3.9. Major Theories of Geopolitics	49-53
	3.9.1. Organic Theory	49-50
	3.9.2. Heartland Theory	50-51
	3.9.3. Rimland Theory	52
	3.9.4 Air Power Theory	52-53
	3.10 Geopolitical Models	53-56
	3.10.1 Civilizational Model	53-54
	3.10.2. The Common-Wealth of Independent States (CIS) Re-integration Model	54-56
	3.10.3. Model of Greater Central Asia (GCA)	56
	3.11 Summary	56-57
13	Chapter- Four Russia's Central Asia Policy: Contextualizing the Paradigmatic Shift	58-95
	4.1. Introduction	58
	4.2. Central Asia in Russia's Policy: A Historical Back Ground	58-63
	4.3 Russia-CARs Relationship: An Enervated Phase	63-69
	4.4 Russia's Central Asia Policy: Rationale	69-74
	4.5 Theoretical Framework of Russia's Central Asia Policy	74-76
	4.6 Russia's Policy towards Central Asia: A Paradigmatic Shift	76-80
	4.7 Russia-Central Asia: Multifaceted Engagements	80-94

	4.7.1 Political Engagements	80-83
	4.7.2 Security Engagements	83-86
	4.7.3 Economic Engagements	86-94
	4.7.3.1 Trade and Investment	87-92
	4.7.3.2 Energy Cooperation	92-94
	4.11 Summary	94-95
14	Chapter- Five The New Great Game as a Gordian knot in Central Asia: Weighing Russia's Re-balancing Reciprocation	96-163
	5.1. Introduction	96
	5.2 Central Asia: Geopolitical Importance	97-101
	5.3 New Great Game in Central Asia	101-103
	5.4 Major and Regional Actors in Central Asia: Protection and Promotion of Multifaceted Interests	103
	5.5 China	103-104
	5.6 China's Central Asia Policy	104-106
	5.7 China's Multifaceted Engagements with the CARs	107-120
	5.7.1 Political Engagements	107-110
	5.7.2 Security Engagements	110-114
	5.7.3 Economic Engagements	114-121
	5.7.3.1 Trade and Investment	114-118
	5.7.3.2 Energy Cooperation	118-120
	5.8 USA	120-121
	5.9 US Policy towards the Central Asia	121-123
	5.10 The US Multi-faceted Engagements with the CARs	124-136
	5.10.1 Political Engagements	124-127
	5.10.2 Security Engagements	127-130
	5.10.3 Economic Engagements	130
	5.10.3.1 Trade and Investment	131-134
	5.10.3.2 Energy Cooperation	134-136
	5.11 The Regional Players: Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan	137-149
	5.11.1 Iran	138-141
	5.11.2 Turkey	141-145

	5.11.3 Pakistan	144-149
	5.12 New Great Game a Gordian knot	149-163
	5.12.1 China	150-153
	5.12.2 US	154-157
	5.12.3 Russia's Re-balancing Reciprocation	157-162
	5.13 Summery	162-163
15	Chapter-Six Central Asia as a Pivot of Russia: India's Emerging Challenges and Options.	164-213
	6.1 Introduction	164-165
	6.2 Strategic Salienc of Central Asia: Russian and Indian Perspective	165-168
	6.3 Central Asia as a Pivot of Russia	168-169
	6.4 India-Central Asia Relations: A Historical Overview	169-171
	6.5 Interests of India in the CARs	171-173
	6.6 India's Policy towards the CARs	173-176
	6.7 Multi-faceted Engagements between India and Central Asia	176-198
	6.7.1 Political Engagements	176-182
	6.7.2 Security Engagements	182-188
	6.7.3 Regional Security Engagements: India and SCO	188-190
	6.7.4 Economic Engagements	190-198
	6.7.4.1 Trade and Investment	191-193
	6.7.4.2 Commodity Composition of India's Imports and Exports	193-196
	6.7.4.3 Energy Cooperation	196-198
	6.8 India's Challenges in the Central Asia	198-203
	6.9 India's Central Asia Policy: Russia as a Bridge Link	204-207
	6.10 A way forward	208-211
	6.11 Summary	211-212
16	Chapter- Seven Conclusion and Recommendations	213-224
17	Bibliography	225-259

LIST OF TABLES

Table No.	Description of Table	Page No.
3.4	Tenure of Presidents of CARs	44
3.6	Socio-Cultural Composition of Central Asia in (%)	47
4.1	Military Campaigns of Tsarist Russia on Central Asia (1865-1884)	60
4.2	Trade between Russia and CARs, 1991-1996, US Million Dollars	65
4.5	CARs Membership in Russia led Regional Organizations	91
4.6	Russia's major oil and gas pipelines with the CARs	93
5.1	CARs Oil and Gas Reserves (Million pb/d)	98
6.1	Ongoing Defense Cooperation between India and CARs	187
6.2	India's Trade with the CARs from 1996-2017 in (US \$ Million)	192
6.4	India's top import Commodities to Central Asian Republics (% Share)	193
6.5	India's Top Ten Export Commodities to Central Asian Republics (% Share)	195
6.6	India's Oil and Petroleum Products Imports from CARs (US \$ million)	197

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure No.	Description of Figure	Page No.
3.1	Split of Former Soviet Union into Fifteen Independent States	36
3.2	Political Map of Central Asia	39
3.3	Geographical Map of the Central Asia	40
3.5	GDP Growth Rate from 2000-2016	46
3.7	Geographical Representation of the Heartland Theory	51
4.3	Russia's Imports from CARs (US \$ million) from (2010-2017)	87
4.4	Russia's Exports to CARs (US Million \$) from (2010-2017)	88
5.2	China's New Silk Route	106
5.3	Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces Operating in XUAR of China	111
5.4	China's Imports from CARs (US \$ million) from (2010-2016)	115
5.5	China's Exports from CARs (US \$ million) from (2010-2016)	115
5.6	China's Energy Production and Consumption million barrels per day (1994-2017)	118
5.7	China's Oil and Gas Pipeline	120
5.8	US Imports from CARs (US \$ million) from (2010-2016)	131
5.9	US Imports from CARs (US \$ million) from (2010-2016)	132
5.10	the US energy Production and Consumption in (%) in 2016	135
5.11	TAPI Gas Pipeline	148
6.3	Graphical Representation of table 6.11.1.1 (US \$ million)	192

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Srl. No.	Full Form	Abbreviation
1	Annual Bilateral Consultation	ABC
2	Asian Development Bank	ADB
3	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank	AIIB
4	Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan	BTC
5	Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum	BTE
6	Belt and Road initiative	BRI
7	Central Asian Cooperation Organization	CACO
8	Central Asian Republic's	CAR'S
9	Central Asia-South Asia	CASA
10	Central Asia-South Asia Regional Electricity Market	CASAREM
11	Central Command	CENTCOM
12	Central Treaty Organisation	CENTO
13	Chevron Oil Company	COC
14	China Development Bank	CDB
15	Collective Rapid Action Forces	CRAF
16	Collective Security Treaty	CST
17	Collective Security Treaty Organization	CSTO
18	Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program	CTFP
19	Commonwealth of Independent States	CIS
20	Communist Party of Soviet Union	CPSU
21	Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia	CICA
22	Connect Central Asia Policy	CCAP
23	Cooperative Threat Reduction	CTR
24	Council of Defence Ministers	CDM
25	Counter-Narcotics Program	CNP
26	Customs Union	CU
27	Eurasian Customs Union	ECU

28	Eurasian Economic Commission	EEC
29	Eurasian Economic Community	EurAsEC
30	Eurasian Economic Space	EES
31	Eurasian Economic Union	EEU
32	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development	EBRD
33	European Free Trade Agreement	EFTA
34	European Union	EU
35	Export Insurance Agency of Russia	EXIAR
36	Export-Import Bank of China	EIBC
37	Foreign Direct Investment	FDI
38	Foreign Military Financing	FMF
39	Forward Operating Locations	FOL's
40	Freedom Support Act	FSA
41	Front-End-Engineering-and-Design	FEED
42	Global Peace Operations Initiative	GPOI
43	Global War on Terror	GWOT
44	Great Silk Road	GSR
45	Greater Central Asia	GCA
46	Hizb-ut-Tahrir	HuT
47	International Military Education and Training	IMET
48	International Monetary Fund	IMF
49	International North-South transport corridor	INSTC
50	Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline	IPI
51	Islamic Jihad Union	IJU
52	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan	IMU
53	Islamic Renaissance Part	IRP
54	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria	ISIS
55	Jaish-e-Mohammad	JeM
56	Joint Working Group	JWG
57	Lashkar-e-Toiba	LeT

58	Look North Policy	LNP
59	Look West Policy	LWP
60	Most Favored Nation	MFN
61	National Delimitation of Central Asia	NDCA
62	North Atlantic Treaty Organization	NATO
63	Northern Distribution Network	NDN
64	One Belt One Road	OBOR
65	Operation Enduring Freedom	OEF
66	Partnership for Democracy Commission	PDC
67	Partnership for Peace	PfP
68	Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement	QTTA
69	Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure	RATS
70	Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic	RSFSR
71	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation	SCO
72	Silk Road Economic Belt	SREB
73	Single Economic Space	SES
74	Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation	SEATO
75	Southern Gas Corridor	SGC
76	Strategic Cooperation Council	SCC
77	Tabliqi Jamaat	TJ
78	Trade Investment Framework Agreement	TIFA
79	Trans-Anatolian gas pipeline project	TANAP
80	Trans-Asian Railway	TAR
81	Trans-Caspian-Pipeline	TCP
82	Treaty of Collective Security	TCS
83	Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists	TUSKON
84	Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency	TIKA
85	Turkistan Liberation Organization	TLO

86	Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline	TAPI
87	Uighur Liberation Organization	UIO
88	Union of Soviet Socialist Republic	USSR
89	United Nations Department for Drug Control and Crime Prevention	UNDCCP
90	United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization	UNESCO
91	United Nations Organization	UNO
92	United Nations Security Council	UNSC
93	United Revolutionary Front of Eastern Turkestan	UFET
94	United States	U.S.
95	US Agency for International Development	USAID
96	Weapons of Mass Destruction	WMD
97	World Bank	WB
98	World Trade Organization	WTO
99	Xinjiang Liberation Organization	XLO
100	Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region	XUAR

Chapter- One

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

During the 19th Century, the Central Asian region got knotted in the great game of politics between Tsarist-Russia and British Empire. In fact, the former had colonized the region and established its control for more than hundred years (Khan, 2013). However, the demise of the Soviet Union (1991) and the subsequent emergence of the Central Asian countries had created a power vacuum in the region (Malashenko, 2013). Additionally, the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic significance of the region have been attracting both the regional and extra-regional players towards the Central Asia. Indeed, the United States (US), China, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and India have been playing their respective cards to assert themselves, settle scores, and enhance their respective footprints in the region.

More importantly, after 9/11 attacks (2001) and subsequently the US led NATO's Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan, wherein the Central Asian region turned into a pivotal region. Like the US, China also has been trying to enhance its strategic presence in its neighborhood. In fact, China has expanded its footprint in Central Asia through trade, energy, security, infrastructure etc. Moreover, China has been cooperating with Russia to pursue its interests in the region. The main stimulus of Sino-Russia cooperation in Central Asia continues to be the shared objective of counterpoising the US presence in the Central Asian region. On the other hand, scholars like Ganguly, Scobell, and Liow (2010) have argued that there are countless differences between them both at bilateral and regional level.

The regional players like Iran, Turkey, India, and Pakistan have been making efforts to pursue their strategic interests and thereby the sphere of influence in the Central Asian region. So for India is concerned, it has introduced several policy frameworks to forge greater cooperation with the Central Asian countries. Nonetheless, India has been facing several challenges to strengthen its multi-faceted cooperation with the regional countries.

1.2. Theoretical Conceptualization

Since times immemorial, Central Asian region had remained a geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic chessboard for several major powers, the question arises why the major powers are making the strategic forays in Central Asia? In order to answer this question, one has to understand different geopolitical theories put forward by the scholars like, Friedrich Ratzel, Halford Mackinder, Nicholas Spykman etc.

Friedrich Ratzel, a German geographer and ethnographer, has contributed the 'Organic Theory of the State'. He describes the state as a spatial organism that requires the space, wherein growth is possible. For Ratzel, borders are irrelevant for growth of a state, whether it is a developed or developing. According to him, the expansion and annexation of territories are important for the growth of a state. He asserts that countries behave in a way not dissimilar from that of living organisms. Ratzel recognized as Darwin did i.e., "the survival of the fittest", which means struggle for life that occurs even in nation-states as well. Therefore, the nation-states must play their cards in the strategic chessboard wherein every actor is a competitor. Thus, the struggle requires a state to do or die situations for enlarging the geographical expansion and to exploit the defeated countries resources.

Halford Mackinder, a professor of geography, has developed the, 'Heartland Theory'. This theory suggests that the ideal area of the world from a strategic point of view is the 'Heartland of the Eurasian' landmass. In size, this area was roughly equal to that had occupied by the Former Soviet Union (FSU). Mackinder theorized that, "whoever controls the heartland, could control the world".

Nicholas Spykman, a disciple and critic of Halford Mackinder, who had recognized the strategic importance of maritime space and coastal regions, as different from that of Mackinder's approach. Spykman said, "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world" (Spykman, 2017).

From the above geopolitical theories, it has become crystal clear that Central Asia occupies strategic significance. Given its location at the Centre of Eurasia and endowed with vast untapped natural resources. Therefore, both regional and extra-regional players have been competing to heighten their geopolitical and geostrategic interests and thereby, strengthening their respective leverage in the region.

1.3. Significance of Central Asian Region

Central Asia is a landlocked in the heart of Eurasia and holds a significant geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic significance. The region stretches from the Caspian Sea in the West, China in the East, Afghanistan in the South and Russia in the North. Therefore, the geographical location of the region has made this region extremely pivotal to both regional and extra-regional countries. The CAR's are rich in mineral resources like oil, natural gas, uranium, gold, silver, copper, aluminum, titanium, manganese and other chemical raw materials. The countries like, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are rich in oil and natural gas resources, whereas Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have huge unexploited hydro-electricity potentials.

From the security point of view, the Central Asian region has remained a pivotal area. For instance, instability in the region may possibly jeopardize the security of the whole Eurasia, Middle East, and South Asia. Moreover, the potential for instability in the Central Asian region is very high given the rising phantom of non-state actor's including the inefficient authoritarian political regimes. Therefore, any geopolitical changes in the region inevitably extends its impact in its neighborhood.

The trafficking of drugs is another important factor for CARs importance, especially for regional countries. Besides the cultivation of domestic drugs, the CARs has been remained a safe transit for Afghan smugglers of opium, heroin and drugs. As most of the drugs are transported to Europe, via Central Asia and Russia. In fact, Russia has not only remained a transit route but a consumer country as well. Therefore, drug trafficking has been recognized as one of the major security challenges of Russia at par with religious extremism and terrorism (Cornell, & Swanstrom, 2006).

Furthermore, the Central Asian region had been focused by the renowned scholars as a pivotal region. For instance, Zbigniew Brzezinski referred to Central Asia as "the Eurasian Balkans" primarily because of its strategic location, energy richness, socio-political instability and potential domain of power. Indeed, the author argues that "whoever controls this space, will dominate the world" (Iseri, 2009). Equally, Zabortseva (2012), pointed out that international community has exponentially increased its focus on Central Asia. She held the view that, geography and natural resources have further

increased the significance of Central Asian countries. Therefore, given the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic significance of the Central Asian countries, both the regional and extra-regional players have approached towards the region to protect their interests and to enhance leverage.

1.4 The Changing Dynamics of Russia-Central Asia Relationship

After the demise of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries have emerged as independent countries. In fact, the then pro-West, the Russian leadership drifted towards the US and international financial institutions like World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other specialized agencies of United Nations Organization (UNO), for financial assistance. Therefore, during the early 1990's Russia's top foreign policy priority was to integrate with the Euro-Atlantic community. In this connection, the newly emerged Central Asian countries were ignored. The CARs were even removed from the Russian Ruble zone and were left without any currency, as the region was regarded as an extra-burden to the Russian economy. Moreover, the Russian President Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999) conceived that re-engaging with the Central Asian countries would not fulfill the national interests. In the security sphere, Russia has reduced the military budget, which consequently created a sense among the Central Asian countries that Russia would be no more a security guarantor of the region (Blank, 2011). In the sphere of transportation of natural resources, Russia's influence had reduced. The CARs had gained the right through international consortia for new pipeline routes that circumvent Russia.

Within a short period of time, however, Russia reoriented its foreign policy towards the Central Asian countries. In fact, the region has been underscored by civilizational links, geographical proximity, and mutual interests, particularly in terms of security, economics, and culture. Moreover, the change in Russia's political leadership from Yeltsin to Putin has also marked a dramatic shift in its foreign policy towards the region. The region has been recognized as a vital space and Russian zone of privileged interests. The shift in Russia's foreign policy towards the Central Asian countries can be traced from its Foreign Policy Doctrines (2000, 2008, 2013 and 2016), wherein Central Asia was given top priority. Therefore, Russia has strengthened its influence

both bilaterally and multilaterally. In fact, President Putin (2000-2008) has improved Moscow's image in the eyes of its Central Asian partners and knocked down the walls of mistrust and distrust. Thus, Central Asian countries have been re-engaged by Russia and the latter re-emerged and enhanced its influence both at the bilateral and multilateral level in the region. Consequently, all the Central Asian countries became strategic partners under the Putin's Presidency (Kazantsev, 2008).

1.5. Geo-Politics in Central Asia: Russia's Reciprocations

Since time immemorial, Central Asia has been figuring in the geo-political maneuverings of the major powers. In fact, 19th Century had witnessed the imperial rivalry and machinations between the Russian and British Empires over the region. The tensions, divergences, and clash of interests between them have described by Rudyard Kipling in his novel *Kim* (1901) as the 'Great Game'. Nonetheless, after the demise of the Soviet Union the region has once again become the Centre of attraction for major powers and regional actors like Russia, China, and the US. The regional powers like Iran, Turkey, India, and Pakistan, have also been for making efforts to enhance their influences. In fact, the regional and trans-regional players are/were active to outmaneuver the strategic presence of other actors. Thus, the divergent interests amongst the involved actors in the region has turned it into a global pivot. To understand this zero-sum strategic rivalry, it becomes imperative to discuss the interests, policies, and multi-faceted engagements of involved actors in the region.

Central Asia has become the geo-political cobweb. Being a major power, the US is one of the major players in the Central Asian region. Its chief interests in the region has been focusing on the promotion of democracy, rule of law and civil society. The diversification of energy routes is one of the US's top interests in the region. After the 9/11 attacks and subsequently the US led 'Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)' in Afghanistan to eradicate the terrorist networks, the CARs became front-line states for logistical purposes. Furthermore, the US has been aiming to contain the re-emergence of Russia, prevent the economic forays of China and circumvent Iran. For this, the US has launched several policy frameworks to pursue its multi-faceted interests and thereby to restrict the leverages of other geo-political actors in the region.

China has civilizational links with the Central Asian region. But the Soviet control over the region had largely been remained an inhibition for Chinese intrusion. Nonetheless, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, China find an opportunity to turn the situation in its favor. Its primary interests in the region are to exploit the oil and natural gas, creating a conducive environment for the economic development, stabilization of China's Xinjiang region and to minimize the US presence (Patnaik, 2012). For this, China has introduced several policy frameworks, invested massively in developmental infrastructure projects in general and the Belt and Road initiative (BRI) in particular to integrate the landlocked Central Asian economies in regional network.

The regional players like, Iran, Turkey, India, and Pakistan have been trying to secure their respective interests either bilaterally or multilaterally by aligning with the major powers in the zero-sum game to achieve their interests in the Central Asian region. Thus, the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic maneuvering of regional and extra-regional players in the Central Asian region have been challenging Russia's influence in the region. Corollary, Russia has been obliged to checkmate the growing clout of the involved actors in its backyard. Therefore political leadership of Russia has prioritized its policy approach towards the region.

Russia has supported the political regimes of the CARs for status quo against the political reforms, change in leadership and multi-party system as advocated by the West. In fact, the unpopular regimes in Central Asia have acknowledged that without the Russian support, their positions could not be stable and safe. Equally, in terms of security cooperation, Russia has enhanced its relationship both bilaterally and multilaterally. It has emerged as a sole security guarantor of the regional countries (Mankoff & Mankoff, 2009). Economically, Russia has strengthened its cooperation and has monopolized the Central Asian oil and natural gas pipelines (Simola, & Solanko, 2017). Importantly from the cultural point of view, Russia has been enjoying more influence and leverage than the other actors in the region.

1.6. India's Interests in Central Asia

Central Asia has been figuring prominently in the Indian foreign policy radar. India and Central Asia have been sharing common civilizational bonds since the

recorded history. However, the colonization of Central Asia and the Indian sub-continent by the Tsarist-Russia and the British Empire respectively had enervated the age-old ties. But with the end of the 'Cold War (1945-1991)' and the demise of Soviet Union, some internal and external dynamics have brought both the regions closer on account of mutual interests. In fact, India's stakes in Central Asia have always been remained on high stake given the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic reasons. The scholarly works of Roy (2001); Campbell (2013); Kothari (2015); Pant (2017) and others highlighted that securing energy especially oil and natural gas and eliminating the rising phantom of terrorism, extremism, small arms proliferation and drug trafficking have been remained the vital interests of India in the Central Asian region. Moreover, as the region shares borders with Afghanistan, which has been remained a hotbed of terrorism, extremism, small arms proliferation etc. In this context, India has vital security interest in the region. Obviously given the Kashmir angle, India cannot be walled off from the security developments, which are usually taking place in the region. Any misadventures/ activities on part of the terrorists and extremists in the CARs including Afghanistan could stimulate similar elements active in India. For reasons, dictated by geography, India's strategic concerns are tied up with the region. Moreover, in the contemporary times, the Central Asia has become an area of competition for both the regional and extra-regional players. Therefore, India's multifaceted interest's lies at stake given the region entrapped in the geopolitical cobweb (Stobdan, 2008).

To pursue its multi-faceted interests, India has introduced several policy frameworks like Extended Neighbourhood, Look North Policy' (LNP), Look West Policy (LWP) (Roy & Roy, 2017). However, India's approach has been remained futile particularly with regard to Central Asian region. In order to protect and promote its stakes and turn the disengagements into re-engagements, India has introduced the 'Connect Central Asia" Policy (CCAP) at the first meeting of the India-Central Asia Dialogue, a Track II initiative on June 12-13, 2012, in Kyrgyzstan to fast-track its multifaceted cooperation with the CARs (Kothari, 2018). Nonetheless, the relationship faces several constraints including geographical discontinuity, problematic India-Pakistan

relation, the unstable situation in Afghanistan and the geostrategic maneuvering of China etc.

1.7. India-Russia Convergences and Divergences in Central Asia

As stated earlier, India and Central Asia had been enjoying civilizational bonds since the recorded history. During the Soviet era (1917-1991), India's relations with the Central Asian region was shaped by Delhi's strategic closeness with Moscow, especially after the Indo-Sino war of 1962. As Central Asia has been an integral part of the Soviet Union, so India keeps on enjoying cordial relations with the region. In fact, India was one of the very few countries that had a consulate at Tashkent in the erstwhile Central Asia of the former Soviet Union. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, both India and Russia framed their foreign policies in opposite directions vis-à-vis Central Asian in general and the Western world in particular. Consequently, Indian and Russian engagements with the Central Asian countries have been remained at the lowest ebb.

With the onset of the New Great Game, the all-weather friends India and Russia have realized the compatibility of their interests in the Central Asian region. In fact, both the countries have been trying to maintain peace and stability in the Central Asian region. As both, have been victims of terrorism and extremism in Kashmir and Chechnya respectively. The rising phantom of non-state actors in the Central Asian region and its possible spillover effects on Eurasia and South Asia had converged India and Russian security interests in the region.

The drug trafficking has been another important issue of common concern between India and Russia. Both the countries have been attempting to eliminate the curse of drug production and trafficking as well. Drug trafficking in Central Asia poses a major threat to regional stability. According to Galeotti, (2016), Russia has almost 6 percent of the total population, or some 8.5 million people regular users of drugs. Moreover, drug trafficking is one of the most lucrative sources of income to the terrorist groups operating in the region. Apart from this, Central Asian region remains an important destination for the Soviet weapons programme and raw materials, as all the countries possess the uranium potentials. The illegal routes that are used for drug

trafficking may also be used for transporting components of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). Both India and Russia scared that the possibility of proliferation of these destructive weapons into the terrorists' hands might create global and regional security threats. Hence, trafficking of drugs and arms have enhanced compatibility of Indo-Russo interests in the Central Asian region.

The most important converging interests between India and Russia in Central Asia has been to limit the expanding influence of China. Although, Russia has several mutual convergences with China in Central Asia, the former has been attempting to check the latter's expanding geostrategic maneuvers in its southern periphery. In fact, China has neutralized Russia's economic forays in the Central Asian region and currently is a leading trade partner of the regional countries. Therefore, greater involvement of China particularly in developmental infrastructure projects like Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in the Central Asian countries has drastically impacted Russia's economic influence. For Russia, to check the economic influence of China in the Central Asian region, India is a reliable partner. In fact, Russia has supported India's full membership in the SCO to balance the strategic maneuvering of China in Central Asia. Moreover, India has been in goodwill to be the member of Russia led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Also, both the countries have been committed to enhance connectivity wherein India is haunted by this problem in the CARs. The connectivity projects included International North-South transport corridor (INSTC) and Chabahar port. Thus, India and Russia have been enjoying multi-faceted converging interests in the Central Asian region.

On the contrary, the changing dynamics of India-Russia relationship had impacted their relationship both bilaterally and in the regional level. In fact, the differences have originated from India's enervating cooperation with the collapse of the Soviet Union that obliged the former to adjust its foreign policy towards the West. Russia's value to India is no longer on ideological basis but straightforward and pragmatic, as it had remained India's major supplier of arms and nothing more (Unnikrishnan, 2017). Moreover, after the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the successor state, Russia has no longer interests in India's immediate neighborhood on account of the independent identity of Central Asian countries (Naik, 1995). Thus, the

increasing geographic proximity between India and Russia in the post-Cold War era had further widened the gap between their foreign policy perspectives vis-à-vis Western World in general and Central Asia region in particular. India has outfoxed by Russia from Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In fact, India's has been asked to vacate the Airbase in Tajikistan (2010) by Russia (Mullen, 2014).

Russia's growing cooperation with China has put India's stakes in peril. Bhattacharjea (2008) argued that China has been a more significant partner for Russia in Central Asia than India. Therefore, for Russia, the financial lure of Chinese investments has overlooked India in the region. Since the US functions as the creator of strategic space for India both in Afghanistan and Central Asia but, the US withdrawal from Afghanistan may further dent India's ability to gain strategic footprints in the region (Usha, 2012). Thus, the growing relationship between Russia and China and now with India's arch-rival Pakistan have impacted India's relationship with Russia in Central Asia.

1.8. India's Foreign Policy towards Central Asia: Challenges and Options

Although India has introduced several policy frameworks with the Central Asian countries. The chief objective has been to pursue its multi-faceted interests in the region. Nonetheless, India has been facing numerous challenges such as connectivity, security concerns, information gap, language barriers, visa problems and the geopolitical rivalry of regional and extra-regional players in the CARs. On the other hand, India has foreign policy options as well to enhance its multifaceted interests in the region. First, India has to reorient its foreign policy towards Central Asia in order to protect and promote its multi-faceted interests. The Connect Central Asia policy is one of its foreign policy frameworks that needs to be strengthened. This policy focused on several identified areas of cooperation including political, economic, security, cultural, education, e-networks, connectivity etc. The comprehensive implementation of this policy needs an acceleration. In fact, it is required allocation of resource for the implementation of this policy that can enhance India's relations with the Central Asian countries.

India, Russia and Central Asia have been sharing commonality with respect to the stability of Afghanistan. As peace and stability in Afghanistan is significant not only for Central Asia but also for India and Russia. Thus, India has to devise its strategy towards Afghanistan in such a way that India, Central Asia, and Russia could cooperate with each other. As Afghanistan has been a bridge link connecting South Asia with the Central Asian.

The Central Asian countries have been seeking India's cooperation to combat the growing menace of religious extremism, violence, terrorism and arms and drugs trafficking, as Pakistan is known for its dubious role in such cooperation given its political instability and security fragility. India must exploit this opportunity. It will not only protect its own interests in the region rather there will be a considerable influence in the region. India's challenge lies in its failure to seeking and heightening cooperation with Russia to turn the adverse situations in its favor.

Another option to enhance India's cooperation with the Central Asian countries is to increase the diplomatic talks, frequent high level and official visits. The trade volume between India and Central Asia is growing but there are huge potentials in IT, textiles, and automobiles. India's membership in the Russia led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), can provide India a space for enlarging its economic relationship with the Central Asian countries. To encourage joint India-Russia information technology (IT) projects in the region with the transfer of skills such as joint initiatives between the Indian and Russian IT sectors and the rising IT industry in Central Asia (Foshko, 2012). In this sector Russia is programming and engineering talent which can be combined with India's skilled labor and well-developed IT services is also an option for India to strengthen its multi-faceted cooperation with the Central Asian countries.

1.9 Research Objectives

- 1.** To analyze, the profile of the Central Asian Republics (CARs) in the context of the different geopolitical theory.
- 2.** To examine the changing dynamics of the Russia-Central Asia relations in the post-Cold War era;
- 3.** To examine Russia in the New Great Game of Central Asia;

4. To investigate India's foreign policy challenges and options in the Central Asian region.

1.10 Research Questions

1. How geopolitical theories have defined Central Asian region in the background of its politico-economic and socio-cultural profile?
2. How Russia has reoriented itself in Central Asia in the post-Cold War era?
3. To what extent Russia has been successful in sustaining its strategic influence in this resource-rich region amidst the New Great Game?
4. What is India's position in the changing geo-political scenario of Central Asia?

1.11 Research Methodology

The methodology used for this research is based on descriptive and analytical approaches. The descriptive approach has been used to describe the profile of the Central Asian countries under the framework of different geopolitical theories. The analytical approach has been employed to analyze the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic maneuvering of the US, China, Turkey, Iran, Pakistan, and India in Russia's backyard (Central Asia). Moreover, analytical approach has been used to explore India's challenges and foreign policy options in the Central Asian region.

The data for the research has been collected from both primary and secondary sources. The primary sources include official statements and foreign policy documents from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Russia, US, China, India, and other involved countries, governmental annual reports and international organizations like UN, WTO, IMF, etc.

The secondary data used in the research has been mainly collected from different books, journals, and articles. For detailed analysis of the developments and theories, working papers of various educational and research institutes, such as the Observer Research Foundation, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies Institute for Security and Development Policy have been thoroughly examined for gaining an understanding of India's perspective on the emerging situation. Also, relevant publications from institutes such as Chatham House,

Carnegie Centre for International Peace, RAND Corporation, Brookings Institution etc., have also been analyzed during the writing of the thesis.

1.12. Significance of the Study

The Central Asia region is located at the heart of Eurasia. The region stretches from the Caspian Sea in the West, China in the East, Afghanistan in the South and Russia in the North. The geographical location of the region has made it extremely pivotal to both regional and extra-regional countries. The CAR's are rich in mineral resources like oil, natural gas, uranium, gold, silver, copper, aluminum, titanium, manganese and other chemical raw materials. The countries like, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are rich in oil and natural gas resources, whereas Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have lot of potential for unexploited hydro-electricity. From the security point of view, the region has remained a pivotal area. In fact, instability in the region may possibly endanger the security of the Eurasia, Middle East, and South Asia as well. Therefore, the theme of this study holds much significance in the contemporary era.

Given the geo-political, geo-strategic and economic significance of the Central Asia. The region became a strategic pivot, where the interests of the Russia, China, and US as well as India, Pakistan, Turkey and Iran, counterpoise with each other. In fact, Russia has restore its influence in the region. Moreover, in this changing geostrategic environment, the all-weather friends India and Russia have been realized their reciprocal interests that helped to revitalize their ties both at global in general and in context of Central Asia in particular. Indeed, the Indo-Soviet friendship has advanced into a strategic partnership and cooperation. For the India-Russia relations, the regional development presents the compatibility of their mutual interests, particularly in the Central Asian region. However, at the same time, some way the Indian strategic maneuverers in the regions have been taken by another way round by Russia. Indeed, India's drift towards the US have creates a peculiar situation between India and Russia both at the bilateral and regional levels. India has been facing several challenges in the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic chessboard of Central Asia. Moreover, the subsequent section of this study has analyzed the foreign policy options for India in

the region. Since the existing literature lacks in various aspects, therefore, a research on this topic is going to be a significant contribution for the Indian and Russian foreign policy pundits, academicians and private entrepreneur as well

1.13 Organization of the Chapters

The thesis has been studied under the following chapters.

Chapter- One: Introduction

This chapter contains the introduction of the work, its significance, methodology and objectives of the study.

Chapter- Two: Review of literature

This chapter describes the ideas and views of experts with regard to the geopolitical and geostrategic environment of Central Asia. This chapter also contains knowledge gap found after scanning the literature.

Chapter- Three: Profiling Central Asian Republics (CARs): Conceptualizing in Geo-Political Settings

This chapter discusses how Central Asian countries came into being. It discusses the general profile of the region especially in terms of polity, economics, social and cultural composition of the region. Moreover, this chapter talks about the concept of geo-politics under the framework of various geopolitical theories.

Chapter- Four: Russia's Central Asia Policy: Contextualizing the Paradigmatic Shift.

This chapter discusses Russia's passive and active approach towards the region. It also analyzes, Russia's motivations in its behavior towards the CARs, its multi-faceted engagements both at bilateral and multilateral levels have been covered in this chapter.

Chapter- Five: New Great Game as a Gordian knot in Central Asia: Weighing Russia's Re-balancing Reciprocation.

This chapter is a modest attempt to explore the policy frameworks of the major powers and regional player. The multi-faceted engagements of involved actors with the

CARs have been discussed. Moreover, this chapter also discusses, Russia's Re-balancing Reciprocation vis-à-vis the involved actors in the Central Asian region.

Chapter- Six: Central Asia as a Pivot of Russia: India's Challenges and Options.

This chapter explores the policy frameworks of India towards the Central Asia. The multi-faceted engagements of India with the CARs have been discussed. Moreover, this chapter put its focus that how India has been gradually carving its position amidst the intense competition of major powers and regional actors in the Central Asian region. It would also analyze India's challenges and opportunities in the emerging geo-politics of Central Asia.

Chapter- Seven: Conclusion and Recommendations.

The last chapter is the concluding chapter which is an attempt to present the findings, observations, and the recommendations.

Chapter- Two

Review of Literature

Ample literature has been available on Russia's geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic maneuvering *vis-à-vis*, the US, China, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and India in the Central Asian region. Literature is also available that debates about India's challenges and options in the region. A large number of books and research articles that mentions the changing geo-politics of Central Asia and its impact on regional countries is categorized under various lines of thought.

2.1. The first line of thought discusses the general Profile of the CARs, the concept of geo-politics under the framework of different theories and geopolitical models.

Hyman (1998) has discussed the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent emergence of the Central Asian countries in his book, *"The Central Asian States: Discovering Independence"*. The author argued that the Central Asian countries since times immemorial has been united by a common history, culture and way of life. This books discusses that with the demise of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries i.e., Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan gained separate statehood. Moreover, this books also discusses the transition period of the CARs (1990s). During this period the CARs have faced several challenges like political, economic, and security etc. Moreover, the subsequent sections of this book has discusses the nation-building problems, faced by the Central Asian countries during the early 1990s.

Rafis Abazov (1998), stated in his work, *"Practice in Foreign Policy Making: Formation of the Post-Soviet International Politics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan"* about the political, economic and socio-culture aspects of the Central Asian countries. The author pointed out that the 'Alma-Ata Declaration' formally ended the existence of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). It had subsequently led to the emergence of the Central Asian countries. Moreover, the author discusses that after the independence, these countries started the formation of their independent foreign policies and sovereign state institutions and began to define their policy orientations *vis-à-vis* regional and extra-regional countries.

Akiner (1994), stated in his work, "Post-Soviet Central Asia", that because of the strategic geographical location, Central Asia has been a cultural crossroads. The author is of the view that the great ancient civilizations of China, India, Iran, the Turkic peoples of the northern steppes have all shaped its historical development. This book reveals that over the 70 years of Soviet rule, however, serious attempts were made to suppress aspects of local culture, religion and separatist sense of ethnic identity. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the independent Central Asian countries enjoy a greater degree of autonomy but faced a range of complex political, economic and social problems. This book addresses not only these problems but also aspects of the region's history and culture, including questions of contemporary nationalism and ethnic identity, the role of natural gas and oil in the economies of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, the foreign policy dilemmas of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and the other countries of Central Asia have been covered.

Scott Haase (2008) in his paper, "Central Asia: a study of history, society, culture and its effects on the current political and economic ideologies of today's leaders" has stated that after many years as a colonial possession, the CARs were granted independence in the wake of the Soviet Union's collapse. The author is of the view that, unlike other countries that received independence with open arms, the CARs were reluctant to embrace their newfound freedom. Unprepared, they were forced to build new nation-states out of the ashes that Russia had left with only their past to serve as a compass to follow. Moreover, this article uncovers that how the shared history, society and culture have impacted their continued usage of past governmental structures resulted in dictatorial regimes and centralized economies as well.

Criekemans, D. (2003), in his book, "*Geo-politics from the Cold War to the 21st Century*" has defined the term geo-politics as an analysis of the interactions between geographical settings and political processes. The political processes include forces that operated both at a regional and international level that influence international behavior. Both geographical settings and political processes are dynamic, and each influence and is influenced by the other. This book reveals that geo-politics is a method of analyzing international relations, has a history that includes a common vocabulary, well-established and sometimes conflicting concepts, an established body of thought,

and a recognized group of theorists and experts. Moreover, this book has presented in detail the history of geopolitical thought from classical geopolitical analysis to contemporary international relations. It has given pride of place to the geopolitical ideas and theories of Halford Mackinder, Nicholas Spykman, and James Burnham. These well-known geo-politicians had combined brilliant analyses of past events with remarkable predictions of future developments in the Central Asian region.

Anita Sengupta (2009) in his book, *“Heartlands of Eurasia: The Geo-politics of Political Space”* wrote that the Mackinder has not given a precise definition of the Heartland. According to the author, the extent of the region had changed in scope over the years even in Mackinder’s writings itself. The author of this book said that Mackinder’s original Euro-Asia of 1904 measured nearly one half of the Asia, east, and west of the Urals. However, in 1919, in the light of the geopolitical changes including the World War I (1914-1918) and the Russian revolution (1917), Mackinder modified his heartland theory by extending it further westward. It was not his final modification to his heartland theory. In fact, after the World War II (1939-1945), Mackinder had proposed the 3rd version of the heartland scheme, making it roughly coterminous with the territory of the former Soviet Union including Central Asia. Sengupta argues that even Mackinder himself considered the heartland to be a strategic concept on a map, with no precise definition. Furthermore, it also examines the post-Cold War scenario including the emergence of the CARs that lead to the revival of certain geopolitical concepts and models that had become largely defunct in the recent past.

The scholars like Jacob L. Shapiro and Xander Snyder (2017) in their work, *“Geopolitical Theories”* discussed three main theories of the geo-politics of Alfred Mahan, Halford Mackinder, and Nicholas Spykman. These geopolitical theories posit a different center for what a dominant world power has to control in order to be a global power. So ironically, Mahan inspired a lot of American strategists, thinkers, and politicians such as Teddy Roosevelt and Franklin Roosevelt. His real contention was that global power was based on the sea, if you could control the world’s oceans, you could see a global power emerge. Equally, Mackinder publishes a paper with his Heartland theory. In Mackinder’s vision, from Europe, all the way to Asia is something that he calls *“The World Island”*. According to Mackinder, if any control this Heartland

of this World Island, which is around Central Asia, Russia, the central part of the World Island, can then control the world. Likewise, Spykman said just the seas power is not enough. It's the Rimland, the land which is around by the Heartland of the World Island and if any country can control that, can become a world power. Thus, this work has briefly defined the concept of geo-politics within the framework of three main geopolitical theories of international relations.

2.2. In this line of thought, different scholars mentioned the changing relationship between Russia and CARs, Russia's tilt towards the West, CARs search for new partners and the shifting paradigms of Russia towards the region.

Jyotsna Bakshi (1999), stated, in his article, "*Russian Policy towards Central Asia*" that after the demise of the USSR, Russia orientated its foreign policy towards the West. It hoped to become a liberal democracy based on the Western model with generous aid and assistance from the West and international monetary institutions such as World Bank, IMF, and WTO. According to the author, Russia was preoccupied with political and economic turmoil and thereby paid marginal attention towards the CARs. At the same time, the Central Asian countries have proceeded to cement their new-found independence by establishing their ties with the outside world. It seemed that the interests of Boris Yeltsin in Moscow and those of the ruling elites in the CARs tended to converge. Thus, during the early 1990's the relationship between Russia and Central Asia went into opposite direction. Nonetheless, Russia realized the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic importance of Central Asia and reoriented its foreign policy. The shadow of Russia loomed large on the Central Asian horizons and continues to do so in many ways. In fact, all transportation and communication links of the CARs including oil and natural gas pipelines moved northward towards Russia, has also covered this article.

Lena Jonson (2004) states in his book, "*Vladimir Putin and Central Asia: The Shaping of Russian Foreign Policy*" that the 9/11 attacks, the US intervention in Afghanistan and the search for Osama bin Laden, had put the Central Asian region in World's attention. Russia under the dynamic leadership of President Putin, gave its consent to the US led ISAF forces to use the Central Asian airfields during the Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) in Afghanistan. According to the author, this leads

to a dramatic turn in Russia's Central Asia policy. Putin's policy at that time represented an effort to respond to the security challenges of the region, but, it also addressed the growing, US engagement in the area, has been covered by Lena Jonson in this piece of work. Moreover, this book also examines Russia's convergences of interests with the West especially with the US in terms of security challenges. Afghanistan initially turned a ground field for Russia and US eliminating the terrorist outfits and maintaining peace and stability in the region.

The authors like, Vladimir Paramonov and Aleksey Stokov (2008) in the work, *"The Evolution of Russia's Central Asia Policy"*, have mentioned in detailed, Russia's policy framework towards the CARs from 1991-2008. According to the authors of this article, the successor state, Russia has shifted its foreign policy towards the West for economic assistance and thereby neglected the region particularly in the 1990s. This article examines that Russia's passive approach, especially during the Boris Yeltsin's era. As a result, both the regional and extra-regional players have been attempted to fill the power vacuum, which further lead to decline Russia's age-old influence in the region. Moreover, after the reemergence of Russia especially in terms economic rise including the rise in the energy prices and more importantly the change in the political leadership lead to reassert Russia's influence in the region, has also covered in this article.

Jos Boonstra (2008) states in his article, *"Russia and Central Asia from Disinterest to Eager Leadership"* that after the demise of the Soviet Union the successor state, Russia was struggling to position itself globally and had aimed to integrate with the western political and economic structures, interest in its southern neighbor was extremely low. According to the author, the newborn Central Asian countries were regarded as a nuisance that restricted Russia to overcome its economic crisis. However, in the second half of the 1990s, Russia gradually started to take interest in Central Asia, mainly in reaction to the US, China and other regional players maneuvering in its southern backyard. Russia took steps to develop its cooperation and re-integrate the CIS under its influence, has also been covered in this article. Moreover, this article also discusses the institutional mechanisms like, CIS, CSTO, EEC, EEU, and SCO that assisted Russia to restore its lost influence in the region.

Marlène Laruelle (2009) in his working paper, *"Russia in Central Asia: Old History, New Challenges"*, stated that Central Asian region remained under the control of the Czarist Russia and the communist Soviet Union. It had colonized the region in the late 18th and 19th Century. Nonetheless, the author points out that after the demise of the Soviet Union, the successor state Russia had lost its hegemonic influence in the region. Russia was in acute economic crisis, to come out of it, Russia tilted towards the US and international monetary institutions for economic assistance. Consequently, during this period, Russia had adopted a passive policy approach towards this region. According to the author, the Soviet retreat in the region created a power vacuum that attracted both the regional and extra-regional actors to fill this vacuum. Thus, the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic maneuvering of the involved actors in the backyard of Russia had caused serious challenges to its age-old influence in the region.

Jeffrey Mankoff (2011) in his book, *"Russian Foreign Policy: The Return of Great Power Politics"* provides a thoughtful analysis of Russia's foreign policy, since the end of the Cold War. This book has examined the developments of the past two decades into the broader sweep of Russian history. The author argues that Russia has adopted a more assertive foreign policy, particularly after the Vladimir Putin came into powers (2000). In fact, under his president ship, Russia extended its foreign policy, strengthen its bilateral and institutional cooperation with the regional and extra-regional countries. Russia actively gets involved in the US war in Iraq and Afghanistan. Mankoff analyzes Russia's interactions with major global and regional actors, such as the US, European Union (EU), China, and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in this piece of work. Despite Russia's harsh rhetoric and the deployment of Russian military forces against Georgia in 2008, the author convincingly demonstrates that there is little reason to fear the re-emergence of the Cold War-like situation with the US. Instead, the Author argues that Russia became more interested in restoring its lost influence.

Julian Cooper (2013) states in his article, *"The Russian economy twenty years after the end of the socialist economic system"* about Russia's economic development after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. The significant changes which occurred in Russia's economy after the end of the cold war have been comprehensively covered by Julian Cooper in this article. The author has made a comparative analysis of

traditional and contemporary models of economic functioning in Russia. Both the models possess their own significance during the course of their functioning. The author has debated about 60 year's old socialist pattern of the economy to find a conclusion about its existence in the contemporary period. Furthermore, two vital sectors, that is, defense industry and military economy have been discussed by the author in this piece of work.

Ryan C. Maness and Brandon Valeriano (2015) have mentioned about Russia's diplomacy after the end of the Cold war in their work, "*Conclusion: Russian Coercive Diplomacy after the Cold War*". Russia has re-emerged in economic and strategic means and similarly, the Russian Federation has been fortunate to have leaders like Yeltsin, Putin, and Medvedev who transformed country's collapsing economy into a rehabilitated phase. The author has discussed Vladimir Putin's abilities and skills in the economic, strategic, maritime and cyber world. The authors of this article have claimed about the coercive nature of Russia's diplomatic power in order to regain its fame that had lost during the Cold War. The article has debated about Russia's coercive attitude vis-à-vis the states that were part of former Soviet Union about not to align with the West primarily the US. However, the authors have mentioned in this article that Russia's policy of keeping these states alienated from the Western influence has not worked properly.

2.3. This line of thought discusses the views and ideas of various scholars with regard to the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic manoeuvring of the US, China Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan in the region, and Russia's rebalancing reciprocations has been covered in this line of thought.

Matthew Edwards (2003) in his article, "*The New Great Game and the new great gamers: disciples of Kipling and Mackinder*", states that since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the concept of a New Great Game has remained a burning issue in the international relations. According to the author, the New Great Game is a shorthand for competition for influence, power, hegemony, and profits, often referring to the oil and natural gas industries and reserves in the Central Asian region. Matthew is of the view that, it is not limited to these aspects only, it is an area of competition in terms of cultural, religious, and military competition. The concept became such an integral part of

reporting on the region, whether implicitly or explicitly in academic journals, print media, and government reports that its use has gained a worldwide following, which has not decreased since the events of 9/11 and the subsequent US-led operation in Afghanistan.

Lutz Kleveman (2004) in his book, *"The New Great Game: Blood and Oil in Central Asia"* talks about the geo-politics of oil and natural gas in the Central Asian region. The author makes the interesting argument that the challenge to the US 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 Asia. The central idea is that the US, China, Russia, and Iran are now engaged in a New Great Game, a power struggle to control the CARs oil and natural gas reserves. The work draws attention to a little understanding of an increasingly important part of the world where oil, Islam, and terrorism converge to create havoc. The concluding part of this book discusses that this competition among major powers and regional actors can mark the development of the region's resources.

Petar Kurecic (2010) mentions in his paper, *"The New Great Game: Rivalry of Geostrategic and Geo-economics in Central Asia"* due to the presence of valuable oil and natural gas reserves, the region has attracted the attention of regional and extra-regional players. The author pointed out that the demise of the Soviet Union and the occurrence of the 9/11 attacks have further led to enhance the significance of the region. In this context, this article reveals that the US, China, Turkey, and Iran have started a quest for Central Asian and Caspian Sea oil and natural gas. Furthermore, the US presence in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Central Asia including China's rising economic influence, Iran's and Turkey's proximity to the region, and military and economic alliances, show that Central Asia is an arena of great power rivalry, has been covered in this paper.

Alexander Cooley (2012) in his book, *"Great Games, Local Rules: The New Great Power Contest in Central Asia"*, describes Central Asia as a land of steppe and silly. Over the past few years, the region has attracted growing attention as the crossroads between US, Russia, and China. From the outset, Cooley challenges easy generalizations about foreign competition in Central Asia. The old 'Great Game'

referred to the 19th Century rivalry between Britain and Russia for influence in the region. However, in the contemporary era, there are various actors having both convergences and divergences of interests has covered this book.

Sun Zhuangzhi (2007) discusses in his article, *“the Relationship between China and Central Asia”*, China’s political, economic and security relations with the CARs. In terms of political engagements, China has strengthened its relationship with the CARs. Both the regions hold similar views on many national and international issues. Equally, in terms of economics, China and the CARs have complementary advantages that offer the possibility of extensive cooperation especially in terms of oil and natural gas. Finally, this article has provided a significant space for Chinese security cooperation with the Central Asian countries, as both the regions share common security challenges. The actions of ethnic separatists, extremists and the threat of transnational crime, terrorism, and regional conflict are mutual concerns. Maintaining the peace and stability in the Central Asian countries has remained a major security interest of China.

Irina Ionela Pop (2010) states in his article, *“China’s Energy Strategy in Central Asia: Interactions with Russia, India, and Japan”* that since 2000, China’s tremendous economic growth subsequently lead to increase the energy demand-supply gap. Given the untapped oil and natural gas reserves in neighboring Central Asia, China adopted a pragmatic energy strategy towards the region in order to reduce its dependence on the Middle East. In this context, this paper examines China’s energy interests, its energy security diplomacy and its investments in Central Asia has covered this paper. Moreover, this paper also examines the role of China in the energy geo-politics of Central Asia and its interactions with the other actors involved in the region. In the concluding part of the paper, the author has summarized that China has been so for successful in achieving its objectives in the region vis-à-vis India and Japan.

Charles Hawkins and Robert Love (2012), in their edited book, *“Chinese Strategies on Central Asia: The New Great Game”*. 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 stakes in the region via trade routes for centuries but has recently made a concerted effort to apply its influence. This book also highlights some key issues of the region include transnational crime, drug trafficking, energy resources, trade, stable governance, border disputes etc. The book also focuses 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.

Niklas Swanström (2015) states in his article, "*The Security Dimension of the China-Central Asia Relationship: China's Military Engagement with Central Asian Countries*" that China has traditionally been reluctant to engage with the Central Asian region primarily for security and economic reasons. According to the author, China took small but significant steps to boost its security and military cooperation with the regional countries. This article has covered Chinese broader security interests and strategies that go beyond the Xinjiang province. Over the years, China has strengthened both bilateral and multilateral military cooperation with the Central Asian countries has also been covered in the piece of work. Thus, due to rising profile of Chinese military engagements with the CARs especially through the SCO that subsequently lead to eclipse Russia's military preeminence in the region has also revealed in this article.

Jacquelyn K. Davis and Michael J. Sweeney (2004) illustrates in their book, "*Central Asia in U.S. Strategy and Operational Planning: Where do we go from here?*", that in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, the US has intensified its multi-faceted engagements with almost all the Central Asian countries. Moreover, this book has paid special attention towards the US security cooperation with the CARs, especially with the Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. Russia and China have initially supported the US led global war on terror. Nonetheless, over the period of time, the growing US military presence in the region has traumatized both Russia and China has also in this piece of work.

Andrew C. Kuchins and Jeffrey Mankoff (2015) mentions in their article, "*Central Asia in a Reconnecting Eurasia: US Policy Interests and Recommendations*" that since the CARs independence, the US has attempted to enhance its multi-faceted engagements with the region. The authors in the first part of the article states that the

US has supported the CARs to open up its economies for foreign investments including the construction of energy pipelines to lessen inherited dependence on Russia. In the latter part of the article US policies emphasized to strengthen the security cooperation particularly after the September 2001. The US was allowed to use the Central Asian airbases has also been covered in this piece of work.

The authors like Eugene Rumer, Richard Sokolsky, and Paul Stronski (2016) states in their article, *“the US Policy toward Central Asia”* that the major geopolitical shifts have increased the great-power competition in Central Asia between US, Russia, and China. This paper has mentioned in detail the US interests and its policy framework especially after the 9/11 attacks and its subsequent intervention in Afghanistan. The US has supported the CARs in the introduction of liberal democracy, open economy and membership in the multilateral institutions. This paper has also covered the US geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic footprints that have feared both Russia and China in their neighborhood.

Trenin, D. (2011) in his book, *“Challenges and Opportunities: Russia and the Rise of China and India”* consider the impact of China’s and India’s rise on Russian foreign and domestic policies. The dramatic change in Russia’s and China’s historical fates at the close of the twentieth century, which established China, for the first time in modern times, as the more powerful, dynamic, and successful of the two countries. The rise of India, by contrast, has had comparatively less influential. The next section of the book discusses the geopolitical and geostrategic aspects of the relationship between these countries. Russia sees China as both an alternative and a supplementary. China wants Russia to hold out a chance to develop its Far Eastern territories and use that foothold to integrate the country into the Asia-Pacific region. India can be a close partner to Russia, but the fate of the partnership will depend on Moscow’s interest.

Stephen J. Blank (2011) in his article, *“Challenges to Russia in Central Asia”* discusses various challenges to Russia and their implications for Central Asian security. He is of the opinion that 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 the 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 crises 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 have 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.

Rustem Kulnazarov (2015) illustrates in his article, *“New Geopolitical Role of Central Asia within Foreign Policy Interests of World Powers”* that after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the leading global and regional actors have started their occupation of the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic vacuum in Central Asia. This article traces the competition between global players especially Russia, China, and the US, with regard to the establishment of control over the Central Asian region. According to the author Russia, has been seeking to return its influence in Central Asia, China, striving to entangle the region into its orbit of influence and the US to try to restrict the influence of both Russia and China. This article also discusses the convergence of Russia and China interests especially at multilateral level in Central Asia.

Konstantin Yevgenievich Meshcheryakov (2015) has drawn our attention towards Russia's foreign policy towards Central Asia, in his article, *“Two Decades of Russia's Foreign Policy in Central Asia: Trends and Problems”*. In this article, the author has covered Russia's foreign policy towards Central Asia during the presidencies of Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999), Vladimir Putin (2000-2008) and Dmitry Medvedev (2008-2012). It has covered Russia's key challenges, achievements, and failures during each administration. Moreover, the author comes to the conclusion that over the last 25 years, Russia's overall policy approach vis-a-vis Central Asia was at times quite unstable and lacking in strategic planning. None of the three administrations were able to accomplish fully their policy goals has been covered in this article.

2.4. In this line of thought, various academicians and scholars have discussed about India's multi-faceted engagements with the CARs. How Russia has been acting as a bridge and ridge for India in the region. It also through light on India's challenges and opportunities.

Meena Singh Roy (2001) in her article, "India's interests in Central Asia" addresses India's interests in the Central Asian countries. This paper also examines various avenues of cooperation with these countries with which India shares many commonalities. Roy also highlights India's geostrategic and geopolitical interests in the region including the problems of political Islam, drug trafficking, small arms proliferation. This paper also examines the economic and energy interests of India in this region. India being an extended neighbor of CARs has major geostrategic and economic interests in this region. Therefore, the future prospects for cooperation between India and Central Asia in the field of energy security seem to be very important. The most crucial factor for India, as addressed by the author has been the security of the region that is considered as vital for both Central Asia and South Asia for maintaining peace and harmony. The global powers have already realized about the danger posed by religious extremism and terrorism, but India can take advantage of the situation and cooperate with other world powers to overcome this rising menace of religious extremism. The region is, however, most important for the peace and stability in whole South Asia particularly that of India, being the largest country of the South Asian region. Despite India's current under-involvement in CARs, these countries offer great opportunities, which if availed would help in consolidating India's both immediate and long-term foreign policy goals in this region.

Stephen Blank (2003). In his article, "India's Rising profile in Central Asia" is of the view that India's presence in Central Asia has galvanized 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 afterward. India's policies toward 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 defense cooperation.

Kuldip Singh (2005) in his edited book, *“South-Central Asia: Emerging Issues”* states the changing dynamics of Central Asia after the collapse of the Soviet Union and its geo-strategic importance to India. Not only regional countries took a keen interest but the region became the central point of influence by the major powers like the US, Russia, and China. This literary work has attempted to present an in-depth study of emerging socio-political and economic scenario in the Central Asian region. The contents of 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 includes information about the security situation in the region mainly after 9/11 episode.

Nirmala Joshi (2007) states, in his book, *“India-Russia Relations and the Strategic Environment in Eurasia”* that the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union had reconfigured the world order and nature of the relations among countries. In this context, the author illustrates that Indo-Russo relationship had found a new basis for re-establishing their close and friendly relations. Within a span of nine years, Indo-Russo ties have evolved into a strategic partnership and thereby into a qualitatively higher level reflecting bilateral mutual trust and confidence. This book, also reveals that the Indo-Russo relations also lie in the compatibility of their vital geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic interests in Central Asia. It also covered Indo-Russo convergences and divergences of interests in the Central Asian region.

P. Stobdon (2008). In his paper *“Central Asia and India's Security”* has analyzed some important issues in Central Asia in the context of India's security. This paper highlights that the region has gained international attention focused on redefining the importance of Central Asia in the changing regional and international context. Since Central Asian reappearance, many suitors have been seeking affinity, alliances, proximity, and legitimacy with the region. The paper mentions that Central Asia compels other regions and areas to think in a zero-sum game of who will control the region next, following Mackinder'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, 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 evolving dynamism in the region would inevitably have implications far beyond what one might have imagined a decade ago. This paper emphasizes the geo-political 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.

Angira Sen Sarma (2010) in his book, *"India and Central Asia: Redefining Energy and Trade Links"*. This book studies India's economic relations with Central Asian Republics such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan. India being energy deficient while as, Central Asia is rich in hydrocarbon reserves. Hydroelectric projects in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, the two republics that are rich in water resources, are also worth exploring. Although the share of trade with these republics in India's total trade basket is meager. One of the major limitations in enhancing energetic trade with the region is the lack of direct transportation and oil pipelines. The region has attracted international attention (USA, Russia, and China) because of its strategic location and endowed with rich resources. Hence, India's position in the region has to take into account the greater geo-politics of oil and gas and also the presence of the regional players in the region such as India, Pakistan, and Iran etc.

The Indo-Russo convergences and divergences have analyzed by Sunita Dhillon (2014) in his article, *"Convergence of Indo-Russian Interests in Central Asia"*. This article, reveals that the changing dynamics of international world order in the post-Cold War era that compelled both India and Russia to come closer. As the CARs have been in a state of constant flux due to developments caused by the external intervention to control its natural resources, efforts to provide substitute transport routes to most of the Central Asian countries of the region. This article has covered that both India and

Russia are very much concerned about the impact of the intensification of US, China, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan in the region's political, economic, security, and energy fields. Apart, the emergence of adjacent Afghanistan, a hot-bed of terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking and organized crime has further complicated the issues. The author states that given the changing contours of the strategic milieu both India and Russia have not only sustained their diplomatic thrust and confidence in the region but also reinvigorate it to a far higher level. Finally, in the concluding part of the article, the author summarizes that both India and Russia desire, for a politically stable Central Asia at their borders, especially after post-2014 NATO withdrawal.

Dilip Kumar Maurya (2015) illustrates in his article, *"India-Central Asian States Relations in the 21st Century"* that India has introduced several frameworks to enhance its relations with the Central Asian countries. The author is of the view that India's active interactions with this region began after the collapse of the Soviet Union. This paper covers India's geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic interests in the region. The core areas of India's interests are energy, security, small arms proliferation and drug trafficking. Thus, the author is of the view that India's foreign policy has moved from earlier idealism to pragmatism.

Bhavna Dave (2016) states in his article, *"Resetting India's Engagement in Central Asia: From Symbols to Substance"* that, India has been actively enhancing its ties with all the Central Asian countries. This article has mentioned the recent developments of India's relations with the CARs particularly, after the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Central Asia, followed by his visit to Ufa (Russia) to attend the joint summit of the SCO and in the informal summit of the EEU. The author, mentions that the revival of India's role in Central Asia comes after decades of inactive, punctuated by ceremonial displays of goodwill and cordiality. It also examines India's challenges especially in terms physical connectivity, including India's efforts to develop alternative channels of communication to accessing the CARs via Iran and Afghanistan. Moreover, the concluding part of this article has recommended some policy options in order to boost India's multi-faceted engagements with the Central Asian countries.

2.5 Knowledge Gap

No doubt, ample literature in the form of books, journals, papers, articles etc. are available with regard to the emergence of the Central Asian countries and geo-politics of the region. However, the literature is insufficient in case of the rationale behind Russia's re-energizing engagements with the Central Asian countries, the changing relationship between Russia and Central Asia. Moreover, how the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic manoeuvring of the involved actors have impacted Russia's interests in Central Asia. The existing literature has been also lacking to a high point on Russia's re-balancing reciprocation vis-à-vis the regional and extra-regional players in the Central Asian region.

The study has also covered India's multi-faceted interests in the Central Asia region and how Russia has been acting as a bridge and ridge to India in Central Asia. Finally, the study has covered, India's foreign policy challenges and option in the region.

Chapter-Three

Profiling Central Asian Republics (CARs): Conceptualizing in Geopolitical Settings

3.1. Introduction

This chapter has been divided into three sections. The first section discusses the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the Central Asian countries. In fact, the region was the Tsarist-Russia's colony and integrated with the former Soviet Union (1917-1991). Therefore, the region remained under the exclusive control of the Tsarist-Russia and Soviet Union till 1991. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries came into being as independent nation-states. Various definitions had been given to this region, based on different parameters such as, history, geography, and cultural peculiarities. Moreover, this section also discusses the profile of the region like polity, geography, economy and socio-cultural composition. The second part of this chapter discusses the concept of geo-politics in general. Given the CARs geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic significance, the region has been remained a pivotal area. As both regional and extra-regional players are counter-posing each other to enhance their influence and out-focus the others. It also examines various geopolitical theories such as, Organic theory, Heartland Theory, Rimland theory, and the Air Power Theory. In fact, the geopolitical theories given by H.J. Mackinder, and Nicholas J. Spykman clearly indicates the significance of the region. Finally, the concluding part of this chapter has focused on different geopolitical models with regard to the Central Asian region.

3.2. The Collapse of the Soviet Union: Emergence of the Central Asian Republics (CARs)

Russia's interactions with the Central Asian region has been established from times antiquity. The Tsarist-Russia expanded its influence and subsequently had colonized this region. The Russian Revolution (1917), ushered a new era in the political history of Central Asia. In fact, the region became an integral part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). However, after the Mikhail Gorbachev (1985-1991) became communist party politician in March 1985, the Soviet Union was in acute crisis.

According to George Breslauer, (2010), Gorbachev faced difficult circumstances than his predecessors. The bulky Soviet Empire was in throes of multilateral crisis. The economy was stagnant, the living standard was in a declining trend, and collective farm system could not feed the growing population. Corruption was draining valuable resources into an uncontrollable black market. Alcohol and drug abuse problems were taking a toll on the health of the country. Growing economic inequality in society which was supposedly based on socialist ideals had created widespread cynicism among the people. The chaos, frustrations and widening gap however did not bother the high ranking members of the communist party, who lived luxurious life, best apartments and enjoyed high-quality medical care unavailable to ordinary people which in turn led to widespread cynicism summed up by saying, "We have communism, but not for everybody" (Kort, 2008). As a result, the high profile officials in the Communist Party had vehemently opposed the reforms especially in the political sphere that had directly threaten their perks and privileges.

In an attempt to stabilize the dwindling economy and re-energize the party doctrine, Gorbachev had introduced the policy of Perestroika, *i.e.*, restructuring. Within a short span of time, the reformists found that the partial reforms were not adequate to stabilize the Union politically and economically. Therefore, the policy of Glasnost *i.e.*, Openness, was revised and popularized by the Gorbachev (1985-1991), as a political slogan for increasing transparency in governmental institutions of the Soviet Union. Glasnost was therefore adapted for the free flow of information, expose corruption and to strengthen the countries technology by giving scientists access to information from abroad (Cummings, 2018). Nevertheless, Gorbachev, as the head of the Communist Party had opposed reforms in the political sphere. It has clearly shown that the policy of Glasnost was partial and limited as the communist party members including Gorbachev have posed a limit, as to what extent the people should know the policy of openness and transparency in governmental institutions. At least, Gorbachev wanted the Communist Party to remain the powerful single political party in the Soviet Union.

From the economic front, Gorbachev wanted to reform the centrally planned economy, including the collective farm system, but at the same time he did not want to dismantle the command economy and replace it with a free market system. What had

happened that a limited Glasnost immediately brought demands for more and, in fact, an abolition of all censorship. Plans to democratize the Communist Party led to criticism of the party and demands were raised for instituting democratic setup based on the multiparty system. Introducing the economic reforms did not improve the political and economic institutional setups rather it raised created more chaos and resistance. When Gorbachev had vehemently responded by introducing more extensive reforms, it began to undermine the very economy and the command institutions, which had facilitated the Soviet Union to remain on top as a major power.

By 1989, the process of economic and political reforms was augmented which had gone beyond control of Gorbachev's desperate attempts to keep it intact. The restructuring had inadvertently resulted in dwindling of economic and political set up. By 1991, chaos had resulted into the Soviet Union's collapse, liberating 15 CIS including 5 Central Asian countries. Among all the republics, the least prepared for that change were the five countries of Central Asia.

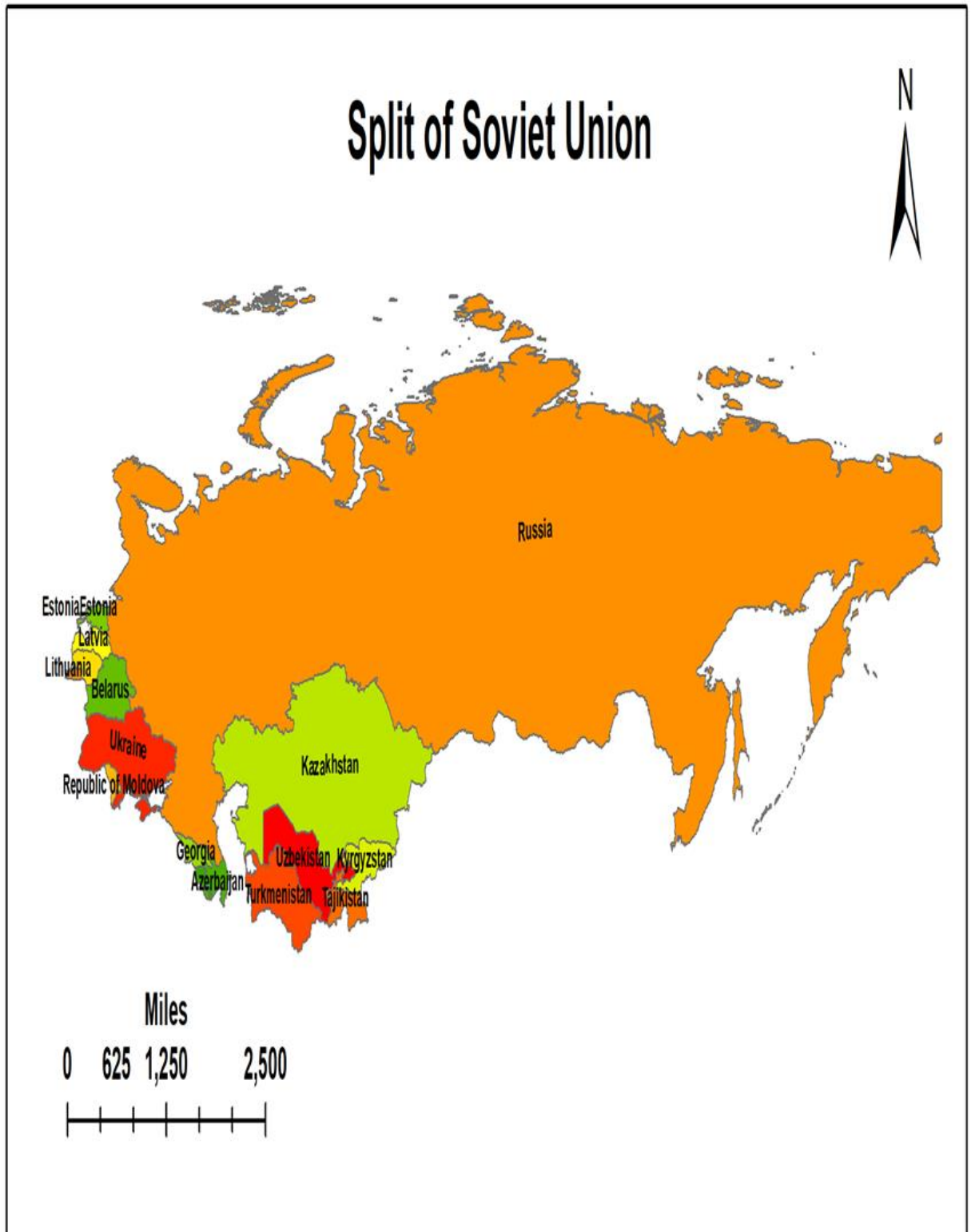
The implementation of extensive and hasty economic reforms remained unsuccessful in arresting the situations becoming bad to worse. In 1990, Gorbachev was succeeded by Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999) as the President of the Former Soviet Union (FSU) through popular elections held on June 12, 1991. Yeltsin had challenged the reforms introduced by his predecessor particularly in centralized political system. Moreover, after the 'August Coup' (August 19-22, 1991) by the Communist hardliners had changed the system upside down. However, Yeltsin had emerged as a successful leader by bringing the coup leaders into the main stream and offered them high profile portfolios. Therefore, the coup gave the Boris Yeltsin a chance to take over the political power again by sidelining the opponent leaders. The Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) was disbanded along the Committee for State Security (KGB) and the centralized economy. Yeltsin had attempted to transform the command and communistic system into a capitalist, liberal and democratic set up, ultimately led to its breakup along with weakening of superpower status and regional hegemony. The flag of the USSR, was lowered from the Kremlin and replacement with the Russian tricolor. With this, the successor state Russia had emerged on the global geo-political landscape on December 26, 1991. The USSR was replaced and recognized as the

Russian Federation in United Nations Organization and other regional and international organizations.

It was rather an unexpected and traumatic event in the international relations that left drastic impact in the Eurasian region. Peimani (2002) argued that, "From a politically quiet and submissive role within the former Soviet Union, each of the republics without warning or preparation, were forced to assume complete responsibility for political organizations, economic policies, and the well-being of citizens". Unlike the other former Soviet Republics, the Baltic Republics (Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and Ukraine) have declared their independence whereas on the other hand, the independence of the CARs was not as a result of mass movements and anti-government activities. In fact, the CARs independence came more as a surprise than hard-earned sovereignty. The Central Asian countries did not leave the Union rather they were pushed out of it. Indeed, in a referendum held on March 17, 1991, the CARs had overwhelmingly voted to remain within the Soviet Union (McFaul & Stoner-Weiss, 2004).

The unprepared, CARs were forced to build their own nation-states out of the ashes that Moscow had left. The disintegration of the former Soviet Union, had resulted in the emergence of fifteen newly independent, sovereign, territorially fixed units led to an astonishing geo-political event in the 20th Century World order. The comparison of which can be made only with the collapse of the great empires such as the 'Habsburg' and 'Ottoman' during the First World War. The following map clearly reflects the fifteen newborn independent states.

Map No. 3.1 Split of Former Soviet Union into Fifteen Independent States



Source: ArcGIS.

3.3. Defining Central Asian Republics (CARs)

There are several definitions of Central Asia, based on different parameters like history, geography and cultural peculiarities (Okur, 2014). Therefore, over the period of time, the region had been given different names, such as Transoxiana, Mavaraun-al-Nahr, Turan, Turkistan, Inner Asia and Middle Asia. Alexander the Great (356 B.C to 323 B.C) made Central Asia famous under the name of 'Transoxania' which means the region which extended up to the Oxus River (Bosworth & Asimov, 2003). The Arab called it, 'Mavaraun-al-Nahr,' which also means another side of the Oxus River. The great Persian writer Firdousi (940-1020) in his book, Shahname, calls the region 'Turon' (Liu, 2012).

The modern term Central Asia is semantically related to the terms such as 'Inner Asia' and 'Middle Asia' which were used by Western and Russian authors in the 18th and 19th Centuries and referred to the distant and inaccessible parts of Asia. With the end of the 18th Century, the region was known as Inner Asia became increasingly smaller, as the British Empire intruded into the continent from the South and the Russian from the North. At the same time, the definition of the region itself became more precise. The British used the term 'Turkestan', which was subsequently adopted at the beginning of the 19th Century by the political scientists, and academicians in Europe and Asia. Turkestan means the land of Turkic people, with its Persian etymology, it had been the product of the historical ties between the Persian and Turkic peoples speaking a Turkic language.

The term, Central Asia had been introduced by the German geographer Alexander Won Humboldt (1769-1859) in his book, 'Asie Centrale,' in 1843, as a distinctive region of the world. Since then, the concept had been used widely in the international relations. According to Humboldt, it is a geographical term referring to the territories of the present five Central Asian countries, Xinjiang, Tibet, Mongolia, South Siberia and areas like the Altai, Sayan, and the Tian Shan including the Pamir Mountains. Humboldt's definition was slightly expanded and redefined, by United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) that includes Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Mongolia as well as areas of Northern Iran, Northern India and Pakistan, Western

China and Southern Siberia of Russia (Tolipov, 2016). Soon after the disintegration, the Tashkent Summit (1993) was organized by the CARs leaders in order to have an accepted name of the region. In this summit, all leaders had agreed to relegate the Soviet term Middle-Asia and adopted the umbrella term 'Central Asia', an identity of all the five post-Soviet Republics viz, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan (Tolipov, 2016). The following map no. 3.2 clearly shows the five Central Asian countries.

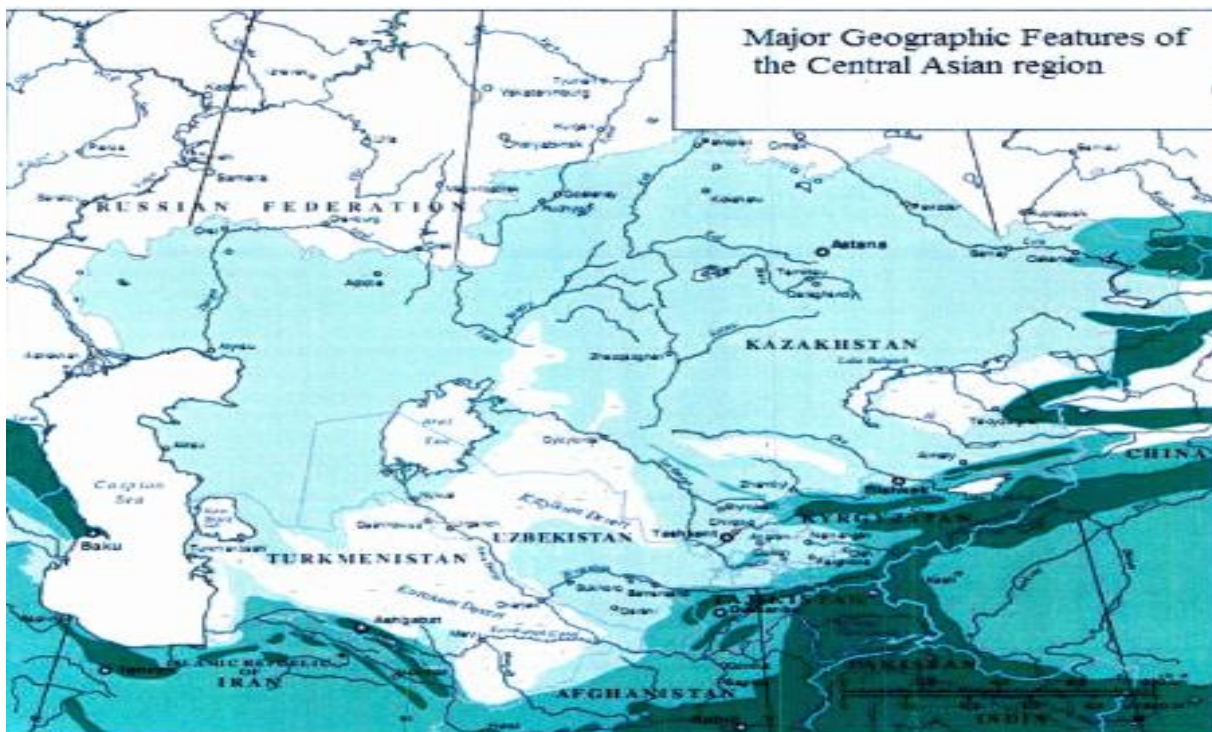


Source: ArcGIS.

3.4. Profile of Central Asia: An Overview

The Central Asian region, spread over an area of 1,279,300 Square kilometers and having a significant population (77 million in 2017). Uzbekistan is the most populous country (31.3 million), followed by Kazakhstan (17.5 million), Tajikistan (8.5 million), Kyrgyzstan, (6 million), and the least populated Turkmenistan, (5.4 million) (Misach, 2017). Geographically, the CARs are situated in the East of the Caspian Sea, the Kyrgyz steppe forms its North and Northeast border while the Kara Kum and the Kopet Dag rest in its Southwestern frontiers, The Southern region of Central Asia is occupied by a complex of mountain ranges such as the Kara Koram, Hindukush and the Tien Shan in its entirety (Kassenova, 2014). The following map no.3.3 gives a clear picture of the geography of the Central Asia.

Map No. 3.3 Geographical Map of the CARs



Source: Rafis (2008). *The Palgrave Concise Historical Atlas of Central Asia*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

In the Eastern part, the region is covered with high mountain ranges such as the Tien-Shan Hindukush, the Altai Trans-Altai, and the Pamirs (Magin, 2005). The Tien-Shan, mountain extending over 1500 kms through the republics of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Xinjiang regions which forms the backbone of Central Asia.

The Altai and Trans-Altai lie in the Southeastern part of Kazakhstan. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are mainly mountainous countries (Arzjancevs, 2017).

There is the meager availability of surface water resources as the level of underground water is very low in Central Asian region. Water resources are thus mainly surface waters those are formed in the mountains and utilized on the plains of Central Asia. The region has two main largest rivers – the Amu Darya and Syr Darya. The former which begins in the Hindu Kush and is fed by the waters from snow and glaciers is the largest river in the region and is approximately 2540 KM in length (Wegerich, 2008). The latter begins in the region of permanent glaciers in the central Tien-Shan and flows through the Fergana Valley and the lowland plain to the Aral Sea (Rakhmatullaev, et al. 2010). Besides, there are other lakes fed by permanent glaciers like, Issysk-kul in Kyrgyzstan, Kara-Kul in Tajikistan and Song-kul in Kyrgyzstan (Mendikulova, 2008). However, most of the water resources of Central Asia drain especially, the Caspian Sea, Balkash Lake, Tarim Basin and Aral Sea (Pearce, 2006).

The two largest deserts are the Kara Kum and Kyzyl Kum, covers much of Western Central Asia. The former is also known as the 'Black Sands', lies between the mountains ranges and the Amu Darya. The latter is also known as the Red Sands, lies between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers. The large plane steppe and forest-steppe of the Northern zone cover approximately one half of Central Asia and is located in the territory of Kazakhstan. The Fergana Valley is situated between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan and stretches near about 300 kilometers and a width of 170 kilometers (Curtis, 1997). Thus, the geographic features of the Central Asia region have isolated the region from the outside world.

3.5 CARs in the Barbs: Sea Saw Polity Model

After the independence of CARs, there was speculation about the nature of the government. These countries have had looked towards the entire world for the appropriate model to emulate. Variety of choices have had before them, ranging from Western democracy to Chinese communism, Turkey's 'Ozal Model' of mixed economy and India's parliamentary system. The CARs had tried to embrace democratic setup but found it difficult rather non-viable. In fact, it was the same ruling elite of the Soviet

period that had inherited power in all the Central Asian countries. The same group continues to dominate the political scenario and the result was the retention of the authoritarian political systems. According to Kaushik (2010) the CARs “have moved from a single party authoritarian system to a personalized authoritarianism of executive Presidents

The polity of Kazakhstan takes place in the framework of a ‘Parliamentary System’. The President is the head of the state and nominates head of the government. The Legislative powers are exercised both by the head of the government and the two houses of parliament. However, the President exercises veto powers against the laws passed by the parliament. The President Nursultan Nazarbayev (1990-Till Date) is the first, and as of 2018 the only President of Kazakhstan. Although, Article 42 of the Kazak Constitution, permits only two terms to the office of the president but, the decrees or referendums have prolonged the term of the President for an indefinite period.

Uzbekistan has a ‘Presidential Republic’ form of government wherein, the President is both head of state and head of government. The Legislative powers are exercised by the two chambers of the ‘Supreme Assembly’, *i.e.*, the ‘Legislative Chamber’ and the ‘Senate’. The Supreme Court and lower courts, exercises the judicial powers. After the independence, Uzbekistan had tried for structural changes in the political system, but the Soviet-style strong authoritarian centralized leadership had been holding the political power. In fact, the President is the supreme powerful and acts both as head of state and head of government. The Uzbek President, Islam Karimov has ruled the country, since 1990, until his death in September 2016. Therefore, Uzbekistan had maintained the authoritarian political set-up.

The polity of the Tajikistan takes place in a framework of a ‘Presidential Republic’. The Legislative powers are vested in the two houses of parliament *i.e.*, ‘Majlisi Namoyandagon’ and ‘Majlisi Millithe’. The President appoints the Prime Minister and other members of the government, without the approval of parliamentary. Therefore, the President is head of state and head of government as well. Tajikistan has held a constitutional referendum (2003) and set a limit of two, seven-year terms for the office of the president. Indeed, the incumbent Emomali Rahmon's election to the office of the president in 2006 counts as his first 7-year term (under the 2003

Constitutional amendment). He was re-elected for a second term (2013-2020), and has been exempted from Presidential term limits.¹

Turkmenistan has also the 'Presidential Republic' whereby the President is the head of the government and head of the state. It has only political party *i.e.*, the 'Democratic Party of Turkmenistan' however, the new constitution (2008) enables the formation of multiple political parties. In fact, the party of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs or (PIE) was registered on August 21, 2012. Moreover, the unofficial, small opposition movements exist abroad like the National Democratic Movement of Turkmenistan (NDMT), the Republican Party of Turkmenistan, and the Watan Party.

Under the constitution (1992), there are two parliamentary bodies, a unicameral 'Halk Maslahaty' or People's Council (supreme legislative body) and a unicameral 'Mejlis or Assembly'. The constitutional amendment (2003) has reduced the powers of the Mejlis and making the Halk Maslahaty the supreme legislative organ. The president is the sole authority of both the executive and legislative branches of government. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow (2007- Till Date) has been the president of Turkmenistan since the death of Saparmurat Niyazov in 2006. Through the constitutional amendment (2016), Turkmenistan has eliminated the term limits for the office of the president, which was earlier seven years (Mdzinarishvili, 2016). In the 2017 elections, Berdimuhamedow has won 98 percent votes in the popular elections against eight other candidates.

Kyrgyzstan has the 'Parliamentary Representative Democratic Republic' system of government. Whereby the President is head of state and the Prime Minister, nominated by the President, as head of government. The executive powers are exercised by the government. While as, the Legislative power are exercised by both the government and parliament. The judicial powers are exercised by the Supreme Court and local courts. Moreover, Kyrgyzstan had replaced the Soviet-times unicameral legislature system into bicameral 'Supreme Council or Joghorku Kengesh'. It consisted of the 'Assembly of People's Representatives' and the Legislative Assembly. However, after the 2005 crisis, the Parliament once again became unicameral *i.e.*, 'Jogorku

¹ Tajikistan votes to allow president to rule indefinitely. (2016). *The Guardian*, Retrieved 9 June 2018, from <https://www.theguardian.com/>.

Kengesh' consists of 120 deputies elected for a period of five years. Until 2010 the form of government was presidential but after the adoption of the Constitution on June 27, 2010 most of the authority was taken by the Parliament. On October 16, 2017, Sooronbay Jeenbekov, the former Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan, was elected as the new President of the country. The following table no. 3.4 clearly shows the tenure of the Presidents of the CARs.

Table no. 3.4 Tenure of Presidents of CARs

Srl No	Country	President	Term of Office
1.	Kazakhstan	Nursultan Nazarbayev	April 24,1990-Till Date
2.	Kyrgyzstan	Aksar Akayev, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, Roza Otunbayeva and Almazbek Atambayev	1991-2005; 2005-2010; 2010-2011; 2011-Till Date
3.	Tajikistan	Qahhor Mahkamov, Rahmon Nabyev, and Emomali Rakhmonov	1990-1991; 1991-1992; 1992-Till Date
4.	Uzbekistan	Islamic Karimov, Šavkat Mirzijojev	1990-2016 2016-Till Date
5.	Turkmenistan	Saparmurat Niyazov, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow	1991-2006; 2006-Till Date

Source: Ministry of External Affairs, (CARs)

From the above table, it becomes clear that in most of the Central Asian countries, the Soviet-era political leadership have been took the political helm of the CARs. In Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan the political systems are centralized, while as, Kyrgyzstan has been conducting the elections but, has been criticized as unfair.

3.6 The Economies of the CARs

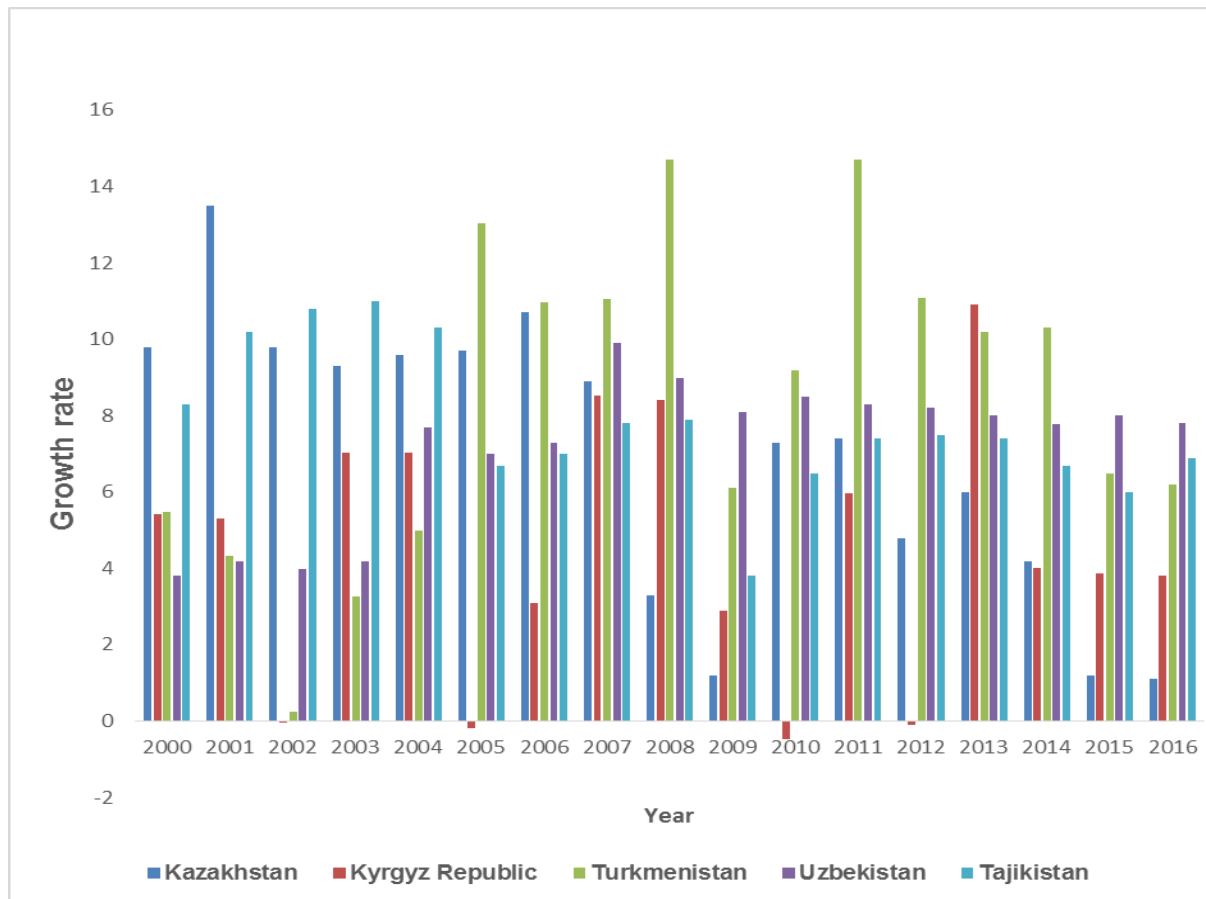
The Central Asian region comprises of small landlocked economies with no access to the maritime routes for trade and commerce. Among the advantages, of the region are its high-priced commodities (oil, natural gas, cotton and gold), reasonable

infrastructure, human capital and a strategic location between Asia and Europe and offers extensive potential for trade, investment, and growth. Since independence (1990s) the Central Asian countries have gradually shifted from command economies to liberal economies. All the Central Asian countries have been implementing structural reforms to boost economic performances and private sector competitiveness. In particular, the CARs have been modernizing the industrial sector and fostering the development of service sector through business-friendly fiscal policies and other measures, to reduce the share of agriculture in GDP. In fact, the share of agriculture fell in all the Central Asian countries except, Tajikistan. The fastest growth in industry has been observed in Turkmenistan whereas the services sector progressed in the other four countries of the region.

In the first half of the 1990s, the CARs have passed through a painful process of correction of huge macroeconomic imbalances and structural distortions inherited from the former Soviet Union. In fact, the CARs economic growth started from late 1990's. It has increased its pace in the 2000s with new investment in hydrocarbons and mineral resources. Moreover, the global commodity boom had also left indelible imprints in the Central Asian economies. However, it again had drastically hit by the negative external market forces like, the slow recovery of international trade, particularly after global financial crisis (2009-2010). The fluctuating global demand for cotton, aluminum, and other metals have hit Tajikistan hardest, since aluminum and raw cotton are its primary exports. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are also major cotton exporters, ranking 5th and 9th respectively worldwide (Bendini, 2013). Although both exports and imports have grown impressively over the past decade, CARs have been remaining vulnerable to economic shocks, owing to their reliance on exports of raw materials, a restricted circle of trading partners and a negligible manufacturing capacity. The Kyrgyz economy was shaken by a series of shocks between 2010 and 2012. Nevertheless, the CARs have fared best during the first decade of the 21st century. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have titanic natural oil and gas reserves and Uzbekistan's own reserves make it more or less self-sufficient. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan all have gold reserves and Kazakhstan has the world's largest uranium reserves (Bendini, 2013). Apart from this, the, annual growth rates have been

remained volatile, largely because of fluctuations in global commodity prices particularly natural oil and natural gas. The following figure no. 3.6.1 clearly shows the growth rate of the CARs.

Figure No. 3.5 GDP Growth Rate from 2000-2016



Source: UN Comtrade (2017).

The above figure shows the GDP growth rate of Central Asia economies. Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan are the leading economies with 15 percent, 9 percent and 8 percent growth rates respectively in 2008. However, the global economic crisis (2009) has hit the Central Asian economies. Currently in 2016, the regional economies have significant growth rate with Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan as leading with 8 percent, 7 percent each.

3.7 Socio-Cultural Composition of Central Asia

The Central Asian region is a home of many ethnic groups, languages, religions, and tribes. There are many large and small ethnic groups residing in the region. Some of the groups like Iranians, Turks, Tatars, Uyghurs, Karakalpak etc. have settled since times immemorial in the region. The transnational character of the ethnic groups extended in the neighboring countries like Russia, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and China. The following table no. 3.7.1 clearly shows the ethnic composition of the CARs including the religion and language.

Table No. 3.6 Socio-Cultural Composition of Central Asia in (%)

Srl no	Country	Ethnicity	Religion	Language
1	Kazakhstan	Kazakh 53.4, Russian 30, Ukrainian 7, Uzbek 2.5, Tatar 1.7, Uyghur 1.4, Other 4.9	Muslim 47; Russia 44; Protestant, 2; Others, 7	Kazakh, 64 (Russian, 95 in business).
2	Kyrgyzstan	Kyrgyz 64.9; Uzbek, 13.8; Russian 12.5; Dungan, 1.1; Ukrainian, 1; Uyghur, 1 and others 5.7	Muslim 75, Russia Orthodox 20, other 5	Kyrgyz 64.7, Uzbek 13.6, Russian 12.5, Dungan 1, other 8.2.
3	Tajikistan	Tajik 79.9, Uzbek 15.3, Russian 1.1, Kyrgyz 1.1, Other 2	Sunni Muslim 85, Shia 5, Other 10	Tajik and Russian
4	Turkmenistan	Turkmen 85, Uzbek 5 Russian 4, Other 6	Muslim 89, orthodox 9; others 2	Turkmen 72, Russian 12, Uzbek 9, other 7
5	Uzbekistan	Uzbek 80, Russian 5.5, Tajik 5, Kazakh 3, Tatar 1.5, Karakalpak 2.5, Other 2.553	Uzbek 74.3, Russian 14.2, Tajik 4.4, other 7.1	Uzbek 74.3 Russian 14.2 Tajik 4.4, other 7.1.

Source: Data compiled from CIA. (2010).

The above table no. 3.6 clearly shows that Russian (language) continue to remain as lingua franca, especially in Kazakhstan (95) percent and Uzbekistan (14) percent. The Russian language has been remained widespread throughout the region along with the national language of Kazak, Uzbek, Turkmen, Kyrgyz and Tajik in their respective republics. After independence, people have re-established their local language as state language all of which were bottled-up under the communist rule of the former Soviet Union. Still Russian is used for administrative and educational purposes along with their respective national languages. Islam is the dominant religion along with Christianity in the Central Asia.

3.8. Conceptualizing Geo-politics

In a world of puzzling complexity, an understanding of the ways in which people behave, acquire power, personal likings and geographical settings are vital. In fact, geopolitical framework can led to a better understanding of the complex world events. It involves the process of describing, analyzing, predicting, and using of political power over a given territory. In fact, it helps in understanding and predicting international political policies of a country through specific geographical variables. According to the Cambridge dictionary, "Geo-politics is the study of geographic factors and their influences on power relationships in international relations". According to William Mallinson and Zoran Ristic (2016), geo-politics is a philosophy which "seeks to understand, explain and predict international political behavior, mainly in terms of geographical variables, such as location, size, climate, topography, demography, natural resources and technological development and potential".

The term 'geo-politics' was first used in Germany to promote German nationalism. It was a loose translation of the German word 'Geopolitik' (Replaced with the word Geo-politics after the World War-II) which means the exploitation of geographical knowledge to serve the purpose of a state or regime. For Karl Haushofer (1869-1946), the father of 'German Geopolitik', had defined 'Geo-politics' as the new national science of the state, a doctrine on the spatial determinism of all political processes, based on the broad foundations of geography, especially of political

geography" (Cohen, 2003). Nonetheless, the term 'Geo-politics' was coined by the Swedish political scientist, Johan Rudolf Kjellen (1864-1922) in 1899 (Costachie, 2011).

Geo-politics straddles two disciplines i.e. 'Geography' and 'Politics'. Therefore, it can be defined as an interactions between the geographical settings and the political processes. The latter includes forces that operate both at domestic and global levels. In fact, both geographical settings and political processes are dynamic and each influence and are influenced by the other.

3.9. Major Theories of Geo-politics

Geo-politics attempts to explain why some countries have power and other countries do not. The connection between spatial qualities of countries and international relations has been observed since the Greeks. However, the formal links between geography and political science began about 100 years ago.

3.9.1. Organic Theory

The concept of the Organic theory was propounded by Carl Ritter (1779-1859), a German geographer. However, it is Friedrich Ratzel (1844-1904) who was credited with having carried forward the tradition of Carl Ritter. While conceptualizing the heritage of Ritter, Ratzel drew heavily upon the works of Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) and Albert Schaffle (1831-1903) to define his own use of the organismic analogy in his monumental work 'Political Geography (1897)' which is often described as the first book on modern political geography. It can be pointed out from his celebrated works that, his only focal point is based on the growth of states. For Ratzel, an organism is primarily a framework or structure cohesion occurred in the division of labor and specialization of functions. However, it was more abstract than a literal analogy with biological organisms. He said that a state is like an organism that has a biological need for growth in order to remain healthy. Inspired by the, 'Survival of the Fittest' idea of Charles Darwin (1809-1882), Ratzel maintained that states have been involved in an endless struggle for space. He believed that all living organisms are in a fight for space and the most powerful have the largest space. States with high population density have a more

valid claim to the empty land than those with a low density (Tuathail, & Toal, 1994). Therefore, to become politically powerful, states must multiply their population as rapidly as possible and take over empty land. Since, the decay of states centers around the lack of space consciousness, he said that the people of all state should develop a 'Space Consciousness' to prevent it from 'decay and downfall'. Ratzel wrote that "the frontier should not be considered a line, but rather a shifting zone of assimilation" (Dikshit, 2006). Therefore, Friedrich Ratzel argued that boundary should not be permanent features of the landscape, but should shift with requirements of the state.

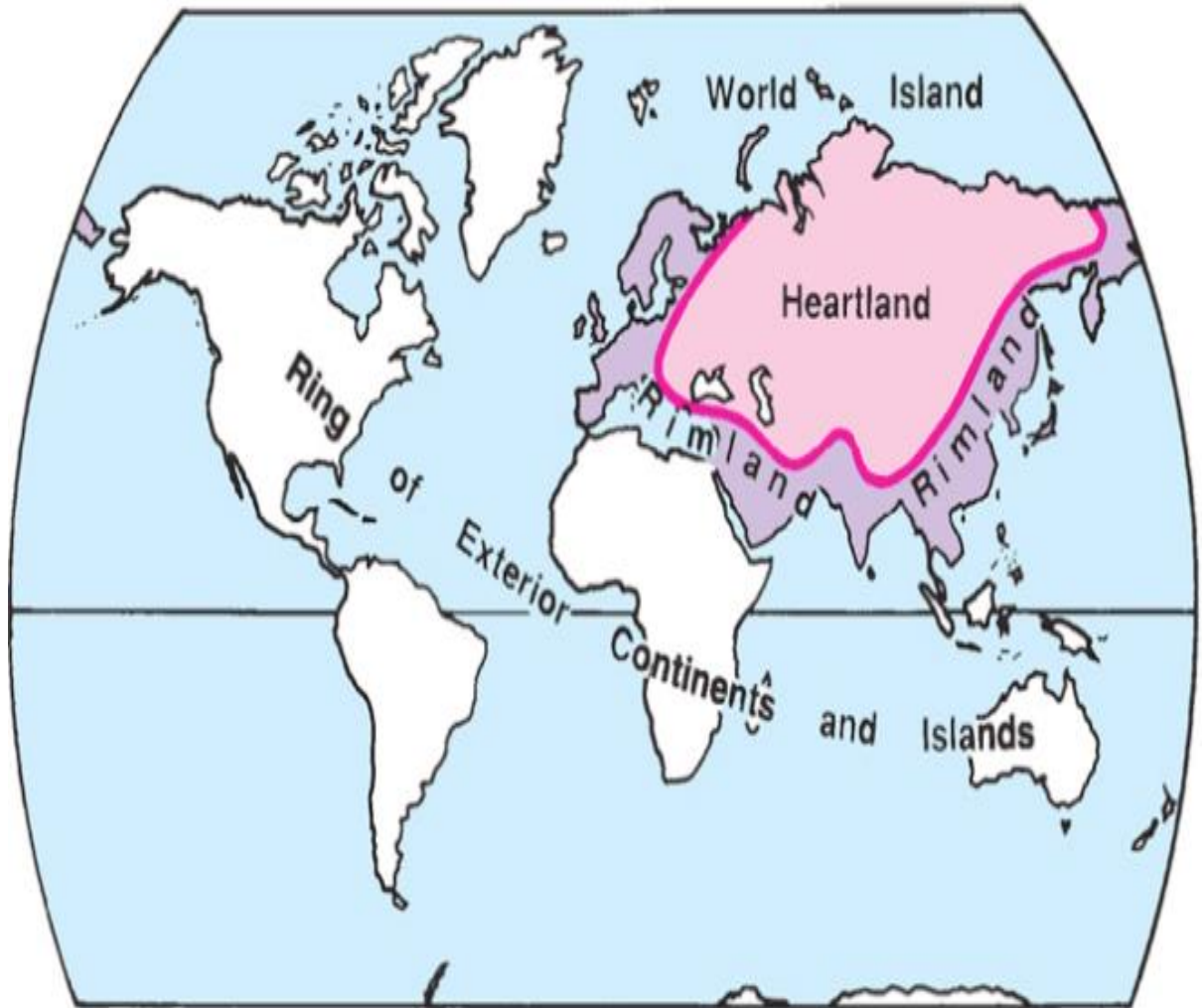
3.9.2. Heartland Theory

The Heartland Theory was advocated by Sir Halford Mackinder, (1861- 1947) a British Astronomer. He had provided a coherent description of the world as a functioning geopolitical entity through his 'Theory of Heartland' (1904). Halford Mackinder in his heartland theory conceived, "the planet earth was a closed system, where a change in one part of the system would change the balance of the relationships in all other parts". In order to prove his hypothesis, he divided the whole surface into Islands. He termed the land mass of Asia, Africa, and Europe as the world Islands and the other parts as Islands and satellites of this great land mass. Within the 'World Island' was the Heartland, "the heartland for the purposes of strategic thinking, includes the Baltic Sea, the navigable Middle and lower Danube, the Black Sea, Asian minor, Armenia, Persia, Tibet, and Mongolia. The Heartland region had been interior channels or Arctic drainage system and is not connected to any water channel and thus inaccessible to sea powers (Charles, 1942). Thus, if the Heartland could be united into a single great political entity, it would dominate the world Island and thereby the whole world. Thus, Mackinder summarizes his Heartland thesis in these words,

He, who controls East Europe, controls the Heartland,
He who controls the Heartland controls the World
Island, He, who controls the World Island, controls the
world.

The following figure no. 3.7 clearly shows the pivotal area as described by Mackinder.

Figure No. 3.7 Geographical Representation of the Heartland Theory



Source: Mackinder, H. J. (2004). The Geographical Pivot of History (1904). *The geographical journal*, 170(4).

Mackinder's chief objective of Heartland theory was to caution the imperial Britain, a sea power of the 19th Century against the conquest of Tsarist Russia, a great land based power at that point of time which could diminish the dominance of Britain and enable Russia to win over the world. His second line of thought on his Heartland Theory is that the unification of states should be avoided and independent states with clearly demarcated territorial boundaries must be created. He warned the world over the unification of certain states, which would prove dangerous for the balance of power system in the prevailing conditions of the world.

3.9.3. Rimland Theory

Nicholas, J. Spykman (1893 to 1943) had accepted Mackinder's geographical concept of the 'Heartland.' However, he differed with Mackinder as the latter had underrated the importance of the sea routes. The key region of world politics was not the 'Heartland,' but rather the maritime space or coastal region bordering the 'Heartland' that Mackinder called the 'Inner or Marginal Crescent,' and in, 'The Geography of the Peace (1944),' Spykman called it, 'Rimland'. He defined the Rimland as follows:

The rim/and of the Eurasian landmass must be viewed as an intermediate region, situated between the heartland and the marginal seas. It functions as a vast buffer zone of conflict between sea power and land power. Looking in both directions, it must function amphibiously and defend itself on land and sea

The Rimland included the countries of West Europe, the Middle East, Southwest Asia, China and the Far East. These countries combined with the offshore islands of Britain and Japan that have possessed greater industrial and manpower resources than the Heartland and wielded both land and sea power. Spykman noted that the three most aspirants to world hegemony (Napoleon's France, Wilhelmine Germany, and Nazi Germany) all emerged from the Rimland. In each instance, it was a coalition of powers from the Rimland, the Heartland, and North America and the Offshore Islands that had defeated the strongest Rimland powers. That is why Spykman argued that, "Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world".

3.9.4 Air Power Theory

This theory was propounded by A.P de Seversky. As per this theory, the land battles would be an obsolete in the coming time. He concluded that whoever controls the skies would be the world power. At that point of time, the US and the FSU were the two most important air powers. He used an azimuthally equidistant projection centered on the North Pole to show the air dominance of the US and FSU. It was an area of

intersection to which he called the "Area of Decision". He believed that whoever controlled this area would be dominant. Therefore, in the light of above-mentioned theories, the Central Asian region occupies vital importance. Therefore, in order to achieve the multifaceted interests in this region several countries put forth different geopolitical models as safeguard measures.

3.10 Geopolitical Models

The key global political centers had been engaged in drawing up paradigms and became extremely interested in the changes that have occurred on the political map of the world after the Soviet breakup. The transformational changes also took place in the former Soviet Space of Central Asia, which for huge natural resources and geostrategic reasons have become one of the important focal point for the international political engagements/interactions, since the beginning of 1990's. The end of the bipolar international political order had led to the political and economic transformations, which in turn had resulted in new spatial-political conceptions and models. The new models were regarded as foreign policy tools for many countries to pursue their interests. According to Saidmuradov (2010), "it is a device of certain countries or group of countries to position themselves spatially in the regional".

3.10.1 Civilizational Model

The civilizational model is an important geopolitical model with regard to the Central Asian geo-politics. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, this model assumed that CARs would become a part of the Islamic bloc. The civilizational model conceived that the future of world politics would be influenced by the civilizational conflicts. According to Samuel Huntington (1993), "the most significant conflicts of the future would occur along the cultural fault lines". Therefore, in this connection, after the emergence of the Central Asian countries, Islam had revived that subsequently, heralded an awakening of the desire among the Central Asia's Muslim peoples to rejoin with the greater Islamic world. As the region has been surrounded by Muslim states like Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in all directions. After the post-Soviet collapse Islam too has been given a chance to reassert itself after 74

years in these republics therefore, an alliance on the lines of religion and culture could be forged. In the words of Shams-ud-din (1998), "the CARs have no viable alternative but to be overwhelmed by the rising tide of Islamic fundamentalism posing a threat to Western Christian civilization, as well as the Indian-Hindu civilization". The basic determinants for the civilizational model of geo-politics are the growing role of world cultures in international politics, the gradual decline of the relevance of the nation-state system and the emergence of a unipolar world dominated by Western Christianity. Hence, it becomes unlikely that the Central Asian countries can get into the Islamic bloc. However, living under communist rule for more than 74 years had changed the mindset of the Central Asia's Muslims. Even today, they are different from the Muslims, outside of the region. The present ruling regimes have been consciously trying not only to keep the Islamic fundamentalists at bay but also deliberately framing the tight administrative policies in order to separate religion from politics. Many external players especially Russia and China are also interested in the stability of the region and are consciously trying to intervene and project and protect the secular model of the Central Asian countries.

3.10.2. The Common-Wealth of Independent States (CIS) Re-integration Model

The collapse of the former Soviet Union leads to the absence of a predominant ideological umbrella of Marxism-Leninism, Pan-Turkism or Islam for uniting the post-Soviet republics. With this, the CARs had have faced the grim prospects of fragmentation on account of deep rooted tribal and ethnic loyalties. The incidents of ethnic cleansing in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan on the eve of the collapse of the Soviet Union had widened the gulf between the Islamists and secularists in the post-Soviet era. Under such circumstances, the constituent members of Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the communique issued at its meetings and the agreements concluded among the members had helped in the creation of CIS. Therefore, the political elites of the Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine met at Belovezhskaya Pushcha (Belarus) and signed an agreement establishing the CIS, also known as the 'Creation Agreement' (December 8, 1991), a successor to the Soviet Union. The CIS was not a new state, but an 'alliance' between independent states. The founding

members agreed that the new alliance would be open to all republics of the former Soviet Union as well as to other countries sharing identical goals and objectives. Thus, the three Slavic republics were joined by the five Central Asian republics and the Trans-Caucasian republics of Azerbaijan, Moldavia, and Armenia after signed the Alma-Ata Protocol agreement on December 21, 1991 and thereby joined the new alliance, bringing the number of participating countries to eleven. Georgia joined later in 1994, but resigned its membership after Russia's annexation of South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2008 (Shoemaker, 2012). Similarly, the three Baltic States of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania had regarded the membership in Russia dominated CIS an illegitimate and joined the NATO and European Union (EU) in 2004 (Izquierdo, 2013).

All the CIS members were aware that Russia with the massive wealth, geographical area, and a long tradition of a great power would make it potential player in the Eurasian region. The long years of a communist rule meant that the economies of these republics were heavily intermeshed with the Russian economy that compelled them to join the alliance. The Charter of the CIS, recognized the sovereignty, territorial integrity, mutual understanding and friendship among the member countries (Kubicek, 2009). Moreover, the CIS possesses coordinating powers in terms of trade, finance, security, environment, human rights, cultural development, and lawmaking. Various regional organizations are under the overview of the CIS, namely the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), the Eurasian Customs Union (ECU) and the Eurasian Economic Space (EES). Out of the eleven CIS members, nine have become the CIS Free Trade Area. However, the member countries are suspicious of Russia and convinced that they had a marginal voice within the CIS. Following the withdrawal of Georgia from the CIS, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan had also skipped the Organization Meeting (2009), given some issues and disagreements with Russia. The Trans-caucasian republics -Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine had also joined Eastern Partnership initiated by the European Union (EU) in 2009 (Gromadzki, 2015). Russia too raising doubts about the future of the CIS, Igor Ivanov, the secretary of the Russian Security Council, emphasized that the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) is becoming a more competent organization to unify the countries of the CIS.

Although the CIS has managed to survive, as an institution, it is far from being a central actor in the post-Soviet space.

3.10.3. Model of Greater Central Asia (GCA)

The Greater Central Asia Model regards Central Asia a larger zone with undefined borders and Afghanistan as its centre. The primary focus of this model was the geopolitical penetration of US into Central Asia by creating a new integration union with the participation of the South Asian countries. Saidmuradov (2010) acknowledges that it was not the US but, Russia and China who first put forward this idea into practice through the formation of 'Shanghai Five' (1996) and later on 'Shanghai Cooperation Organization' (SCO) in 2001, that includes all the countries that fall in the Greater Central Asia region. On the contrary, Sachdeva (2006) opines that the idea is US invention, primarily to achieve its objectives in Afghanistan and to access the natural resources of Central Asia and thereby to limit the influence of Russia and China.

The chief objectives behind the formation of GCA are integration, connectivity, trade, development, elimination of terrorism, and foster participatory political system (Starr, 2005). Although efforts have been made to improve connectivity such as International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), Chabahar Sea port, roads and railways etc. However, GCA does not have a strategic core, it is rather a loose, open and an amorphous system (Shums-Ud-din, 1998). Moreover, the Russia and China were skeptical about the US long-term presence in the region. Both viewed that the main focus of the US policy in the region has been to contain Russia and China. The countries of Central Asia and South Asian were actively participating in CSTO, SCO, Eurasian Economic Community, (EurAsEC) and for regional development, improvement in connectivity and stability (Saidmuradov, 2010). Therefore, the above mentioned geopolitical models were adopted by the involved players in the Central Asia region to pursue their national interests and contain the others influence.

3.11 Summary

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries came into existence. On the basis of history, geography and cultural peculiarities etc., the region

had been given different names like, Transoxiana, Turan, Mavaraun-al-Nahr, Inner Asia, and Turkestan. Nonetheless, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the then five Presidents of Central Asian countries called the Tashkent summit (1993) and provided themselves a regional identity i.e. 'Central Asia' comprising of the present five Central Asian countries. This chapter has examined the profile of the CARs in terms of polity, economy, and socio-cultural composition. It has been studied that most of the Central Asian countries have the authoritarian political systems. Some efforts have been by Kyrgyzstan towards political liberalization. The CARs have shifted their economies from command towards the market economies. However, the international fluctuations in trade have been impacted the Central Asian economies.

In terms of the socio-cultural composition of the CARs, the region has remained a home of many ethnic groups like, Iranians, Turks, Tatars, Uighurs, Karakalpak, and others, who have been arrived in the region from the recorded history. However, the Russian influence has remained significant especially in terms of language and culture. Islam is the dominant religion in the CARs, but the Russian Orthodox Christianity has been practiced in the region.

The final part of this chapter has discussed the concept of geo-politics in the framework of different geopolitical theories such as Organic theory, Heartland theory, Rimland theory, and Air Power Theory. It has been found that the term geo-politics is a systematic way to understand the relationship between the states, their history, and politics and geographical settings. Moreover, it has also discussed different geopolitical models such as Civilizational model, CIS model, and the Greater Central Asia model. These geopolitical models were used as geopolitical tools to protect interests and expand influence in the Central Asian region.

Chapter- Four

Russia's Central Asia Policy: Contextualizing the Paradigmatic Shift

4.1. Introduction

Russia's interaction with the Central Asian region has been established since the recorded history. In fact, the Tsarist-Russia had expanded its influence and subsequently colonized the region. One of the primary reasons for the territorial expansion was to restrict the strategic moves of the British, who had been expanding influence in the Eastern flank. However, the Anglo-Russian Treaty (1907) had formally ended the rivalry between Tsarist-Russia and Britain. The World War-I (1914-1919), and the Russian Revolution (1917) had proved important events in the Central Asian political history as given that the region had come out from the colonial clutches. However, later on, it became an integral part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) between 1918 and 1922 (Olcott, 2010). Nonetheless, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the Central Asia Republics have found themselves independent.

In the post-disintegration period, Russia had ignored this region by tilting its foreign policy towards the West to overcome its grave economic crisis. The pro-Western political leadership of Russia had regarded this region as a burden and an obstacle for Moscow's drift towards the West. Thus, in the early 1990's Russia altogether had neglected this region. Nonetheless, the drastic geopolitical changes over the period of time along with some internal dynamics had been motivated Russia to reorient its foreign policy towards the Central Asian region. The current chapter has taken the stock of Russian foreign policy towards the Central Asian region from past to present.

4.2. Central Asia in Russia's Policy: A Historical Back Ground

Links between Russia and Central Asia dates back since times immemorial. Some records placed this relationship in the 10th Century (Ubaidulloev, 2015; Friedman, 2012). However, in the contemporary era, scholars generally agree that Russia's relations with the region established in the 17th Century, when Russian Empire had extended its influence across the Siberian plains to the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

Under the leadership of Czar Peter the Great (1672-1725), Russia had built forts on the steppes near the Om River including the Semipalatinsk Fort, which later in the second half of the 20th Century became the first site for the Soviet Union in conducting of nuclear tests (Kort, 2008). Despite resistance, Russia controlled most of the Kazakh steppe. By the 19th century, Russia continued its imperialist policy and conquered the southern part of Central Asia for economic and security reasons.

One of the primary reasons for Czarist-Russia's imperialist policy remained suspicious of Britain that had established its base in India. The latter had tried to expand its empire towards Russian's eastern flank. The imperialist competition between Russia and Britain had intensified during the second half of the 19th Century and caused several crises. Both had competed for geographical expansions, security, economic benefits and above all for strategic motives like gaining strategic depth and leverage in the region. As a result, an environment of mistrust, distrust and the war-like situation had emerged known as, the Great Game particularly in context of Central Asia (Hopkirk, 1994). Besides, Russia was also concerned about their countrymen, the Russian settlers on the steppes, who had been captured by Turkic's and were sold as slaves. While this situation may have been little more than an excuse for expansion, it struck a raw nerve of national pride and inspired public anger. Finally, Russia was driven for annexing the Central Asian region as it had its long-standing hostilities with Turkic's who had been lived in the South and the East of Central Asia, with whom Russia had fought wars over centuries (Kort, 2008).

Russia's imperial expansion slackened in 1850's given the Crimean War (1853-1856) against an alliance of France, Britain, Kingdom of Sardinia and the Ottoman Empire. This defeat restricted Russian influence in Europe and provided a stimulus for more intense expansion in the Eastern and Southern directions. Russia conquered the Caucasus region, lying between the Black and Caspian Sea. While as Northern Kazakhstan had mostly acceded to the Russian Empire, the rest of Central Asia had fell under the Russian armies in a series of military campaigns in the second half of 19th Century (See table no. 4. 1 below).

Table No. 4.1 Military Campaigns of Tsarist Russia on Central Asia (1865-1884)

Srl. No.	Places	Annexed Year	Description of the places
1.	Tashkent	1865	The administrative center for southern Central Asia was annexed by Tsarist-Russia.
2.	Bukhara	1867	Located on the Silk Road, the city has long served as a center of trade, scholarship, culture, and religion.
3.	Khiva	1873	The former capital of Khwarezmia and the Khanate of Khiva.
4.	Kokand	1876	The Khanate of Kokand was a Central Asian city in Fergana (1709–1876).
5.	Merv	1884	An ancient city of Central Asia lying near the modern town of Mary, Turkmenistan.

Source: Starr, S. (2011). *Fergana valley: The heart of Central Asia*. London: Routledge.

The Czarist-Russia had annexed Tashkent in 1865, the largest city in the region and former administrative centre for Southern Central Asia (Allworth, 1994). It conquered the city of Bukhara in 1867, captured its parts and turned the rest into a protectorate. The Russian army then subdued Khiva in 1873 which also survived as a Russian protectorate. In 1876, Russia abolished the khanate of Kokand, annexing all of its territories and finally it captured Merv in 1884 (Starr, 2011). Thus, Czarist-Russia annexed Central Asia and established the borders between Central Asia and Afghanistan, but it had not ended the long-standing rivalry with Britain, fought the first, (1839 to 1842) second, (1878 to 1880) and third (May 6, 1919 to August 1919) Anglo-Afghan Wars in an attempt to establish control over the region, and to counter the expansion of Russia.

Losing badly in both the Anglo-Afghanistan Wars (1839-1842 and 1878-1880), the British had signed the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention which divided Afghanistan between the two powers and outlined the framework for all future diplomatic relations.

This treaty of 1907 formally brought the Great Game politics to an end.¹ In the post-1907, Central Asia had been remained fully under the occupation of Tsarist Russia. The geo-politics of Central Asia was such that, it not only provided a consumer market to the Tsarist Russian industries, also helped in finding a trade route to connect with the other parts of the world, guaranteed supply of raw materials like cotton and assured better security to the Russian sovereignty. However, Central Asia in return was treated as no less than a colony under the Tsarist rule. The First World War (1914-1919) followed by the October Revolution of 1917, ushered a new era in the life of the Central Asian people. Breaking their colonial clutches Central Asia integrated with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR).

The Soviet rule in Central Asia was established between 1918 and 1922 (Zajda, 2010). The first step in this direction was taken to create Proto-nation-states within the framework of the Soviet Union. This territorial division known as the National Delimitation of Central Asia (NDCA; 1924) which was based on the assumption that ethnic and linguistic affiliations coincided and that together formed the markers of national identity. The National Delimitation had embraced all the territory that had been under the Tsarist rule. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan were immediately given the full Union Republic status, while Tajikistan including the Pamir province, later renamed Gomo-Badakhshan was created as an autonomous republic within Uzbekistan. Similarly, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were given the status of autonomous republics within the Union. In 1929 Tajikistan acquired Union Republic status followed by Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 1936. Karakalpakstan, originally part of the Kazakh republic has become an autonomous republic in 1932 and was transferred with the same status to the jurisdiction of Uzbekistan in 1936. There was some readjustment of borders during the Soviet period but in broad outline, the territories of the today's independent republics of Post-Soviet Central Asia are those that were delimited in 1924 (Zajda, 2010).

¹ The Anglo-Russian Convention was signed on August 31, 1907 in St. Petersburg, Russia. The Convention had brought shaky British-Russian relations to the forefront by solidifying boundaries that identified respective control in Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet. This agreement seemingly ended a long-standing struggle for power that had gone on at the expense of lesser-developed regions throughout Central Asian region.

The physical creation of Soviet Central Asia was followed by a comprehensive programme to modernize and 'Sovietise' the region. For that, the Soviet Union took some bold steps like, suppression of Islam and Islamic institutions, assigned citizens to ethnic groups, abolished religious trusts, schools and recruited natives as political puppets. It imposed Russian as an official language (Rywkin, 1963). The popularization of the Russian language was the key policy in the grand scheme of social engineering designed by Moscow, to cut off the influence of outsiders and inculcate the Russification in the region (Bacon, 1966). Moreover, the Communist Soviet Union redistributed lands, Collectivization of agriculture, state-sponsored economic programmes and a centralized political structure which led to the soaring of living standards of the people of the region. Basic infrastructures, such as schools, hospitals, and airports, railways had been expanded dramatically. Central Asia had seen massive industrialization and higher education became accessible to a larger percentage of the population. The medical services had been improved significantly in the region (Dickens, 1989).

Gradually, the Central Asian region had developed as a great trade center within the Soviet periphery given the growth of its main economic sectors such as agriculture, extractive industries (mainly oil, gas, coal, and minerals), metallurgy (including the processing of Aluminum and Uranium in Tajikistan), and several large petrochemical plants. Some of the cities like Semipalatinsk (the military-industrial site) and the Baikanour (Space Centre) had become symbol of civil-military technological bases in Kazakhstan. Some testing site like, Vozrozhdeniya for chemical and biological weapons test was also established in Uzbekistan (Weitz, 2008).

The Central Asia had experienced the controlled political system under the Soviet Union. Additionally, it was certainly ambivalent and eventful till date. Soon after the World War II (1939-1945), the region was turned into a military and nuclear zone following the growing schism between the Soviet Union and the US. The NATO spearheaded by the US was almost at its boundary. Iran was experiencing religious fundamentalism and political instability under dictators (Abolhassan Banisadr, 1980-1981), Ali Khamenei, 1981-1989, Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, 1989-1997), etc., as its rulers. Afghanistan bordering the Soviet Union from the South was no less threatening to the national security of Central Asia under the Soviet rule. Therefore, Central Asia

enjoys a prominent position in the FSU campaign against the US-led Capitalist World order.

During the 1980s, life changed quickly in the Soviet Union after several decades of stability and growth under Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982). During the 1980s, the economic problems and shortfalls in meeting economic targets brought into light the serious structural problems in Soviet economic centralization, the cost sustaining the military setup, the lack of appropriate incentives in the workplace and a disconnection between technology innovations and industrial productions were among the reasons why the USSR fell short of its own hopes for growth. However, the enduring problems of lack of civic freedoms and corruption within the government had further exacerbated these problems. With all these apparent problems, Mikhail Gorbachev had succeeded the Soviet leadership in 1985. In order to put an end to these prevailing problems, he attempted to introduce structural changes through Perestroika and Glasnost. But instead of solving problems, rather the same had turned into bad to worse. Given this, first time the USSR had witnessed internal weakness, protests by the republics. Consequently, the sign of disintegration had been started appearing and ultimately on December 8, 1991, it had happened. Thus, by default without any liberation struggle or change in political leadership, Central Asian Republics, suddenly found themselves independent and sovereign countries.

4.3 Russia-CARs Relationship: An Enervated Phase

After the collapse of Soviet Union, Moscow's foreign policy in general and in context of CARs in particular, was strongly affected by its own politico-economic and security problems. Due to internal exigencies economic instability, lack of vision of Russian leadership, instable borders and law and order situation had left indelible imprints on Russo-Central Asian relations. Against this backdrop, the Russian President Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999) focused to create a non-threatening environment conducive to economic and political development of Russia (Donaldson, 2000). The new Russian leadership was strongly following the liberal ideology towards the West as the yardstick of civilized values, and felt that Western interests, particularly those of the US, converge with Russia's long-term interests. So the primary thrust of Russia's

foreign policy during the beginning of the 1990's was to make the country an integral part of the Euro-Atlantic community (Troitskiy, 2014).

Russia had hoped to become a prosperous liberal democracy and an equal partner of the US in the international decision-making processes. For that, Russia had implemented the drastic economic reforms such as the release of price and currency controls, withdrawal of state subsidies, and large-scale privatization programmes. A mass privatization programme had introduced that led to a huge transfer of shares from the government to their managers, workers and the common people. By 1994, almost 70 percent of the Russian economy was privatized (Shleifer & Treisman, 2005). Russia thus, pursued 'One-Sided Pro-Western' foreign policy, set the West as the top priority and stressed the compatibility between the Western and Russian interests in the early 1990's.

Although, Russia had established the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) in 1999 to, re-integrate the post-Soviet space. All industries had operated within the framework of Russian Union up to 1992. The Russian ruble had remained the standard currency of the CARs. The CARs themselves had remained extremely keen to preserve a unified trade and currency system with Russia. However, on the other hand, Russia was striving hard to get rid of the acute economic crisis followed by the Soviet disintegration. It was suffering from the liquidation of the Union Republican industrial giants and the closure of a large number of medium and small-scale enterprises. The Central Bank of Russia had failed to supply sufficient amount of money to the CARs. Russia eventually, relinquished its regional monetary hegemony and expelled the CARs from the ruble zone in 1993. By doing so, Russia automatically abandoned its economic position in the post-Soviet space and reduced its economic influence. The demise of the Russia-dominated 'Ruble Zone' and the members exited accelerated the breakdown of mutual economic relations and thus left the CARs with no currencies (Lo, 2015). Russia's trade with the Central Asian countries declined drastically. The following table no. 4.2 shows the trade between Russia and CARs.

Table No. 4.2 Trade between Russia and CARs, 1991-1996, US Million Dollars

Year	Volume of Trade	Russian Exports to CARs	Russian Imports from CARs	Russian Trade Balance
1991	59226	33785	25441	8344
1992	6360	5767	593	5174
1993	6750	4703	2047	2656
1994	6163	3771	2372	1399
1995	7679	4230	3449	781
1996	7244	3920	3324	596
1997	6833	3402	3431	-29
1998	5411	3165	2246	919
1999	3695	1903	1792	111

Source: Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, Advanced Research and Assessment Group.

It is clear from the above table that Russia's trade with the CARs had drastically declined from the US \$ 59.226 billion to US \$ 3.695 billion during the period 1991-1999. As a result, Russia's trade cooperation with the Central Asian countries was drastically declined. Moreover, in 1994, Russia had ignored the attempts of Kazak President, Nursultan Nazarbaev, to form a Eurasian Union, an initiative, which could boost the process of Russia's economic re-integration with the post-Soviet space of Central Asia (Yesdauletova & Yesdauletov, 2014).

The economy of the Central Asian region had to a large extent depended on Russian subsidies. It has been estimated that in 1990s, Moscow used to share in the budget of Tajikistan's about 44%; Uzbekistan (42 percent); and Turkmenistan (22) (Bohr, 2004). Realizing it as a major burden on Russian economy, Russian President

Boris Yeltsin government implemented an economic policy of 'shaking off the burden.' Under this policy, Russia had canceled the financial subsidies, and thereby dramatically reduced the supply of raw materials (Bohr, 2004). Resultantly, the CARs have heightened multifaceted relations with the external powers and regional players. In this background, the countries diversified economic connections with the outside world and thus enthusiastically welcomed the non-Russian foreign investment. Moreover, Russia wanted to avoid demographic pressures of the CARs which were regarded as a hurdle to reform the politico-economic setup. The Russian leadership was of the opinion that without the CARs, the process of reforming the Russian economy and aligning with the Western economic and political systems would proceed more easily and rapidly.

In the military sphere, Yeltsin knew that the stability of the CARs was very critical for Russia. Therefore, Kremlin worked towards the creation of an effective system for collective security. On May 15, 1992, in Uzbekistan, Russia, signed the Treaty of Collective Security (TCS) with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Armenia, defining the obligation of every member state to provide military assistance whenever any member country was invaded. According to article 2 of the TCS, the member countries took the obligation to consult each other on all important security issues. However, in practice, the same had been remained passive and did not show maturity along with the effective security mechanism. There were disagreements among the member countries on several issues, which meant the TCS may, first of all, settle 'internal' disputes before being fully put into function. Moreover, the CARs had lacked trust in Russia's long-term objectives in the region and seen Russia through the prism of the possible recurrence of traditional 'Russian imperialism'.

Russia was unable to integrate the CARs militarily and its proposals for the military integration of the post-Soviet space under the CIS were rejected (Olcott, Åslund, & Garnett, 1999). From 1991-1995, Russia's real military spending decreased drastically from 146 billion dollars to 73 billion dollars which in turn led to the reduction of the Kremlin's military cooperation with the CARs and partly responsible for its decreasing its own strategic influence. The same situation was true with regard to Russia's bilateral security cooperation with the regional countries. In fact, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan had reduced their military dependence on Russia. Despite close

military cooperation with Russia, Kazakhstan too was searching for alternatives for security guarantees.

Conclusively, it would be out of context by saying that the Yeltsin administration tried to distance itself from events in the CARs. Without the political will and support of the Kremlin, the Russian troops were left to the vagaries of fate, and the very presence of Russian troops in the region became dormant. Russia was unable to prevent the escalation of the internal conflicts in Tajikistan, the flow of drugs from Afghanistan, the increasing military cooperation of regional countries with the US. For instance, in 1994, the US lead NATO began its 'Partnership for Peace' (PfP) programme, Russia made no serious attempts to coordinate a united approach to this programme.

In the sphere of managing natural resources, particularly oil and natural gas, Russia's influence had reduced drastically. The CARs had gained the right through international consortia for new pipeline routes that circumvent Russia. Russia has been remained ineffective to stop these actions on part of the CARs and resultantly started being considered as one among the other actors. Furthermore, railways and roads were being extended and connected to the other regional countries particularly China, in order to diversify their contacts with the outside world that lead to the decline of Russia's once monopolistic control over the region.

The regional and extra-regional countries became active in the region in response to the expectations of CARs political elites. Among the regional countries like Turkey, Iran and China had shown exceptional interests in the region. Given its geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic salience, no sooner than later, the USA followed the suit. Both the regional and extra-regional countries had concretized multifaceted cooperation such as economic, political and defense including the social and cultural with the CARs. To maintain what was left of its influence, Russia was somewhat compelled to enter the competition with other entities in the Central Asian region. Due to the growing importance of the region in the age of scarcity of oil and natural gas, this region gained the global attention with the potential for an independent foreign policy and a new reorientation.

For Russia, to maintain close relationships with the CARs authoritarian and communist regimes lead to distrust in the capitalist World for Russian leadership in its

periphery. Apart from this, Russia's political alliance with the regional countries could also serve the interests of conservative fractions in Russia. However, the public opinion gave priorities to democratic values and procedures than the centralized authoritarian system. Gorecki (2014) argued that one of the main reasons why Central Asia was abandoned was the desire among the Russian liberals and Democrats to get rid of authoritarian system which had grown on the Communist Soviet substratum and, in the opinion of those Democrats, were ready to back Communist retaliation. Establishing ties with the CARs had not only resulted in the continuance of the low-efficiency industries and low production but also would slow the market-oriented reforms, integration with West and European economic institutions. The Westernizers held the view that Russia can find alternative sources of required raw material from other countries to meet the rising demands. Apart from this, the CARs being a source of instability, conflicts, and problems, any military intervention, if required, would be costly which would not be accepted or appreciated by the Russian public opinion (Peyrouse, Boonstra, & Laruelle, 2012).

Unilaterally, Russia had started the radical economic reforms, created independent armed forces, and framed the pro-Western foreign policy orientation, without the consultations of the CARs. All these factors demonstrate that Russia's had pursued with dormant and enervated policy towards the CARs. By and large, Russia had bluntly rejected the CARs as an economic burden and alien civilization in pursuit of Atlantic approach. Its influence had declined in almost all spheres such as military, trade, commerce, and Culture.

Russia had also failed to create a common economic integration within the CIS. The CARs had reciprocated very indignantly to Russia's 'New Foreign Policy', seeing it as a kind of betrayal. This was a natural reaction to the actions of a fraternal country with which they had grown up for more than hundred years. Such hasty reread of Russia was taken as 'flight' from the CARs. Consequently, the CARs were obligated to tailor their respective foreign policies to readjust external relations with the regional players and the major powers. It was only after when Vladimir Putin came into power (2000) and took a keen interest in its southern periphery to restore its influence.

4.4 Russia's Central Asia Policy: Rationale

Central Asia has been underscored by historic connections, geographical proximity, and mutual interests, particularly in terms of security, economics, and culture. In fact, the former Soviet Union used the borders of CARs as the first line of defense and a strategic buffer against external threats. Moscow has always been strongly obstructed the transforming of the geopolitical status quo and security alignments in its backyard. Economically, the region has been remained significant, for raw materials needed for the Russian cotton and textile industries as well as for the huge untapped mineral resources, especially natural gas and oil.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the successor state Russia relatively neglected the CARs and subsequently shifted its foreign policy towards West and supranational monetary institutions. As a result, the Russian retreat in the CARs created a power vacuum and thereby created space for the regional and extra-regional players in the region. The changing contours of Moscow's regional dynamics led to accentuate to the US and Chinese to expand their influences, particularly after 9/11 attacks. In the post-9/11, Moscow has adopted a more pragmatic foreign policy towards the CARs particularly, after the Vladimir Putin's ascent to the Russian presidency in early 2000. Russia cannot afford to be a bystander to the changing military and strategic balance of power in its backyard. The adoption of a more active foreign policy towards the CARs was determined by a series of factors discussed below.

The first and foremost factor was the economic interdependence and complementarities of the former Soviet space was enough complex to simply segregate it from the region. Russia had been imported sizeable quantities of oil and gas from the CARs and had provided transit facilities to the CARs. Without this facility, impoverished CARs were unable to export their energy resources to the world markets to get hard currency, vital for their economic growth and development. The inter-relationship in the energy sector has contributed to the development of strategic interdependence in other fields as well.

The CARs industrial and agricultural potential had remained an imperative element of the former Soviet integrated economic complex (Roy, 2001). The region had remained a traditional supplier of various raw materials such as cotton, leather,

and wool for the Russian manufacturing industries and relatively a large market for Russia's finished goods. According to some estimates, about 75 percent of consumer and industrial goods in the region were supplied from other parts of the former Soviet Union, particularly from Russia. The expanding influence of the external powers in the CARs, was not digestible for Russia. Moreover, the policy of division of labor (functional Specialization) practiced, and the division of work on a territorial basis in the Central Asia, had resulted in structural and technological inter-dependency on Russia. Hence, the economic recession in the former Soviet space was bound to have direct adverse repercussions on the industrial and agricultural production of Russia. Therefore, the need of the hour, from the Russian point of view, was the economic re-integration of the Post-Soviet space.

The CARs had been remained an ethnic kaleidoscope, in all the five countries the Russian population was most significant. Menon (1995), argues that that in Kazakhstan, the Russian diaspora was (38 percent), in Kyrgyzstan (22 percent), in Turkmenistan (9 percent), in Uzbekistan (8 percent) and in Tajikistan (7 percent). Overnight the Russian diaspora had turned into minorities after the break-up of the Soviet Union. The Russian had arrived in the region as soldiers, administrators, technical specialists, and bureaucrats. The white colored jobs and handsome salaries of the Russians in the CARs which created a sense of discrimination among the common local inhabitants. As a result, the collapse of the Soviet Union had created a kind of patriotic and nationalist feelings in the post-Soviet space fueled by the worsened economic conditions of indigenous inhabitants had resulted into ethnic dissonance between local population on one hand and Russian diaspora on the other hand. The corollary of which had brought discrimination, otherness and subsequently had led to huge casualties of Russian in the CARs. The most obvious targets in the CARs were the Russian's concentrated in urban areas of the region. It was realized in Moscow that the reoriented policy is required to safeguard the ethnic minorities in Central Asia. On October 10, 1993, Russia's Foreign Minister Kozyrev (1991-1996) said, 'it would be a mistake to disregard the special responsibility of Russia, for protecting the legitimate rights of the millions of Russians in the region (Hill, and Jewett, 2014).

The important motivation that had compelled Russia to intervene in the CARs was the threat of 'Radical Extremism' emanating from its southern periphery. The turbulent processes of the revival of Islamic radicalization have sensitized the policy makers in Russia to regard the CARs as a long-term and a mortal security challenges. The demise of the Soviet Union led to the breakdown of the socio-political system and resultantly, and partly responsible for the emergence of illegal radical organizations in the Fergana Valley (Uzbekistan) and Tajikistan (Stronski, 2016). The activities of such organizations were aimed at propagating a radical Islam new to the region and enhancing the role of religion in the functioning society at large. Postulating a revival of the religious life, these organizations de facto went against the traditional folk of Islam and the official Muslim structures which were earlier controlled by the Soviet communist authorities.

During the civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997), radical groups such as Islamic Renaissance Part (IRP) came into existence. The IRP began establishing local councils, volunteer militias espousing extremist ideas and had attempted to implement the observance of sharia as the primary basis for legislation. In Uzbekistan, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), had emerged out of the radical tendencies in the Uzbek section of the Ferghana Valley (1990s). This group had worked closely with the Taliban, recruited and trained hundreds of terrorists, and infiltrated them into other parts of the region. In addition, originally emerged (1953) in the Arab world, the Hizb -ul-Tahrir (HuT), has been working in the direction to convert the Fergana Valley into an Islamic Shari'a State. Its primary motive was the removal of the secular regimes, and to establish an absolutist theocratic state, a caliphate, across the CARs. It is being operated through a clandestine cell structure and has thousands of followers, potentially posing a Bolshevik-style threat in the CARs (Kimmage, 2009). Given the CARs had geographical proximity, cultural homogeneity with Russia and the safe havens for several regional radical groups had worsened the security situation in Russia. The highly infested with terrorism, security situation has drastically had underbelly and jeopardize its spillover affected Russia's security and integrity in Chechnya and Dagestan (Kimmage, 2009). Therefore, putting up a barrier against extremism in the CARs was one of the main reasons why Russian troops had been

deployed along the Tajik-Afghan border. The Deputy Foreign Minister Georgii Kunadze in an interview with *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* on July 29, 1993, stressed the need to prevent the explosive charge of radical extremism from penetrating into Russian areas of the Muslim population. Therefore, the Potential radicalization of Islam in the CARs had remained a challenge to Russia in its capacity of strategic allies of the CARs and Afghanistan. The preservation of the traditional secular culture of political regimes historically dominant in the CARs had been a major importance to Russia, a multinational and multi-confessional but secular state. Even a hypothetical Islamic alternative in the CARs seems to be entirely detrimental to Russian interests. Therefore, Islamic radicalism had remained a regional security threat.

Drug trafficking had been seen by the Russian Security Council as one of the major security challenges at par with religious extremism and terrorism. The geographical location of the CARs had made the region as attractive areas for drug trafficking, situated in close proximity with the Golden Crescent countries (Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Iran) and, via China, with the Golden Triangle (Burma, Laos, and Thailand), which are the world's largest producers of illicit opiates (Cornell, 2005). With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the CARs inherited a well-established road and air connectivity that linked them to Russia and the West. It also led to open borders and freer foreign travel to the other countries. Increased cross-border communications had increased the opportunities for drug smugglers to establish contacts with interested parties in the region. Moreover, the pattern of cross-border ethnic relations had also served another powerful facilitator of the drug proliferation. For instance, the Tajiks and Uzbeks have kin across the Afghan border, and these cross-border relationships had been served as a link in the drug trade across the borders. It is estimated that between 1992 and 1996 opium transportation through the region was increased 14 times. Afghanistan has been remained the main hub of 'Hard Drug Production', producing 80 percent of opiates in the world (Golunov, 2012). Most opiates from Afghanistan are transported to Europe, via Central Asia, Russia, and Europe. Russia had not only remained a transit route but also a consumer country (Galeotti, 2012). According to Yakovenko (2013), "Afghan drug traffic is like a tsunami constantly breaking over Russia...we are sinking in it." Thus, the expansion of the Russian drug consumption

and trade during the 1990s had caused a serious security challenge to Russia and prompted the Russian leadership to intervene in its southern periphery which had been remained a major source of drug transportation in the region.

Moscow's one-sided pro-Western foreign policy proved unsuccessful. Russia was disappointed to see the US and Europe's refusal to recognize it as a strategic partner at the international platform. Boris Yeltsin's 'one-sided' policy was received coldly in the West at the same time, it became clear to Russia that NATO expansion into the CIS was unstoppable. As a result, the Russian leadership realized that it was impossible, at least for the time being, for Moscow to be recognized as a Western power. Thus, Russia shifted its 'one-sidedness' to a pragmatic Eurasianism. It has realized the importance of the regional countries and reoriented its foreign policy towards the Central Asia.

At last, Russia was concerned about the regional and extra-regional countries, acquiring a predominant influence in the CARs. In 1994, the US-led NATO had expanded its military relations through the Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme with the CARs (İnan, & Yusuf. 1999). Within the framework of the PfP, the three republics formed the Central Asian battalion 'Tsentrzbat' in 1995 (Spechler, 2002). In fact, for the first time the military exercise took place between Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan under the framework of PfP with the participation of troops from the USA and Turkey in 1997 (Bakshi, 2001).

After the 9/11attacks and subsequently the US launched OEF in Afghanistan. The CARs proximity to Afghanistan qualifies the former as an ideal place for the US to establish military bases and transfer supplies. The US obtained temporary basing rights at Manas (Kyrgyzstan) and K2 (Uzbekistan; Sestak, 2003). Furthermore, the US supports democratic penetration, pro-Western regimes and free market-oriented reforms in the CARs, hoping to overthrow the Russia-dominated political pattern there. Consequently, the growing US influence in the Central Asia has compelled Russia to switch its foreign policy from an initially one-sided pro-Western strategy to a more practical Eurasia-oriented style.

The rising dragon (China) too has rapidly attempting to influence the Central Asia. It has signed numerous bilateral and multilateral treaties with the CARs, especially

in the area of energy, with the purpose of taking advantage of the huge oil and natural gas market in Eurasia. More importantly, China offered access to the land-locked CARs to connect with the world markets. As a natural corollary, Russia had been pestered by China's growing economic expansion in its backyard (Mitchell, 2014). Thus, Russia preferred to put under its own control the pipeline's system crossing the region and inherited from the Soviet Union.

Moreover, the regional countries like Iran, Turkey, India, and Pakistan have also made their inroads to enhance their respective geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic leverage in the region. Iran attempted to play a religious card by projecting itself as the core of an Islamic world and value system. It offered the shortest routes to the landlocked CARs to access the warm waters and export their natural resources to the international markets (Patnaik, 2002). Turkey too had made vigorous attempt to project itself as the role model for the newborn CARs. The major components of its model were, Sunni Islam, democracy, free market economy and pro-western orientation. Similarly, India and Pakistan attempted to pursue their interests in the Central Asia.

The involvement of regional and extra-regional players in post-Soviet space of CARs has compelled the Russian leadership to reassert its influence in the region. The CARs had been viewed from Moscow as falling within its legitimate sphere of influence and vital interests, with Russia having important responsibilities for the stability, peace, and order in the region.

4.5 Theoretical Framework of Russia's Central Asia Policy

The foreign policy of Russia towards Central Asia, since December 1991, had undergone drastic changes in terms of formulation and execution. Russia's foreign policy has been primarily influenced by two schools of thought i.e. the Atlantic and Eurasianist. The first school was represented by Andrei Kozyrev, the first Foreign Minister of Russia (1990-1996), Yury Gaidar, acting Prime Minister of Russia (June 15, 1992 - December 14, 1992), and, the first President of Russia, Boris Nikolayevich Yeltsin (1991-1999). According to this school, Russia had to renounce its pretense to originality and uniqueness. Russia represented an exhausted form of Eurasian civilization which

combined Buddhist and Byzantine Christian elements (Podberezsky, 2014). Russia is a European and given this its diplomacy should focus towards the West.

At the multilateral level, this school was of the opinion that Russia should establish a partnership with West in general. In particular, it should enhance its partnership the global institution led by the West like the North-Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), European Union (EU), International Monetary Fund (IMF), G-7 etc. the Atlantic approach, therefore, emphasized the importance of the United Nations Charter (1945), Helsinki Declarations (1964), and the Paris Charter on Human Rights, (1948) and should be used as a guide for Russia Foreign Policy (Starr, & Dawisha, 2015). In June 1992, President Boris Yeltsin had expressed willingness to cooperate with the US and to bring the stereotypical mindset of hostility highly charged by the Cold War to an end (Marantz, 1997). Notwithstanding the no-easy acceptance of the Russian stand by the West, shortly the ideas of the school had started losing the ground. The ideas were further dived down as Russia was not given status in the international decision-making process as per its position. It had become more unrealizable given the Cold War built mutual distrust and cynicism etc. (Talbot, 2014).

The second school of thought (Eurasianist), was comprised of Individuals such as Vice-President of Russia, Alexander Rutskoi (July 10, 1991 - October 4, 1993); Speaker of the Supreme Soviet, Ruslan Khasbulatov (October 29, 1991-October 4, 1993); Russian Defence Minister, Yevgeny Shaposhnikov (August 23, 1991 to December 21, 1991). Additionally, it was supported by the scholars from the Russian Academy of Sciences (Pursiainen, 2017). The proponents of this approach believed that foreign policy had to focus on rejuvenate Russia into a single powerful state within the limits of Russian civilization (Tolz, 1998). Andrew & Clint (2017) argued that, "Russia's future belongs to the South, not to the West and opposed the idea of an exclusive alliance with the West." The proponents of this approach warned against the alienation from the East Europe, Middle East, and South Asia and more importantly the CARs. Living together within common borders for centuries has formed a common space of civilization. In the words of Pleshakov (1993):

Russia does not end on the border of the Baltic States or on the foothills of the Great Caucasian Range. The empire is gone, but its

political, economic, military, cultural and intellectual space is not. Russia is closely integrated into the affairs of all the newly independent states of the former Soviet Union

This approach aimed to establish a belt of good neighborliness beyond its borders and focused to work towards development of bilateral and multilateral forms of cooperation with the CARs. Particular attention would be devoted to the settlement of conflicts with the CARs, the security of the borders, and the protection of the rights of Russian minorities. The Eurasianist's advocated establishing political, economic and military relations with the CARs which were named as 'Near Abroad' (Smith, 2016). It drew attention that Russia should get rid of external dependence by using its own resources in order to establish its national identity against West. The school was of the view that the US had been Russia's primary concern, history of opposition to the Soviet Union and its position with the NATO alliance on the borders of Eastern Europe. Therefore, the influence of the two antagonistic schools of thought in Russia's foreign policy had remained one of the major reasons for Russia's pessimistic approach towards CARs.

4.6 Russia's Policy towards Central Asia: A Paradigmatic Shift

In order to restore its classical influence in Central Asia, Russia has reoriented its foreign policy towards the region both at the bilateral and multilateral levels. In fact, Russia has signed the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation with Kazakhstan (May 25, 1992), Uzbekistan (May 30, 1992) and Kyrgyzstan (June 10, 1992) respectively. Moreover, Russia had declared the region as a 'Space of Vital Interest' under the 'Primakov Doctrine' (September 14, 1995). Its chief objective was to recover Russia's lost influence in its backyard i.e., Central Asia. Under this doctrine, Russia has been conceived as one of the Centre of the multi-polar world. The main objective of the doctrine was to get engaged with the neighboring countries in general and the Central Asia in particular. Notwithstanding these policy frameworks, Russia's foreign policy towards Central Asia under Boris Yeltsin (1991-1999), had been remained as weak, vague and unsuccessful (Paramonov & Stolpovski, 2008).

Russian foreign policy towards Central Asia had undergone metamorphic changes under President Vladimir Putin (2000-2008). In fact, Putin has formulated straightforward foreign policy with clearly defined priorities and well-structured objectives towards the Central Asia. It is evident in the Foreign Policy Doctrines of Russia (2000, 2013 and 2016), wherein the region has been prioritized. In the political sphere, Russia has adopted the policy of 'Non-Interface' with the Central Asian countries. Its chief objective has been to retain the 'authoritarian political systems' of the Central Asian countries. In fact, Russia's model of 'Sovereign Democracy' has more appeal, as it matches with the political structures of Central Asian countries. Therefore, it appears that Russia has been satisfied with the authoritarian model that predominates there since it views this system more stable than the democratic, practiced in West.

In the security sphere, Russia has reoriented its foreign policy towards the Central Asian countries. It has signed various bilateral and multilateral military/security agreement (s) with the CARs. Indeed, it has means and potential to react to the crisis together with an assumed responsibility to cope security challenges in its Southern flank. This is borne out of bilateral security cooperation with the CARs as well as under the auspices of regional multilateral agreements.

Russia has signed the 'Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance' with Kazakhstan (1998). The Protocol on amendments to the 'Treaty on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance' was signed in 2012 and ratified in June 2013. Russia signed the 'Strategic Partnership' (2004) and 'Allied Relationship' agreements (2005) with Uzbekistan (Perovic, 2005). It has established the 'Strategic Partnership' agreement (2017) with Turkmenistan that sounded somehow at variance with latter's official policy of neutrality. Meshcheryakov (2014) acknowledges that, one of the reasons for the development of Russia's security cooperation with the CARs has been to restore its regional influence. Under the Putin's Presidency (2000-2008 and 2012-Till Date), Russia's policy towards the CARs reached its peak as all the Central Asian countries became Russia's strategic allies.

The fundamental shift in Russia's foreign policy towards the CARs was marked by the decisive actions taken to develop regional security and military institutional. Although, the bilateral relationships are the foundational basis of Russia's policy

towards the CARs. While as, the multilateral regional initiatives, have empowered Moscow to enhance its leverage in the region. In this context, Russia has established the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Shanghai Five, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 1992, 1996 and 2001, respectively.

The Shanghai Five was largely a Chinese security initiative. It was comprised of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Its only function was demilitarization of the borders of the member countries and to resolve border disputes. While as, the CSTO consists of 9 members, among them 4 are the Central Asian countries (Except Turkmenistan). Within this security grouping, Russia has set up Collective Rapid Action Forces (RAF) in 2009, having 10 battalions and consists of 4000 ground troops including 1500 Special commandos, managed through joint military headquarters in member countries (Rozanov & Dovgan, 2010). Moreover, Russia has the right to veto the establishment of foreign military bases in the territories of the CSTO members (Radyuhin, 2011). Unlike the SCO, it counts no other major player besides Russia among its members. Thus, the CSTO has been serving as a vehicle for Russia's residual military presence in the region.

Similarly, the SCO has been also facilitating Russia's re-assertion in the Central Asian countries. Russia and China are its leading members including Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan (India and Pakistan joined in 2017). Its primary focus has been to eliminate the three evils i.e., Terrorism, Extremism and Separatism. On June 17, 2004, the 'Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure' (RATS) was established to contain the three evils (Haas, 2016). Thus, over the years, the organization's military activities have expanded in terms of joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, counter-terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crimes.

In the economic sphere, Russia has established several mechanisms to enhance its economic cooperation with the Central Asian countries, both at bilateral and multilateral level. It has established the 'Intergovernmental Cooperation Committee (1997), Joint Declaration on Cooperation in the peaceful use of nuclear energy (2006), and the 'International Center for Uranium recovery (ICUR)' with Kazakhstan in 2007. Under the 'European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) negotiation (2013), Russia has agreed to include industrial as well as agricultural products, services, and investments,

in its bilateral trade with Kazakhstan (Zabortseva, 2014). Russia has signed the treaty of 'Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance' with Kyrgyzstan (1992). For expanding the existing economic engagements, Russia has established the Joint Inter-governmental Commission with Kyrgyzstan. The former has executed the first national exhibition under the agenda of 'Economic Growth and Mutually Beneficial Partnership' with Tajikistan in 2010. Russia offered new prospects to the Central Asian country for establishing the direct business contacts. A key role in this direction has been playing by the 'Russia-Tajikistan Commission on Trade and Commerce'. Moreover, the Russia led economic forums have been playing a significant role in expanding trade and investment cooperation with the Central Asian countries. In the field of energy, Russia has been retained a strong grip, it has applied significant pressure to prevent circumvention and thereby enhanced its leverage in the region.

At the multilateral level, Russia has been established various economic groupings to re-integrate the CARs with Russia. In fact, it has established the 'Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC)' with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in 2000. Later on, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have joined the Russian centric EurAsEC in (2005) however, the later had withdrew in (2008). Its chief objective has been economic integration and unification of the member countries through partial or full elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers. The resolution was made on establishing the 'Anti-Crisis Foundation' within the EurAsEC to exercise joint efforts to minimize the adverse effect of the world crisis on the member countries' economies. Besides, Russia has established the 'Customs Union (CU)' with Kazakhstan and Belarus in 2010, which was re-named as the 'Eurasian Customs Union (ECU)'. Its objective has been to cut the customs levied on goods, services, capital of member countries of union (Wisniewska, 2012). Moreover, Russia has also established the 'Single Economic Space (SES)' with Belarus, Kazakhstan in 2012, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia joined in 2015. The primary focus of the SES has been to create an integrated single market.

In order to overcome the lacunas of ECU and SES, Russia has established the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Belarus, and Armenia in 2015. Its key objectives are, free flow of goods, services, labor and capital among its member countries, i.e., a single market (Sugaipova, 2015). The Russian President

Putin has been frequently argued that the Eurasian integration is an opportunity for the entire post-Soviet space to become an independent Centre for global development, rather than remaining on the outskirts of Europe and Asia (Wolczuk, & Dragneva, 2017). Vinokurov (2017) argued that, Russia led EEU is the core of a wider regional grouping i.e. the 'Greater Eurasia', led by Russia.

Therefore, from the above discussion, Russia has been tried to preserve its sphere of influence as Eurasia's great power. It has been seeking to develop closer cooperation with the CARs both at bilateral and multilateral level in order to limit the influence of both regional and extra-regional players.

4.7 Russia-Central Asia: Multifaceted Engagements

From the above policy framework of Russia towards the Central Asian countries, it becomes clear that Russia has been attempting to enhance its multi-faceted engagements with the regional countries. The following section has explored Russia's political, economic and security cooperation with the Central Asian countries.

4.7.1 Political Engagements

Russia has enhanced its political ties with the Central Asian countries. In fact, over the years, Russia has recovered most of its lost influence and has managed to acquire new levers of political control in the region. Strikingly, after the Putin's accession into power (2000) and his personal ties with the political elites of the CARs, lead to Russia's political rapprochement with the regional countries. During his first tenure (2000-2004), Putin has held more than a dozen personal meetings with each of the Central Asian political leaders, expressing criticism neither of their increasingly absolute rule nor of the legitimacy of the referendum on extending their respective terms in office. In addition to official state visits, President Putin consistently used multilateral gatherings for a series of tete-a-tete meetings, granting the greatest priority to Kazakhstan, emphasizing the value of alliances with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, paying due respect to Uzbekistan and not forgetting self-isolating Turkmenistan (Policy of Neutrality).

In this connection, Russia has been maintaining cordial ties with the first and the only President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev (1990-till Date). The Executive Heads of Russia and Kazakhstan reaffirmed their alliance by signing an agreement on good-neighborliness and alliance at a CIS summit in Kazakhstan on October 15, 2015. The President Nazarbayev's, 'Multi-Vector' foreign policy that aims to attain different benefits from simultaneous cooperation with major powers. Yet, until now President Nazarbaev has preferred Russia, primarily due to its geopolitical convergences that have developed, over the years (Meshcheryakov, 2014). The political cooperation reached its zenith following the 'Colour Revolutions' that aimed for political transformations, democracy, and human rights in the post-Soviet space. As a result, when the threat of interference in Kazakhstan's domestic affairs became real, Russia stood staunchly by Astana's side.

Russia has established political contacts at the highest level with Kazakhstan. Moreover, Russian Embassy was established in Astana, (Transferred from Almaty in 2005) followed by Consulate Generals in Almaty, Uralsk and Ust-Kamenogorsk. On the other hand, Kazakhstan has its Embassy in Moscow, along with the Consulate General in St. Petersburg, Astrakhan and Omsk. The Intensive political contacts and bilateral political exchanges between the two countries have been enhanced the political cooperation.

Russia has established its diplomatic ties With Uzbekistan (1992). At the very start of his presidency, Vladimir Putin paid his first visit to Uzbekistan (May 18-19, 2000). Putin was given a high-level reception by the Uzbek President Karimov. In August 2003, Putin once again visited Uzbekistan and met with Karimov in the Uzbek President's hometown of Samarkand, the second largest city, in Uzbekistan. Such intriguing symbolism and high-level receptions have heightened bilateral political rapprochements.

Putin has signed agreements such as 'Strategic Partnership' (June 16, 2004), 'Allied Relationship' (November 14, 2005) with his Uzbek counterpart Karimov (Perovic, 2005). According to Tolipov (2006), 'the Strategic and Allied' agreements were not signed due to external threats to Uzbekistan's national interests, but due to the danger to Karimov's regime. With the onset of the US campaign in Afghanistan that had

brought Tashkent closer to Washington. Nonetheless, the 'Color Revolutions' in the CARs, coupled with Western criticism following the Andijon crackdown (2005) had alienated Uzbekistan from the US. Even, the Western countries had imposed sanctions against Uzbekistan. Consequently, Uzbekistan had to join Russia's bandwagon to survive. Similarly, Mukerji (2016) argued that, President Karimov was careful to keep his channels of communication open with Russia, even during its pro-US policy shift. Moreover, Uzbekistan disillusioned with the financial incentives received from the US that subsequently led Karimov to return towards Russian (Matveeva, 2011). The bilateral political dialogues at the highest level has been regular between the two countries.

After the death of Islam Karimov (September 2, 2016), Putin visited Uzbekistan on September 23, 2016. His visit obviously was not just a courtesy call, though he was careful to observe the proprieties by giving personal condolences to Karimov's family a highly important symbolic step that draws favorable notice in a conservative and traditional society like Uzbekistan. Importantly, Putin's main purpose, however, was to establish contacts with the new Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev about their policies and about the future bilateral relationship.

Soon after the breakdown of the FSU, Turkmenistan fell in line with Moscow and joined the Russian led CIS (1992). However, the bilateral political cooperation had remained at lowest ebb, chiefly because of President Niyazov adoption of 'Policy of Neutrality' (1993). Consequently, Turkmenistan politically distanced herself from the rest of the world including Russia. After the death of the Turkmen President Niyazov (December 21, 2006), Russia used this opportunity to engage in the first face-to-face consultations with the new President, Berdimuhamedow (2007-Till Date) seeking and eventually receiving a firm guarantee of continuing good neighborly relations. In fact, it undertook pro-Russian steps that were to accommodate Moscow's interests in the region along with the alleviation of the appalling social conditions of the Russian minority in Turkmenistan (Horak & Sir, 2009).

In this way, the pro-Russian activities of the new leadership met with a positive response from Russia as demonstrated by high-level diplomatic visits of Russia's political leadership to Turkmenistan. In fact, the Russian President Putin has visited

Turkmenistan in (2000, 2004, 2007, 2008, 2012, and 2015). Recently, President Putin has made his official trip to Ashgabat (October 2, 2017) and met the Turkmen counterpart Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov. In this meeting, both the countries have signed the 'Strategic Partnership Agreement' (2017) for the first time that sounded somehow at variance with Turkmenistan's official policy of neutrality (Hasanov, 2017). Similarly, the President of Turkmenistan Berdymukhamedov visited Russia in (2011, 2014 and 2016, and 2017). Both the countries have organized the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties in 2007.

The political system of the Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have been characterized by the authoritarian system. At times, when the authoritarian governments of these countries have been criticized by the West, while Russia has been remained a staunch supporter of the ruling governments of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and has often come to the rescue in crises. This policy has guaranteed Russia a great deal of influence in the region.

4.7.2 Security Engagements

Russia's overriding concerns in the post-Soviet space of Central Asia is security. It is on the receiving end of transcontinental threats including, small arms proliferation, narcotics trafficking, and terrorism coming from its southern periphery. For this purpose, Russia has signed various military/security agreements with the CARs. In fact, Russia has the means to check/control the crisis together with an assumed responsibility to manage security challenges. This is borne out of bilateral security cooperation with the CARs as well as under the auspices of regional multilateral agreements. In this context, Russia has developed its military/security cooperation with Kazakhstan. Russia's bilateral security cooperation with Kazakhstan had enabled Kremlin to enjoy several important strategic facilities in Kazakhstan. Currently, there are 11 million hectares of land was leased to Russia by Kazakhstan for military purposes (Abrams, 2011). In 1994, Russia signed the first Baikonur Cosmodrome lease agreement with Kazakhstan for a period of 20 years. In 2004, the lease was extended till 2050, at an annual cost of US \$ 115 million (Dolman, 2005).

Russia's air force and naval aviation make trials of new weapons at Atyrau (Western Kazakhstan), firing ranges for testing missiles and ammunition located in Western Kazakhstan, as well as ranges in Karaganda, Aqtobe, Kyzlorda, and Zhambyl, covering about 80,000 square kilometers for the testing of air defense and strategic ballistic missiles, an independent radar node 'Balkhash-9' serves as part of Russia's Space Forces integrated missile attack warning system and a regiment of the Russian Air Transport Branch located at Kostanai which is used for fulfilling the air transport requirements of the above facilities (McDermott, 2016).

Russia has been providing military training to Kazakh troops on favorable terms. In fact, in Russia's military educational establishments there is relatively more representation of Kazakh military officers and commandoes than the other countries of Central Asia. In terms of arms supplies, Russia is the chief supplier of military armaments to Kazakhstan. Over the years, it has commissioned several military armaments like BTR-80 armored carriers, Mi-17 multi-role helicopters, and light Ansat helicopters for about US \$ 63 million dollars. In August 2010, at the Maks aviation salon, Russian signed a contract worth the US \$ 60 million dollars. The agreement covers the overhauling and modernization of MiG-29, Mig-31 and Su-25 aircraft. The agreement also covered the supply of modern simulators and other aircrew training equipment's (Gorenburg, 2014). Russia has supplied the modern S-300 (Favorite) and S-400 (Triumph) missile systems (2013-2015) to Kazakhstan on subsidized prices, which are capable of shooting down any hijacked aircraft (Tynan, 2017). Furthermore, Russia has also repeatedly made proposals offering practical assistance to Kazakhstan's Caspian Sea Fleet including the construction of shipbuilding facilities and other elements of the shore infrastructure, and offering navigational and hydrographic information.

Russia has enhanced its security cooperation with Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Russia has established its military base in Tajikistan and also signed the 'Treaty of Alliance and Co-operation' in 1999. In fact, Russia has deployed one of the largest military contingent, the 201st Motorised Rifle Division in Tajikistan. Putz (2016) argues that about 7,000 troops are deployed at the base, equipped with high-tech weaponry, assault helicopters and combat vehicles. It has signed an agreement with Tajikistan (2012), which provides for rent free basing rights for Russian military forces until 2042

(Dubnov, 2018). Russia has assisted Tajikistan in the creation of its air defense system. Russia has been making regular supplies of weapons and ammunition to Tajikistan. It has provided arms and equipment's to Tajikistan like, Mi-8, Mi-24 military helicopters, L-39 combat trainer aircrafts, ammunition and spare parts (Persson, 2016). Besides, it has also been providing military training to Tajik military personnel in the Russian military academies. Furthermore, Russia has been conducting military exercises with the Tajikistan both at bilateral and through CSTO and SCO platform. Thus, Russia has heightened its military cooperation with Tajikistan.

Russia has strengthened its security cooperation with Kyrgyzstan. It has played a major role in the making of the national armed forces and other parts of the security apparatus of Kyrgyzstan. It was with the Russian efforts that the headquarters of the 'Rapid Actions Forces' (RAF) and regional Anti-Terrorist Centre (RATS) were established in Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, Russia has been supplying high-tech weapons and equipment's to Kyrgyzstan like, Kam AZ trucks, armored vehicles, Mi-8MTV and Mi-24 combat helicopters, air defense radar system, and spare parts (Connolly, and Sendstad, 2017). It has been conducting joint military exercises with Kyrgyzstan in almost every year both bilaterally and under the auspicious of SCO and CSTO. Russia has been providing training to the military personnel's of Kyrgyzstan in Russian military training establishments at privileged prices. Moreover, Russian signed an agreement with Kyrgyzstan for the extension of its Kant base till 2032 in 2012. This agreement has created a unified Russian military base in Kyrgyzstan, bringing together all Russia's strategic assets in the country, including the Kant airbase, the jointly-owned Dastan Torpedo factory, and a Torpedo Testing Base on Lake Issyk-Kul (Patnaik, 2016). Therefore, the Permanent military deployment, coupled with military high-tech equipment's and training of military personnel's all have contributed to the reassertion of Russian military influence in Kyrgyzstan.

Russia's security cooperation with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan is somewhat different. The former is special since it has been following the policy of neutrality and does not take part in any regional security organization. However, over the years, Russia has been taking steps to enhance the level of mutual trust. It offered to share intelligence, advised the Turkmen colleagues better techniques to equip border posts.

For the first time, a high-level delegation of Russia's defense ministry visited to the Turkmenistan (2016), to discuss the security situation in the Central Asian region and plans for bilateral military cooperation. Indeed, these official contacts are unprecedented and noteworthy as Turkmenistan has no tradition of discussing security issues with the foreigners and its military generals are strictly prohibited from traveling abroad for consultations with peers. Thus, Russia has been gradually accomplishing its objective of drawing the Turkmenistan closer.

Initially, Russia's security cooperation with Uzbekistan was uncordial. The bilateral security cooperation was more a question of paper cooperation than practical. Uzbekistan had withdrew from the CSTO (2012), but is a member of CIS. Gradually, Russia has heightened its security cooperation with the Uzbekistan. It has conducted its first joint military exercise (2005) with Uzbekistan on the 'Farish' mountain training range in Jizzax region. From 2008 onwards, annual joint training of air forces were conducted in 'Ashuluk' range in Astrakhan Oblast. Moreover, Russia has agreed to cooperate actively in modernizing armed forces of Uzbekistan, re-equipping them with high-tech weapons, and training Uzbek officers in Russia military academies. Indeed, Russia has supplied Uzbekistan high-tech military equipment's like, sniper rifles, light machine guns helicopters, armored vehicles, ammunition, and multirole Su-30SM fighter aircraft on discounted rates (Daly, 2018). Thus, Russia's objective has been to offer maximum incentives in order to increase its influence in the region.

4.7.3 Economic Engagements

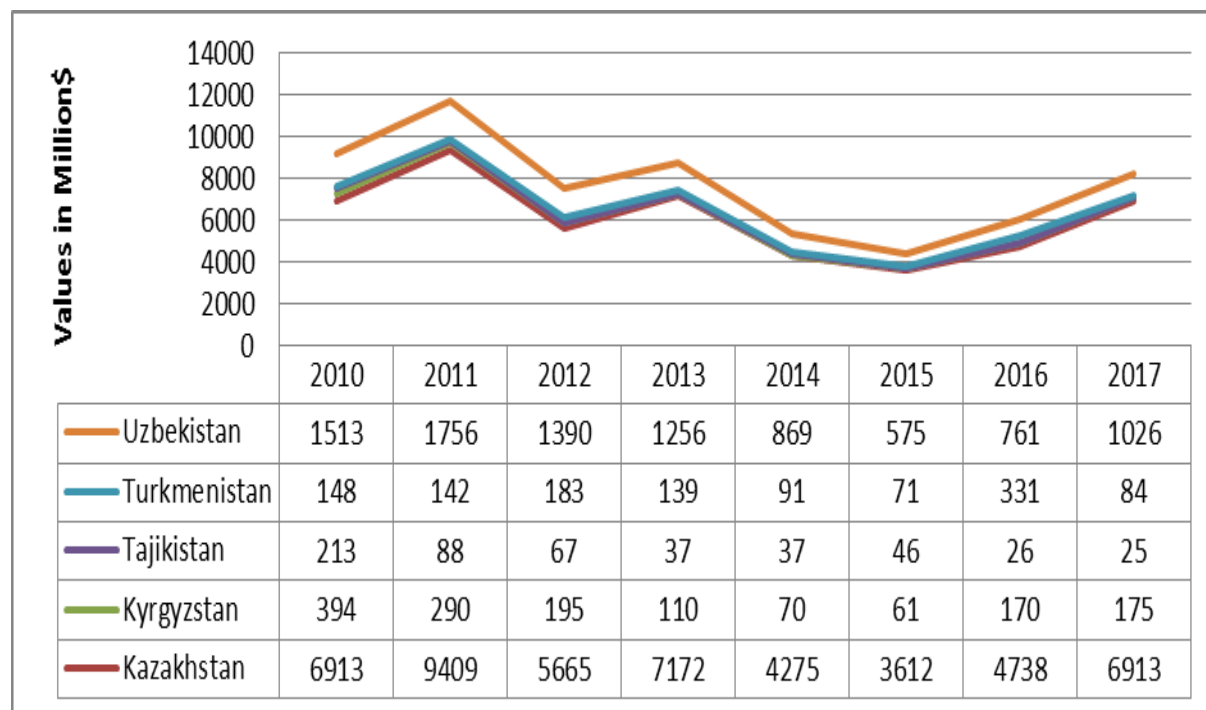
Until its disintegration, the Soviet Union remained the major driving force of CARs development, making a decisive impact on the evolution of the region's current economic realities. During 1990's, Russia's economic cooperation with the CARs declined drastically. Even Russia had expelled the CARs from the Russian ruble zone in (1993). However, realizing each other's interdependence and potential, both Russia and Central Asia have made efforts to rope in each other in economic engagements. To enhance the economic cooperation, Russia has introduced several policy frameworks both at bilateral and multilateral level with the Central Asian countries.

These engagements have been concretized through the various economic institutions like, CU (2010), SES (2012), and EEU (2015).

4.7.3.1 Trade and Investment

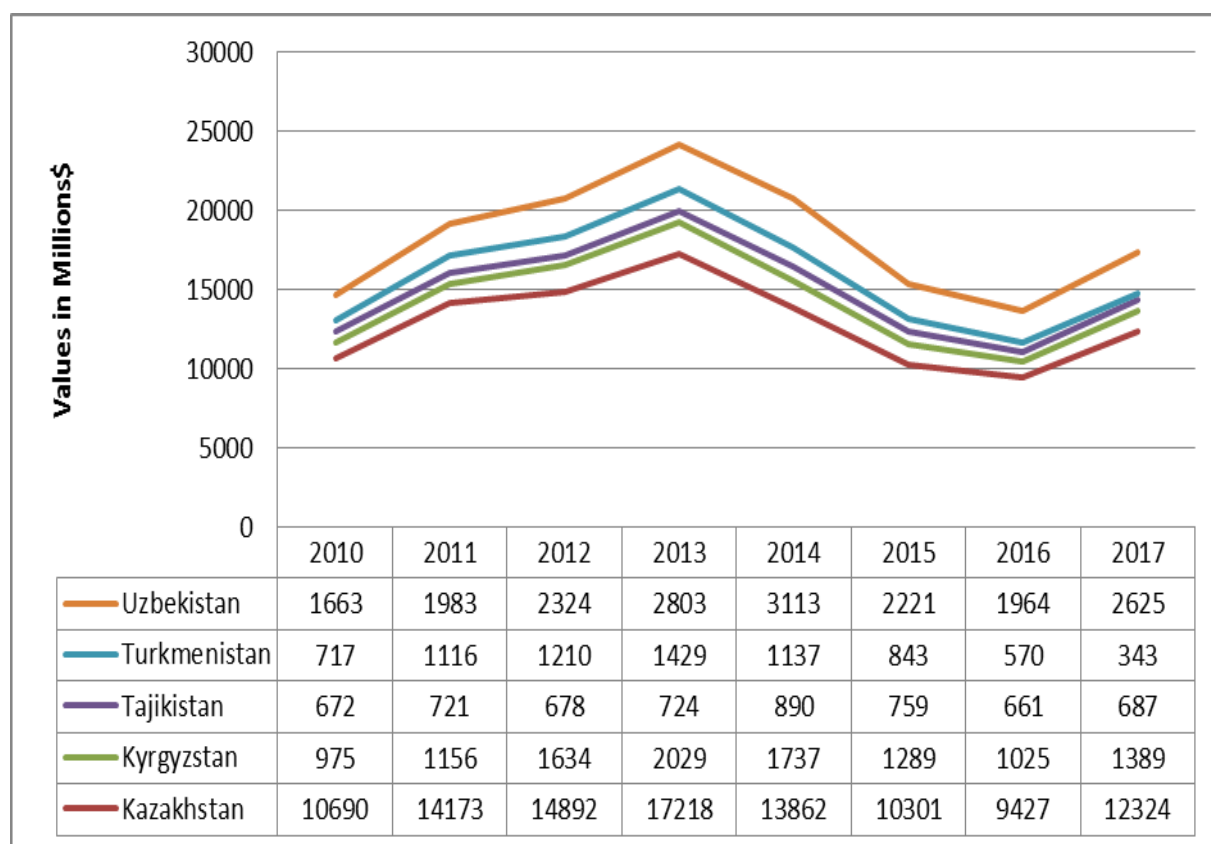
Russia is the second largest trading partner of the Central Asian countries after China. According to the UN Comtrade (2018) Russia's total trade volume with the region stood at (US \$ 25591 million), comprising of exports (US \$ 17369 million) and imports (US \$ 8223 million) in 2017 (See fig. no. below). As per the report of Asian Development Bank (2014), Russia has been the highest investment partner of Uzbekistan worth (37) percent followed by Tajikistan (19) percent, Turkmenistan (17) percent and smaller but still visible in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan (5) percent in both the countries. Likewise, the scholarly work of Batsaikhan and Dabrowski (2017) acknowledged that Russia's investment in the Central Asian region stood at (US \$ 12 billion) in 2017 which is comparatively less than China.

Figure No. 4.3 Russia's Imports from CARs (US \$ million from 2010-2017)



Source: UN Comtrade Database (2018).

Figure No. 4.4 Russia's Exports to CARs (US Million \$) from (2010-2017)



Source: UN Comtrade Database (2018).

From the above figures, it became clear that Russia has significant trade with the Central Asian countries. Kazakhstan is the leading trading partner of Russia (US \$ 19,237 million), followed by Uzbekistan (US \$ 3651 million), Kyrgyzstan (US \$ 1564 million), Tajikistan (US \$ 712 million) and Turkmenistan (US \$ 427 million). Therefore, from the economic point of view, Russia is still the second largest trading partner of the Central Asian counties.

In order to understand Russia's economic engagements with the Central Asian countries the succeeding paras, have discussed structurally at the bilateral level. Currently, Kazakhstan is the one of the leading trade partner of the Russia. Its total trade with Kazakhstan stood at (US \$ 19,237 million) comprising of imports (US \$ 6,913) and exports (12,324) in 2017. Russia's highest focus area of economic cooperation with the country has been the energy cooperation. It is estimated that about 500 hundred Russian companies are working in different sectors in Kazakhstan such as, hydroelectricity, uranium, agriculture, construction, information technologies, scientific

and technical cooperation and digital economy (Issabayev, Sadykov, Seitzkazina, & Bekmaganbetov, 2016). Moreover, Russia's cooperation with Kazakhstan has been effective along the lines of CIS and other integration units like, CU (2010), SES (2012), and the EEU (2015). In fact, a Common 'Free Market Zone' has been in effect since 2015 which provides an additional boost to more extensive integration processes and economic cooperation. Besides, 'Russia-Kazakhstan Interregional Cooperation Forum' (IRCF) has been playing significant role in eliminating administrative and infrastructure barriers for bilateral trade, development of a common transport and logistics infrastructure, since 2003.² Indeed, under this business forum more than 11,000 joint ventures have established, and about 300 interregional cooperation contracts have signed between the two countries till 2016 (Putz, 2016).

Russia's second leading trade partner in Central Asia is Uzbekistan. Its total trade with this country stood at (US \$ 3651 million), comprising of imports (US \$ 1026 million) and exports (US \$ 2625 million) in 2017. Russia has remained an important economic partner and main importer of Uzbekistan products. It has been continuously developing its economic cooperation in the spirit of strategic partnership and alliance. Despite, the latter's aversion to Russia led multilateralism it has to be pragmatic in dealing with Uzbekistan. Moscow conducted a Business Forum in Tashkent titled "New Cooperation Horizons (2007)" with the participation of business entrepreneurs of both the countries (Manzurova, 2007). Russia has signed the 'Encouragement and Mutual Protection of Investments and Program' with the Uzbekistan in 2013. The monetary institutions like customs and tax services of both the countries have been cooperating to increase economic engagements. Boboev (2016) argues that some 850 Russia companies have been working in Uzbekistan. At the same time, the latter has been exporting commodities like cotton, textiles, and food products to the former. Moreover, Russia-Uzbekistan partnership has been dynamic in the energy sector, with Russia's largest hydrocarbon companies working effectively in Uzbekistan and thereby has been strengthen its grip over the years.

² Russia-Kazakhstan Business Forum. (2016). *The Embassy of Russian Federation to the Republic of Kazakhstan*. Retrieved 28 June 2018 from <http://www.rfembassy>.

The third leading trade partner of Russia has been the Kyrgyzstan. Its total trade volume with this country stood at (US \$ 1564 million), comprising of imports (US \$ 175 million) and exports (US \$ 1389 million) in 2017. Russia has signed the treaty of 'Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance' with Kyrgyzstan. The friendship treaty in fact has concluded more than 235 mutual agreements, most of them focus on economic cooperation.³ Moreover, the bilateral and regional economic forums have been playing a significant role in expanding trade and investment engagements. Lewis (2015) argues that Russia has contributed US \$ 700 million to Kyrgyzstan with the aim to re-integrate the country with the EEU.

Russia's trade with Tajikistan stood at (US \$ 712 million), comprising of (US \$ 25 million) imports and (US \$ 687 million) exports in 2017. The former has established its first national exhibition under the title of 'Economic Growth and Mutually Beneficial Partnership' in 2010 in Dushanbe. Russia offered new prospects to the country for establishing the direct business contacts among companies and enterprises. A key role in this direction has been playing by the 'Russian-Tajik Commission on Trade and commerce'. Moreover, Tajikistan largely depending on Russian economy for the given of massive remittance sending by the Tajik people, working in Russia for decades.⁴ Sinitsina (2012) argues that the remittances from Russia to Tajikistan amounts (37) percent. Moreover, under the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), Russia has been cooperating at the multilateral level for trade and investment areas.

Russia's trade with Turkmenistan stood at (US \$ 427 million), comprising of imports (US \$ 84 million) and exports (US \$ 343 million) in 2017. Russia's economic engagements with Turkmenistan are concentrated mostly on energy cooperation. The first national exhibition of Russia namely, 'The Economic Growth and Mutually Beneficial Partnership' in Ashgabat, which has been encouraging in the enhancement of economic cooperation. Moreover, Russia and Turkmenistan have been cooperating in a wide range of areas like energy, transport, communication and the agro-industries

³ Russian-Kyrgyz intergovernmental negotiations, Retrieved 12, August 2017 from, <http://archive.government.ru/eng/docs>.

⁴ First Russian national exhibition opens in Tashkent. Retrieved 20 August 2017, from <http://news.uzreportuz/news>

etc. It has been estimated that more than 195 companies of Russia have been working in 240 investment projects in Turkmenistan.⁵ Under the aegis of Russia-Turkmenistan inter-governmental commission on economic cooperation (2016), Russia has created the ‘high-level group on trade and investment’ for implementing the programmes of economic cooperation from 2017-2019.⁶ Furthermore, under the Russia centric regional organizations, the Central Asian countries have been remained the pivotal. See table no. 4.5, below that shows Central Asian countries membership in various Russia centric economic and security organizations.

Table No. 4.5 CARs Membership in Russia led Regional Organizations

Country	CIS	EurAsEC	CU	CSTO	SCO	EEU
Russia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kazakhstan	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kyrgyzstan	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓
Tajikistan	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	X
Uzbekistan	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X
Turkmenistan	✓	X	X	X	X	X

Source: Official Websites of CIS/ EurAsEC/CSTO/SCO/EEU.

4.7.3.2 Energy Cooperation

Russia has been dominating the Central Asian countries energy markets. Although, the former has been the largest energy producer in the world and has also huge potentials of natural gas reserves. Thus, Russia has been a major exporter of natural gas to Europe. In this context, the demand for energy has been high due to the

⁵ Turkmenistan and Russia will make new gas agreements. *Fergana News Agency*. Retrieved 21 December 2017, from <http://enews.fergananews.com>.

⁶ The key areas of activation of trade and economic cooperation between Turkmenistan and Russia. (2017). *The state news agency of Turkmenistan*, Retrieved 20 September 2017, from <http://tdh.gov.tm/news>.

burden of domestic consumption and external demand which has been obliged Russia to enhance energy cooperation with the Central Asian countries.

In order to enlarge its gas export markets, Russia has been used to import natural gas from the neighboring Central Asian countries at low prices and export the same at the higher prices. As already mentioned that countries like Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have been rich in oil and natural gas reserves. Therefore, Russia wants to hold a monopolistic control over the energy pipelines. Russian companies like Lukoil Gazprom, and Rosneft are actively working in the Kazakhstan oil and natural gas fields. In fact, the former has a (15) percent share in the 'Karachaganak' gas condensate field of Kazakhstan. Russia has also established the oil company namely the 'KazMunayTeniz' with Kazakhstan which has been operative. Likewise, Rosneft of Russia has been working with the Kazakhstan's Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources. Moreover, the Russian company, Gazprom has been also operating in the 'Khvalinskoe' and 'Tsentralnoe' fields. Indeed, the Russian Gazprom and the International Group of Companies (ITERA) have been working in the oil and gas sectors of Turkmenistan. Besides, the ITERA has been planning to establish projects to open oil and natural gas fields in Turkmenistan.

Uzbekistan is one of the important countries for Russian energy cooperation. Hill (2006) argues that the Gazprom has signed an agreement for 15 years on the extraction of the natural gas from the Shokhpakhty gas field. It has also signed two agreements with Uzbekistan, pledging US \$1.5 billion of Russian investments in the Uzbekistan's energy sector. Both the countries have also signed a deal for the construction of a new gas pipeline that would expand the capacities of the presently operating Central Asia-Centre Pipeline (CAC) pipeline. Similarly, the Russian company, Lukoil has also signed an agreement for 35 years to develop the Kandym gas field.

Table No. 4.6 Russia's major oil and gas pipelines with the CARs

Pipeline	Length in KM	Finish Date	Remarks
Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC)	1510	1992	The pipeline transport Caspian oil from Tengiz field to the Novorossiysk-2 Marine Terminal on Russia's Black Sea coast.
Uzen-Atyrau-Samara (UAS) Pipeline	1500	1971	The UAS pipeline provides transportation of oil to Atyrau (Kazakhstan) and Samara (Russia).
Central Asia-Center Gas Pipeline (CAC)	NA	1960-1988	The CAC is a Gazprom controlled system of natural gas pipelines, which run from Turkmenistan via Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to Russia.
Pre-Caspian Gas Pipeline	NA	NA	Established under the trilateral agreement Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Russia to carry the natural gas from the Caspian Sea.

Source: Chow, E. C., & Hendrix, L. E. (2010). Central Asia's Pipelines: Field of Dreams and Reality.

Thus, the above energy projects of Russia with the Central Asian countries clearly shows that the former has been maintaining its monopolistic influence in the region. In fact, exclusive control over the pipeline networks of the Central Asian countries has provided Russia an upper hand vis-à-vis the other players in the Central Asian region.

4.11 Summary

From the above analyses, it became quite clear, that Russia had been enjoying multi-faceted cooperation with the Central Asian countries from the recorded history. Nonetheless, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union (1991), the Central Asian countries found themselves independent, without any liberation struggle. The successor state Russia had lost its international status as one of the recognized superpowers and faced severe political, economic and security concerns. The Central Bank of Russia has failed to supply sufficient amount of currency to the Central Asian countries. In fact, Russia had expelled the CARs from the rubble zone and left them, with no currency (1993). Moreover, Russia's trade with the five Central Asian countries

had declined drastically from the US \$ 59226 million in 1991 to the US \$ 3695 million in 1999. Thus, Russia's economic relationship with the CARs had declined drastically.

Similarly, in the military sphere, Russia has drastically reduced the military spending from the US \$ 164 billion to the US \$ 73 from 1991-1995. In fact, the collective security treaty of Russia with the CARs had remained non-functional. The CSTO led by Russia was unable to prevent the escalation of the civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1996), the flow of drugs from Afghanistan, the increasing military presence in the region, backed by the US. Therefore, it created a sense among the Central Asian countries that Russia had no longer remained the security guarantee of the Central Asian countries.

In the political sphere, the Russia under the presidency of the Boris Yeltsin disassociated with the Central Asian authoritarian regimes. It has been found that to maintain close relationships with the Central Asian communist regimes lead to distrust in the capitalist World. Apart, Russia's political alliance with the regional countries would serve the interests of conservative fractions. However, the public opinion gave priorities to democratic values and procedures than the centralized authoritarian system. Thus, in the political sphere, Russia's engagements with the Central Asian countries had enervated.

Within a short period of time, various factors have motivated Russia to reorient its foreign policy towards the region and thereby, to restore its lost influence in the region. For that, Russia had rented the site of the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, stationed Russian troops in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, and pressurized the CARs to ensure their adherence to the Russian lead Collective Security Treaty (CST) of the CIS. More importantly, the change in the political leadership from Yeltsin to Vladimir Putin has remained an important factor in Russia's active stance towards Central Asia. Putin had been conducted dozen of personal meetings with each of the Central Asian political leaders, expressing criticism neither of their increasingly absolute rule nor of the legitimacy of the referendum on extending their respective terms in office. From the security point of view, Russia has signed several military and security agreements with the Central Asian countries. With significant military assets based in the region, Russia has the means to react to the crisis together with an

assumed responsibility to manage security challenges. This is borne out of bilateral military ties with the CARs as well as under the auspices of regional multilateral agreements. In the economic sphere, Russia has enhanced its economic engagements with the Central Asian countries. Russia is the second largest trading partner of the CARs. Russia's total trade with CARs stood at the US \$ 25.591 billion dollars comprising of exports of US \$ 17.369 billion dollars and imports the US \$ 8.223 billion dollars respectively in 2017. Moreover, most of the Central Asian oil and gas pipelines crossed through Russia and thereby the former has been enjoyed the monopoly over the transits of natural resources of Central Asian countries.

Thus, Russia has restored its lost influence both at bilateral and multilateral level. Although, the bilateral cooperation is the foundational basis of Russia's engagements with the Central Asian countries. The multilateral institutions, CSTO, SCO, EurAsEC, and EEU played an important role in boosting its relationship and strengthening its leverage in the Central Asian region.

Chapter- Five

New Great Game as a Gordian Knot in Central Asia: Weighing of Russia's Re-Balancing Reciprocation

5.1. Introduction

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Central Asia was unexpectedly and vigorously had entered into the community of independent sovereign states. Russia had become economically weak and politically vulnerable and had lost its superpower status. Therefore, the changing circumstances have dramatically put the newly independent CARs, firmly into geopolitical calculations. Moreover, the significance of the region has been explored by many well-known scholars. At the beginning of the 20th century, Sir Hartford Mackinder postulated his 'Heartland Theory'. Mackinder had summarized the Heartland Theory in these words, "Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland; who rules the Heartland commands the World-Island; who rules the World-Island controls the world". Similarly, Spykman in his book, 'The Geography of the Peace (1944),' called it, 'Rimland'. He defined the Rimland as, "The rim/and of the Eurasian landmass must be viewed as an intermediate region, situated between the heartland and the marginal seas. It functions as a vast buffer zone of conflict between sea power and land power. Looking in both directions, it must function amphibiously and defend itself on land and sea". The other geo-strategists like, Zbigniew Brzezinski (1928-2017), Zabortseva etc., have also explored the strategic significance of the region.

Thus, given the strategic significance of the region, Central Asia region has been remained a battle ground of regional and extra-regional players for profits and influence. In this background, this chapter is a modest attempt to explore the policy frameworks of both the regional and extra-regional players as well as their multi-faceted engagements towards the region. Moreover, it has also examined Russia's Re-balancing Reciprocation vis-à-vis involved actors in the region.

5.2 Central Asia: Geopolitical Importance

The contemporary international significance of Central Asia reflects their, geographical location, demographic potential, natural resources, the character of their relations with the other states, primarily with the neighboring ones, as well as their role in regional and international organizations. The geographical location of the region has made it extremely pivotal. It lie at the crossroads of Russia, the Middle East, South Asia, and the Far East. Furthermore, the completion of the international North-South Corridor (INSTC), Trans-Asian Railway (TAR), Chabhar sea port, Belt and Road initiative (BRI) and associated connectivity networks would further enhance the economic significance of the Central Asian region (Kulnazarov, 2015).

The regional countries were rich in mineral resources such as oil, natural gas, uranium, gold, silver, manganese, aluminum, copper, and titanium etc. In fact, Kazakhstan has been amongst the 20th largest oil producing countries with 2 percent of global production.¹ Moreover, Kazakhstan's proven natural gas reserves has been 1.3 trillion cubic meters. Indeed, the Karachaganak natural gas field produces around half of Kazakhstan's total gas production. Similarly, Turkmenistan is one of the largest natural gas producer. After Iran, Russia, and Qatar, Turkmenistan has been the 4th largest offshore and onshore natural gas reserves in the world.² Uzbekistan is also rich in natural gas and is the 3rd largest gas producer in the region, after Russia and Turkmenistan. Likewise, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have mountains topography, therefore both the countries have huge hydroelectricity potentials in the region. The following table no. 5.1 shows the oil and natural gas reserves available in Central Asian countries.

¹ Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan in Switzerland. Retrieved from: <http://www.kazakhstan-bern.ch/en/?page/id=370>, Accessed on December 8, 2017.

² US Energy Information Administration-EIA. (2015). Retrieved from, <https://www.eia.gov/beta/international/analysis/cfm?iso>, Accessed on December 8, 2017.

Table No. 5.1 CARs Oil and Gas Reserves (Million pb/d)

Countries	2001	2005	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Kazakhstan	5417	9000	30000	30000	30000	30000	30000
Kyrgyzstan	40	40	40	40	40	40	40
Tajikistan	12	12	12	12	12	12	12
Turkmenistan	546	546	600	600	600	600	600
Uzbekistan	594	594	594	594	594	594	594
Gas (Billion Cubic Meters)							
Kazakhstan	1840	1900	1950	1950	1939	1929	1918
Kyrgyzstan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Tajikistan	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Turkmenistan	2680	2680	10000	10000	9967	9934	9904
Uzbekistan	1735	1735	1661	1661	1632	1632	1608

Source: Oil and Gas Review (2014), *ENI*.

The above table clearly shows that Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan have enormous oil and gas reserves, while as at the same time, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have huge untapped hydroelectricity potentials. Therefore, the energy wealth of the Central Asian countries have attracted the major powers and regional actors. Indeed, the major economic powers, as well as multinational companies, are extremely keen to participate in the energy acquisition in the Central Asian region (Shuja, 2018).

Importantly, security has remained one of the major reasons for the CARs strategic significance. Any instability in the region may possibly jeopardize the security of the whole Eurasia, Middle East, and Asia as well. As a matter of fact, religious extremism, terrorism, separatism, ethnic and civil tensions are the major security concerns of the region. In case of Tajikistan, the Islamic parties shared power since the civil war broke out (1992). The bombings in Tashkent (1999) and the incursions of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) into Balkan region in southern Kyrgyzstan

heightened the apprehension of the extremist threats. Similarly, there have been series of incursions in Kyrgyzstan and even Kazakhstan has witnessed terrorist attacks committed by radical groups. The dissents were fueled further by the Hizb-ul-Tahrir (HuT) and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) cadre especially by exploiting the anti-government sentiments of people. Apart from HuT and IMU, there are various other terrorist organizations operating in the region such as Al-Qaeda, Taliban, ISIS, Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) and Tabliqi Jamaat (TJ) and East Turkistan Liberation Organization (ETLO), and another extremist group. According to Olcott (2010), the most dangerous outfits are HuT and IMU, who have been advocating Jihadism and separatism in Central Asia thereby, openly terrified the people in the region. These terrorist groups continue to operate their activities under the umbrella of different social funds including foreign secret aids and weapons. Developments in the adjacent Afghanistan and Pakistan are important for the stability, peace, and security of the region. Moreover, these countries have acknowledged Central Asia as a major energy hub. Since instability in the CARs can jeopardize the security in the neighboring countries especially Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, and India as well. Therefore, stability in Central Asia is very important to all regional and trans-regional countries.

The trafficking of drugs is another important factor for CARs importance, especially for regional countries. Besides the cultivation of domestic drugs, the CARs has been remained a safe transit for Afghan opium, heroin and other drugs. Afghanistan opium can easily available in the vicinity of the CARs. Nonetheless, most of the drugs are transported to Europe, via Central Asia and Russia. The Russian Federation has not only remained a transit but also a consumer country for Afghan drugs (Galeotti, 2016). The drug trafficking has been seen by the Russian Security Council as one of the major security challenges of Russia on a par with religious extremism and terrorism.

The CARs are characterized by the high potential for instability given nature of the political regimes considered to be domineering, oppressive, and devoid of the liberal and democratic practices. The political system in all the Central Asian Republics are authoritarian in nature. Any geopolitical changes in the region are inevitably extend their impact in its neighborhood, especially to Russia and China.

The CARs had been remained an ethnic kaleidoscope, with a diverse range of ethnicities and fragmented societies. For instance, the Fergana Valley which is at the heart of the Central Asian region formerly existed as a single cultural and economic unit dominated by the Uzbeks. It was trifurcated between Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, leaving large ethnic minorities in others territory. The consequences of which led to the ethnic clashes amongst the different ethnic groups in the valley. Similarly, Kyrgyzstan is also ethnically mixed country, having Kyrgyz and Uzbeks ethnic population, which has seen two major sagas of ethnic-based violence's (1990 and 2010), between Kyrgyz and Uzbeks. The Uzbeks constitute 14.4% of Kyrgyzstan's population and are mostly concentrated in the South (Belafatti, 2018). Likewise, in the Southern Uzbekistan as well as North and Western Tajikistan, Uzbek and Tajik communities live mixed with titular nationalities. It is estimated that Uzbekistan's Tajik minority accounts for around 20 percent of the population, while as Tajikistan's Uzbek minorities accounts near about 35 percent of the total population. Moreover, as per the study of Peyrouse (2014), the ethnic Russians constitute a major share of the CARs population, *i.e.*, 21% in Kazakhstan followed by 7% (Kyrgyzstan), 3% (Uzbekistan), 2% (Turkmenistan) and 1% (Tajikistan). Similarly, there is a significant presence of the Uyghur ethnic groups of China in Central Asia. Central Asia has been housing Uyghurs more than 300000, of whom, 2,10,000 are in Kazakhstan followed by 4,6000 (Kyrgyzstan) and about 3,0000 (Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan). (Laruelle, & Peyrouse, 2009).

The presence of different ethnic groups throughout the Central Asian Region, who have been playing a disruptive role for state security, social order and thereby has been remained as a major concern for Russia and China. Furthermore, the absence of effective regional organizations has remained a major concern for the regional and trans-regional actors. In fact, the Russian led CSTO and SCO have failed to guarantee the regional security particularly during the ethnic clashes in Kyrgyzstan (2005 and 2010), and the frequent clashes along the Tajik-Kyrgyz border (2013-2014). Both the organizations have justified their military inaction for the lack of a foreign aggression, CSTO and SCO are not designed to deal with internal security conflicts between/among the members, instead only the external threats (Indeo, 2015). Even though, CSTO and

SCO charters listed the provisions for strengthening the regional security and stability through joint activities (Articles 3 and 8 of CSTO's Charter) and joint counteraction against the three evils "terrorism, separatism, and extremism in all their manifestations (Article 1 of SCO's Charter). Stability in Central Asia is very important to all the regional and trans-regional actors in the region.

5.3 New Great Game in Central Asia

The collapse of the Soviet Union left the five Central Asian Republics as independent countries that subsequently has created a power vacuum in the region. Apart, the geo-strategic, geo-political and geo-economic significance of the region has further attracted the attention of regional and trans-regional actor towards the region. It seems that the Great Game has resurfaced under the rubric of the 'New Great Game' in Central Asia. It has been described as the complex cobweb of rivalries, competition, and the zero-sum game being played in the CARs in the contemporary era. However, the players are no longer confined to Russia and Britain, rather entered the major global players such as China, and the US and the regional players such as Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India. All these players have been vying to protect and promote their respective interests in the region. It has aptly been summarized by Spang and Milovanovic (2011), in these words;

The five new republics of Central Asia, predominantly Islamic but vibrantly distinct, are grouped around the Caspian Sea, the current landlords of untapped oil and natural gas reserves that rival those in the Persian Gulf..... have their own political, economic, and cultural interests in the region.

The issue of traditional politico-military hegemony is an aspect of the New Great Game. Russia's attempts to reassert its influence over the CARs along with China and the US (Winrow, 2011). In fact, since 1991 there has been a popular view that most geopolitical issues in the region could be reduced either in favor or against of the Russian influence (Weisbrode, 2008). It is an integral part of the New Great Game that the former Soviet Republics are the subject of competition between Russia on one hand, and her opponents, on the other hand, most notably the US and China, each trying to gain

greatest influence and leverage, what has been termed as the 'Great Power Chauvinism' (Karimov, 1998).

More importantly, the presence of the vast mineral resources, especially natural gas and oil, access and sharing this potential wealth has been retained as one of the most important aspects of the New Great Game politics. The overall impression is that the region's mineral resources have been remained untapped. With the profit motive, a number of MNCs have been jumped in Central Asia (Ghorban, 1993). The question of the pipeline, what route should they take, who should be responsible for their construction and safety, who charges and profits from these pipelines have been seen as a sub-part of the New Great Game concept.

The economic security and the pipeline politics is not the only facet of the New Great Game politics. It has been widely anticipated that struggle for cultural influence in Central Asia has been the most fateful and fiercest competition. Russia used to use the culture as a soft power technique to strengthen its leverage in the region. Iran and Turkey have been claiming cultural, historical and religious ties with the regional countries (Tarock, 1997, and Pasha, 1997). Similarly, India and Pakistan used to claim their affinity towards the CARs on the bases on geo-culture, religion, and history, a subset of this cultural aspect of the New Great Game.

The question of hard security has gained vital importance in the region especially in the post 9/11. In the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent the US-led military actions in Afghanistan, the whole question of a New Great Game has been revised. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) had been remained active in Afghanistan along with the US military bases in Central Asia especially in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The US presence in Central Asia, however, has in some circles been perceived not only as a military action but having some different intentions. According to Rumer (2006), the US invasion of Afghanistan is somehow, about maintenance of US access to oil supplies to quench its energy thirst.

The supranational institutions such as the United Nations (UN), World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary fund (IMF), European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Asian Development Bank (ADB), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) are also the part and parcel of the New Great

Game. Among the regional security and economic organizations such as SCO, CSTO, and the EEU have been playing a crucial role. Apart, the non-state actors such as IMU, HuT, ISIS, Taliban, Lashkar-e-Toiba, (LeT) Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) all have allegedly been regarded as part of this New Great Game thesis. Therefore, the perceived wisdom is that the New Great Game has emerged in the early 1990s and continue till date.

5.4 Major and Regional Actors in Central Asia: Protection and Promotion of Multifaceted Interests

Since the time immemorial, Central Asia has been figuring in the geopolitical maneuverings of the major powers. In fact, the 19th and 20th centuries had witnessed the imperial rivalry and machinations between the Russian and British Empires over the region. The demise of the Soviet Union had created a power vacuum in Central Asia. Additionally, given the geo-strategic, geo-political and geo-economic significance of the CARs, the region has once again become the Centre of attraction for influence, power, and profits. In fact, the regional and trans-regional players have been active to outmaneuver the strategic presence of other actors and thereby to enhance their respective spheres of influence in the region. To understand this zero-sum strategic rivalry, it becomes imperative to discuss the interests, policies, and multi-faceted engagements of involved actors in the region.

5.5 China

China has a long history of cultural, religious and trade relations with the Central Asian neighbors. It shares long borders with Kazakhstan (1782 KM), Kyrgyzstan (858 KM), and Tajikistan (414 KM). China has established a friendly relationship with the CARs to ensure that the elements that China claimed 'three evils' (Terrorism, Extremism, and Separatism) would not find safe shelter across the across Central Asia borders and become launching pads for separatist movements. Central Asia is a region with a high potential for instability, given the military and ethnic conflicts, political coups, the rising of non-state actors (IMU, HuT, ISIS, ETLO) and socio-economic tensions. Moreover, the post-Soviet CARs have been sharing borders with Afghanistan, that has

traditionally been remained as a hotbed of terrorism, extremism, and a safe transit of small arms proliferation and drug trafficking. Hence, the peaceful and stable neighborhood has remained one of the primary interests of China in the region.

China has potential economic interests in the CARs. With the high growth rate, urbanization, and an unprecedented social transformation with only one percent of the world's oil reserves for the 2nd largest consumption country, China needs to secure sustainable energy supply sources from elsewhere. Countries in Central Asia, especially those with large mineral deposits and hydrocarbon reserves, have become premier investment destinations for China. From the strategic point of view, it has been remained one of the primary interests of China to tilt the zero-sum game in the region in its favor. Therefore, in this context, it is interesting to study, how China has been attempting to pursue its multifaceted interest in the region.

5.6 China's Central Asia Policy

In order to pursue multi-dimensional interests in the CARs, China has introduced several policy frameworks. China has launched the policy of 'He-He' in 1990's. It is meant for peace, harmony, stability, and development of its western borders. This policy has underlined the importance of regional cooperation especially with the CARs and Russia (Zhu, 2010). China has introduced the policy of 'Grand Western Development Campaign' (2001), primarily focused on economic considerations along with strategic and security aspects. China's move towards western borders seems to be a long-term strategy to secure its far western borders and extend its sphere of influence into Central Asia (Li, 2016). The 'Western Development Campaign' thereby, has policy implications on the CARs. To have a clear understanding of China's policies towards the region, the study has classified China's policy frameworks under the following aspects.

Firstly, in the political sphere, China has moved away from attacking any kind of political undertones vis-à-vis the CARs, instead placing importance on status quo, sovereignty and territorial integrity (Zhang, 2015). It reflects, in part, the principle of 'non-interference' in Chinese foreign policy vis-à-vis the CARs. The policy of 'March West', launched in 2012 is an important Chinese policy framework in this direction. It

aims to respect the status quo of political regimes, sovereignty, territorial integrity and economic development of the region (Xichao, 2014). China has enhanced its cooperation with the Central Asian countries and signed the Treaty of 'Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation' with Kazakhstan (2002), Kyrgyzstan (2002), Tajikistan (2007), Uzbekistan (2013) and Turkmenistan (2014).

In the economic sphere, China is more interested in energy and economic opportunities of the CARs. Chinese policies focused on investments in the regional markets particularly in oil and natural gas. China has introduced the policy of 'Focus: CIS Programme' (2003) exclusively for promoting economic engagements with the Central Asian countries (Das, 2013). In a broader sense, Chinese revival of the 'Silk Road Economic Belt' (SREB) in 2013 (See Map No. 5.2 below) and the establishment of the 'Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank' (AIIB) in 2015, reflects China's policy initiatives in this direction. The former includes railways, highways, pipelines, airlines, energy cables etc. and the latter to focuses economic engagements. Thus, China led institution AIIB and connectivity project SREB have emphasized on trade, commerce, development, and connectivity to realize it's economic and energy security with the Central Asian countries (Pantucci, 2015).

In terms of security, China has institutionalized the policy of 'Wait and See'. China's security policies in the CARs rests upon deepening military trust, multilateral security arrangements countering terrorism, religious extremism, separatism and countering the influence of both state and non-state actors inimical to Chinese security interests. China has initiated the policy of 'Strike Hard Campaign' in 1996. The basic premises of this policy was to restrict the activities of Uighur Movements and their supporters. On April 26, 1996, China has adopted a pragmatic policy initiative and set up a working group based on '4+1, Formula', formally known as 'Shanghai Five'. Its primary objectives are the demarcation of boundaries, reduction of military forces on the western borders and strengthening of military trust with, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Russia. The Shanghai Five, which later reconstituted into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), after the entry of Uzbekistan on June 15, 2001 (Yuan, 2010). Its primary objectives were reoriented covering the elimination of 'three evils', terrorism, extremism and separatism in the region. Socio-culturally, China has followed

the policy of 'Soft power' in the CARs. It is manifested through Chinese greater interest in culture courses as well as the establishment of Confucian institutes in the CARs.

To sum up, China recognizes the strategic importance of Central Asia and its potential impacts. Second, on the economic front, China has realized the importance of Central Asia for its future economic development, especially as a supplier of vital energy resources. Third, China has a security and political interests in making sure that the individual countries of Central Asia develop in a way that does not threaten China. Lastly, China recognizes both bilateral and multilateral approach of cooperation, with the Central Asian countries.

Map No. 5.2 China's New Silk Route



Source: ArcGIS

5.7 China's Multifaceted Engagements with the CARs

Given the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic significance of Central Asia. As discussed above, China has been adopting different policy frameworks to boost its multi-faceted engagements with the CARs. In this context, it becomes imperative to discuss, China's political, economic and security engagements with the CARs. The following section of this chapter briefly discuss China's multi-faceted engagements with the regional countries.

5.7.1 Political Engagements

Since the independence of the CARs, China has been making efforts to build strong political ties with the Central Asian countries. It has recognized the independence of all the Central Asian countries and established the diplomatic ties. China's political cooperation with the CARs has heightened during the President Jiang Zemin's (1993-2003) visit to the CARs in April 1996. The visit led to the foundational bases of China's interactions with the regional countries. It includes respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity; non-interference in the internal affairs; peaceful coexistence and maintenance of good neighborly relationships (Pop, 2010).

China adheres to the legitimation and the stability of the Central Asian political regimes. It has been consistently supported the rights of the CARs to total freedom in maintaining their domestic affairs. China had established its diplomatic ties with Kazakhstan on January 3, 1992. Established its embassy in Astana (Kazakhstan) in 1992. China has signed the 'Treaty of Good Neighborhood and Friendly Cooperation' (December 23, 2002) with Kazakhstan. In fact, the political engagements have remained the cornerstone of China-Kazakh strategic partnership. The two sides maintain close ties at the highest level, committed support in matters related to the mutual interests while treating each other as sincere, friendly and reliable partners. In 2017, Kazakhstan has hosted the 25th anniversary of diplomatic ties with China (Jafarova, 2017) and set an example to the other Central Asian republics.

The bilateral diplomatic ties reached its zenith, after the conclusion of the 'Comprehensive Strategic Partnership' (September 9, 2013). Under this agreement,

both the countries have reaffirmed for not participating in any union or group which cause any threats to sovereignty, security and territorial integrity.³

China has established its diplomatic ties with Turkmenistan on January 6, 1992. Its political engagements with Turkmenistan are based on the principles of equality, non-interference, mutually benefits as well as a commitment to peace and stability. China respects Turkmenistan's 'Policy of Neutrality' (1995) and in return, Turkmenistan strictly supports the 'One China Policy'. After the death of the President Saparmurat Niyazov in December 2006, China has maintained cordial relations with the new President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov. In fact, the political leadership of both the countries has been expressing a full understanding of the issues of the mutual cooperation. Consequently, China has signed the 'Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation' (May 12, 2014). The Chinese Vice-President Li Yuanchao attended the celebration of 20th anniversary of Turkmenistan's policy of neutrality (December 12, 2015). Both the countries have marked the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the diplomatic ties on June 9, 2017.

China has established its diplomatic ties with Tajikistan on January 4, 1992. Its embassy is operative in Dushanbe since, March 13, 1992, and the embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan in Beijing has been working, since April 7, 1997 (Stronski, 2016). The China-Tajikistan bilateral diplomatic ties have reached its zenith, during the then Chinese President Hu Jintao's visit to Tajikistan in 2007. During this visit, China has signed the treaty of 'Good-Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation' and thereby lifted the bilateral political cooperation into a higher level.⁴ In fact, China adheres to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity, and non-interference in the internal affairs of Tajikistan. The China-Tajikistan political cooperation has advanced from 'Friendly

³ Joint Declaration on New Stage of Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Kazakhstan. (2015). *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Peoples Republic of China*. Retrieved 15 August 2017, from http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjd.

⁴ Joint Statement between the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Tajikistan on Further Developing Good-neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs People's Republic of China*. Retrieved 15 August 2017, from <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa/eng/wjd>.

Cooperation' to 'Strategic Partnership' in 2013. Both the countries have been exchanging high-level diplomatic visits that lead to enhancing mutual political trust and understanding. The Tajik embassy in Beijing hosted the 25th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic ties (January 4, 2017).

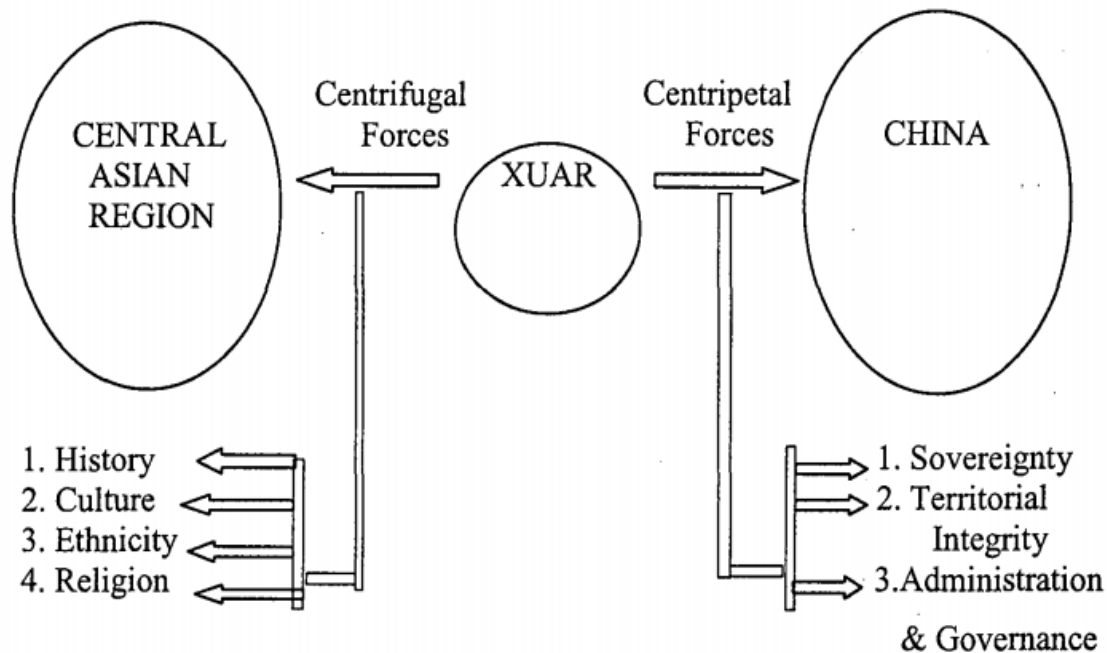
China has forged its diplomatic ties with Kyrgyzstan on January 5, 1992. China's political engagements with Kyrgyzstan firmly adheres to the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interface in the internal affairs whereas, on the other hand, Kyrgyzstan has been supporting the One China Policy (Omuralieva, 2014). On June 24, 2002, China signed the treaty of 'Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation' with Kyrgyzstan, that concretized the mutual understanding between the two countries. In 2013, China established 'Strategic Partnership' with Kyrgyzstan, which injected new vitality in bilateral political engagements. China has lifted the inter-governmental ties with Kyrgyzstan through the high-level diplomatic exchanges especially at the ministers of foreign affairs level, exchange of parliamentary committees and political parties. On January 6, 2017, President Xi Jinping of China and its Kyrgyzstan counterpart marked the 25th anniversary of diplomatic ties in the Great Hall of China. President Xi appreciates Kyrgyzstan as a good friend, neighbors, and partner. Finally, over the years, China has deepened political trust and expanded cooperation in various areas with Uzbekistan. On January 5, 2017, China-Uzbekistan marked the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations (Sayfullin, 2017). After the sudden death of Islam Karimov in 2016, the new President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has been following its predecessor's footsteps with regard to China.

5.7.2 Security Engagements

Security cooperation with the CARs, has been remained a driving force in Chinese foreign policy. As its western neighborhood is characterized by insecurity with the arch of turbulence ranging from Pakistan-Afghanistan-CARs. The region has been remained a hotbed of terrorism, extremism, small arms proliferation and drug trafficking. The problem had been made worse by the fact that China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR) is vulnerable, with its own separatist groups. Currently, the 'Centripetal and Centrifugal' forces have been operating in XUAR region (See

Figure No. 5.3 below). The Centripetal Forces aims to pull the XUAR towards Beijing's central authority for administrative, law and order purposes and thereby protects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of China. While as the Centrifugal Forces have been attempting to drift XUAR from Beijing's Central authority and thereby germinate separatist idea in the minds of Uyghur minorities living in the XUAR as well as in the Central Asian region. In fact, China has been facing security threats from Uighur insurgent groups like the Uighur Liberation Organization (UIO), United Revolutionary Front of Eastern Turkestan (UFET), and Xinjiang Liberation Organization (XLO). These insurgent groups are linked with the non-state actors like, IMU, HuT, ISIS, Taliban, Al-Qaida etc. Thus, have been receiving technical, financial and training support (Mariani, 2013). As a matter of fact, the most deadly incident that broke out in Urumqi (capital of Xinjiang) on July 5, 2009, resulted in 184 casualties and more than 1600 people injured. Followed by series of attacks in other cities of the Western region of China like Kashgar, Hotan, Yarkand, Aksu and Luntai, causing near about 130 casualties from 2013-2016 (Shunli, 2016). China has claimed that these attacks were engineered by extremists and separatists outside China. According to the official figures (China's Census, 2010), there are approximately 300,000 Uighurs living in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan who are potential targets of the insurgent's mobilization efforts (Yin and Zhengxu, 2009). Moreover, China's Western neighborhood (CARs) has remained a high potential for instability. The evidence of which has been manifested through military and ethnic conflicts, political coups, the activity of radicals groups and socio-economic tensions. Other sources of threats included the limited efficiency of Central Asian regimes, unstable political systems, and the adjacent fragile Afghanistan. Insecurity in the CARs possibly contribute to the anti-Chinese centrifugal forces, especially in XUAR. Thus, it became imperative for China to push for greater security cooperation with the CARs, both at bilateral and multilateral levels.

Figure No. 5.3 Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces Operating in XUAR of China.



Source: Prepared by Researcher

Considerably, on April 26, 1996, China has set up the Shanghai Five, in collaboration with Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Within the Shanghai Five framework, China has signed the confidence building treaty namely, 'Deepening Military Trust' with the CARs as well as with Russia in 1996. This joint multilateral agreement has been aimed to promote peace, stability, and tranquility along the borders shared by China. The 1996 military trust agreement was supplemented on April 24, 1997, by another agreement namely the 'Reduction of Military Forces' along the common borders, signed by China with the other four members of the Shanghai Five. It was the first document on border disarmament in Eurasia as well as in Asia-Pacific region.

Boundary issue has been emerged as the most vexatious issue between China and Central Asia having potential to emerge as a serious security concern. In order to ensure stability over the international borders, China has resolved all the contentious boundary issues with the CARs. In fact, from 2002-2012, China made altogether 14 border agreements with Kazakhstan and demarcated the long boundary., China has

signed two border agreements with Kyrgyzstan in 1996 and 1999, which were later ratified by the Jogorku Kenesh (Parliament) of the Kyrgyz Republic on May 7, 2002 (Pannier, 2003). While with Tajikistan, China has concluded three border demarcation agreements in 2002, 2011 and 2012, and consequently settled all the border issues (Bitabarova, 2016). In fact, the border demarcations have served as a foundational basis for China in developing the security engagements with the CARs.

At the regional level, China has engaged all the Central Asian countries in the SCO to seek and strengthen the security cooperation. It is a regional organization comprising of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan founded in Shanghai on June 15, 2001. It is largely a Chinese initiative and China plays a 'leading role' in the SCO (Song, 2014). The primary objectives of SCO have been to counteract terrorism, separatism, and extremism in all manifestations; to bout illicit narcotics; small arms proliferation and other types of criminal activity of regional and transnational character (Bailes, Dunay, Guang & Troitskiy, 2007). In fact, the SCO convention (2001) aimed to combat the 'Three Evils' such as terrorism, extremism, and separatism in the region. Consequently, the SCO convention has provided a base for China in establishing an effective joint anti-terrorism mechanism. In June 2002, the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) of SCO was set up. In fact, the organizational momentum of the SCO is largely due to Chinese endeavor (Song, 2014).

The SCO has emerged an effective tool to achieve the broader counter-terrorism objectives of China such as operational training, compiling a database of suspected or known terrorists and extremists, strategic security and fight with transnational crimes. For China, RATS became an effective multilateral platform in providing technical, financial and other types of military assistance to CARs and thereby securing access to fugitives who are believed to support anti-China activities in the region (Xiaodong, 2012). This mechanism has facilitated the coordination of activities amongst security and military services, which resulted in China's bilateral and multilateral joint military exercises with the CARs.

In 2003, China has signed a MoU with the SCO member countries for joint military exercises. Consequently, China has conducted joint military exercises with Kazakhstan (2003, 2006, and 2015); Kyrgyzstan (2002, 2011, and 2013); Tajikistan

(2006, 2011, and 2014) under the auspices of SCO (Jackson, & Lopez, 2017). China has also started, 'Joint Peaceful Mission Exercises' with the CARs (2007, 2012, 2014, and 2016). These joint military exercises were unprecedented in terms of both scale of operations and the weapons used. The exercises involved various military branches, including land and air forces, as well as units dedicated to special operations, electronic countermeasures and reconnaissance. In fact, the Peace Mission Exercises (2016) had brought together 2000 troops from SCO members, organized in Kyrgyzstan, at the Edelweiss Training Center (Breitmaier, 2016). Thus, the joint military operational maneuvers have been playing an outsized role in heightening Chinese military and security cooperation with the CARs. China's military cooperation with the CARs is also oriented toward technical support and aids for military weaponry, training, and joint military maneuvers. In fact, in the recent past, China has provided \$ 2 million military aid to Kyrgyzstan (Satke, 2017). In 2016, China agreed to provide \$ 16.5 million in military assistance to Kyrgyzstan for purchasing modern military weapons, equipment and transport vehicles (Breitmaier, 2016). It has provided US\$ 15 million military aid to Tajikistan and in April 2009, has promised to provide an additional US\$1.5 million military aid. Chinese military aid to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan has been limited. In 2000, Uzbekistan received Chinese sniper rifles and became the first country in the region to obtain weapons from Beijing. Furthermore, China has allocated US\$ 4.4 million to Uzbekistan to upgrade military equipment's as well as to monitor border crossings (Indeo, 2015). Likewise, over the years Kazakhstan has received US\$ 30 million aid from China (Ovozi, 2017). Thus, these symbolic contributions over the years have enabled China to enhance security engagements with the CARs.

5.7.3 Economic Engagements

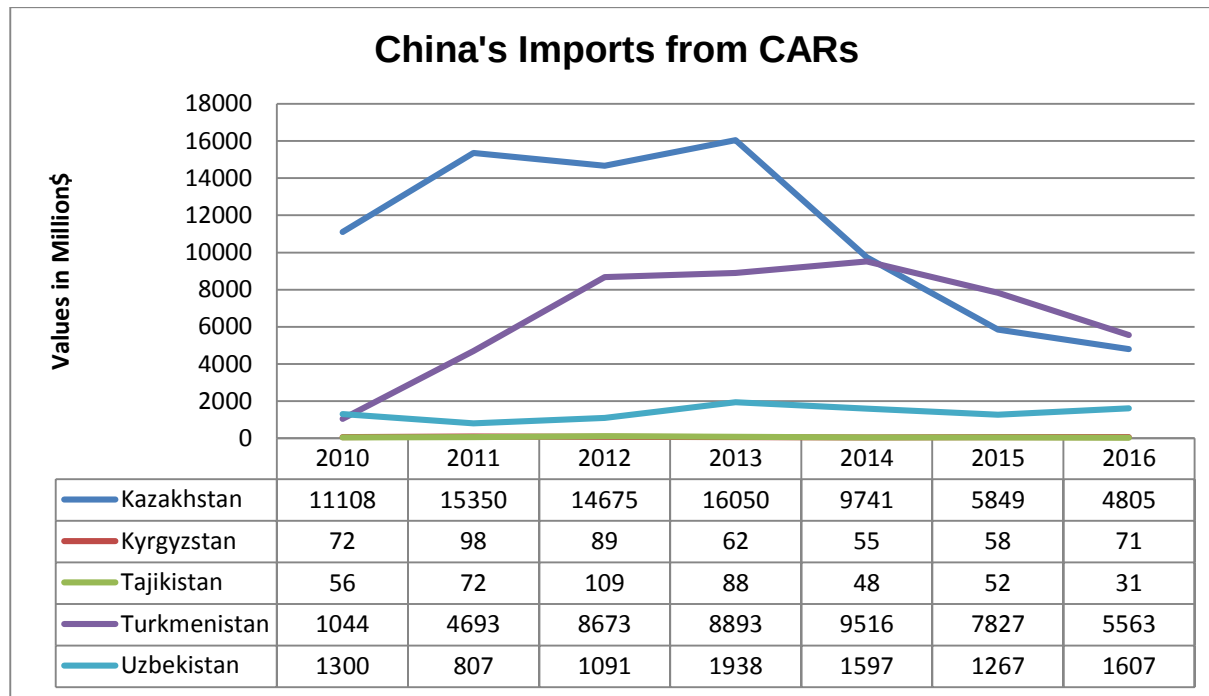
After the emergence of Central Asia, China had negligible economic engagements with the region, substantiated by the low level of trade. Realizing each other's potential, both China and Central Asia have made efforts to rope in each other in economic engagements. The major steps are include like policy frameworks, intuitional engagements and developmental projects. As far as the policy frameworks are concerned, like Grand Western Development Campaign (2001), Silk Road

Economic Belt (2013), and Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (2015). It has been also investing in railways, highways, pipelines, cables etc. China has become one of the leading trading partners of the Central Asian countries.

5.7.3.1 Trade and Investment

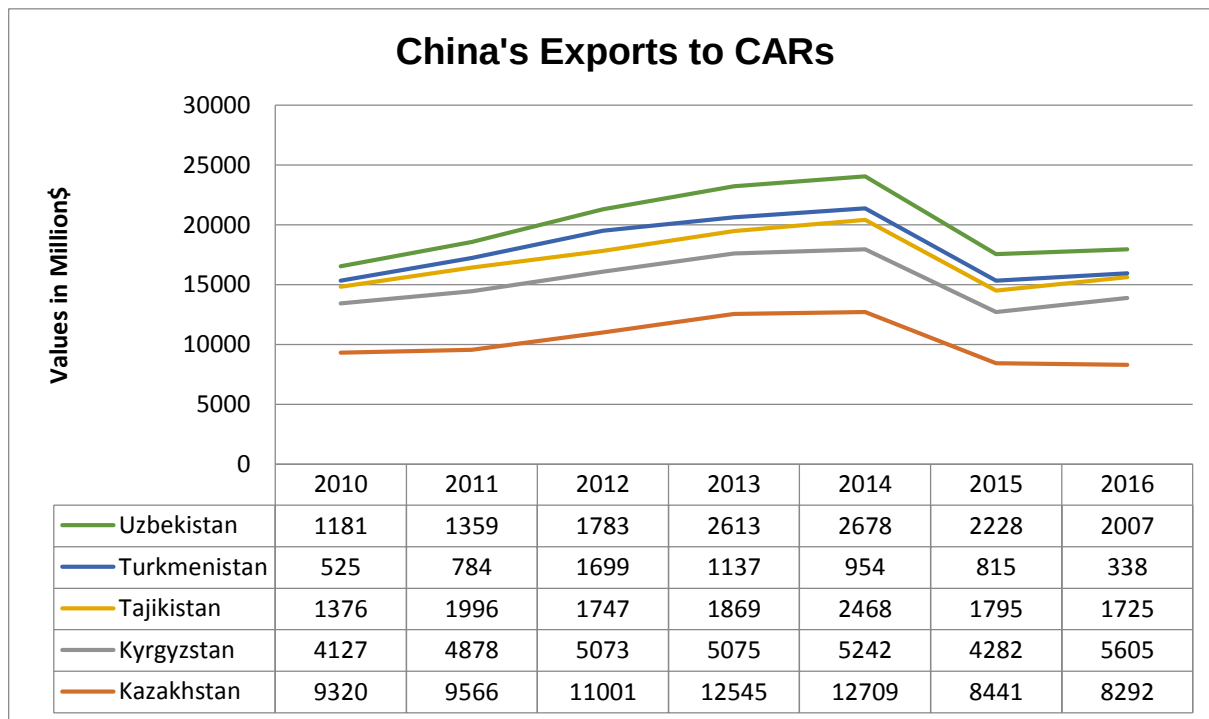
Trade is one of the determinants of the bilateral and regional cooperation. According to the UN Comtrade (2018), China's trade with Central Asian countries stood at US \$ 30044 million (2016). It comprised of US \$ 17967 million exports and US \$ 12077 million imports (See figure no. 5.4 and 5.5 below). The major commodities of imports and exports are energy, chemical products, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, machinery, foodstuffs etc. As per the study of Bordachev (2017), the total FDI of China in the Central Asian region has been stood at US \$ 13188 million in 2016. Its major share in the investment has been held by Kazakhstan 72 (percent), followed by Kyrgyzstan (12) percent, Turkmenistan (10) percent, Uzbekistan (5) percent and Tajikistan (3) percent. Therefore, both from the trade and investment wise, China has been a leading economic partners of the Central Asian countries. In order to take the economic cooperation into new heights, China has been building new transport roads and development projects. It has been making efforts to further the economic cooperation in areas like, export/imports of goods and services, FDI, joint ventures, banking sectors etc.

5.4 China's Imports from CARs (US \$ million) from (2010-2016)



Source: UN Comtrade, Database (2018).

Figure No. 5.5 China's Exports from CARs (US \$ million) from (2010-2016)



Source: UN Comtrade, Database (2018).

From the above figures, it became clear that China is the top most trading partner of the Central Asian countries. Kazakhstan is the leading trading partner of China (US \$ 13,097 million), followed by Turkmenistan (US \$ 5901 million), Kyrgyzstan (US \$ 5622 million), Uzbekistan (US \$ 3614 million) and Tajikistan (US \$ 1756 million). Therefore, from the economic point of view, China has enhanced its economic cooperation with the Central Asian countries.

In order to understand China's economic engagements with the Central Asian countries the succeeding paras, have discussed structurally at the bilateral level. Historically, Kazakhstan had been played a vibrant role in connecting China with the rest of the world. Currently, it is the one of the leading trade partner of the China. Its total trade stood at US \$ 13097 million comprising of imports (US \$ 4805 million) and exports (US \$ 8292 million) in 2016. China has invested in several infrastructural projects of Kazakhstan. It had constructed a railway line with Kazakhstan (1992) that has been facilitating the transport and transit with the rest of the region. It has also constructed 'Altynkol-Khorgos' (2011), railway line that connects China with Europe via Kazakhstan.⁵

More importantly, the completion of the BRI, would further enhance China's economic cooperation with Kazakhstan. In fact, the first phase of a logistics terminal jointly built by China and Kazakhstan went into operation in the port of Lianyungang in East China's Jiangsu Province, offering the land-locked Central Asian countries transit to connect with the World markets. Moreover, about 700 Chinese companies have been working in Kazakhstan in various sectors like oil, natural gas, construction, etc.⁶

Turkmenistan is the second leading trade partner of China in Central Asian region. China's total trade volume with Turkmenistan stood at US \$ 5901 million, comprising of imports (US \$ 5563 million) and exports (US \$ 338 million) in 2016. In order to strengthen the economic relationship both the countries have established a

⁵ Kazakhstan-Chinese relations at the present stage. Retrieved 3 December 2017, from <http://e-history.kz/en/view/2162/>.

⁶ Kazakhstan International Outlook. Retrieved 3 December 2017, from <http://eoio.com/reports/kazakhstan/>.

joint communique.⁷ Moreover, China has increased the number of investment projects and joint ventures in various sectors including interconnectivity, infrastructure construction and cargo transit through China's sea ports etc.⁸ Additionally, the completion of the BRI, would further enhance cooperation in trade, commerce, and investment inflows.⁹ Hasanov (2017) argues that about 420 Chinese companies are working in different sectors in Turkmenistan.

China is the first country to establish trade and commercial relations with Kyrgyzstan. The former's total trade with the latter stood at US \$ 5622 million, comprising of imports (US \$ 71 million) and exports (US \$ 5605 million) in 2016. Kassenova (2009) argued that China has been planning to establish 'Free Trade Zone' with Kyrgyzstan. Moreover, more than 40 Chinese companies have been working in Kyrgyzstan in various sectors like energy, transportation, infrastructure and agriculture.

China's economic cooperation with Uzbekistan is significant. Its total trade with Uzbekistan stood at US \$ 3614 million, comprising of imports (US \$ 1607 million) and exports (US \$ 2007 million) in 2016. China is actively engaged in Uzbekistan and has been investing in the various sector like roads, and railways, other transportation networks. Both the countries have granted the Most Favored Nation (MFN) status to each other under the 'Economic and Trade Agreement (1992)'. China's exports green-tea, electronics, cloths, fashion accessories etc. to Uzbekistan. On the other hand, it imports fruits and other food stuffs. The joint ventures are spread across several fields like energy, transport, communication, agriculture and education. Moreover, China and Uzbekistan have been part of the trans-continental trade and connectivity network. Koparkar (2017) argues that about 600 Chinese companies are working in different sectors in Uzbekistan like, energy, transport, communication, agriculture, education etc.

⁷ Joint Statement between Turkmenistan and the People's Republic of China. Retrieved 14 April 2018, from <http://turk/meniya.narod.ru/turkmen-china-declaration-eng.html>.

⁸ China, Turkmenistan ready to promote cooperation in various areas. (2016). *Xinhua*, Retrieved 19 December 2015, from http://english.gov.cn/state_council/vice_premiers/2016/09/03/content_28_1474985544619.htm.

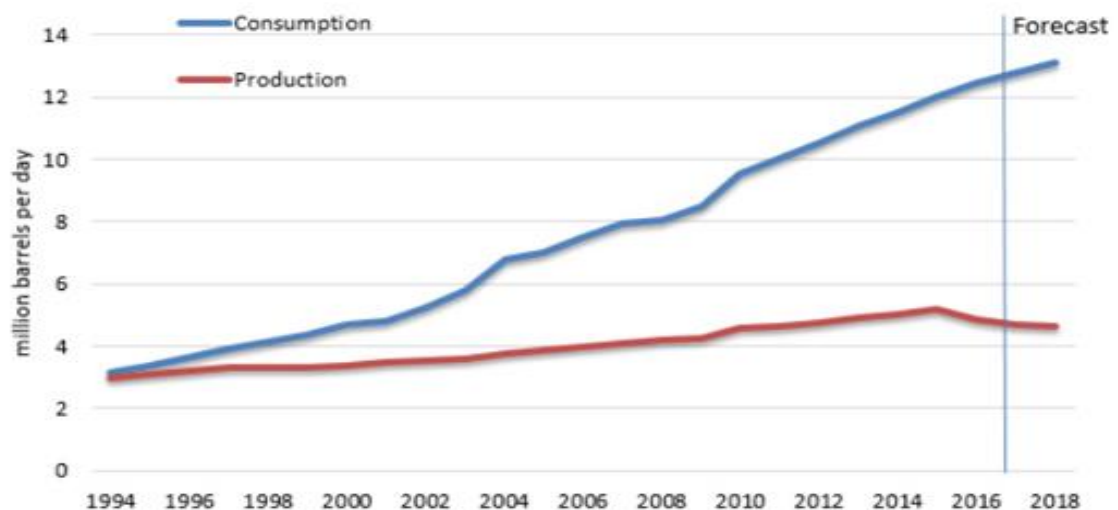
⁹ Turkmenistan willing to play active role in Belt and Road construction. (2016). *Xinhua*. Retrieved 14 April 2018, from <http://www.xinhuanet.com>.

China's economic cooperation with Tajikistan is at low level. Its total trade stood at US \$ 1756 million, comprising imports (US \$ 31 million) and exports (US \$ 1725 million) in 2016. Huang (2017) argues that China has been investing in several infrastructural projects in Tajikistan like roads, railways, science and technology, agriculture, engineering, construction, mining, etc. Several Chinese companies are working in different sectors of the country. Moreover, both countries are in goodwill to revive the RBI, which would subsequently enhance connectivity and thereby economic cooperation.¹⁰

5.7.3.2 Energy Cooperation

China has been at the higher economic trajectory. To keep the economic wheel in motion, China requires a consistent supply of energy resources especially oil and natural gas. Although some of its energy demands have been met by its domestic production. Nonetheless, there is a wide gap between China's domestic production and consumption of energy resources.

Figure No. 5.6 China's Energy Production and Consumption million barrels per day (1994-2017)



Source: US Energy Information Administration Data, (2017).

¹⁰ China Embassy in Tajikistan. China-Tajikistan Relations. Retrieved from <http://tj.chin-embassy.a.org>. Accessed on November 28, 2017.

From the above figure, it becomes clear that there is a big gap between production and consumption. China's energy consumption in (2016) was (13mb/d), while its production was (5mb/d). Therefore, there is a wide gap between production and consumption i.e., (7mb/d).

Given the huge untapped energy resources of the Central Asian countries, the region has become a favored destination for Chinese investment. As China is the largest energy consumer in the world with a huge population (1.3787 billion) including the growing industrial infrastructure. To meet its rising energy demands, China has been launched several energy projects and has been investing in the oil and natural gas pipelines of the Central Asian countries. Satke (2017) argues that Kazakhstan is a major energy market that can meet China's oil and gas demands. China has been also actively engaging with Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. It has been also focusing on Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to access the hydroelectricity potentials.

According to BP Statistical (2014) China imports (16) percent of oil out of the total energy exports of Kazakhstan and more than (50) percent natural gas from Turkmen's in 2013. With the introduction of progressive energy policies, China has enhanced its energy cooperation with the Central Asian countries significantly. In fact, China's leading national oil company, the 'China National Petroleum Corporation' (CNPC) holds the largest shares in the two major oil companies of the Kazakhstan i.e., AktobeMunaiGas (80) percent and Petro Kazakhstan (70) percent. Odintsov (2016) argued that China has invested US\$ 27 billion in the Central Asian economies by 2016. Out of the total investment US \$ 23.6 billion has been utilized in Kazakhstan.

Furthermore, China has been investing huge FDI in the Central Asian energy fields. It has constructed the oil pipeline 'Atyrau-Alashankou' (2009) and gas pipeline (2010) from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan respectively (Mariani, 2013). The capacity of the former has been increased from 12 to 14 million tons per year in 2014. The gas pipeline has been transporting 4.38 bcm of natural gas to China. Its delivery capacity has also been amplified to 40 bcm a year. The following figure shows the China's oil and gas pipelines with the Central Asian countries

Figure No. 5.7 China's Oil and Gas Pipelines



Source: Bhadrakumar, M. K. (2009). China Resets Terms of Engagement in Central Asia: Energy and Great Power Conflict. *The Asia-Pacific Journal: Japan Focus*, 52 (2).

Thus from the above discussion it become clear that China has multifaceted interests in the Central Asian region covering political, security, economic and energy etc. In the political sphere, China has put forth several policy frameworks like 'He-He (1990s)'; non-interference; respect the status quo of political regimes, sovereignty, and territorial integrity etc. In the security sphere it has introduced policy frameworks such as Strike Hard Campaign (1996), Shanghai Five (1996) and SCO (2001), conducting military training, supply arms etc. It has increased its economic engagements through the policy frameworks like Focus: CIS Programme' (2003), March West (2012), SREB (2013) and the establishment of the 'Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank' (AIIB) in 2015, reflects China's policy initiatives in this direction.

5.8 USA

In the changing geopolitical scenario of the Central Asian region, the US has emerged as a major player of the New Great Game. The US's primarily interests in the Central Asian region has been to secure the sovereignty, independence, political pluralism, rule of law, civil society and protection of human rights. The diversification of

energy resources and supply routes of the Central Asian Countries also remained another top most interest of the US in the region. Moreover, the US embarked upon long-term efforts to support the creation of good governance, free market economies, and economic integration with the supra-national economic institutions like the World Bank (WB), World Trade Organization (WTO) and International Monetary Fund (IMF). Nonetheless, after the 9/11 attacks, the US security interests have remained the overwhelming focus in preventing the 'Afghanization' of Central Asia and spawning of the terrorist groups in the region. Furthermore, the US has been interested in Central Asia's strategic location and wanted to secure influence that would always be favorable for the US and its allies. Indeed, the US domination would influence Russia in the North, Iran, and Afghanistan in the South, China in the East, and command the Caucasus in the West (Legvold, 2003). In this background, it is interesting to study, how the US has been attempting to pursue its geopolitical interests in the region.

5.9 US Policy towards the Central Asia

The US foreign policy in the early 1990's was directed at waiting, tracing and examining the Central Asian region geopolitical environment. On October 24, 1992, the US President, George H. W. Bush (1989-1993) signed the 'Freedom Support Act' (FSA). Its primary objectives were to provide grants and aids to support political pluralism, civil society and free market economies in the post-Soviet space of Central Asia (Alaolmolki 2001).

Politically, the US wanted the CARs to follow the path of democracy, civil society, human rights and political freedoms. It is in this regard that the US has been assisting various regional and trans-regional 'Non-Governmental Organizations' (NGO) throughout the CARs. The US-sponsored NGO's such as the National Democratic Institute, International Republic Institute, Freedom House, Inter-News and International Foundation for Electoral System. These organizations have been working with a wide range of issues including, political liberalization, election monitoring, human rights protection, micro-credit, microeconomic development as well as environmental protection (Patnaik, 2012).

From a security point of view, the US-led NATO launched the 'Partnership for Peace' (PfP) policy in 1994. It was designed to foster military and security ties with the former Warsaw Pact countries including the CARs. Its objectives are to facilitate the defense planning, training, military-to-military cooperation and joint military exercises. On May 29, 1997, the US established the 'Council of Euro-Atlantic Partnership' (CEAP), in order to improve the US security ties with the non-NATO countries including the CARs (Rotfeld, 2014). Both, the PfP and CEAP have been remained the USA's important instruments to forge security cooperation with the CARs.

The 9/11 terrorist attack has caused drastic changes in the US policy towards Central Asia. The US, under the Bush regime (2001-2009) has launched the anti-terrorist policy namely the 'Operation Enduring Freedom' (OEF) in Afghanistan on October 7, 2001. Its primary objectives were to eliminate the terrorist organizations especially, Al Qaeda, Taliban and Haqqani Network in Afghanistan. Given geographical proximity with Afghanistan, Central Asia has also figured prominently in the geostrategic calculations of the US. To make the OEF success, the US had adopted the policy of 'Forward Operating Locations' (FOLs) vis-à-vis CARs in 2001 (Oliker & Shlapak, 2005). The US policy of FOLs was aimed to hire the bases of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan for logistics and transit routes (Cooley, 2014). On June 1, 2002, during the address at the US Military Academy (West Point), US President George Bush had outlined the policy of 'Three Silos' in CARs. The policy had recommended for maintaining peace against terrorist's threats; preserving the peace by building good relations with the CARs and promoting peace by encouraging free and open societies in Central Asia.

In May 2003, President Bush has introduced the policy of 'Proliferation Security Initiative' (PSI) towards the CARs (Blank, 2005). The PSI seeks to combat the proliferation of 'Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), their delivery systems and related materials. Likewise, in 2009, the Obama administration (2009-2017) introduced the policy of 'National Military Strategy' (NMS) towards Afghanistan and Central Asia (Rumer, Sokolsky, & Stronski, 2016). Its chief focus was to heighten the US military ties with the 'Greater Central Asia' and thereby to play the role of security guarantor of the region. Recently, in 2015, the US has launched the 'C5+1 Mechanism' (CARs plus

US) in the CARs, to foster the security ties and subsequently to balance the rising assertiveness of Russia and China in the region. The narcotics is one of the major challenges for the US in the region. In order to check its trafficking, the US has adopted the three model policy for counter-drug trafficking like, providing of alternative livelihoods; establishing of the effective law enforcement structures at the local level; and interdicting the drug trade through the use of military forces (Osmonaliev, 2005).

In the economic sphere, the US has adopted the 'Open Door' and 'Equal Access' policies towards CARs in 1990's (Oliker & Shlapak, 2005). Not surprisingly, the leitmotif of these policies has been to seek energy exploration, expanding the network of multiple pipelines and links to foreign consumers especially to the US and its allies. Importantly, the US policies in terms of energy have been concentrating on diversification of the CARs energy routes. In fact, after the 'Talbot Doctrine' of 1996, which stated that no country can monopolize the energy routes of CARs, the US policies in terms of transit energy routes got solidified (Ochilov, 2017). In 1999 and 2006, the US has enacted two 'Silk Road Strategic Acts' with the objective to connect landlocked Central Asia with South Caucasus, and establishing Turkey as a bridge-link. Moreover, in 2011, the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (2009-2013) has once again proposed the NSR initiative as a way to integrate and connect Central Asia with Europe and Asia (Mankoff, 2013). The chief objectives of the US's New Silk Road Policy are to promote connectivity and enhance trade, transportation, businesses and people-to-people contacts. Thus, the driving force of the US policy toward CARs is to support the 'Anti-monopolism' of CARs energy routes. The US policy also aims to take advantage of the agreements negotiated to facilitate the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) to boost the soft infrastructure of border crossing, customs and tariff agreements and procedures for battling cross-border crime and corruption needed to sustain the regional economic integration. The NDN, a landline connecting Riga, Latvia through Russia and Central Asia to Afghanistan is expected to create substantial economic opportunities for CARs.

The cultural and academic exchanges are a vital tool for US policy towards the CARs. In the words of Richard Hoagland (2013-2015), US Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia, the exchange programs and their alumni

activities are US soft policies towards CARs in strengthening the political liberalization, tolerance and the development of civil society (Mankoff, 2015). These programs give participants the opportunity to see first-hand how a market democracy operates in practice. They also establish valuable, long-standing relationships with American counterparts.

5.10 The US Multi-faceted Engagements with the CARs

Given the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic significance of Central Asia. More, importantly after the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent US-led NATO invasion of Afghanistan, has heightened the CARs significance. In fact, the US has articulated various policy frameworks to enhance its ties with the CARs. Against this background, the US has been making efforts to enhance its multi-faceted engagements with the CARs. The following section of this chapter has discussed the US's political, security and economic cooperation with the CARs.

5.10.1 Political Engagements

The US has recognized the independence of all the CARs. It focused to promote the ideals of democracy, civil society, and rule of law. The US has established its diplomatic ties with Kazakhstan on December 25, 1991, and opened its embassy in Astana.¹¹ The US President Bush and its Kazak counterpart Nursultan Nazarbayev have adhered to strengthen the bilateral political cooperation. Likewise, the US President Obama and President Nazarbayev (2009-2017) have lifted the bilateral political engagements into higher levels.¹² Moreover, after the victory of the US President Donald Trump, the Kazak President Nazarbayev congratulated him through a phone call on November 30, 2016. Recently, on January 16, 2018, President Donald

¹¹ Kazakh-US Political Cooperation. *Embassy of Republic of Kazakhstan*. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from <https://www.kazakhemb us.com/content/political-cooperation>.

¹² A New Relationship between the United States and Central Asia. (2015). *Radio Free Europe*. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from, <https:// www.rferl.org/>.

Trump has hosted Nazarbayev in the White House. Both the sides adhered to enhance cooperation in political, economic and security aspects.¹³

The US has recognized the independence of Uzbekistan on December 25, 1991. It has established its diplomatic ties on February 19, 1992. The US has opened its embassy in Tashkent in March 1992. In turn, Uzbekistan has opened its embassy in Washington in February 1995. Since then, the US has been supporting Uzbekistan's development as an independent, sovereign and democratic country. Nonetheless, much of this euphoria was short-lived, the US ties with the CARs quickly trapped in a geopolitical cobweb, following the 'Color Revolutions' in the CIS including the Andijan massacre (2005) in Uzbekistan. In fact, Tashkent has alleged the US, backed NGOs were involved, which are working for civil society, political pluralism and human rights inside the country.¹⁴ Given the geo-strategic significance of Uzbekistan, the US has gradually re-energized its engagements especially through the bilateral exchanges of high-level visits. The recent visit of US Secretary of State for Political Affairs, Thomas Shannon (2016-till date), and Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs William Todd (2016-till date) to Uzbekistan, have exchanged views to develop bilateral cooperation taking into account the mutual interests of both the countries. In February 2017, US President Donald Trump and his Uzbek counterpart Shavkat Mirziyoyev have exchanged congratulatory messages on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries (Izimov, 2016).

The US established the diplomatic ties with Turkmenistan on February 19, 1992. It had opened its embassy in Ashgabat on March 17, 1992. Nonetheless, it should be noted that Central to Turkmenistan's foreign ties has been based on the doctrine of 'Neutrality' (Bohr, 2018). After the death of the Niyazov (2006), the new Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow (2006-Till Date) and its US counter-part

¹³. United States and Kazakhstan: An Enhanced Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century. *US Embassy and Consulate in Kazakhstan*. Retrieved 2 February 2018, from <https://kz.usembassy.gov/>.

¹⁴ Bilateral Relations of the Republic Of Uzbekistan with American Countries. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan*. Retrieved 3 February 2018, from <https://en/cooperation/countries/>.

Barak Obama (2009-2017) took few steps towards political rapprochement. In fact, US has launched the Annual Bilateral Consultation (ABC) with Turkmenistan in 2010 (Nichol, 2013). The recent ABC was held in Washington (2016), where the US has emphasized for rule of law, democratization and political consultations.¹⁵ Nonetheless, US-Turkmenistan political engagements so far have remained ambiguous.

The US has established diplomatic ties with Kyrgyzstan on December 25, 1991. It had opened its embassy in Bishkek on February 1, 1992, and the embassy of Kyrgyzstan is functional in Washington, D.C., since 1992. The creation of the US Congress Parliamentary Group formally known as the 'Great Silk Road' (GSR), has been contributing significantly in the developing the US-Kyrgyz bilateral political cooperation. In fact, the GSR group lobbied to enhance multi-faceted cooperation with CARs, particularly with Kyrgyzstan. In fact, the US has actively supported Kyrgyzstan, in introducing Western democratic ideals. In 2012, the Parliament of Kyrgyzstan became a partner of the 'Partnership for Democracy Commission' (PDC) of the US House of Representatives. Therefore, as a party to the PDC, several parliament members of Jogorku Kenesh (Kyrgyzstan Parliament) have visited the US that subsequently leads to enhance the bilateral political engagements. Furthermore, the annual bilateral political consultations (ABC) have been playing an important role in the development of US-Kyrgyzstan political cooperation. On December 27, 2017, both the countries have exchanged congratulatory messages on the 25th anniversary of the diplomatic relations.

The US has established its diplomatic ties with Tajikistan on February 14, 1992, it had opened its embassy in Dushanbe in March 1992. Tajikistan too had established its embassy in Washington, D.C. since 2002. The exchange of bilateral diplomatic visits has been playing an important role in the development of US-Tajik political cooperation. On January 20, 2009, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon has sent a congratulatory letter to US President Barack Obama. On February 12, 2010, U.S-Tajikistan has participated in the first ABC in Washington, D.C. In this diplomatic consultation both the parties presented their views on implementing the 'Working Plan' for regular political

¹⁵ US-Turkmenistan Annual Bilateral Consultations. *US Embassy in Turkmenistan*. Retrieved 5 February 2018, from <https://tm.usembassy.gov>.

consultations.¹⁶ Recently, on June 16, 2017, the 7th ‘Annual Bilateral Consultation’ was held in the US. During the consultations, both the sides discussed to cooperate on a wide range of issues including political, economic, security, energy, humanitarian, as well as cooperation at multilateral levels.

5.10.2 Security Engagements

After recognizing the newly independent CARs in late 1990’s, the US immediately started diplomatic ties with the objective to develop other areas of cooperation including the security cooperation. Amongst the CARs, Kazakhstan had remained the focus of US security interests in the region. It had signed the ‘Cooperative Threat Reduction’ (CTR) agreement, with Kazakhstan (1993), to dismantle the nuclear weapon infrastructure (Kakenova, 2014). Kazakhstan has joined the US-led NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994. (Mukhtorova, 2018). After the 9/11 attacks, the US-Kazakhstan security cooperation reached its top. In fact, Kazakhstan has allowed the US to use its air routes, rail links and right to land in the emergency situations on its territory (Kakenova, 2014). In 2003, US has signed a ‘Five-Year Plan’ (FYP) from (2003-2008), with Kazakhstan on military cooperation. It has renewed the FYP military cooperation plan in 2008, 2013 and recently in January 2018 up to 2023. It has signed the ‘Strategic Partnership Dialogue’ (SPD) agreement with Kazakhstan on April 10, 2012.¹⁷ Moreover, the US has been conducting the ‘Steppe Eagle’ peacekeeping exercises with Kazakhstan, since 2003. So far 15 joint peacekeeping military exercises have been conducted between the two countries. Recently, in 2017, the Steppe Eagle Exercise took place in Illisky Training Center, (Kazakhstan). The objective of the military exercise has been to combat the terrorism, small arms proliferation, drug trafficking and transnational organized crimes and thereby enhance the bilateral security cooperation.

Over the years, the US has heightened its security cooperation with Uzbekistan. In 1998, the former has establishment a Joint Commission for Military Cooperation with the latter. In 1999, the US had signed a CTR Agreement with Uzbekistan to dismantle

¹⁶. US-Tajik Diplomatic History. *US Embassy in Tajikistan*. Retrieved 6 February 2018, from <https://tj.usembassy.gov/>.

¹⁷. Kazakh-US Relations Overview. *Embassy of Republic of Kazakhstan* Retrieved 11 April 2018, from <https://www.Kazakhembus.com/>.

and decontaminate the biological weapons including the research facilities. The 9/11 incident had provided a new impetus to US military cooperation with Uzbekistan. In fact, the US-Uzbekistan Agreement (October 2001) has allowed the US to use the airspace of Uzbekistan and Karshi-Khanabad (K2) military base for operations in Afghanistan. The US has signed a 'Strategic Partnership and Cooperation', agreement in March 2002. Nonetheless, after the Andijan Massacre (2005) and the US condemnation of the Uzbekistan's brutal action resulted into decline the bilateral cooperation. In fact, US was expelled from the K2 military base and in reciprocation, the US has suspended the International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Foreign Military Financing (FMF) funding to Uzbekistan. Owing to its significance, the US has re-engaged its relationship with the Uzbekistan. It had permitted Uzbekistan for purchasing the military equipment's with the FMF credits that had approved prior to the aid cut-off (Lumpe, 2010). Furthermore, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) has encouraged Uzbekistan's participation in regional military exercises. Moreover, the US has resumed the counter-terrorism funding to Uzbekistan in 2008 and expanded IMET funding for training in 2010 (Ibid, 2010). The ban was waived off in January 2012, although the US has dilly-dallying the supply of the advanced military weapons to Uzbekistan. Till date, the US has supplied, GPS equipment's, bulletproof vests, X-ray rail scanners for the border and night vision goggles to Uzbekistan (Kramer, 2016). The US has donated 328 modern armored cars to the Uzbek Ministry of Defense (2015) that became the biggest in history of military assistance to the CARs.¹⁸

Given the permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan, the US security cooperation remained distinct. But, given its strategic significance, Turkmenistan has remained an important conduit for US military in Afghanistan. In fact, Turkmenistan had given the blanket over-flight permission and the refueling to the US lead NATO forces, in Afghanistan. Nonetheless, it should be noted, that Turkmenistan has never provided unlimited permission for international coalition forces to operate within the Turkmen airspace. It is for this reason that scholars described the Turkmen permission as 'Restricted Blanket Clearance', only authorized for the deliverance of the humanitarian

¹⁸ Uzbekistan gets 328 military vehicles from the United States. (2018). *Asia Plus*, Retrieved 13 April 2018, from <http://news.tj/en/news/uzbekistan-gets-328-military-vehicles-united-states-0>.

assistance and to help to stabilize and rebuild fragile Afghanistan. In terms of arms transfer, US has donated two S-92 helicopters to Turkmenistan Point Jackson Coast Guard cutter radiation detection, container scanners, and military vehicles (Katzman, 2016).

The US has signed a military cooperation agreement with Kyrgyzstan in 1993 and agreed to provide the latter financial assistance. By joining the NATO Partnership for Peace (PfP) in 1994, Kyrgyzstan has gained an opportunity to engage in a number of training exercises in the fields of defense, security and civil emergency planning cooperation with the US. The US security engagements with Kyrgyzstan had reached its peak after the 9/11 attacks and the subsequent ISAF military operation in Afghanistan. The US has urged Kyrgyzstan to host the US international airbase at 'Manas International Airport' near Bishkek. Consequently, the base was opened as a center for deployment and transit of military forces to Afghanistan on December 16, 2001. Nonetheless, in February 2009, the Kyrgyz Parliament voted to close the US base after the two governments failed to agree on prescribed rent. It was only after June 23, 2009, a tentative agreement was reached. Under the arrangement, the US agreed to pay the US \$ 200 million, approximately three times more than the previous rent (Marat, 2013). Finally, on June 3, 2014, international troops have handed over the base to the Kyrgyzstan military (Rumer, Sokolsky, & Stronski, 2016). In terms of arms supplies, the US has donated Mi-8 helicopters, military jeeps, ATVs, and passenger and cargo vehicles. It has also financed for construction of various facilities for the Kyrgyzstan's border guards, including barracks, checkpoints, and a command center in southern Kyrgyzstan. (Fleurant, Perlo-Freeman, Wezeman, 2018).

Tajikistan has remained a key strategic partner for the US in Afghan military operation. The former has permitted the US-led international coalition forces' emergency landing rights in the Ayni airbase. In return, the US has provided substantial security assistance to Tajikistan (Nichol, 2013). Majority of the US security assistance to Tajikistan has been provided to the border guards and to special-force units. The US-sponsored programmes such as Combating Terrorism Fellowship Program (CTFP), Counter-Narcotics Program (CN), Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI),

Global Security Contingency Fund Assistance and Counterterrorism Assistance.¹⁹ Moreover, the US has supplied several arms to Tajikistan including AK-47 rifles, Makarov 9 mm pistols, military vehicles, computers, cameras, communications equipment etc., (Kakenova, 2014). Nonetheless, after the ISAF withdrawal from Afghanistan the US-Tajik bilateral military cooperation has declined to a large extent. But at the same time, US has maintained the joint military exercises with the CARs including Tajikistan, under the rubric of NATO. Recently, the US Department of Defence and the Armed Forces of Tajikistan has conducted joint military exercises on April 28, 2017.

5.10.3 Economic Engagements

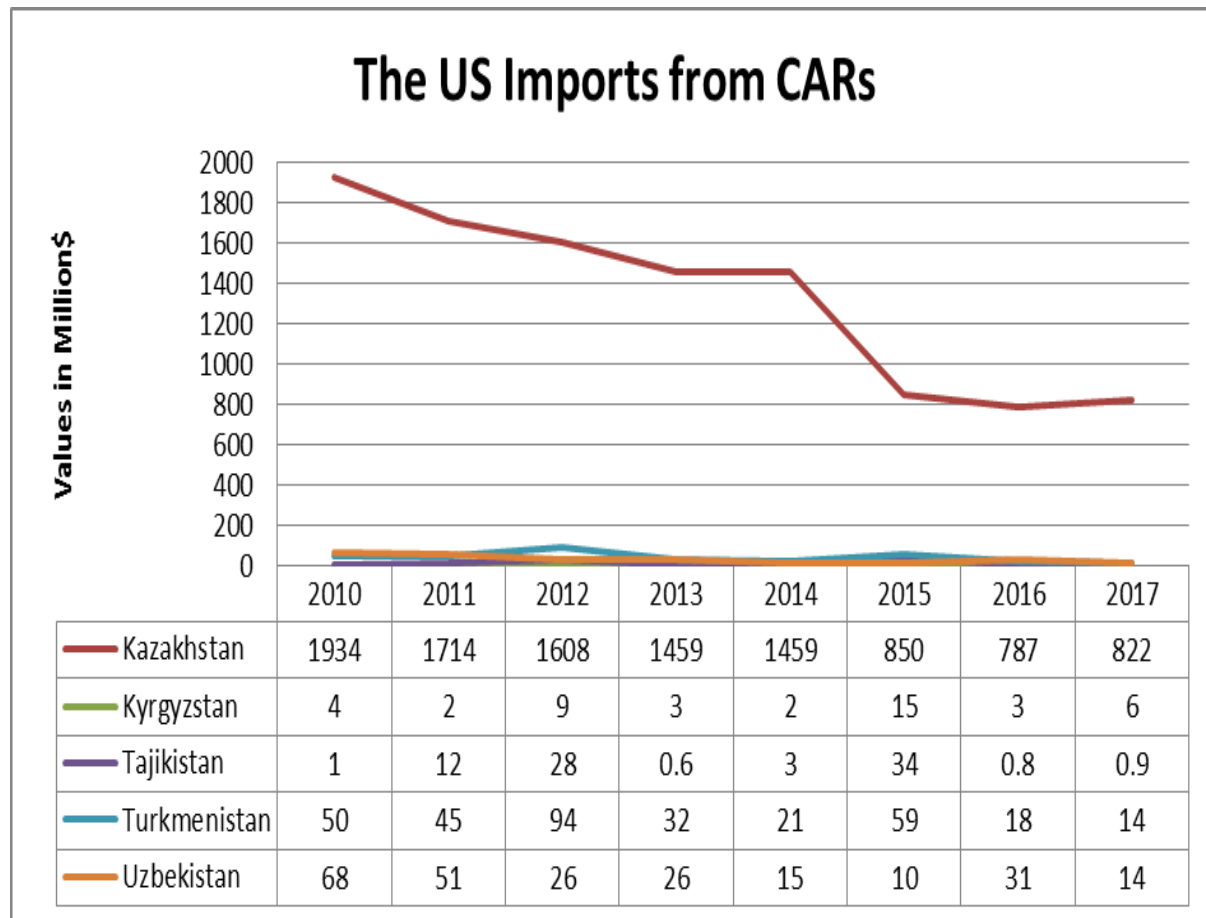
After the emergence of Central Asia, the US had negligible economic engagements with the region. Since then, it has been working for enhancing the economic cooperation, investing in the various connectivity projects (Caspian Pipeline Consortium) and fostering technical collaboration with the regional countries. The US has been supporting the CARs for economic reforms, trans-regional integration and inclusion in global financial institutions like, WTO, IMF, World Bank etc. As far as the policy frameworks are concerned, like Open Door' and 'Equal Access' (1990's), 'Talbot Doctrine' (1996), which stated that no country can monopolize the energy routes of CARs (Ochilov, 2017). The US has enacted two 'Silk Road Strategic Acts' (1999 and 2006) with the objective to connect landlocked Central Asia with South Caucasus, and establishing Turkey as a bridge-link. The US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton (2009-2013) has also proposed the NSR initiative (2011), as a way to integrate Central Asian countries with Europe and Asia (Mankoff, 2013). It has also signed the 'Trade and Investment Framework Agreement' (TIFA), a high-level platform for dialogue to strengthen trade and investment cooperation between the US and the countries of Central Asia.

¹⁹. Office of Military Cooperation. *US Embassy in Tajikistan*. Retrieved 31 January 2018 from, <https://tj.usembassy.gov/embassy/dushanbe/sections-offices/office-military-cooperation/>.

5.10.3.1 Trade and Investment

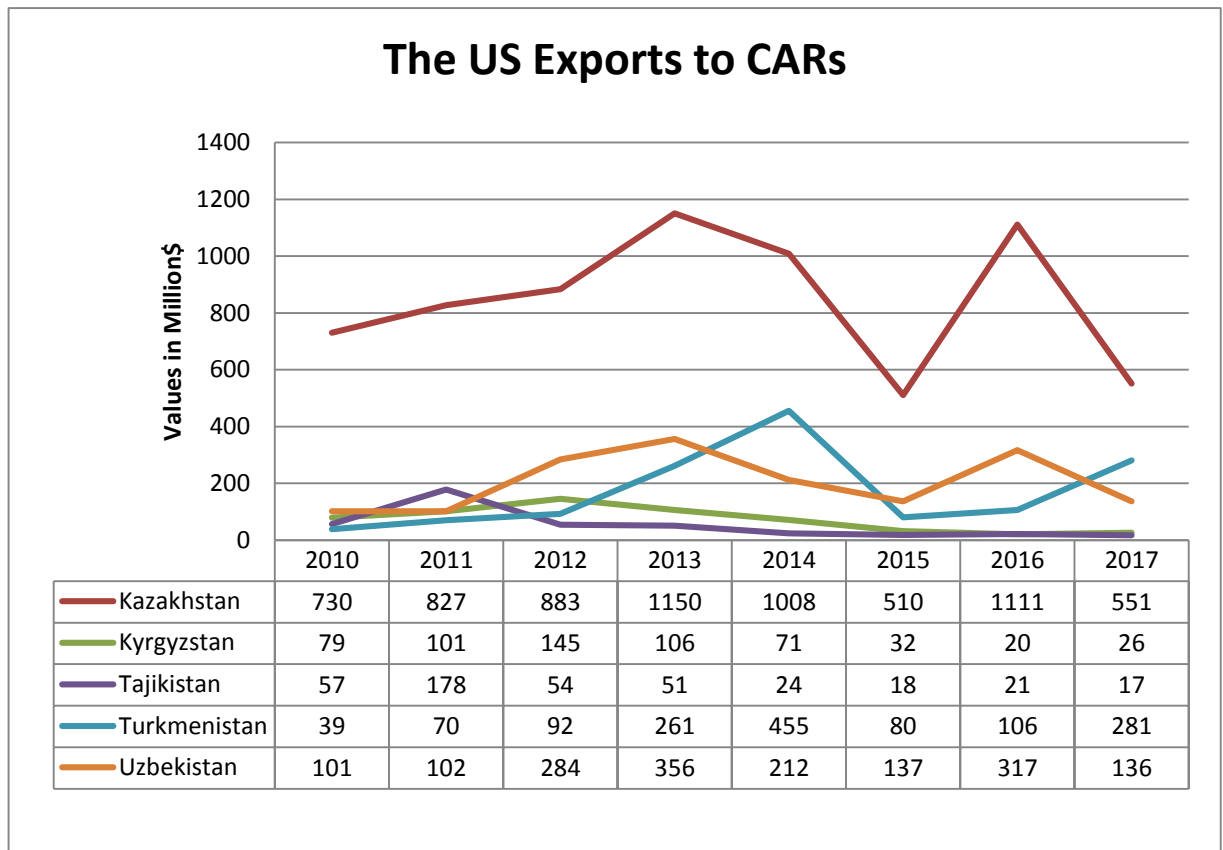
The US trade with the Central Asia stood at US \$ 1867.9 million in 2017, wherein exports and imports comprised of US \$ 1011 and the US \$ 856.9 million respectively (See figure no. 5.8 and 5.9 below). So for the US investment in Central Asia is concerned, Kazakhstan is the biggest destination for the US investment. Its investments in Kazakhstan is worth US \$ 25 billion (2017) making it the 2nd largest foreign investors (Russell, 2017). Moreover, the pace of investment has accelerated, to a record US \$ 2.3 billion in the first half of 2017. It has bilateral investment agreements with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as well. There is considerable potential for increased US investments, which outside Kazakhstan remains small i.e, US \$ 150 million in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan in 2015 (Russell, 2017).

Figure No. 5.8 US Imports from CARs (US \$ million) from (2010-2017)



Source: UN Comtrade Database, (2018).

Figure No. 5.9 US Exports from CARs (US \$ million) from (2010-2016)



Source: UN *Comtrade* Database, (2018).

From the above figures, it became clear that US bilateral trade with the Central Asian countries, has been increasing significantly. Kazakhstan is the leading trading partner of the US (US \$ 1373 million) followed by Turkmenistan (US \$ 295 million), Uzbekistan (US \$ 150 million), Kyrgyzstan (US \$ 32 million), and Tajikistan (US \$ 17.9 million). The exports of the US from the region stood at trajectory level during 2015-16. However, it has been slightly decreased in 2017. At the same time, the imports remained the same except that of Kazakhstan.

In order to understand US's economic engagements with the Central Asian countries the succeeding paras, have been discussed structurally at the bilateral level. Kazakhstan is the one of the leading trade partner of the US. Its total trade stood (US \$ 1373 million), comprising of imports (US \$ 822 million) and exports (US \$ 551 million) in 2017. The US has signed several investment agreements with Kazakhstan like energy, tourism, healthcare and resource extraction etc. According to sources more

the 250 US companies have been working in different sectors in Kazakhstan.²⁰ Also, both the countries reinforced their commitment to the Central Asia 'Trade and Investment Framework Agreement (TIFA)'. At the institutional level, the US has supported Kazakhstan's membership in WTO (Starr and Cornell, 2018). To increase foreign investment and expand trade the US has signed trade and investment framework agreement (TIFA) with Kazakhstan. The US and Turkmenistan have a most favored nation status agreement. Moreover, about 20 representatives of the 'US-Turkmenistan Business Council', US State Department, Department of Commerce, US state enterprises, officials of various US companies working in different sectors like oil, natural gas, chemical industry, electronics, innovative technologies, transport and logistics, agriculture and food industry etc.

The US total trade with Turkmenistan stood (US \$ 295 million), comprising of imports (US \$ 14 million) and exports (US \$ 281 million) in 2017. It has been investing in various sectors in Turkmenistan for the enhancement of economic cooperation. It has been encouraging Turkmenistan to adopt liberalization, privatization, fiscal reforms, as well as legal and regulatory reforms to open up the economy to foreign trade and investment (Mogilevskii, 2012). Turkmenistan on the other hand, wants that the US should increase its small and medium-sized business enterprises to generate more employment opportunities and thereby economic development.

The US total trade with Uzbekistan stood (US \$ 150 million), comprising of imports (US \$ 14 million) and exports (US \$ 136 million) in 2017. The former has signed many trade and investment agreements with the latter. In fact, the US has signed the 'Trade Investment Framework Agreement' with Uzbekistan (2004) to promote trade and investment cooperation. The agreement has provided for extension of most-favored-nation trade status (MNF) between the two countries. There are about 195 US companies working in different sectors of Uzbekistan. Furthermore, the US has also supported Uzbekistan's entry into the WTO, which would further facilitate its trade and economic cooperation.

²⁰ US Relations with Kazakhstan. (2016). *Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs*. Retrieved 17 June 2018, from <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5487.htm>.

The US total trade with Kyrgyzstan stood (US \$ 32 million), comprising of imports (US \$ 6 million) and exports (US \$ 26 million) in 2017. It has provided huge sums for the development of various economic sectors and passed laws, granting the normal trade relations (NTR) to enhance its economic cooperation. The US imports commodities like, apparel, textiles, and pharmaceutical products and exports merchandise, machinery, electronics, and food products to Kyrgyzstan. Like other Central Asian countries, Kyrgyzstan has also signed a trade and investment framework agreement with the US, a regional forum to discuss ways and means to improve investment climates and expand trade. Furthermore, the US has supported Kyrgyzstan's membership in the WTO and offered Most Favored Nation (MFN) status (Nichol, 2014), which further have helped to enhance the economic cooperation between the two countries.

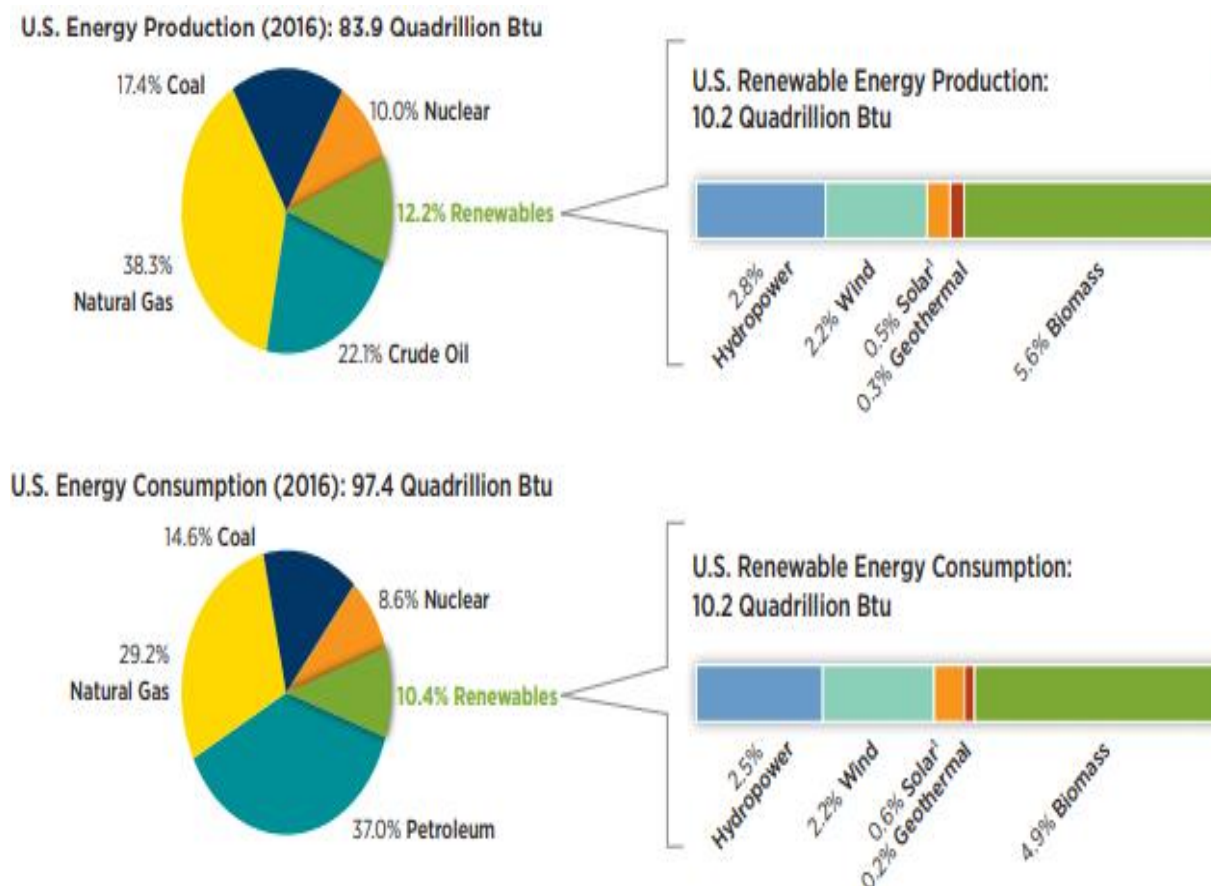
The US total trade with Tajikistan stood (US \$ 17.9 million), comprising of imports (US \$ 0.9 million) and exports (US \$ 17 million) in 2017. In order to increase economic cooperation, the US has signed a bilateral investment treaty with Tajikistan (2004).²¹ The US Agency for International Development (USAID) has been helping in strengthening bilateral economic cooperation. Currently, various USAID projects are implementing in Tajikistan in various areas like agriculture, health, water supply, education, empowerment, farm development, etc. Furthermore, the US has been supported the economic reforms and market economy in and also favors its entry into WTO.

5.10.3.2 Energy Cooperation

After the dynamic growth of the industrial infrastructure the US has to depend on other countries for oil and natural gas demands. According to EIA (2017) the total energy production of the US has 83.9 quadrillions Btu (British Thermal Units), while as the consumption has been reached to 97.4 quadrillion Btu. Therefore there is a considerable gap between production and consumption (See figure no. 5.10 below).

²¹. US Relations with Kazakhstan. (2016). *Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs*
Retrieved 24 June 2017, from <https://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/5487.htm>.

Figure No. 5.10 the US energy Production and Consumption in (%) in 2016



Source: Beiter, Elchinger, and Tian. (2017). *Renewable Energy Data Book*.

Steeves, & Ouriques (2016) argued that the US has become a 2nd largest energy consumer after China in the current scenario. According to the US Energy Facts (2017) it has three main energy reserves and produces natural gas (38.3) percent, petroleum, crude oil & gas plant liquids (22) percent, coal (17.4) percent as well as renewable energy (12.2) percent of total energy production of the US. However, DiChristopher (2017) projected that the US would become a net energy exporter by 2026.

Due to the rise in domestic oil and gas demands, the US has been importing the same from the energy-rich countries. According to EIA (2016) the US imports about (85) percent of crude oil from Canada, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, and Mexico. Despite the US has been making efforts to diversify its primary energy suppliers to Central Asian countries. It has been trying to channel the oil and natural gas pipelines from

Central Asia into the international markets. For this the US has been focusing on Kazakhstan, given its vast untapped oil and uranium resources. In fact, the US has been made attempts to transport Kazakhstan's oil through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline. Despite the 2nd largest consumer of the oil and natural gas, the US imports from the Central Asian countries has been remained low. According to EIA (2017) estimates the US imports of crude oil has been stood at 5560 thousand p/b in 2016. Furthermore, the US has imported 11 million pounds of uranium from Kazakhstan in 2016 (EIA, 2017).

Additionally, some of the US MNCs have also been working in the oil and natural gas sectors of Central Asian region. In fact, the Unocal has been working to construct oil and gas pipelines. However, it had lost its pre-eminence. Currently, the US Company, Chevron Oil Company (COC) has been working in Kazakhstan. It has held 50 percent stakes and has planned to invest the US \$ 36 billion to boost oil production in the CARs.²² Several other smaller US companies in the region support the Trans-Caspian-Pipeline (TCP) and the TAPI.

5.11 The Regional Players: Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan

Like major powers, the regional actors have been making efforts to strengthen their influence. Nonetheless, regional actors have been hampered by lack of political and economic track record with the ruling elites of the Central Asian countries. Their specific goals, however, are necessarily more circumscribed in both their geopolitical significance and the finances apportioned for their realization. Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan have focused on using their cards to achieve their respective well-defined objectives in Central Asia, be it energy cooperation, regional security, diversification of energy resources, trade and connectivity. In this context, the following section of this chapter will explore the multi-dimensional interests of regional actors and their role in the new great game politics of Central Asia.

²² Chevron Drives Oil Companies and Kazakhstan to Boost Oil Production in a Major Way. Retrieved 5 April 2017 from, <http://fortune.com/2016/07/06/chevron-oil-kazakhstan/>.

5.11.1 Iran

Iran is an important regional player. It shares long borders with Turkmenistan and the Caspian Sea with Kazakhstan. The ethnic and linguistic affinities give Iran an upper edge to make strong bonds with the CARs. Initially, Iran had attempted to play the religious card by projecting itself as the leader of the Islamic world and value system (Paunic, 2016). The ideological dimension of Iran's foreign policy has relatively lost its fervor. On the other hand, the shared common history, ethnicity, language between the two regions, including Iran's growing stakes in terms of economics, security, connectivity coupled with the involvement of other actors particularly the US in the region, compelled it to shift its foreign policy from ideology to pragmatism (Byman, Chubin, Ehteshami, & Green, 2001).

From connectivity point of view, Iran holds a strategic importance for Central Asia. The landlocked CARs look to Iran as a natural bridge link to warm waters. Given, Iran's geographic location provides it a distinct advantage of being able to offer the CARs a direct and relatively easy access to high seas. Nevertheless, the US sanctions on Iran dismantled this option. Some efforts from the Central Asian side tried to cash this option. For instance, despite US disapproval, Turkmenistan had opted for Iranian route to export its natural gas to Europe and both the countries had signed an agreement (1995) to construct a gas pipeline between Korpaji (Turkmenistan) and Kuryk (Iran). This pipeline was put into operation in 1997 and is the only export pipeline of Turkmenistan that is not dependent on Russia (Peyrouse, 2014). On January 2010, the second Turkmenistan-Iran gas pipeline started pumping oil to Iran (Wastnidge, 2017). The 180 Kilometers Turkmen-Iran pipeline started modestly pumping of 8 bcm of Turkmen gas. But its annual capacity is 20 bcm that would meet the energy requirements of Iran's Caspian region and enable it to free its own natural gas production in the southern fields for exports (Balie, 2016).

In the sphere of economic cooperation, Iran has constantly remained among the top consumer of Turkmen natural gas. In 2015, it has imported 3718 million KWts of electricity and out of it, 66% of which came from the Republic of Turkmenistan (Parkhomchik, 2015). To facilitate the easy transportation of goods, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Iran inaugurated the 900 Km the Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan

railway link on December 3, 2013 (Dawn, 2014). Despite, Iran's cordial relations with Turkmenistan, the development of bilateral ties has been remained weakened. Tajikistan occupies a special place in the Iranian foreign policy. It is the only Farsi speaking country, with a strong linkage to the Iranian culture. Along with many other smaller investment projects, Iran has assisted Tajikistan in the construction of the Anzab tunnel and Sangtuda-2 Hydroelectric Power Plant (Clark, 2015).

Iran has significant economic cooperation with Kazakhstan. It imports fuels, crude oil, iron, steel, various chemical products, grains and wastes of the food industry and exports fruits, glass and glass products, plastic materials, ceramic products, steam and hot water boilers, and articles of iron and steel. Moreover, the two countries have signed a series of oil swaps whereby, Iran receives Kazakh oil via the Caspian ports (Dorraj and Entessar, 2013). In terms of connectivity, Iran can serve as a natural gateway to the CARs. The Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev (1991-Till Date), in his book 'Path of Kazakhstan', refers Iran a window to the global markets (Kooalee, Ebrahimi, and Mougouee, 2014). Moreover, in 2014, Iran, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan inaugurated the Uzen (Kazakhstan)–Kyzylkaya–Bereket–Etrek (Turkmenistan)–Gorgan (Iran), railway line providing a link from the Persian Gulf to Central Asia. With sanctions eased, Iran is open to additional opportunities to cooperate with Kazakhstan on potential areas.

Uzbekistan has not been attractive to Iran, primarily due to several factors such as openly accusing Iran of assisting the Islamic Tajik Coalition and the Islamic Agitators in the Fergana Valley and most importantly Uzbekistan's close strategic ties with the US and its support to the policy of containment (Lang, 2013). Uzbekistan and Iran did not especially want to sacrifice the relations of his country with the US to the reinforcement of its ties with Iran. However, after the withdrawal of the NATO forces from Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, since then, the relations between both the countries have been gradually improving (Aliriza, Flanagan, Alterman, Kuchins, & Cipoletti, 2013).

Iran's economic cooperation with Kyrgyzstan remained least developed, probably because of geographical remoteness and religious differences. But, Iran still imports meat, grain and steel scraps and in return exports clothing, paints, nuts, and

flooring to Kyrgyzstan. For facilitating the economic ties the Iranian companies participated in the construction of a highway connecting Bishkek and Osh (Financial Tribune, 2017). Moreover, the fading relationships between Kyrgyzstan and US have contributed in enhancing the bilateral cooperation.

Another, a key determinant of Iran's policy towards the CARs is related to political and security cooperation. Seeing an opportunity to expand its influence in the CARs and Trans-Caucasus as well, Iran set out to fulfill what it saw as its natural geopolitical role of providing a bridge to the Central Asian countries. Since 1991, Iran has been dealing with volatile security challenges in its north. Almost overnight, the numbers of its neighbors had increased from 1-3 i.e. Turkmenistan, Armenia, and Azerbaijan. In fact, Iran got closer to the unstable spots of the intense ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus. The security dimension of Iran's relationship with CARs is even more significant because of the instability and fluidity of the political situation in the region. In fact, the painstaking process of nation-building, the legitimacy crisis, rapid economic and social transformation, ethnic diversity, border disputes and a catalogue of other issues are sources of instability in the Central Asia.

The enhancement of the US presence in the region, following the 9/11 attacks has further increased security threats to Iran. Since, US has been accusing Iran of being an 'Axis of Evil' including Iraq and North Korea, as well (Sokolsky and Miller, 2017). The strong US military presence in Afghanistan and the stationing of US lead NATO forces in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have critically increased Iranian perception of strategic concerns. Iran fears that it might be the target of a pre-emptive US military strike aimed at neutralizing Iran's nuclear assets. In this connection, Iran took sides with Russia, China, and SCO member's *vis-à-vis*, the US. As the Moscow and Beijing are the major regional and emerging global powers. Apart, both are not in favor of imposing a ban on Iran for not fully cooperating on the nuclear weapons issue because of the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic reasons. In fact, Iran being a major supplier of energy exports to China and Russia has economic stakes, heavily invested in Iran's civil nuclear energy (Kozhanov, 2017).

Iran has been trying to develop its cooperation at the multilateral level particularly through the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), and Shanghai

cooperation (SCO). The member countries are paying concerted efforts to develop the intra-regional transportation and communication infrastructures for facilitating the easy transportation of goods and services. The development of improved transport links across the ECO members such as the Tejen–Mashhad link, North-South Transport Corridor, the Trans-Caspian Transportation Route, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Chabahar, Bandar Abbas, Karachi, and Gwadar ports highlights the recognition of the need for better connections between member states and also reflects the idea of revival the Silk Route. Iran also actively promoted ECO Container Trains on Istanbul-Tehran-Tashkent-Almaty and the Bandar-Abbas-Almaty Routes for the development of transport cooperation among the ECO members. However, the regional grouping has proved futile for various reasons such as vulnerable economies with poor performance, economic mismanagement, political and ideological divisions.

Iran's interests in the SCO, a regional grouping that has ostensible security priorities and serves a wider geostrategic purpose for Iran as an aspiring member. Song (2013) observed that "ECO member's claim that SCO is a non-traditional security grouping, while others define it as a 'bloc of authoritarian states confronting Western influence. It will be beneficial for Iran to be a full member of the organization. On July 5, 2005, SCO Summit (Astana), Iran was granted the observer status in the regional grouping (Weitz, 2007). Iran sought full membership of the SCO, in 2008 and 2010 respectively, but was remained unsuccessful on both the occasions (Akbarzadeh, 2015). In the same summit, Iran's proposal for full membership has been supported by China and Russia (Finance Tribune, 2017)

From the above discussion, it seems crystal clear that Iran is not a dominant player in the Central Asian region. Since from 26 years, Iran has regularly attempted to enhance its leverage but, gained limited success primarily for its image as an international pariah. However, its mutual compatibility of interests with the major powers especially with Russia and China is its plus point to strengthen its footsteps in the Central Asian region.

5.11.2 Turkey

Like Iran, Turkey also shares common historical and cultural connections with the Central Asian region. After the CARs emergence, Turkey had made enthusiastic

attempts to project itself as a role model for newborn countries. The major components of its identity are democracy, liberal economy, and Islam. Even the West favored the Turkish model to the CARs (Aras, & Fidan, 2009). The West put forward Turkey as a Muslim but, secular, democratic and an ideal antidote to the Iranian influence including the return of Russian influence, if not its hegemony (Sengupta, 2009). Turkey has categorically declared that its relationship with CARs would be based on, respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, non-interference in the internal affairs and equal rights and mutual benefits.

Disillusions were quickly come to an end for Turkey that it did not have enough political clout and economic means to implement its Central Asian policy. Its Western backing has also gone beyond declarations of intent. The role ascribed to Ankara as a model and a bridge link for CARs to outside world has been failed. The intentions of promoting democratic values and political pluralism on part of Turkey has largely fell flat (Aras, & Fidan, 2009). Therefore, Ankara had confronted a harsh and an unexpected reality shaped by the rejection of its big brother role by the political elites of Central Asia (Wheeler, 2013). Nevertheless, the relations haven't been without partly success especially after the Justice and Development Party (AKP), that came into power consecutively from the 2002-till date and under the leadership of President Abdullah Gul (2007-2014) and now Tayyip Erdogan (2014-Till Date). Turkey has been attempting to follow a pro-active policy approach and resolved the existed problems under its policy of 'Zero Problems with Neighbors' (ZPN) concept (Yesiltas, 2013).

Turkey focused to increase its engagements with Central Asia on a broad range of issues including diplomatic exchanges, trade agreements, capital flows and pursuing a general deepening of economic cooperation, both at bilateral and institutional level. Ankara, unilaterally abolished the visa restrictions for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Georgia, and later short-term visas free entry for Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, and Mongolia in 2007 (Saidazimova, 2017). It established its High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council (SCC) mechanism with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and the Cooperation Council with Tajikistan, to provide a basis for developing cooperation. The scholarly works of Ozkan and Demirtepe (2012) noted that Turkish International Cooperation and Development Agency (TIKA) has played a vital role in providing aid

and devising economic strategies with a particular focus on Turkish speaking countries and neighbors to abate Iranian and Russian influence in the region. In this connection, Ankara has provided the US \$ 1 billion aid to four out of five Central Asian republics namely Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan over the last 25 years (Alam, 2015). Nevertheless, TİKA aid activities remained marginal due to its limited budget including the interests of major powers especially US, Russia, China and EU which are providing grants and aids in order to enhance their respective leverage in the Central Asian region (Hausmann, & Lundsgaarde, 2015).

The Turkish NGOs are also playing vital roles in cementing its economic cooperation with the CARs particularly Turkish Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists (TUSKON). The other affiliated organizations of TUSKON like Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-speaking Countries (TURKPA), International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY), Turkic Academy, and Turkic Business Council have also been working on these lines. However, the TUSKON's activities were banned in Turkey following the coup attempt (July 15, 2016), that aimed at overthrow the Recep Tayyip Erdogan regime. The Turkish Ministry of Economy, adopted a new doctrine - the 'Turkish Exports Strategy-for 2023 in 2012'. It proposed to achieve the trade target of US \$ 500 billion by 2023 with the CARs (Kozhanov, 2012). The new export strategy has been regarded as a significant move to enhance economic cooperation between the two regions (Bilgin, & Bilgiç, 2013). According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, the trade volume with the CARs is US\$ 7 billion in 2016 and US \$ 13 billion investment as of December 2017.²³

In the energy sector, Turkey has been exploiting its geographical advantage, located at the center of East-West, and North-South. In fact, Turkey desires to become a vital energy transit corridor. The implementation of crude oil pipeline -Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (1768 KM); natural gas pipelines Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (980 KM) and Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway (826 KM) project have been indicators of strong economic and energy cooperation between both the regions. Both the regions have been working in

²³. Turkey's Relations with Central Asian Republics. *Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey*. Retrieved 17 April 2018, from http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-relations-with-central-asian-republics.en.mfa.

the direction to expand the existing energy cooperation along with new energy projects. For example, the construction of the proposed projects-Trans-Anatolian Gas Pipeline and the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) would promote Turkey as a transit country and thereby would enhance its leverage in the CARs energy market (Winrow, 2011).

In terms of security cooperation, Turkey shares common concerns with the CARs in terms of terrorism, separatism, drug-trafficking and small arms proliferation issues. Therefore, to restrict the menace of shared security concerns, Turkey has been providing military training to hundreds of military personnel of Central Asia including financial assistance through bilateral and multilateral defense agreements (Wheeler, 2013). It has hosted the NATO Partnerships for Peace (PfP) program training centre in Ankara, especially for providing training, to the military personnel of the CARs on various operational and tactical themes ranging from counter-terrorism to organized crime and human trafficking, etc. One of the priorities of Turkey in its contributions to the security of CARs is to support military reforms and to strengthen the armed forces of the region. For this purpose, Turkey's armed forces participated in the joint military maneuvers for improving the military capabilities of the Central Asian militaries.

Additionally, Turkey has provided various funds to the training programmes for Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. In 2013, Turkish Defense Company, the Radar and Electronic Warfare Technology Centre (ASELSAN) and its Kazakh partner Kazakhstan Engineering signed a military agreement worth US \$ 44 million dollars for the establishment of joint Turkish-Kazakh defense manufacturing unit. It has been also providing training to Kazakh military personnel. Satke, Michel, & Korkmaz (2014) argues that, Turkey has signed agreements with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan for jointly fighting any possible Islamist intrigues. Nevertheless, it has been remained embedded in a vicious circle of regional polarization, fostered by competition for strategic leverage in the Central Asian as well as other scenarios of strategic significance to Turkish national interests especially in the Middle East, Caucasus and Eastern Mediterranean.

The key factor behind this polarization trend was Russia's revanchism in its southern periphery to regain its influence. Apart from exerting pressure to the individual republics of Central Asia at the bilateral level, Moscow's dominant regional role has

been primarily reaffirmed at a multilateral level, for instance, widening the scope of CIS, CSTO, SCO, and EEU. The regional organizations lead by Russia and China represented a collective response to Euro-Atlantic influence in the region. As a matter of fact, the aim of jointly tackling the issues such as terrorism, energy, military cooperation etc. through multilateral frameworks directly rivaled the analogous attempt pursued through contemporary efforts undertaken under the banner of the NATO.

In addition to, the current Syrian crisis and annexation of the Crimea further escalated Turkey's relations with the Russia which in turn affected its relations with the CARs (Knipp, 2017). This friction reached its zenith on November 24, 2015, when Turkey shot down a Russia Su-24 bomber, claiming the violation of sovereign borders (Velioglu, 2016). With this unprecedented act, Russia responded by imposing economic embargos, restricted and banned Turkish imports, suspended the visa-free regime and closed the doors of membership in the EEU to Turkey. The Union declared to work on free-trade agreements with Tehran, and not with Ankara and thereby, hit hard Turkey's interests in the region. Turkey also differs from Russia on the Ukrainian issue. Turkey does not recognize the annexation of Crimea and remained concerned about ethnically Turkic Crimean Tatars. As a result, the worsening in Russo-Turkish bilateral ties is bound to have repercussions in the Turkey-CARs relations, as well. Malysheva (2015), noted, that CARs have always subordinated their relations with Turkey to the overall state of affairs between Turkey and Russia.

As most of these countries are members of Russian dominating regional organization. Moreover, the CARs participation Sino-Russia led cooperation initiatives, a setback for Turkish policies toward Central Asia. Furthermore, Turkey lacks a comprehensive strategy to enhance its ties with the region. On the other hand, the political elites of Central Asia prefer to keep Turkey at arm's length out of fear that it supported political pluralism *Vis-à-vis*, authoritarian regimes (Frappi, 2013).

5.11.3 Pakistan

The Central Asian countries have gained immense prominence in Pakistan's foreign policy considerations. Pakistan, share a common history, culture, religion, and geographical proximity with the CARs. For centuries, this region was closely attached

to the nomadic people and the Silk Route had acted as a bridge link for exchanging goods, ideas, and movement of people between Europe and Asia. Even today, many eminent families in Pakistan claim descents from Mughal ancestors in Bukhara, Samarkand, Fergana and other parts of Central Asia (Starr, 2015). But, the colonization of Central Asia and South Asian subcontinent by Czarist-Russia and Britain respectively, broke the age-old bond. Moreover, during the cold war period (1945-1991), Pakistan's alliance with the West, (Member of SEATO and CENTO) and its support to Afghan Mujahedin during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan (1979-1989) further complicated Pakistan's relations with Soviet-controlled Central Asia (Sial, 2013 and Katzman, 2015). After the end of the Cold War and emergence of Central Asian countries, Pakistan recognized the independence of CARs and established its embassies immediately in all the Central Asian countries. Khan (2017) acknowledges that, Pakistan has celebrated the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties with the Central Asian countries in 2017. Without losing much time, Pakistan sent a high-level 26 member's delegation to Central Asia (1991), led by the minister of state for economic affairs, Sardar Asif Ahmed Ali (1991-1993). The delegation arrived at a mutual understanding for cooperation in various areas including political, security, economic, cultural and connectivity (Roy, 2006). In fact, during 1990s, the exchange of official visits between the two regions, have concluded MoUs in the fields of polity, economy, security, culture etc., however, concrete steps for implementation were not taken.

The strategic myopia had skewed Pakistan due to its domestic political instability, unstable economy, lack of infrastructure, security problems. Moreover, the emergence of the Taliban rule in Afghanistan (1996-2001), and Pakistan's support to the Pashtu militant groups, against Uzbek and Tajik fractions in Afghanistan (Fair, 2008). Pakistan not only supported the Taliban, but also accorded de-facto recognition to their government which further enlarged the gulf between Pakistan and the Central Asian countries enormously. Additionally, the problems of extremism, insufficient laws and order situation in the federally administered tribal areas (FATA), Baluchistan and Karachi remained major bottlenecks for enhancing its cooperation with the CARs.

The sluggish process of development of bilateral relations were however revived after the 9/11 attacks and the US introduction of OEF in Afghanistan wherein, Pakistan became a frontline state in the 'Global War on Terror' in Afghanistan. Since then frequent visits by the officials on both sides have been made, which is an evidence of improved bilateral relations. Pakistan's cooperation has significant impact in assisting the US especially, with regard to intelligence gathering and providing a crucial logistical transit routes. On the other hand, Pakistan pragmatically changed its foreign policy towards Afghanistan by denouncing its support to Taliban, and subsequently tried to make inroads into Central Asia with improved image (Hussian, and Ali, 2016). It offered shortest route connectivity to the CARs. Due to its exceptional geographical location at the crossroads of South Asia, West Asia, Central Asia and Middle East and thereby, a natural gateway to landlocked Central Asian countries. In fact the completion of the Pakistan's Gwadar seaport can offer this facility to the CARs. Turkmenistan was already permitted to use the Gwadar Port in the beginning of 2016, granting the country access to the Indian Ocean. Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan also eyes on Gwadar seaport, which could indeed form a junction for connecting Central Asia with the rest of world.

Furthermore, the revival of Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement (QTTA) between Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and China has given new impetus to regional connectivity and will help to further unlock the potentials of CARs. It can also be extended to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The agreement provides Pakistan with a gateway to Central Asia by completely circumnavigating instable Afghanistan and relies on the Karakoram Highway, which connects Pakistan and China, as a transit corridor, without levy of any duties in territories of involved parties. Pakistan and Uzbekistan, have signed an extradition treaty and invested significant efforts in infrastructural connections. The Almaty-Karachi Road via the Karakorams (Almaty-Bishkek-Kashgar-Islamabad-Karachi network) is functioning. Opening up ports and other routes for Central Asian goods, Pakistan can improve its relations with the Republics and subsequently can help in tapping the natural resources of the CARs (Shaukat, 2014).

In the energy sector, Pakistan like many other countries is also an energy deficient country. It imports most of its oil and gas come from the Gulf countries

especially from Saudi Arabia and Iran. Since the Middle East is in falling the arc of turbulence, therefore, Central Asian Republics have been remained attractive and better option. In this connection, the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline costing worth \$10 billion US dollars with a length of 1814 kilometers link is a promising project which could as per observations deliver 19 bcm oil per annum, out of which 5 bcm will consume Afghanistan and 14 bcm to each Pakistan and India. (Ruff, 2015). In 2015, Prime Minister of Pakistan Nawaz Sharif (2013-2017) participated in the ground-breaking ceremony of TAPI Gas Pipeline Project along with the Presidents of Afghanistan and Turkmenistan and Vice-President of India Hamid Ansari at Mary in Turkmenistan and jointly kick-off the work on TAPI gas pipeline.

The Dawn (2017), reported that the multi-billion dollars project entered its practical phase in Pakistan after the process of initiating Front-End-Engineering-and-Design (FEED) route survey was formally inaugurated on March 3, 2017 after a period of 22 years and is expected to operate by 2019 (Reyaz, 2015). The map no. 5.20.1 clearly shows the road map of the TAPI pipeline project. Moreover, under the banner of Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) programme, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Afghanistan and Pakistan had operationalized the Central Asia-South Asia (CASA), a hydroelectricity transmission line on May 12, 2016 near Dushanbe in Tajikistan. The 750 KM long CASA power project costing worth US \$1.16 billion would allow Pakistan and Afghanistan to import 1000 and 300 MW electricity from Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, respectively (Dawn, 2017). According to the CAREC Work Plan, CASA is going to serve as the first phase of the Central Asia-South Asia Regional Electricity Market (CASAREM) development programme, which is expected to set the stage for greater energy trade between the two regions.²⁴ Moreover, to heighten its economic cooperation, Pakistan has established joint Economic Commissions (JECs) with all the Central Asian countries (Khan, 2017).

²⁴ Energy Sector Progress Report and Work Plan (2012- 2013), Senior Officials' Meeting Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation, Astana, Kazakhstan, Retrieved 24 May 2018, from <http://www.Carecprogram.org/Energy-Sector-Progress-report>.

Map No. 5.11 TAPI Gas Pipeline



Source: ArcGIS

Pakistan has been also expanding its relationship with the CARs through the multilateral institutional arrangements such as the SCO. In fact, Pakistan was granted the full membership status at the Ufa SCO Summit (July 10, 2017). The membership in regional grouping has opened new vistas of opportunities in engaging with the CARs including Pakistan's all-weather strategic friend China and Russia. The policies and programmes of the SCO are in consonance with Pakistan's long-term objectives. Pakistan offers SCO club a valuable partner to eradicate the three evils of terrorism, extremism and separatism, including drug trafficking in the region. The regional organizations consistently conducting the joint military exercises against this heinous crime. Jones (2013) has argued that, Afghan-Pakistan have been remained

sanctuaries of terrorist organizations and extremism and their spill over to South and Central Asia subsequently caused chaos and havoc in the regional stability. Although, Pakistan has been conducting military operations such as Koh-e-Sufaid, Zarb-e-Azab and Radd-ul-Fassad against terrorist organizations (Javaid, 2016). Pakistan's entry into SCO may also contribute significantly to the further development of Pakistan's anti-terrorism capabilities, especially through the SCO's Regional Anti-terrorism Structure (RATS) (Siddiq, 2016).

Indeed, Pakistan has signed bilateral anti-terrorism cooperation agreements with some SCO member countries. The RATS could come forward to extend help Pakistan to institutionalize the anti-terrorism cooperation in a more comprehensive manner and on a much wider scale. Furthermore, the SCO has already set up many mechanisms and policy options in Afghanistan to nudge it towards peace and stability. But, there are constraints in enhancing Pakistan's relations with the Central Asian countries. The major problem for Pakistan is to establish a strong relationship with CARs is geographic in nature. While only several miles away from Tajikistan across the Wakhan Corridor, it is separated from the region by Afghanistan (Cornell and Swanström, 2006). The economic limitations like lack of adequate financial resources in Pakistan also matters. The existing law and order problems in Afghanistan had definitely made difficult for Pakistan to have a land trade route with Central Asia. The other external factors, like the presence of India, Iran Turkey, Russia and Western power may also hinder the process of overland linkage with the Central Asian countries.

5.12 New Great Game a Gordian knot

The geostrategic importance of the CARs is because of its geopolitical and geo-economic significance. As already mentioned that in 1904 Mackinder, stated that the Heart of Eurasia would play an important role in the world politics. The Heartland theory summarizes that 'the power which controls the heartland would control the world affairs'. Given the geo-political, geo-strategic and economic significance of the region. The CARs became a strategic pivot, where the interests of the Russia, China, and US as well as India, Pakistan, Turkey and Iran, counterpoise with each other. The battle

for interests among the involved players in the region thereby, makes it a strategic fulcrum.

5.12.1 China

Interests of China in Central Asia.

1. To strengthen the bilateral and multilateral relations with all the Central Asian countries;
2. To heighten the bilateral and regional cooperation with the CARs in terms of trade, energy, and transportation sector;
3. To improve the conditions of communication and transportation (Romanowski, 2017).
4. China supports the authoritarian political regimes of Central Asian countries. It finds the authoritarian political system more helpful in achieving her objectives (Sharshenova, & Crawford, 2017);
5. China wants to maintain peace and stability in the adjacent CARs to contain the centrifugal forces in its western Xinjiang province (Muzalevsky, 2015).
6. And, the most important objective of China's Central Asian policy is to counter and weaken the influence its geopolitical rivals.

To achieve the above-stated objectives, China has established the partnership of 'Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation' with all the CARs. Unlike the US and Russia, China has moved away from imposing any kind of political overtones to the CARs. Instead, it has been placed importance on the status quo, sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.

China has consistently supported the CARs rights in terms of total freedom, especially in domestic political affairs. It has vehemently opposed the imposition of Western democratic standards in the region being directed by on part of the EU in general and the US in particular. The existing political systems of Central Asia suits more to China over the US and Russia. This pressure on part of the US and Russia distanced Central Asia from these countries. It provides more geopolitical space to China. This argument can be illustrated by the quoting some instances in this context here. During the 'Color Revolutions' including the crisis in Andijan (2005); Janaozen

(2011) and Gorno-Badakhshan (2012), in Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan respectively, which were backed by the US led NGO's, in order to change the political leadership of CARs. While China has been vehemently supporting the political regimes of CARs, against the US overtures. It has granted benevolent backing to Uzbekistan's President, Islam Karimov against the international investigations reinforced by the US and its European allies (Schimmelfennig, 2013).

It's not only politics, rather geo-economic dynamics that have been playing an important role in the geo-politics of the region. Unlike the US and Russia, China has been providing substantial aids and grants, credit lines, foreign direct investment to the Central Asian countries without insisting them to adopt the Chinese political practices and prescriptions (Sharshenova, & Crawford, 2017). Unlike the US and Russia, China does not make demands for political reform from Central Asian governments. Indeed, like Russia, China does not use political pressure to keep the CARs in cordial and friendly its general orientation. The lack of an overt political agenda other than regional stability, which China claims can be guaranteed through economic development thereby, makes China attractive to the CARs.

Given its security stakes in the CARs, China has been providing military training, arms, equipment's, intelligence sharing and has been conducting several military exercises bilaterally and multilaterally with the Central Asian countries. In this connection, China led SCO has been serving as a launching pad for protecting and promoting China's security interests in Central Asia. It has been utilizing the SCO platform to restrict the influence of other geopolitical actors particularly the US and in veiled way, Russia and India as well. Ironically, roping Russia and India as permanent members in the same, these countries have become second fiddle to China. Moreover, China led SCO had obliged the US to vacate its military bases in Central Asia and thereby, to restrict the US's military presence in the region.

China's recent activity in security affairs of Central Asia has been challenging the established notion of the 'Division of Labour' in the region wherein, Russia acts as the security guarantor and China for economic development. There has been a gradual change of China from economics oriented to a more strategic player, given the expanding role of the SCO in the Central Asian security.

At the bilateral level, China and Tajikistan agreed to establish a bilateral counterterrorism centre in Dushanbe in 2016. Saalman (2017) argued that China has been committed to build military base on the Tajik-Afghan border in 2017. It has set up a counterterrorism cooperation mechanism in Urumqi, in collaboration with Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan. Thus, China's membership of the quadrilateral counterterrorism coordination group indicates its willingness to engage with other significant players other than Russia on the question of Afghan's stability. More nerve-wracking for Russia, however, is the fact that China is anticipated to supply high-tech arms to the CARs, which used to be dominated by Russia. The scholarly work of Scobell, Ratner and Beckley (2015) acknowledge that China has supplied Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan HQ-9 air defence system for the first time. China and Uzbekistan had opposed Russia's military troops close to their borders (Kucera, 2016). Given the instances along with arguments, indicated that right now, China is in position to counter its strong rivals like the US in particular and Russia in general. In this background it is argued that China would become an assertive player of Central Asian strategic issues in the coming time.

At the multilateral level, China has been also challenging the Russia military hegemony in the region. For instance, unlike, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, which are the largest recipients of Russia's military aid in Central Asia, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan had shunned the Russia led CSTO in 2012. In fact, Uzbekistan is the member of the SCO, which used to conduct the frequent military exercises with China (Muzalevsky, 2015). Thus, China has been challenging both the US and Russian military maneuvers in the Central Asian region.

In the economic sphere, China has been enhanced its trade, commerce, investment and energy cooperation with the Central Asian countries. It's continuing economic forays into Central Asia, has simultaneously turned attention towards Russia's privileged position in the region. Indeed, China has surpassed Russia as the CARs leading trade partner (US \$ 572 million in 1992 to US \$ 30 billion), in 2010 (Mitchell, 2014). Currently, its total trade with the CARs stood at (US \$ 30 billion) in 2017, a figure that dwarfs Russia's total trade (US \$ 25 billion) and the US (US \$ 19 billion) as well in the same time period (UN Comtrade, 2018).

Apart from substantial rise China's regional trade, its economic influence continues to grow in the Central Asia. It has massively been investing in several infrastructural projects like, building roads, railways, bridges, tunnels, etc. in Central Asia. More importantly China's most ambitious BRI (2013) and its associated Infrastructural corridors, even if partially fulfilled, would reduce Russia's strategic and economic influence over the CARs transit routes (Stronski, 2018). Additionally, China has been utilizing its economic institutions like, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Export-Import Bank of China (EIBC) and the China Development Bank (CDB). The rising influence of China led economic institutions would overshadow, the CU and EEU, led by Russia and its long ambition of 'Greater Eurasia' (Russell, 2017).

In the energy sector, China has been obtaining oil and natural gas directly from the region, completely bypassing Russia and thereby, challenging one of Russia's core strategic goals in Central Asia *i.e.*, monopolized control of energy flows in region. It has constructed the China–Kazakhstan Oil Pipeline (2007) and cooperated with Turkmenistan in constructing the China-Turkmenistan Gas Pipeline (2009). The network lines of gas pipelines *i.e.*, A, B, and C were completed in 2009, 2010, and 2015 respectively. China has signed another agreement with Turkmenistan, for the construction of fourth line (D) of gas pipeline in 2013 (Blank, 2014). The completion of line (D), would increase the gas exports to 30 billion cubic meters annually. China's oil and natural gas pipelines have helped Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to re-route their energy resources away from Russia, thus, receding their over-dependency on Russia (Aminjonov, 2017). Similarly, China funded oil refinery plant in Kyrgyzstan is going to break the Russia's fuel supply monopoly (Romanowski, 2017). Hence, China's growing energy imports along with assertive influence control in the CARs, would pose the serious blow to Russia's influence over oil, natural gas and electricity of the Central Asian countries.

Thus, from the above analyses, it becomes clear that China has increased its influence in the Central Asian region. It has been challenging its geopolitical competitors particularly the US, Russia and India in Central Asia. However, China has more compatible interests with Russia to thwart the US presence in the region.

5.12.2 USA

Since the independence of the CARs, the region has remained strategically significant for the US. The Central Asian region represents a microcosm of the US foreign interests, including Russia's resurgence, China's rising influence, the role of Iran, the future of Afghanistan, terrorism, extremism and the goal of democracy promotion and human rights. Thus, the US interests in the region are primarily strategic in nature. The followings point clearly reflect the US geopolitical interests in the Central Asian region.

1. To contain the strategic leverage of Russia, China as well as Iran in the region;
2. To support the CARs to access world markets in order to reduce the over-dependence on Russia and China (Blank, 2014).
3. To promote Political liberalization, Rule of law and Civil Society in accordance with the Western democratic values against the Russia and China backed authoritarian regimes (Spratlen, 2018).
4. One of the major interests of the US is to create a 'Greater Central Asia' (GCA) with Afghanistan as its center, connecting Central and South Asia;
5. To preserve not just the independence of the five Central Asian countries but also their ability to exercise sovereign political and economic choices, free from external coercion (Mankoff, 2015).

To realize the above mentioned strategic interests, the US has been applying different strategies for protecting and promoting its interests in general and to contain its geopolitical rivals particularly Russia, China and Iran in particular. The US has been supporting for political pluralism, democracy and rule of law that contradict the Russian and Chinese geopolitical interests in the Central Asia, and an effort to weaken Russia's hold over individual Central Asian countries. For this, the US has lobbied several NGO's for democracy promotion in Central Asian countries.

Indeed, the US Agency for International Development (USAID), has spent millions of dollars for democracy promotion programmes in Central Asia. It had spent (US \$ 3.8 million) in Turkmenistan, followed by Kyrgyzstan (US \$ 11.4 million) and Tajikistan (US \$ 12.4 million), in order to motivate the CARs political leadership to emulate the Western democracy ideals (Spratlen, 2018). It has been witnessed through

the emergence of several social movements to of strive for democratization and political reforms like, Rosé Revolution (2003), Orange Revolution (2004-2005), Tulip Revolution (2005 and 2010) and the Ukrainian Maidan (2014), which Russian President Putin has accused US for coup. Furthermore, these incidents have soured the CARs perceptions of the US role through various NGO's in the region. Notwithstanding, the US has been failed so far to convince the CARs for political reforms and democracy, thus, a geopolitical win by Russia and China in retaining the authoritarian political regimes (Romanowski, 2017).

Security is a key agenda item for all the stake holders in Central Asia. Therefore, the region has been remained a regional and global pivot, particularly after the 9/11attacks (2001). Following this, the US has expanded its security cooperation exponentially with the Central Asian countries. Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan became frontline states of the US led OEF in Afghanistan. Subsequently, the US was permitted to access the military bases of CARs particularly that of Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. Wherein, it had deployed 1,500 and 3,000 soldiers at K2 and Manas military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, respectively, adjacent to Russia, China and Iran (Bagbaslioglu, 2014). Moreover, the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) played an important role for transit and logistics into Afghanistan via Central Asia. Consequently, Russia became seriously preoccupied with the US influence in its southern flank.

It is argued by scholars like () the US military bases in CARs negate Russia's ambition to become the unchallenged security guarantor of an exclusive sphere of influence in Central Asia. Furthermore, for the first time, the US led NATO has been conducting the joint military exercise with the Central Asian countries, at the doorsteps of Russia and China. Russia had perceived itself as encircled by the US led NATO alliance. The CARs membership in NATO had viewed by the Russian leadership a real security threat (Stronski, 2018). In fact, the Russia Defense Minister Igor Sergeev (1993-2006) has argued that the US's strategic manoeuvres have been aimed to weaken Russia's global status in general and in the context of Central Asia in particular. On the other hand, Russia views that the US presence in the CARs has increased the security risks of Russia in the form of cross-border terrorism, refugee flows, drug

trafficking and organized crime etc (Skalamera, 2017). Indeed, the US has pepped up global military posture particularly in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Georgia and Azerbaijan, lead some observers to anticipate and believe that the former has been pursuing the containment policy towards Russia, China and Iran in Central Asia.

Notwithstanding, in the post-2014, the paradigmatic shift has took place in the backdrop of the US led ISAF withdrawal in Afghanistan and Kyrgyzstan as well (Pillalamarri, 2016). It has substantially reduced military assistance to the regional countries. Nonetheless, the US has announced the C5+1 (2015) to bring all the Central Asian countries on one platform and to neutralize the influence of Russia and China in the region. However, the US under the Donald Trump administration has retreated from the predecessors like Bush and Obama's interventionist policies have been pursued particularly towards the CARs. It has given a set back to the Central Asian policy along with partial and relatively outfox from the region. Currently, the US President Trump has been prioritizing the 'America First Policy' and until now has relatively overlooked the region in terms of security engagements (Weitz, 2017).

In the economic sphere, the US has put forth several mechanisms to fortify its economic cooperation with the CARs. Its total trade with the CARs stood at (US \$ 19 billion) in 2017. The US has been supporting for promoting economic liberalization, market reforms and CARs integration with the global financial institutions and to limit the economic forays of Russia and China (Blank, 2011). The US has been using financial aid and investments to gain control over the key industries of Central Asian countries, especially mining and transportation industries.

The US has been supporting for diversification of CARs transit routes to reduce the overdependence on Russian pipelines. The US has been promoting alternate export routes like, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) gas pipeline, and Nabucco gas pipeline (Arif, 2017). Thus, the leitmotif of the US has been to foster the development of multiple pipelines and transit links to outside consumers to end the Russian monopoly.

Additionally, the US has been supporting to integrate the CARs with the outside world in order to restrict the leverage of Russia and China in the region. In fact, the US

has proposed the New Silk Road (NSR) strategy to connect Central Asia with the world markets (Mankoff, 2015). Moreover, the US has been supporting the TAPI and CASA-1000, but at the same time the former has been remained one of the major hurdle in the realization of the IPI pipeline that would otherwise connecting India with Central Asia via Iran and Afghanistan. The chief objective behind the US policy has been to limit leverage of Russia, China and restrict Iran in the region.

Thus, from the above analyses, it has become crystal clear that Central Asia has been remained a global pivot for geopolitical calculations. A geopolitical shift in Central Asia possibly spillover Russia, thus the region has become a guardian knot for Russia.

5.12.3 Russia's Re-balancing Reciprocation

In order to restore its influence in Central Asia, Russia has reoriented its foreign policy towards the region. Given its closeness with the CARs, especially in terms of common history, geography, security concerns and economic interdependence, the CARs continues to be key to the Russian sphere of influence. The following points clearly reflect the geopolitical interests of Russia in the Central Asian region.

1. Russia supports the authoritarian political regimes in the region;
2. To stabilize the region in order to prevent any outside power to exercise influence;
3. The CARs is a hub of energy resources which increased its significance amongst the geopolitical actors. Thus, it remained the primary objective of Russia to monopolize the energy transit routes emanating from the region. (Malashenko, 2013).
4. To protect Russian minorities living in the region;
5. To eliminate the spread of terrorism, extremism, and radicalism in the region;
6. To encourage CARs to join Russia Centric multilateral institutions (Kazantsev, 2008).

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objectives, Russia has followed various strategies to maintain its leverage in the region. From the geopolitical perspective, Russia has been continuously supporting authoritarian regimes of the Central Asian to restrict the US's push for political pluralism. In fact, Russia's model of 'Sovereign

Democracy' has more appeal than the 'Western Model' in the region. In fact, the Russian President Vladimir Putin has become icon for the Central Asian political leaders particularly, in terms of term and position of the office, therefore, a complete opposition of the US approach.

Russia has restored its influence by backing the Central Asian political regimes against the Western democratic encroachment. Indeed, Russia shielded the CARs political apparatus against 'Color Revolutions' in Georgia (2003), Ukraine (2004), and Kyrgyzstan (2005 and 2010) that aimed to change the political systems from authoritarianism to Democracy. The President Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev (1990-Till Date), Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov (1991-2016) and Tajikistan, Emomali Rakhmonov (1994-Till Date), have perceived that these revolutions were indirectly directed to destabilize the regional political stability to give space for external intervention. Consequently, the political leadership of CARs have sought the Russian support to keep their political regimes intact. Russia stood as a rock with the CARs and criticized the transatlantic democratic moves on part of the US, in its backyard. Thus, Russia has successfully contained the liberal ideology diffusion in Central Asia, what has prompted some scholars to argue 'democratic recession' in the region (Mulder, 2014 and Giordanengo, 2017). Hence, on the one hand, it checked and neutralized the geopolitical influence of not only of the US and its allies, rather it has remained successful to convince China to converge its geopolitical interests in the region.

The Security cooperation is major concern and issue of geo-politics which used to take shape in terms of military exercises, providing weapons, deploying troops, military sea, land and air bases and development of strategic infrastructure etc. The military maneuvers of the US and China has been neutralized by Russia in Central Asia. Gorecki (2014), acknowledges that Russia has deployed about 14,000 troops in the CIS including Central Asia, whereas on the contrary, there is no military presence of the US and China in the region. Therefore, Russia's appetite for overseas military deployments far outstrips that of the US and China in the Central Asia.

Russia has been succeeded in outfoxing the US base in Uzbekistan (2005). Following the US eviction from the K2 base, Russia has concluded a Treaty of Alliance

with Uzbekistan (2005). The same has allowed Russia to establish its military base in Uzbekistan (although it has not succeeded in doing so). Moreover, Russia has constantly supported Kyrgyzstan to force the US out of the Manas base and submit to being part of the Russian sphere of influence. In fact, under the Russian pressure, Kyrgyzstan has demanded a higher rent to Manas Air Base in 2009. The US had finally handed over the Manas base to Kyrgyz government, whereas on the contrary, it is housing the Russian troops. Likewise, in Tajikistan, the former US Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld (2001-2006) has failed to obtain access to strategic facilities like military bases and deploying the military forces. In fact, Rumsfeld was rebuffed by the Tajik government, given the Russian strategic support and pressure.

Russia has also forbidden the Central Asian countries from buying Western arms and equipments in general and from the US in particular. Indeed, Russia supplies the CARs both heavy and light military weapons at subsidized rates. And in return for their debts, Russia has sought to restore the Soviet times military-industrial complexes by buying equity in strategic defense firms (Olcott, 2007). In fact, all the CARs are virtual dependent on Kremlin's military weaponry including repairs and spare parts.

At the multilateral level, Russia through the CSTO has restricted the CARs in aligning with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) or getting too involved with the US-led 'Partnership for Peace' (PfP) program. As part of this drive, Russia has veto power over the CIS members' in terms of military ties with the West, especially with the US. Consequently, the CSTO platform has provided Russia a license to meddle in the domestic affairs of the CARs. Russia is constantly seeking to augment the scope of its missions in Central Asia through this platform. In fact, it is moving from air defense to counterterrorism and peacekeeping operations thereby, heighten its military leverage in the region.

Russia has been focusing to strengthen the CSTO, so that the SCO, which is largely a Chinese initiative, does not supersede in its backyard. Russia, of course, is a member country of the SCO, while as China is not a member country of CSTO. In fact, Russia's policy has been more intrusive within the framework of the CSTO than within the SCO. Russia aimed to transform the CSTO into a force on a par with NATO, so that it can speak to the latter as an equal partner, and oblige the CARs to seek the former's

consent before engaging in any common military initiatives with the US or China. Therefore, at the multilateral level too, Russia has more military leverage *vis-à-vis* the US and China in the region. Thus, from the above discussion, it becomes crystal clear that Russia enjoys the military leverage *vis-à-vis* other geopolitical players, especially US and China, in its zone of privileged interests, i.e., in Central Asia.

Since the disintegration of the Soviet Union (1991), Russia has concluded various economic treaties, both at bilateral and multilateral level, to re-establish its control over the CARs. Unlike, the US and China, Russia has been enjoying maximum benefits in the Central Asian region. It has been employing a multi-pronged approach, comprising the creation of cooperative economic mechanisms and institutions to maintain its economic leverage *vis-à-vis* the other geopolitical actors in the region. Indeed, Russia has increased its trade with the Central Asian countries from the US \$ 7 billion in 2003 to the US \$ 21 billion in 2007 and retained its economic clout as a leading trading partner (Sinitsina, 2012). Nonetheless, its trade had declined, following the global financial crisis (2010) to (US \$ 14 billion). Currently, Russia's trade with the region stood at (US \$ 25 billion), positioning herself as equal partner of China in the CARs (China -US \$ 30 billion).

Russia has established several regional economic groupings to out-focus both US and China in its backyard. It has established the Eurasian Economic Community (2000), Customs Union (2010), Single Economic Space (2012), and Eurasian Economic Union (2015), orienting CARs economies toward Moscow (Kusznir, 2015). Bordachev (2015) acknowledges that the EEU aims to restrict the US proposed 'New Silk Road (2011)' and Chinese 'Silk Road Economic Belt (2013)', as well. In fact, the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton (2009-2013) said, that the EEU is Putin's plan to, re-Sovietize the CIS, an economic restriction to both the China and US as well (Starr, & Cornell, 2014). Nonetheless, despite some misgivings, Russia has cautiously supportive of China's SREB, in which the former is a participatory country (Aminjonov, 2017). Indeed, both Russia and China have been committed to cooperation between the EEU and the SREB. Additionally, Russia has promoted the notion of 'Greater Eurasia', a nebulous project that would link Russia, China and Central Asia in a new

political and economic bloc, and perceives cooperation with China as intrinsic (Malle, 2017).

In the field of energy cooperation, Russia has been a leading player in the Central Asian oil and natural gas reserves. Unlike, the US and China, Russia has been enjoying the Soviet legacy along with geographical proximity with the Central Asian countries that subsequently has been providing it an upper hand to control oil and natural of the region. Indeed, Russia's role in exploration, development, and transportation of the energy resources, has made it hegemon in the Central Asia. Russia's primary motives have been to prevent any attempts of the US that circumvent Russian pipelines. Indeed, Russia's enterprises like Gazprom, Rosneft, and Lukoil have been enthusiastically investing/working in the energy projects and rejects the proposal of pipelines of third countries that bypass Russia.

Russia has near monopoly over the major oil and natural gas pipelines of the Central Asian countries. It has pressurized Kazakhstan from using the Caspian Sea to circumvent Russia and reach to the European markets via Azerbaijan and Turkey. Kazantsev (2008) argued that Russia has blocked the US proposed 'Trans-Caspian oil pipeline' (Kazakhstan-Azerbaijan-Caucasus-Turkey). On the other hand it has signed an agreement with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan for constructing the 'Caspian Pipeline (2007)', in order to substitute the 'Trans-Caspian' oil pipeline. Moreover, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have not permitted the US to invest in the oil and gas fields due to unfriendly relations. In this context, the dominance of Russia, disinterest of the Central Asian countries, and the rising influence of China have been blocking the US economic forays in the energy sector of Central Asian countries.

As mentioned already that, China is the leading trading partner of the Central Asian countries followed by Russia. In fact, CARs major oil and gas exporters (Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan) have diversified their export destination towards China. Consequently, Russia reoriented its Central Asia policy. The SCO has been playing an important role in the region in the context of regional geopolitical and geo-economic dynamics. For example, the Russian President Putin has proposed to the establishment of the 'SCO Energy Club' after the construction of the first China-Kazakhstan oil pipeline (2006). It wants to maintain its dominance in transit routes of

the Central Asian region. In this regard, it has been signed an agreement with KazTransOil to ship five million tons oil annually to China through the Omsk-avlodar-Atasu-Alanshakou pipeline.²⁵ Olcott (2013) argued that Russia's Lukoil moved quickly to compete with the China's CNPC, soon after the latter's acquisition of PetroKazakhstan. Thus, Russia has prominent role in the Central Asian energy sector, limiting the role of the US and China as well.

Additionally, Unlike US and China the remittances from Russia to Central Asian countries have been playing an important role. As Russia is the major receiving country for migrant labor from region. It is estimated that around 3.5 million labor migrants from Central Asia currently are working in Russia (UNDP, 2015). In fact, the remittances from labor migrants have been supporting the economies of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan. In fact, Tajikistan is considered to be the most dependent country on Russian remittances from labor migrants working in Russia.

5.13 Summery

The collapse of the Soviet Union had created a power vacuum in the Central Asian region. Indeed, the region became a pivotal area for geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic interests of Russia, China, US, Turkey, Iran, India, and Pakistan. In this zero-sum game, China like Russia, has been adhering to stabilize the authoritarian political regimes of the CARs, *vis-à-vis* the US and its European allies. In fact, China in collaboration with Russia have pressurized the US to vacate its military bases in their backyard (Central Asia), under the banner of the SCO. China is one of the largest trade partners of the CARs in comparison to Russia and US. Its trade stood at (US \$ 30 billion) in 2017, while as it is (US \$ 25 billion) of Russia and (US \$ 19 billion) of the US in the same time period. Moreover, Russia has broken the Russian monopoly over the oil and gas pipelines of Central Asian countries. Nonetheless, China has been cooperating with the Russia in the economic sphere in the Central Asian region. Indeed, the BRI and EEU have been converging, to push back the US economic forays in the region.

²⁵ KazTransOil Announces Beginning of Russian Crude Transit to China. (2008). *Interfax*, Retrieved 21 April 2017, from www.uoalberta.ca.

Unlike, Russia and China, the US has been supporting for political pluralism. But until now, it has been remained ineffective to install procedural political systems based on regular elections. More importantly following the 9/11 attacks (2001), the CARs became the frontline states of the US led OEF (2001) in Afghanistan. It established its military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, close to the borders of Russia, China and Iran. Consequently, the US presence has caused security dilemma to Russia, China and Iran. However, the post-2014 has witnessed drastic US military decline in the region. It had left its military bases and the NDN was closed by the CARs and Russia as well. While as at the same time, the US has instituted the C5+1 (CARs plus US; 2015), mechanism to balance the rising assertiveness of Russia and China in the region.

Moreover, to reduce the CARs dependence on Russia and China, the US has been focusing for diversification the energy routes, supporting free market economies and integration with the supra-national financial institution. For this, the US has adopted the 'Open Door' and 'Equal Access' policy (1990's), Silk Road Strategic Acts' (1999 and 2006) and the New Silk Route initiative (2011) to restrict both Russia, China in the region. Furthermore, the regional countries like, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan have been making attempts to enhance their respective footsteps in the Central Asian region. In fact, the regional countries are sidelining with the US, Russia and China to protect and promote their respective geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic interests in the region.

In this zero-sum game, Russia has been a leading player countering both, the regional and extra-regional players. Nonetheless, it has been cooperating with the China to restrict US in the region. Indeed, Russia has been providing economic space to China. While as, at the same time, China is comfortable with Russia's military influence in the region. Thus, it has been observed that Russia has been the leading player in the Central Asian geo-politics.

Chapter- Six

Central Asia as a Pivot of Russia: India's Challenges and Options

6.1 Introduction

The collapse of the former Soviet Union led to a dramatic change in the international settings. The Soviet-led, Warsaw Pact unravelled, it disintegrated into 15 independent states including the CARs. Hence, it caused an alteration in the Eurasian geopolitical and geostrategic landscape. After the Soviet retreat from the CARs and subsequently with the onset of New Great Game, the CARs have been entrapped into the vortex of geo-political cobweb, wherein both Regional and extra-regional players like, the US, Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, India, and Pakistan have sought to influence and get engaged, to boost their respective leverages in the Central Asian region. Indeed, the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic importance of the region has turned it pivotal.

In the changing geo-strategic scenario, both India and Russia have realized their reciprocal necessity to revitalize and rejuvenate their ties both at global in general and in context of Central Asia in particular. The earlier Indo-Soviet friendship has evolved into a strategic partnership and cooperation. For the Indo-Russo relations, the regional developments have presented the compatibility of their interests, particularly in the resource-loaded Central Asia. Nevertheless, at the same time, in some ways the Indian maneuvering in the CARs has been taken by other way round by Russia. It has evolved a peculiar situation between them, especially in Central Asian region. Hence the present chapter will give the answer to questions as to how Indo-CARs geopolitics, geostrategic and geo-economic equations have been taken by Russia.

Given Russia's strategic hegemony in the CARs, it becomes more interesting to see, how Indo-Russia relations have been moving and what are the substance and style in general in context of Central Asia in particular. How Russia could become a bridge link between India and CARs, have been emerging such pertinent questions, which are needed to be answered here? Since Central Asia is very important for both the countries particularly from geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic perspectives. In this scenario, the present chapter will make sincere efforts to analyses

how Russia has been emerging as a bridge and ridge between India and CARs. In order to get a picture of the same, the first endeavor in this direction is the mapping the strategic salience of Central Asia, the relationship in different phases, changing dynamics of India-Russia relations, how these changing dynamics will affect the Indo-CARs relations and finally what are India's available options in the region?

6.2 Strategic Salience of Central Asia: Russian and Indian Perspective

The 21st Century is sure to be an Asian Century, which means anything of strategic importance within Asia gets international attention. In the context of Central Asia, the region has been of strategic importance especially because of several factors. Primarily, the region is situated in the Centre of Eurasia, which has historically been acquired ample significance in the land-locked territorial cobweb, which is located in the heart of Asia and at the crossroads of different civilizations. It is not only connecting Asia and Europe but also offering the shortest transit route from Asia to Europe and vice-versa, including the various other neighboring and extended neighborhood regions. In fact, the geographic terms, the region has been massively influenced by many factors, therefore, it has become a region of geo-political, geo-strategic and economic importance in the arena of international relations.

As already mentioned in chapter-3 that the geostrategic significance of the region has highlighted by the Sir Halford Mackinder in his work, the Geographical Pivot of History, postulated his Heartland Theory that dwelt with the geostrategic significance of the Heartland. Mackinder had concluded that "Whosoever controlled the heartland, controlled the world". Similarly, Nicholas Spykman (1938), who was both an adherent and critic of Halford Mackinder, who had also recognized the geostrategic importance of maritime space and coastal regions. Spykman disagreed with Mackinder, and therefore said, *"Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world"*. Furthermore, Zabortseva (2014), in her article titled, *"Forgotten Region" to the "Great Game" Region: On the Development of Geo-politics in Central Asia*, argued that international community has paid exponentially increased attention towards the CARs because of the geo-political, geo-strategic and economic reasons.

In the Russian and Indian strategic thinking, the CARs has remained a strategic arena. Given the various factors and dynamics into consideration, the CARs has been holding a pivotal position in the New Delhi and Moscow's foreign policy matrices. From the security point of view, the process of peace and stability in the CARs has remained critical for both the regions. The ethnically diverse CARs have remained a fertile recruitment ground for various militant outfits such as IMU, HuT, ISIS, Al Qaeda, Taliban, and others. These societal differences and lack of political maturity in the CARs have likely multiplied the sources of instability and fragility in Eurasia and South Asia as well. The achievement of various objectives, including the regional stability and security has been holding a pivotal significance, for both India and Russia. Inextricably linked with security threats in Central Asia is Afghanistan, the latter is part of the Central Asian geopolitical construct as it shares boundaries with CARs particularly with Tajikistan (1,300-kilometer), Uzbekistan (137-kilometres), and Turkmenistan (744-kilometres; Pariona, 2018). In fact, Afghanistan has been remained critical to stability and security from the Kashmir (India) and Chechnya (Russia) point of view. The rising phantom of terrorist outfits in this strategic arena and their possible spillover effects can dent the fabric of the regional security. In this context, Russia and India have been sharing common security threats given their borders with Central Asia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Maintaining peace and stability in the CARs and in Afghanistan have remained one of the major motivations to Russia and India in the region.

Given the strategic significance of the region, both are regarding the CARs a vital strategic space particularly on account of terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking, the proliferation of small arms, the arms culture and in many other areas of mutual concern. In fact, Moscow has been considering the region as its strategic backyard, buffer zone and a bridge to Asia. Pipes (1997), said that Russia has the legacy of continuous expansion which had created a patrimonial mentality embedded in the Russian psyche which holds that anything inherited from the past is inalienable property of Russia. Similarly, India claims CARs as its 'Extended Neighborhood or Near Abroad,' in which India has been enjoying civilizational and geo-cultural ties, thus, reflects the strategic importance of the region in the context of both Russia and India.

Central Asia is neighboring to the 'Golden Crescent' *i.e.*, Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The drugs produced in Afghanistan are marketed to European markets via Central Asia and Russia. In fact, Russia has not been only the transit corridor for illicit drugs but, has been consuming a larger proportion of it and thereby, pose an escalating threat not only to the domestic stability and development rather serious health issues at large. Likewise, the scholarly works, academic circles and the public discourses in India claimed that the money earned through the drug trade has been remained a major source of funding for the non-state actors and, thus, creating and causing the security threats to India. Here too, it indicates that the CARs are important to both India and Russia in combatting the menace of drug trafficking and its possible spillovers.

Apart from the security angle, the CARs are endowed with the rich natural resources including oil, natural gas, uranium, and a major untapped market as well. India's energy interests in the CARs have been remained the primary driving forces for greater engagements. In fact, India intends to ensure incessant access to oil and natural gas resources originating in the CARs and thereby to increase trade, commerce and importantly to diversify energy suppliers. As per the study of Nurgaliyeva (2017), it is estimated that CARs particularly Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan have about 300 trillion cubic feet of gas and 90-200 bcm of oil. In fact, Turkmenistan has the 4th largest gas reserves in the world. India's interest in this context can be manifested through the TAPI project. Tajikistan has vast hydropower potentials, it is the 2nd largest producer of hydroelectricity in the CIS, after Russia. Likewise, Kazakhstan has the largest Uranium reserves. In fact, after Russia, Kazakhstan is endowed with huge uranium reserves (Putz, 2016). According to Prasad (2016), Kazakhstan has the second largest deposits of uranium of 1.5 million tons, constituting approximately 17 percent of the world's total. Therefore, Kazakhstan holds immense significance for India for the given of huge untapped uranium deposits. Similarly, the rich hydropower potentials of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan also hold tremendous hydroelectric resources and, thereby, attaches greater importance to India. Similarly, from the Russian point of view, the CARs are the life lines given its energy and market potentials for the Russian economy. It purchases the CARs oil and natural gas at the very low prices and sale the

same to the world markets at very high prices. Russia has to a large extent has monopolized the CARs energy routes to the outside world. In fact, Russian dominance in the CARs has been providing the former strategic leverage vis-à-vis, regional and extra-regional players in the region (Usha, 2012). Hence, it is for the above-mentioned reasons that neither New Delhi nor Moscow under any circumstances can ignore this resource-loaded heartland region.

6.3 Central Asia as a Pivot of Russia

After a brief period of passiveness towards the CARs, Russia has been reorienting its foreign policy approach towards the region. Indeed, in the aftermath of 2000, the Russia President Putin has identified the CARs as a topmost priority in its foreign policy radar. The CARs has been figured prominently in the various foreign policy doctrines, adopted in 2000, 2008 2013, and 2016. Consequently, under the Putin's presidency (2000-2008 and 2012-Till Date), Russian policy towards the CARs has been reached to its pinnacle. In fact, all the CARs became Russia's strategic partners, and four of them i.e., Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, military allies (Meshcheryakov, 2014). The Primakov Doctrine has ensured to recover Russia's lost influence at the global level in general and in the context of Central Asia in particular. For that, Russia had acted aggressively, it hired the site of the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan and stationed approximately 5,900-9,000 troops in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, engaged militarily in Tajikistan (1992-1997) and put political pressure on the CARs to ensure their adherence to Russian led security and economic organizations like CIS (1990), CSTO (1992), SCO (2001), EurAsEC (2000), CU (2010), SES (2012) and EEU (2015). It tried to maintain its monopolistic control over the transit of CARs energy resources. Furthermore, Russia feels responsible for the large number of Russian residents and Russian-speaking ethnic communities in the CARs, which is an extra factor contributing to the Russian policy towards the Central Asian countries.

The CARs have played a crucial role in defining Russia's regional policy. Speaking of each Central Asian republic separately, it could be argued that Kazakhstan is one of Russia's closest, most reliable and important allies in the region. It is a member

of Russia centric regional groupings such as EurAsEC, CU, SES, CSTO and EEU (Wolczuk & Dragneva, 2017). Similarly, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are also the members of both CSTO and EurAsEC and have shown interest in joining the SES. It could be explained by the fact that both republics are heavily reliant on their bilateral security and economic partnership with Russia. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have rather complex relationships with Russia. Uzbekistan has had a turbulent relationship with Russia and has suspended its memberships in both EurAsEC in 2008 and CSTO in 2012. Turkmenistan's relations with Russia has been, to a certain degree, a similar character, Ashgabat's status of 'Positive Neutrality' has successfully kept it separate from collaborative arrangements and multilateral institutions with the other CARs, and to a certain degree, with Russia.

From the above discussion, it becomes crystal clear that Russia has been tried to preserve its sphere of influence as Eurasia's great power by seeking to develop closer cooperation with the Central Asian countries and thereby maintain its leverage in the region both at bilateral and multilateral level.

6.4 India-Central Asia Relations: A Historical Overview

India's relations and Central Asian region has been historical and civilizational. Before the discovery of the sea route, India had been closely linked with the region through the famous 'Silk Route' (3rd Century B.C. till 15th Century A.D; Campbell, 2013). This route was not only the transportation link through which goods were traded but a way that helped to exchange the thoughts, ideas, religion, and philosophy between the two regions. In fact, the Buddhism had transcended from India to Central Asia and thereafter to China (Starr, 2007). The credit to disseminate the Buddhism in the region was given to Ashoka, the Indian emperor (268-232 BCE) and King Kanishka (127-150 BCE) of the Kushan Emperor of Central Asian origin, whose empire was extended up to northern India. An equally important development from the religious perspective was the expansion of Sufism in the Indian subcontinent. Many Sufi saints along with their disciples came to India from different areas of Central Asia particularly from Bukhara and Samarkand. For instance, Syed Ali Shah Hamadani (1314-1384), who came to India along with his 500 disciples in the late

14th Century. The exchange of Sufi saints have played an important role in the spread of Islam in Indian subcontinent. Even today, the Sufi shrines of Nizamuddin Auliya (Delhi) and Muinuddin Chisti Ajmer (Rajasthan), attracts thousands of devotees throughout the world.

Trade was the motivating factor throughout the recorded history. Indeed, the economic dimension was a constant feature of India's engagements with Central Asia. India was exporting sugar, cotton cloths, namda woolen carpets, and shawls, while the major items that India was importing were horses, sheep, gold, silver, precious stones, metals and fruits, particularly dried fruits. Apart from trading activity, India was also engaged in money lending and exchanging, which further had heightened India's interactions with the region. Equally, the people of the Central Asia had occupied high positions in the Indian sub-content. A large number of artisans and craftsmen whose work most visible contribution lay in architecture. A fine specimen of architectural skill is the Taj Mahal at Agra. An important period in the historical ties between Medieval India and Central Asia began with the invasion of Mahmud of Ghazni (998-1030) who was in search of Indian riches and lead several expeditions to India with this objective. In 1526, Babur, hailing from Fergana, laid the foundation of Mughal Empire in India. It was Bairam Khan from the Turkmen region who helped Humayun (Son of Babur) to regain his lost empire. Bairam Khan, however, is known as the tutor and mentor of Akbar and his son Abdurrahim Khan was a first-rate soldier. Akbar unified large parts of India. The decline of the Mughal Empire began in the 18th Century due to the absence of worthy successors. The mighty Mughal Empire was crumbled and paid the way for British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent. With the consolidation of the British colonialism in the Indian subcontinent, India's ties with Central Asia declined. Nonetheless, it did not mean that there was no connection between the two regions. The colonial rivalry between Tsarist Russia and the British Empire could not disrupt the links between the two regions. In the 19th and the early 20th Centuries, 8,000 Indian settlers and traders lived in the Central Asian region. According to Kaushik (2010) that Indian community occupied a place far more important than any others foreign settlers with the exception of the Russians.

Following India's independence (1947), relations with Central Asia were shaped by Delhi's strategic closeness to the Moscow, especially after the Indo-Sino war of 1962. In fact, India's relations with the former Soviet Union reached at its zenith after the 'Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship, and Cooperation' (1971). As Central Asia was an integral part of the Soviet Union, so India enjoyed cordial relations with the region especially in the cultural sphere. In fact, India was one of the very few countries that had a consulate at Tashkent in the erstwhile Central Asian of the former Soviet Union. More importantly, India's cultural was present in the everyday lives of Central Asian people through television, movies, music and cultural exchanges. Nonetheless, with no direct transportation access and difficult market conditions, Central Asia did not become attractive to Indian private companies. Moreover, the end of the Cold War, following the demise of the Soviet Union, left India in shock and ushered in a cataclysmic shift in its foreign policy discourse away from Nehruvian idealism towards pragmatism. India's relations with the CARs remained somehow muted. Nonetheless, things started changing since later part of the 1990s when the major powers such as US, China, and Russia made strategic inroads into the region. Given the geo-political, geo-strategic and economic significance of the region, India took keen interest towards the CARs, in view of its growing energy demands, security threats and rising economic growth as well. In fact, India referred the CARs as the 'Near Abroad' and focused to develop relations both at bilateral and multilateral levels with all the five Central Asian Republics, in order to achieve its multifaceted interests in the region.

6.5 Interests of India in the CARs

India's interests in the Central Asian region have been always remained a priority in the Indian foreign policy radar. The geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic changes and frequent bouts of fundamentalist uprising in the region have further multiplied India's interests in the region. In fact, the past two and a half decades have seen a noticeable rise in India's efforts to engage with the CARs and subsequently, strengthened its leverage in the region. Indeed, India's primary interests in the Central Asia region are acquiring energy, preventing terrorism, extremism, separatism, small arms proliferation, drug trafficking, organized crimes etc. In addition,

India is keen to tap the considerable commercial potentials of the CARs for mutual benefits. Moreover, given the geo-political, geo-strategic and economic significance of the CARs including the strategic maneuvers of regional and extra-regional players, India has the following key interests in the region.

1. One of the primary strategic priorities before India has been to restore the traditional linkages with the Eurasia.
2. To sustain the economic wheel in motion, India required a huge amount of natural resources especially oil and natural gas. Given the CARs rich energy resources, India is increasingly looking toward the CARs as a reliable supplier;
3. India is very keen to tap the commercial potentials of the CARs, trade and economic ties with the landlocked region are the point of interest for India;
4. The rising phantom of non-state actors such as Taliban, Al Qaida, ISIS poses a big security challenge to India's national security. In fact, the heinous acts of killing of innocent people at Mumbai (2008), Pathankort (2016) attacks and cross-border terrorism, demonstrates the security threats of India. Therefore, eliminating the non-traditional security threats, maintaining peace and stability in the region have remained major interests of India;
5. A scramble for resources has begun in the CARs between regional and trans-regional players, resulting in a Great Game rivalry, India desperately wants to gain a foothold in the regional geo-politics to strengthen its geo-political, geo-strategic and economic position in the region;
6. From the strategic point of view, India's relations with Central Asia is of immense significance in the sense that it has a direct bearing on India's relations with its arch rivals especially Pakistan and China in the region. India's strategic objective in the CARs has been to the consolidation of democratic and secular politics in the region.

From the above analysis it becomes clear that India has multidimensional stakes in the Central Asian region. In fact, the changing geo-strategic settings of the CARs, the major player's power politics, mounting interests of the regional players such as Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and bilateral disputes of India-Pakistan were some of the major factors that shape India's policy towards the region. The instability in Afghanistan particularly the re-emergence of non-state actors, after the post-2014, the mounting

menace of drug trafficking, small arms and ammunition proliferation has seriously affecting India's security interests are some of the other reasons for India to relook towards the CARs (Usha, 2012). Furthermore, the CARs can provide active support for India's emerging regional/global power status. India's claim for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC); countering arch rival Pakistan's anti-India rhetoric and significantly, provide India a grand platform alongside the US, China and Russia. India, as of now, cannot leapfrog to the global high table without demonstrating effective initiative at the regional level, the CARs being an important regional constituent of India's extended neighborhood.

6.6 India's Policy towards the CARs

Despite India's multidimensional interests in the Central Asia, the latter was unnoticed by the former for a protracted period of time. India's policy towards the region was caught in the dilemmas of conceptual tensions, strategic uncertainties, and geo-political constraints (Kavalski, 2018). The collapse of the bipolar world and the radical transformations in the former Soviet Union had shaken the basic foundations and frameworks of India's foreign policy vis-à-vis the CARs. In fact, throughout the 1990s, India's policymakers seemed uncertain to position India's foreign affairs. This setting reveals New Delhi's problems of coming to terms with the turbulence of post-Cold War world order. It also displays the deepening sense of incoherence and indistinctiveness of India's foreign policy due to the absence of a well-defined and well-articulated policy frameworks vis-à-vis the CARs (Kaushik, 2010).

Given the geo-political, geo-strategic and economic prominence of the Central Asia along with the increasing attention of major and regional actors for establishing their spheres of influences in the region has subsequently caused a serious concern for Indian foreign policy makers. Indeed, India has understood that CARs has been a distinct region whose patterns of relations have an impact on and are impacted by the developments both in Eurasia and South Asia. Hence, India cannot remain a mere speculator and watch the blatant attempts of involved players in its neighbourhood.

Kaushik (2010), has remarked that the public mind in India has been in general clear about India's high stakes in Central Asia. On account of vital politico-economic,

cultural and concerns for security has motivated India's policymakers towards the region. In this connection, India has introduced various policy frameworks like, the 'Extended Neighbourhood' with all the CARs (Kaushiki, 2013). It was further reinforced, when priority to Central Asia was shifted from 'Immediate to Strategic Neighbourhood' (Singh, 2018). To strengthen India's strategic foot prints, 'Look North Policy' (LNP) was framed (Roy & Roy, 2017). These policy frameworks have been launched to serve the democratic and secular principles of the Central Asian countries and to prevent the spill-over effects of radical fundamentalism, which could bully India's stability and security as well. Moreover, the LNP was articulated to balance the strategic manoeuvres of Russia, China, US and more importantly India's arch-rival Pakistan (Dar, 2014). Nonetheless, unlike India's Look East policy, the LNP has remained mostly a discursive approach. Dave (2016), pointed out that India's LNP though produced incremental shifts but its accent was on projecting India's influence as a 'rising power' rather than on exploring solid basis of cooperation and engagement with the Central Asian countries. Similarly, India's Look West Policy (LWP) has been remained dysfunctional particular with regard to the Central Asia. It has laid more emphasis towards the Middle East countries such as Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, Bahrain and Kuwait. Since these countries have been remained major economic partners of India, housing more than 4 million and a major source of oil and natural gas imports of India (Siddiqui, 2015). Although India has made attempts to connect the sub-continent with the energy-rich Persian Gulf and Central Asia, it remained futile especially due to the geo-strategic dynamics of Pakistan. Hence, India's policy of Look West ignored the CARs and remained unsuccessful particularly with regard to Central Asian region.

In order to protect India's stakes and turn the disengagements into re-engagements, India has launched the 'Connect Central Asia' policy (CCAP) at the first meeting of the India-Central Asia Dialogue, a Track II initiative (June 12-13, 2012), in Kyrgyzstan to fast-track India's engagements with the CARs (Kothari, 2018). The primary goal behind the CCAP has been as the name suggests, re-connecting with the Central Asian region. The CCAP is a multi-faceted approach covering political, security, economic and cultural aspects between India and Central Asia. In this context, the

CCAP covers cooperation in terms of energy, medicine, education, IT, management, connectivity, banking infrastructure, trade and investment across the greater Central Asia, including Afghanistan. It also involves the exchanges of scholars, academics, civil society and youth delegations in order to boost India's engagements with the CARs (Reyaz, 2017).

Furthermore, India has envisaged a series of high-level diplomatic meetings as policy options for revitalizing the partnership and making India a prominent actor in the CARs. During his visit to Tajikistan in October 2013, the Indian Vice-President Hamid Ansari (2007-2017) called for regular diplomatic exchanges primarily to bring India's interests on a converging platform vis-à-vis the CARs (Kumar, 2016). In fact, the incumbent Prime Minister Mr. Modi's visited all the five Central Asian countries in (2015 and 2016) has remained an important breakthrough in this regard. His visit to the CARs sent out a loud and clear message to the regional countries and the world at large that India is determined to make up for lost time and expand its engagements with the CARs (Desai, 2017). While interacting with the Presidents of the CARs, on a bilateral basis, he stressed the need for deepening infrastructure links. Hence the emphasis was on speeding up the work on International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan (ITK) rail link, India's interests in joining the Ashgabat Agreement, and India's investment in Chabahar Sea Port (Roy & Roy, 2017). In return, the President of Kyrgyzstan (Almazbek Atambayev) and Tajikistan (Emomali Rahmon), visited India for the Heart of Asia Conference held in Amritsar on December 4-5, 2016, vowed to cooperate with India in various sectors such as energy, economics, Security, culture, and education (Talwar, 2016).

Under Modi's policy of 'Neighborhood First', the CARs has been remained important in the policy radar as being India's proximate region (Reyaz, 2017). In fact, India has succeeded in getting the full membership in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on June 8-9, 2017 at the Astana summit. After becoming a member of the regional organization, India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj (2014-till date) has attended the 16th Meeting of Council of SCO Heads of Governments in Sochi (Russia) on December 1, 2017. The highlights of her speech included urging on the fight against terrorism, improving connectivity, cooperating in energy and other areas

of economic cooperation. Thus, membership in the SCO could provide India a platform to improve its relations with the CARs both at bilateral and multilateral level. Further, India's potential participation in Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) would be an added advantage. India and EEU (Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia, and Armenia) are currently studying the feasibility of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA). Undoubtedly, an FTA with EEU would bring benefits for the Indian economy. It will not only help in boosting India's trade with Eurasian countries but also help in improving connectivity (Mann, 2016). Thus, from the above discussion, it becomes crystal clear that India has put forth several policy frameworks to revitalize its engagements with the CARs. Nonetheless, the relationship faces several constraints including geographical discontinuity, problematic India-Pakistan relation, the unstable situation in Afghanistan and the geostrategic maneuvering of China.

6.7 Multi-faceted Engagements between India and Central Asia

Across the Great Himalayan terrain, the culture, the lifestyle and the religion have got enriched by both geographic boundaries of India and Central Asia by integrated efforts down the ages. Historically, both the regions are interconnected in numerous ways. This relation witnessed vast and deep dimensions of culturally socio-religious and intellectual exchanges. These mutual influences are multidimensional and vast which incorporates multifaceted aspects such as governance, architecture, art, trade and commerce, social customs, language, dress, lifestyle, philosophy, astrology, science, music, etc. are among the few which are easily visible from ancient to the current period. In this context, this chapter has made a sincere effort to scrutinize some of the major dimensions of India's engagements with the Central Asian countries including political, economic and security towards establishing the possible bridge across the two major regions.

6.7.1 Political Engagements

India's political engagements with the CARs have been traditionally warm and friendly. As both the regions have similar goals with regard to their domestic policies. In fact, the political leadership of both the regions have been working to best serve the

interests of the citizens, belonging to various religions, cultures, ethnic groups and even races. In fact, India is known throughout the world as the personification of 'unity in diversity'. Similarly, the CARs have also pluralistic societies, the political elites of CARs have been also tailoring policies i.e., combining diversity into a single whole (Spechler & Spechler, 2010). Consequently, the political commonalities, especially in terms of domestic policies, has raised India's status as a secular country in the CARs strategic vision. The reciprocation of same is noticeable through the Central Asia political elite's political prioritizations for India and policy choices as well. In fact, the President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov (1989-2016) had opted India as his first visit to a country outside the CIS in 1991. Similarly, the President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev (1991-Till Date) made his diplomatic visit to India in February 1992, followed by President Askar Akayev's of Kyrgyzstan (1990-2005) in March 1992. Mullen (2014), argued that the political elites of CARs has highly appreciated India's secular political model and expressed to tailor the diplomatic engagements with India. In return, India's then Prime Minister Narasimha Rao (1991-1996), made his diplomatic visit to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in 1992 and to Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in 1995 (Yerzhan, 2008). In fact, the bilateral diplomatic visits have been playing important role in developing the diplomatic engagements.

India was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of Kazakhstan. The bilateral diplomatic relations were established in February 1992. India opened its embassy in Almaty (1992) and the Embassy of Kazakhstan was established in New Delhi (1993). After the shift of Kazakhstan's capital from Almaty to Astana (1997), India subsequently opened its Representative Office in Astana on (15, 2003). The political leadership of India have made several diplomatic visits to Kazakhstan. In this connection, India's Prime Minister Narasimha Rao visited Kazakhstan (1993), PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee (2002), Dr. Manmohan Singh (2011) and finally Narendra Modi in July 2015 (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2018). Similarly, Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev made his first visit India (1992), and both sides signed a declaration on 'Principles of Mutual Relations'. Under this declaration, both sides have reiterated their commitment to establish bilateral relations based upon respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non- interference in the

internal affairs of each. Apart from his first visit, President Nursultan Nazarbayev has visited India five times (1992, 1993, 1996, 2002, and 2009). In fact, he was the 'Chief Guest' at the republic day parade in New Delhi on January 26, 2009. These bilateral high-level diplomatic visits have contributed to a large extent in building a strong basis for close and friendly political engagements between the two countries.

The multilateral institutions have been playing a significant role in advancing India's political engagements with Kazakhstan. In this connection, the India-Kazakhstan Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) established in 1993, Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA), SCO, and the UNSC organizations. India has been a consistent supporter of Kazakhstan's initiative to convene CICA and has been actively participating in the process. Kazakhstan has supported India's full membership in SCO and UNSC. Likewise, India supported Kazakhstan's successful candidature for non-permanent membership of UNSC in 2017-18 and Kazakhstan has assured its support for India's candidature for a non-permanent seat in 2021-22. Furthermore, the 'Foreign Office Consultations (FOC)' at the level of 'Deputy Foreign Ministers' are held to discuss the entire range of bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. The 6th FOC was held in Kazakhstan in March 2015. Thus, from the above discussion, it becomes clear that India has cordial political engagements with Kazakhstan both at the bilateral and multilateral level and both the partners are moving towards strengthening the same into new heights.

India has established the diplomatic ties with Uzbekistan in 1992. It has opened its 'Consulate General' in Tashkent (1987), which was later on upgraded to an Embassy (1992). Most of India's Prime Ministers had paid diplomatic visits to Uzbekistan. For instance, PM, Narasimha Rao visited Uzbekistan (May 25, 1993), PM Manmohan Singh on April 25-26, 2006 and the incumbent PM Narendra Modi visited Uzbekistan in July 2015 and in 2017 on the sidelines of the SCO summit held in Tashkent and expressed confidence in further development of the cooperation between the two

countries, based on mutual cooperation.¹ Similarly, the President of Uzbekistan has paid several diplomatic visits to India in (1991, 1994, 2000, 2005 and 2011).

After the death of the revered Uzbek President Islam Karimov (2016), India's Minister of State for External Affairs, M.J. Akbar visited Uzbekistan (2016), as a special envoy and offered condolence on the death of the President. He also held a bilateral meeting with Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan, Abdulaziz Kamilov, and has congratulated the new President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev.² Thus, the frequent bilateral political exchanges have been bridging the gaps in advancing India's political engagements with Uzbekistan. Furthermore, India's robust political engagements with Uzbekistan have made possible cooperation in other areas as well. At the multilateral level, Uzbekistan has supported India's candidature for the non-permanent seat in the UNSC in 2011-2012 and has been supporting India's inclusion as a permanent member of the UNSC.

India has establish diplomatic ties with the country on March 18, 1992, and established its Embassy in 1994. The year 2018, has marked the 26th year of Indo-Kyrgyzstan diplomatic ties. The bilateral diplomatic high-level visits have been playing a significant role in cementing the political engagements. In fact, under the 15 years' regime of President Akaev, several high-level Indian dignitaries have visited the country.

India's diplomatic engagements with Kyrgyzstan have reached its 20th year in 2012. In the same year, India's has enacted the 'Connect Central Asia Policy' (CCAP) during the visit of Minister of State for External Affairs, Rashid Ahmed to Kyrgyzstan on June 2012. In his inaugural address, Ahmed has declared India's intention to establish e-Network in Central Asia to promote tele-medicine and tele-education. During the visit, he met Kyrgyz PM Omurbek Babanov and held bilateral talks with the Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Ruslan Kazakbaev. India's PM Narendra Modi visited Kyrgyzstan on July 11-12, 2015, which injected new vitality, especially in the bilateral political engagements.

¹ India-Uzbekistan Relations. *Embassy of India in Tashkent*. Retrieved 23 March 2018, from <http://eoi.gov.in/tashkent/?2615?000>.

² Uzbek-Indian Relations. *Embassy of Uzbekistan in New Delhi*. Retrieved 30 March 2018, from, <http://www.uzbekembassy.in/uzbek-indian-relations/>.

Modi's visit took place after a gap of 20 years. He has held several meetings with the Kyrgyz President Almazbek Atambayev, Speaker Asylbek Jeenbekov, and PM Temir Sariyev (Baitha, 2015). The two sides have also expressed satisfaction over the effective implementation of the MOU on cooperation on electoral matters between the Central Commission for Elections and Referendums (CCER) in Kyrgyzstan and the Election Commission of India (ECI), during this visit (Desk, 2016). On December 8-9, 2015, EAM Sushma Swaraj and Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Erlan Abdyldaev met on the sidelines of Heart of Asia Conference held in Amritsar and discussed bilateral relations.³ In March 2017, the President of Kyrgyzstan Almazbek Atambayev visited India and celebrated the 25th anniversary of diplomatic relations in New Delhi.

India's full membership in SCO has been supported by Kyrgyzstan and New Delhi's bid for a permanent seat at UNSC. Furthermore, at the institutional level, India has strengthened its engagements through Foreign Office Consultation (FOC). In fact, the 8th round of Foreign Office Consultation was held in Bishkek on April 27, 2016. Similarly, India has conducted the 7th Session of India-Kyrgyz Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) for enhancing the political, economic and cultural cooperation. Thus, from the above discussion, it is obvious that India has heightened its political engagements with Kyrgyzstan especially through bilateral diplomatic exchanges and multilateral institutions as well.

India was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of Tajikistan. It has opened its embassy in Dushanbe (1994), Tajikistan followed the same and opened its embassy in New Delhi (2003). In order to concretize the political engagements, several bilateral visits have been made. From Indian side, PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998-2004) has visited Tajikistan (2003). The President of India, Pratibha Patil took an official tour of Dushanbe in 2009, followed by Vice President Hamid Ansari in 2013. Incumbent India's PM Modi has visited in 2015, which significantly set new standards in bilateral engagements (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2018). Likewise, the President of Tajikistan, Rahman (1994-Till Date) has visited India

³ India-Kyrgyzstan Joint Statement during the State visit of President of Kyrgyzstan to India. (2016). *Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India*. Retrieved 24 March 2018, from <http://mea.gov.in/bilateral-ocuments.htm?dtl/27870/>.

in (1995, 1999, 2001, 2006, 2012 and 2016) (Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan, New Delhi, 2018). These bilateral visits have contributed and concretized the bilateral relations into new heights.

As a matter of fact, during the President Rahmon's visit to India in 2012, the bilateral ties have elevated into a strategic partnership, making Tajikistan third Central Asian country to sign such agreement with India, first two being Kazakhstan (2009) and Uzbekistan (2011; Roy, 2012). Furthermore, India has established Joint Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) with Tajikistan to cooperation in various fields including political, economic, security and culture, which holds the regular meetings. Currently, the 9th session of the India-Tajikistan Inter-Governmental Commission was held in New Delhi on June 16, 2017 (Mullen and & Prasad, 2017). India has also established political consultations mechanism with Tajikistan, consultations are conducted on annual basis (Koparkar, 2017). Moreover, the First Deputy Foreign Minister of Tajikistan Nizomiddin Zohidi has paid an official visit to India and participating in 6th Heart of Asia Istanbul Process Conference in Amritsar on December 3-4, 2016. At the multilateral level, both have been pushing for the reforms in the structure of the UNSC. Tajikistan has been supporting India's candidature in the UNSC and its full membership in the SCO.

India has recognized the independence of Turkmenistan. It has opened its embassy in Ashgabat in December 1994, while Turkmenistan has also opened its embassy in New Delhi. In fact, the 'Turkman Gate' built in New Delhi (1650) bear's the testimony of this friendship. Moreover, the exchange of high-level diplomatic visits have further solidified the political engagements. The political Leadership of both the countries have been encouraging the continued enhancement of bilateral exchanges at all levels, including parliamentarians and senior officials bilaterally and on the sidelines of multilateral events.⁴ India has strengthened its political engagements with Turkmenistan at the institutional level. In this connection, India has established the Inter-Governmental Commission, with Turkmenistan, which meets regularly. The 6th

⁴. Joint Statement between Turkmenistan and India during the Prime Minister's visit to Turkmenistan. *Ministry of external Affairs. Government of India*. Retrieved 25 March 2018, from, <http://www.mea.gov.in/>.

meeting of the India-Turkmen Inter-Governmental Joint Commission was held in New Delhi on August 14, 2017.⁵ Moreover, India has been focusing to strengthen other institutional linkages such as, Foreign Office Consultations (FOC), Consular Consultations (CC), as well as establishment of additional mechanisms on mutually agreed issues.⁶ Both sides agreed to strengthen inter-parliamentary cooperation between Mejlis of Turkmenistan and parliament of India. Thus, over the years, India has heightened its political engagement with Turkmenistan both at the bilateral and institutional level.

6.7.2 Security Engagements

The CARs have been strategically vital to India particularly for security reasons. After the collapse of the former Soviet Union, the Central Asian region become a fertile recruiting ground for various non-state radical groups such as, IMU, HuT, ISIS, etc. These non-state groups active in the CARs have links with the Taliban, Al Qaida, and other extremist groups operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan have generated high degree of insecurity for India, particularly from the Kashmir point of view. Moreover, the withdrawal of the ISAF (2014), have increased the importance of regional cooperation between India and CARs to prevent the possible destabilization in its North-Western frontiers. Indeed, the fresh memory of 2001 attacks on the Indian parliament, Mumbai attacks (2008), and the recent Pathankot attack (2016), have been serving as a chilling reminder to the Indian minds of the fact that safe havens for terrorists have yet to be eradicated. Moreover, the proliferation of drugs, small arms organized crimes including weak management of borders, corruption practices, coupled with the failure to stem the drug production, have added India's security concerns.

It is for these vital security reasons that compelled India to enhance security cooperation with the CARs in combating terrorism, eradicating drug trafficking and providing the military training to the Central Asian military personnel. Indeed, India had

⁵ India-Turkmenistan Relations, Retrieved 25 March 2018, from <https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/Foreign/Relation/Turkmenistan>.

⁶ Turkmenistan Protocol of the 6th meeting of the India-Turk minister Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, economic, scientific and technological Cooperation. *Embassy of India in Ashgabat*. Retrieved 26 March 2018, from <http://www.eoi.gov.in/ashgabat/>.

installed its first foreign military outpost in Tajikistan. It has refurbished the Ayni airbase in 2004. Dave (2016), acknowledges that India has spent US \$ 70 million as part of its military aid and modernization of the airbase. Maurya (2015), argues that there were speculations about India's installation of MiG-29 fighter jets and Mi-17 multi-purpose helicopters at the airbase, which would subsequently increase India's options in the event of heightened tensions with its arch-rival Pakistan. Nonetheless, in 2011 Tajikistan has negotiated with Russia and subsequently, the latter has deployed its own military contingent and ruled out India (Ibrahimov, Garibov, 2013). Furthermore, till the mid-2000, India had operated the Farkhor air base in collaboration with the Tajik Air Force to send supplies to the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan fighting the Taliban, was also closed.

Despite India's setback, the political leadership has made consecutive efforts to re-energize security engagements. In fact, India and Tajikistan have reinvigorated official-level interactions in the framework of the Counter-Terrorism Joint Working Group (JWG) for the strengthening cooperation against terrorism (Basu, 2016). In fact, the 3rd meeting of the India-Tajikistan Joint Working Group was held in Tajikistan on June 15, 2017 (Report of the Ministry of External Affairs, GOI, 2017). Moreover, India has been cooperating with Tajikistan in terms of security agencies, including information sharing mechanism to counter the growing menace of terrorism and organized crimes. India's arms donation to Tajikistan includes two Mi-8 helicopters, critical spare parts, military trucks, uniforms and number of computer systems. In addition, hundreds of Tajik military cadets and officers have been getting trained in India's National Defence Academy (INDA). India also funded the refurbishment of the Tajik Military Institute in Dushanbe. The cost of training Tajik military personnel's is borne by India (Sodiqov, 2011). India has also established a military hospital in Tajikistan. India's security engagements have not been restricted to material support alone. Capacity and institutional building of the armed forces of Tajikistan has been another area of cooperation. In fact, India has conducted its first military exercise with Tajikistan in 2003. Moreover, Tajikistan supports India on the Kashmir issue. It holds the view that, it is a bilateral dispute and would be resolved bilaterally.

With Kazakhstan, India has been sharing common security threats, since, the non-traditional threats are transnational in character. In this context, India has developed close security cooperation with Kazakhstan especially in combating, terrorism, extremism, small arms proliferation and drug-trafficking. For this, India has established a Joint Working Group (JWG) on combating terrorism, both at regional and global level in 2002. Recently the 5th meeting of the JWG was held in Astana in February 2018, wherein both the countries have agreed to cooperate in scientific and technical cooperation in military areas, modernization of arms, rendering of assistance in development of naval fleet of Kazakhstan in the Caspian Sea, mutual visits of military experts, and interactions between law enforcement bodies of two countries in this regard (Ministry of External Affairs, GOI, 2018). Furthermore, India has been providing training to the military personnel of Kazakhstan in the National Defence Academy in Khadakvasla (Pune) and the Indian Military Academy in Dehradun (Lopour, 2015). It has been conducting the joint military exercises with Kazakhstan. The first joint military exercise, 'Prabal Dostyk' was conducted in Kazakhstan (2016) and the second military exercise was recently conducted in India in 2017.⁷ These military exercises have improved India's security engagements with the country.

India has been sharing common security concerns with Uzbekistan. It has convergences in terms of secularism, tolerance and strong opposition to the non-traditional security threats. The Indian experience of fighting terrorism and insurgency could prove handy for Uzbekistan given the hotspots in Ferghana Valley and other parts of Uzbekistan including the rising phantom of radical non-state actors such as IMU, HuT, Tablighi Jamaat and ISIS.

Tecimer (2017) argues that some extremist elements from the CARs have been found operating side-by-side with Pakistani militants in the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir. Therefore, given the compatibility of interests especially in terms of security concerns, India's has heightened its relationship with Uzbekistan into a

⁷ India, Kazakhstan armies begin joint military exercise in Himachal Pradesh. (2107). *Hindustan Times*. Retrieved 20 June 2018, from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-kazakhstan-armies-begin-joint-military-exercise-from-in-himachal-pradesh/story-GEuwRwiYJosAkjxOJYseAO.html>.

strategic partnership (2011). It has coordinating through Joint Working Group (JWG) on combating terrorism and extremism. The latest meeting of JWG was held in India on August 10, 2016 (Ministry of External Affairs, GOI, 2017). Moreover, in terms of arms acquisition, India had acquired 6 Ilyushin-78 in-flight refueling aircraft from Uzbekistan (Lal, 2006). The issues of military training, education, and joint military exercises have figured in the recent bilateral talks between PM Narinder Modi and its Uzbek counterpart Shavkat Mirziyoyev. Moreover, India has signed an MOU on Cyber Security with the Uzbekistan on May 31, 2017.⁸ Moreover, Uzbekistan recently (March 2018), has offered India a unique proposal to set up a defence manufacturing unit in its territory in (Chaudhury, 2018). Additionally, Uzbekistan supports India in resolution of Jammu & Kashmir issue through bilateral talks between India and Pakistan (Bhattacharjee, 2016).

As already stated that India has been one of the first countries to establish diplomatic ties with Kyrgyzstan. Like other countries of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan is not an exception, in terms of India's shared security interests. Therefore, India has been progressively strengthened its military cooperation with Kyrgyzstan particularly in terms of information technology exchange, training, joint military exercises, jungle warfare, and counter-terrorism. In fact, India has been conducting the joint military exercises with Kyrgyzstan, 'Khanjar military exercises', since 2011. It has conducted four Khanjar series of military exercises in (2011, 2015, 2016 and 2017). Currently, 4th, Khanjar exercise was held Kyrgyzstan in March 2017 (Rishi, 2017). Furthermore, India in collaboration with Kyrgyzstan has been jointly constructing the 'Kyrgyz-Indian Mountain Training Centre' in the city of Balykchi (Kyrgyzstan). The completion of the Centre would provide instruction and training to the Armed Forces of Kyrgyzstan (Bhattacharjee, 2016). Thus, the frequent India-Kyrgyz military exercises have been contributing in strengthening India's military engagements with the country. Furthermore, the exchange of high-level military officials have been cementing India's security engagements with Kyrgyzstan (Chaudhury, 2018).

⁸ India, Uzbekistan agree to step up security cooperation. (2018). *The Economic Times*. Retrieved 28 June 2018, from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com>.

India has intensified its security engagements with Turkmenistan. Although the latter has adopted the policy of 'Permanent Neutrality' and had subsequently remained aloof from joining any regional military or security alliance. Nonetheless, the security concerns of both the countries have compelled them to fight the rising menace of terrorism, extremism, and drug trafficking. India has been gradually strengthening its security engagements with Turkmenistan, it exchanges the high-level and mid-level visits, training and dialogue between the Ministries of Defence and other relevant organizations. Recently, India's Deputy National Security Adviser has visited Turkmenistan, on May 28-31, 2017, followed by Chief of Army Staff, Shri Bipin Rawat on August 4-6, 2017. Likewise, the Defense Minister of Turkmenistan Yaylym Berdiev visited India from February 16-17, 2016. Also, the Yusup Muhammetgulyyev, the Deputy Minister of Defense of has participated in the Asian Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction (AMCDRR) which took place in New Delhi November 2-5, 2016. Importantly, the visits of the Chief of Air Force of Turkmenistan to India in July 2016 and Deputy Chief of General Staff of Armed Forces, Colonel Gochiev Nurgeldi on November 11, 2017, has been indicating the growing security engagements between the two countries. In 2017, India has imparted 19 Turkmen Armed Forces Personnel the counter-terrorism training at Subathu (Himachal Pradesh).

Fig No. 6.1 the Ongoing Defense Cooperation between India and CARs



Source: Sajjanhar, A. (2016). India-Central Asia relations: Expanding vistas of partnership. *Observer Research Foundation*, Retrieved 15 December 2017, from <https://www.orfonline.org/>.

The aforementioned examination of India's military cooperation with the CARs clearly indicates the centrality of Tajikistan as a major partner in the region. It has close defence cooperation with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. However, Turkmenistan continues to be a weak link in India's defence cooperation in comparison to other Central Asian countries. Under its new policy approach, India plans to further strengthen its existing strategic and security cooperation with all the CARs with a focus on military training, joint research, counter-terrorism coordination, and close

consultation on Afghanistan. Moreover, India's full membership in SCO has added new vitality in security engagements between both the regions.

6.7.3 Regional Security Engagements: India and SCO

The changing geo-political, geo-strategic and economic dynamics of Central Asia appear to favor cooperation at the multilateral level. In this context, a major instrument that highlights this regional cooperative trend is the dynamics of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Notably, its expanded engagements beyond Central Asian region, by admitting India and Pakistan as full members, and Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan as Observers, on June 8-9, 2017 at the Astana Summit, adds a new dimension to India's strategic cooperation with the CARs at the multilateral level (Sharma, and Sharma 2016).

Over the years, the SCO has advanced its areas of engagements from being a mechanism to settle border issues to address security problems, improve economic engagements and enhance connectivity among the member countries. In fact, the 'Charter of the Organization' highlights its security objectives such as to combat the threats of terrorism, extremism, and separatism. Its success in dealing with organized crime, drugs trafficking, and small arms proliferation, its Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) is an important body at work since 2005 to eradicate the challenge of terrorism. Roy (2017) has argued that it has prevented 600 terrorist attacks, arrested 400 terrorists only in 2016 and extradited hundred. Over 900 anti-terrorist personnel's have been trained till 2016. Apart, the SCO has been conducting the joint military exercises to combat the common security threats of the member countries. In 2015, for the first time, the organization has conducted a joint military exercise (Xiamen-2015) in China for countering the use of the Internet for causing terrorism, separatism and extremism and other related activities. The main purpose of the Xiamen-2015 joint command post-military exercise is to strengthen the security cooperation mechanisms of SCO member countries in eradicating the cyber security threats. Recently, in 2015, the organization has approved the 'SCO Development Strategy-2025 document'. Its primary objectives have been to boost mutual trust, deal with security challenges and deepen economic engagements among the member countries (Siddiqi, 2018).

In this light, India's multi-faceted interests align with the SCO, especially in terms of security. In this, all the five countries of the Central Asia have been sharing permanent membership. Thus, the organization, provides India a multi-lateral platform to strengthen its outreach to Central Asia and subsequently strengthened its security engagements. As a victim of terrorism, India has developed its specific expertise to combat the threat of terrorism. These include building up expertise on policy aspects, counter-terror operations, intelligence gathering, training, disaster management, and border protection. In fact, intelligence gathering mechanisms depend mainly on satellite and IT tools. India has strong expertise in both these areas. It also cooperates with other countries at the regional and international levels. Therefore, India can share its experience and even offer customized solutions, if required. With SCO's actions being formulated on the basis of consensus, India can negotiate outcomes that have a direct bearing on its core security interests.

Now being a member of the organization, India has taken part in a meeting of the international military cooperation departments of the SCO, since joining the regional organization in 2017. The Indian delegation led by Major General Ajay Seth participated in the meeting, which discussed issues of practical cooperation among the member countries in combatting the menace of the non-security threats. In fact, it is the first meeting attended by India in the field of defense cooperation under the SCO framework. Apart, the joint military exercise and 'Peace Missions' among the member countries would help India to gain valuable new military operational insights.

The SCO has also frequently expressed concern over the evolving security situation in Afghanistan. Indeed, most of the members of the organization have argued for some kind of involvement to stabilize the country (Roy and Roy, 2017). SCO can, thus, facilitate greater security cooperation between India and rest of the SCO members particularly in terms of intelligence sharing and interaction between law enforcement agencies. These core security policies of stabilizing the region mesh with India's concerns in its extended neighborhood (Ibid, 2016). India's External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna (2009-2012), acknowledged the SCO's role in Afghanistan. He stated that 'the SCO is uniquely fitted to provide positive contributions to the global discourse on Afghanistan (Roy, 2017). The organization can certainly add a critical

regional perspective and play a constructive role in ensuring a peaceful and stability in Afghanistan. During the 16th Meeting of the SCO Heads of Government Council held in Sochi from November 30 to December 1, 2017. India's Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj pointed out that India is ready to cooperate fully with the RATS of the SCO for exchanging information and working out a common strategy for combating terrorism (Suhag, 2017). Apart from dealing with terrorism, extremism, separatism cybersecurity, and drug trafficking, also the SCO platform would help India to strengthen its cooperation in other areas as well including trade, energy, education, and tourism. In fact, the organization could become an ideal confidence-building mechanism for working together toward the common objectives on the same platform helps in removing mistrust and promotes dialogue on diverse issues of vital significance.

Thus, from the above discussion it became clear crystal that India has enhanced its security cooperation with the Central Asian countries both at bilateral and multilateral level.

6.7.4 Economic Engagements

After the emergence of Central Asian countries, India had negligible economic engagements with the region, substantiated by the low level of trade and investment. After realizing each other's potential, both the regions have made efforts to rope in each other in economic engagements. The major steps are include like policy frameworks, intuitional engagements and developmental projects. India's policy frameworks towards the Central Asia including the Look North Policy, Look West Policy, Extended Neighborhood policy and the Connect Central Asia policy. To increase the economic engagements, India has established the joint economic institutions with the Central Asian countries such as India-Kazakhstan 'Joint Business Council (2004), India-Kyrgyzstan 'Inter-governmental Covenant Agreement' India-Tajikistan intergovernmental commission on trade, economic, scientific and technical cooperation and the Trilateral Transit agreement with Turkmenistan and Iran (2000).⁹ Michael

⁹ India-Turkmenistan Relations. Retrieved 12 November, 2016, from http://www.whatisindia.com/issues/turkmeni/indo-turkmeni_info.html.

(2015) argued that both countries have also signed the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) and the Gas Pipeline Framework Agreement (GPFA) in the TAPI summit (2010). Under these agreements it was agreed that Turkmenistan would supply 38mcm of natural gas per day to India.

Thus, from the above it became clear that India has been making desperate efforts to expand its economic cooperation through the several MOUs, protocols, agreements, bilateral visits, dialogues, summits, etc. These agreements chiefly concentrate on the business and investment for enhancing the economic engagements.

6.7.4.1 Trade and Investment

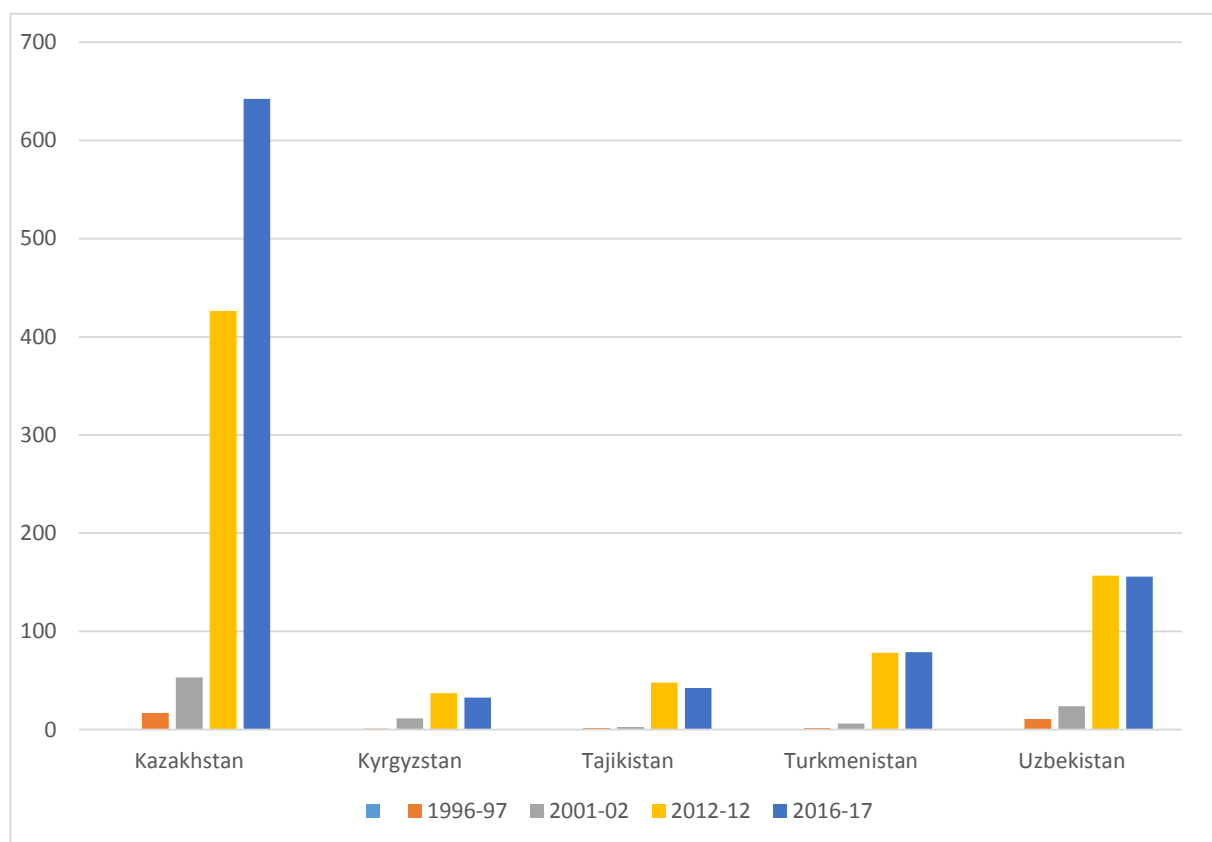
India's trade with CARs has remained at the lowest ebb. Its trade with the CARs stood at (US \$ 952 million), comprised of (US \$ 17967 million) exports and (US \$ 12077 million) imports (See table no. 6.11.1.1 below). India has been investing in several sectors in the Central Asian countries like construction, energy, IT, medicine, agriculture, education etc. Moreover, it has also signed many investments agreements and treaties with the regional countries. For instance, Indian EXIM Bank has established a joint ventures in the pharmaceutical sector and other industries in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It has been also investing in Kazakhstan's core sectors like oil and natural gas, construction, transport, agriculture, food processing, textiles, tourism, petrochemical industry etc. On the other hand, Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister Karibzhanov had visited India and signed an agreement on 'Kazakhstan's Investment Opportunities' (2009). Likewise, with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, India has been investing in manufacturing, construction, insurance, real estate etc. Thus, the Central Asian countries have huge potential for Indian investment in the areas particularly in energy, IT, banking, construction, and food processing etc.

Table No. 6.2 India's Trade with the CARs from 1996-2017 in (US \$ Million)

Year	Total Trade	Kazakh	Kyrgyz	Tajik	Turkmen	Uzbek
1996-97	31.85	16.96	0.98	1.53	1.65	10.74
2001-02	97.28	53.09	11.53	2.56	6.3	23.8
2012-13	746.31	426.22	37.08	48.02	78.25	156.75
2016-17	952.15	642.42	32.57	42.33	79.07	155.66

Source: Department of Commerce, Government of India, Retrieved from, <http://commerce.nic.in/edit/default.asp>.

Fig. no. 6.3 Graphical Representation of table 6.11.1.1 (US \$ million)



Source: Department of Commerce, Government of India, Retrieved 25 May 2018, from [http:// com.merce.nic.in/edit/default.asp](http://com.merce.nic.in/edit/default.asp).

The above figure shows that India's trade with the CARs from 1996-2017. Amongst the CARs, India's trade with Kazakhstan is at the top (642.42 million) followed by Uzbekistan (155.66 million), Turkmenistan (79.09), Tajikistan (42.33) and Kyrgyzstan (32.57) in 2017. Thus, India's total trade with the CARs is 952 million. It clearly indicates that India has very minimal trade with the Central Asian countries.

6.7.4.2 Commodity Composition of India's Imports and Exports

In order to understand India's economic cooperation with the Central Asian countries, it becomes vital to know the commodity composition that India imports and exports to the CARs. The following tables shows the top ten commodities India Imports and exports to the CARs.

Table No. 6.4 India's top import Commodities to Central Asian Republics (% Share)

Commodity Code	Description	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
27	Fuel, oil, distillation products, etc.	36.56	31.48	36.75	39.60	26.80
71	Pearls, metals, coins, etc.	18.75	17.91	11.12	14.48	15.30
28	Chemicals, metal etc.	2.18	1.56	1.55	1.09	1.30
72	Iron and Steel	1.89	2.74	3.41	2.17	3.00
39	Plastic	1.29	1.51	1.42	2.15	2.91
25	Salt, sulphur, plaster	0.83	0.54	0.80	0.51	0.68
87	Vehicles	0.74	0.76	1.01	0.97	1.27
52	Cotton	0.68	0.40	0.23	0.16	0.15
40	Rubber	0.55	0.63	0.57	0.74	0.75
41	leather	0.36	0.26	0.15	0.12	0.17

Source: UN Comtrade (2017), *calculated from India's total world Imports*

The above table shows the top 10 commodities that India imports from the Central Asia in 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016. It indicates that India has imported

a significant proportion of fuels, oils, distillation products, etc. with (36.56%) from the region in 2000. However, it has declined to (31.48%) in 2004 but significantly increased in 2008 with (36.75%). Notably, in 2012, the share of these mineral fuels have been increased to the (39.60%) due to the increasing demand of Indian energy market. But with the effect of global recession of foreign trade, the share has been decreased to the (26.80%) in 2016.

The second significant import commodity that India imports are precious stones, metals, coins, etc. which has amounted (18.75%) share in Indian import market from the region in 2000. Although, its share has been declining over the study years but remains at a second top most commodity with (15.30%) in 2016. In 2000, Inorganic chemicals, precious metals, followed by iron and steel and plastics and articles thereof are the 3rd, 4th and 5th top level commodities India imported from the CARs with (2.18%, 1.89%, and 1.29%) respectively. Noteworthy, inorganic chemicals, precious metals, etc. commodities have lost their value in 2016 and accounted decline share 1.30. Whereas, on the other hand, iron, steel and Plastics articles thereof have significantly increased its share with (3% and 2.91%), respectively. On the other hand, commodities such as, salt, sulphur, plaster, Vehicles other, Cotton, Rubber and articles thereof and leather are also in the listed of the top 10 import commodities of India from the region. So for the India's exports are concerned, the following table shows India's top 10 exports to the CARs.

Table No. 6.5 India's Top Ten Export Commodities to Central Asian Republics (% Share)

Commodity Code	Description	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016
71	Pearls, precious stones.	17.80	16.66	11.09	13.12	14.56
62	Articles of apparel, etc.	8.52	4.95	3.25	2.60	3.54
61	Accessories, knit or crochet.	3.93	3.50	2.39	2.07	2.84
84	Nuclear reactors, machinery.	2.80	3.85	4.44	3.90	6.00
85	Electrical equipment's.	2.60	2.58	3.44	3.34	3.0
30	Pharmaceutical products.	2.02	2.51	2.75	3.46	4.73
87	Vehicles.	1.94	2.96	3.31	4.10	5.33
9	Coffee, tea, spices and mate.	1.79	1.05	0.96	0.80	1.10
38	Chemical products.	0.99	0.84	1.05	1.01	1.15
90	Optical, photo, technical, medical, apparatus etc.	0.56	0.73	0.60	0.68	0.88

Source: UN Comtrade 2017, *calculated from India's total world exports*

The above table no. 6.11.2.2 shows top 10 commodities that India exports to the Central Asian countries in 2000, 2004, 2008, 2012 and 2016. The table shows that the share of Indian pearls and precious stones have ranked first in the Indian export basket to the CARs i.e., stood at (17.80%) in 2000. However, the export of these pearls have declined to (14.56%) in 2016. The second top most commodities are apparel, accessories, not knit or crochet share (8.52%) in 2000, which have also decreased to (3.54%) in 2016. After that, Article of apparel, accessories, knit or crochet followed by Nuclear reactors, machinery, etc. are the essential commodities for India over the years. However, latter commodity has been lost its share to the level of (2.84%) in 2016, but the former has significantly increased its share to (6%) in 2016. Furthermore, commodities such as electronic equipment's, pharmaceutical and Vehicles have been increasing share (2.60 %, 2.02%, and 1.94 %) to (3.00 %, 4.73%, and 5.33 %) in 2016. While as on the other hand, commodities like, coffee, tea, spices and mate, chemical products and optical, photo, technical, medical, apparatus, etc. have recorded marginal

share in Indian exports to the region, but these have significantly maintained their position over the years.

6.7.4.3 Energy Cooperation

Given the abundant natural resources of the CARs are of particular relevance for an energy deficit country like India. Indeed, there is a wide gap between India's production and consumption. Jain and Ummat (2015), argued that India has been the largest populated country with (17%) of total world population but, only (0.4%) of oil, and (0.4%) gas and (6%) coal reserves of the world's total reserves. The IEA (2016) projected that India's energy consumption will increase more than European countries by 2040 (International Energy Outlook, 2016). Moreover, a recent PWC (2017), report projects India's growth to be in the range of (5.5-6.5 %) between 2017 and 2050.¹⁰ It has the potential to catapult India to be the second largest economy in the world by 2050 in terms of the purchasing power parity (PPP). On the contrary, the Central Asian countries have abundant untapped oil, natural gas, and uranium reserves. IEA (2015), observed that the Kazakhstan has been producing (1.70 million) barrels petroleum per day. EIA (2016), estimates that Turkmenistan has been producing more than (2.5Tcf) natural gas and counted in the top six natural gas reservoirs. As per the estimations of International Energy Agency (2016), Uzbekistan is the 3rd largest natural gas producer with (2Tcf) of natural gas in 2015. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are the largest basin for the hydroelectric potentials which can fulfill the (90%) world's electricity demands.

Thus, from the above it becomes clear that India has been running towards largest energy dependent countries in the world. While as, on the other hand, the CARs has been abundance energy reserves. As a result, India has been looking towards the CARs as an alternative option which will supply sufficient amount of the energy covering oil and natural gas products. In this context, Sachdeva (2006) argued that the Central Asian countries have been playing an important role in diversifying India's energy imports. Indeed, many Indian companies have been engaging in extraction of oil and natural gas in the region. For instance, 'Indian Oil and Natural Gas Corporation

¹⁰ The World in 2050 will the shift in global economic power continue?. PWC. Retrieved 25 May 2018, from <https://www.pwc.com/gx/en/issues/the-economy/assets/world-in-2050>.

Videsh Ltd (ONGC)' and 'Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL)' have already (15%) ownership stake in Kazakhstan's Alibekmola oil field (Schaffer and Hate, 2007). Moreover, ONGC and BHEL have declared to investment (US \$1.5 billion) in the joint Russian-Kazakh Kurmangazy oil field. India has also acquired a (25%) stake in Kazakhstan's Satpayev offshore exploration block, estimated to be at a price of (US\$ 5 billion). Furthermore, India has been keenly watching towards Turkmenistan for natural gas imports through the TAPI gas pipeline. In case of Uzbekistan, India has signed an agreement to import 2,000 tons uranium from the country (Pant, 2017). Hence, the ongoing energy projects between India and the Central Asian countries would help to fulfill the formers energy demands effectively. On the other hand, given the turbulence in the Middle East Asia, from where India imports maximum amount of energy, the CARs become best available option for India. The following table shows India's energy imports from 2004-2014.

Table No. 6.6 India's Oil and Petroleum Products Imports from CARs (US \$ million)

Year	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
2004	NA	0.285	0.005	NA	NA
2005	NA	0.275	NA	NA	NA
2006	NA	NA	NA	0.12	0.12
2007	NA	0.003	NA	0.30	0.59
2008	9.55	0.026	NA	NA	1.68
2009	24.48	0.27	0.01	NA	0.3
2010	0.72	0.081	NA	NA	NA
2011	0.581	0.152	0.039	NA	11.699
2012	1.889	0.028	0.158	NA	3.366
2013	334.78	0.453	0	NA	0.299
2014	792.05	0.426	NA	NA	1.677
2015	235.28	0.483	NA	39.5	NA

Source: UN Comtrade, Database, (2016)

The above table shows India's crude oil petroleum imports from the Central Asian countries (2004-2015). The table clearly shows that Kazakhstan has supplied (9.55 million) to India in 2008. These imports have increased from (US \$ 334.78 million in 2013 to US\$ 792.05 million) in 2014. However, it declined and reached to (US \$ 235.28 million) in 2015. In case of Kyrgyzstan, India imported (0.285 million) crude oil and petroleum products in 2004. Nonetheless, India's imports have been declined from (0.27 million to 0.08 million) during the period of 2005-2010. In contrast, India's imports from Kyrgyzstan have been also marginally increasing from (0.42 million) in 2014 to (0.49 million) in 2015. India's Imports from Tajikistan has been (0.005 million) in 2004 which has been increased to (0.158 million) in 2012. During 2006-2007, India's crude oil and petroleum products imports from Turkmenistan have increased from (0.12 million to 0.30 million). In this positive trends, these imports have reached to (39.5 million) in 2015. In case of Uzbekistan, India has imported (0.12 million) crude oil and petroleum products in 2006. The table shows that during 2007-2008, these imports have increased from (0.59 million to 1.68 million) respectively. In 2011, these imports have risen to (11.69 million). However, it declined from (3.36 million) in 2012 to (1.67 million) in 2014. Therefore, the above table depicts that India has imported a considerable amount of crude oil and petroleum products from Kazakhstan followed by Turkmenistan. While Uzbekistan has been also exported some oil and petroleum products to India followed by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Nonetheless, India has been facing several challenges in protecting and promoting its geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic interests in the region. The following section of this chapter would discuss India's multifaceted challenges and the available options as well.

6.8 India's Challenges in the Central Asia

Despite India's pro-active policy initiatives and a history of exemplary cooperation with the Central Asian region, still the former has been remained ineffective to emerge as a major geopolitical player *vis-à-vis* the US, Russia and China. In fact, since the emergence of the CARs, India has been facing several challenges in the geopolitical chessboard of Central Asia wherein, the major powers like, the US, Russia, and China including regional actors like, Iran, Turkey, India and Pakistan have been

playing the zero-sum game in order to multiply their respective multifaceted interests and abating the influence of opponents. Most importantly, India's regional engagements have been largely episodic and consistent snags in the way of enhancing its multifaceted engagements with the Central Asian countries. Moreover, India's shift towards the US in response to Russia-China and Pakistan's creeping rapprochement has also been limiting India's strategic maneuvering towards the region. Therefore, in this background, the key challenges that India has been confronting in Central Asia are briefly discussed below.

Although India and CARs have been enjoying warm and friendly relationship, since the recorded history. However, the lack of direct connectivity has been remained a major obstacle before India. The scholarly works of Roy (2011), Singh (2018) and Kavalski (2018) acknowledge that lack of direct connectivity has been remained a major challenge for India. As India's arch rival Pakistan has been a vital bridge link between both the regions. However, since the partition of the Indian subcontinent India had lost this connectivity option because of its hostility with Pakistan. In fact, both the countries had fought the three major wars (1948, 1965 and 1971) including the Kargil proxy war (1999). The role in Bangladesh liberation movement (1971), security (nuclearization and terrorism), Siachen Glacier, Gilgit-Baltistan, water sharing concerns, and more importantly New Delhi's ties with Kabul are some of the other crucial problems that have been keeping both the countries on tenterhooks. Consequently, India's ability to access Central Asia via, Pak-Afghan route has been remained herculean task. Pakistan has been consistently negating India to access Central Asia through its territory.

India's other alternative to access the Central Asia has been via China. As the latter has been sharing long borders with the Central Asian countries. Thus, it could be helpful in bridging India's connectivity with the CARs via China. Stobdan (2015), argued that the alternative possibility of connectivity for India-Central Asia could be via the 'Trans-Himalayan Passes.' A linkage through Ladakh to Xinjiang highway via the Karakoram Pass. However, due to China's sensitivity including its strategic partnership with Pakistan, it has become more problematic for India to access this route. Furthermore, China's 'String of Pearls' culminating at Gwadar sea port and the China-

Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) had signaled a major challenge for India in the context of Central Asian region. Wolf (2016) argues that China's strategy towards Pakistan has been undoubtedly a problem for India *vis-a-vis* the CARs. For instance, CPEC project would create additional constraints for India. On the other hand, given India's sovereignty issue and unfriendly ties with Pakistan, the former missed the opportunity to join this connectivity project. Additionally, India's two major connectivity routes *i.e.*, International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Chabahar sea port are likely to be affected given the geopolitical dynamics like increasing the dominance of China, unilateral withdrawal of Trump regime from Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), imposition of Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions (CAATSA). China has been affecting these routes by linking the Gwadar port and CPEC with the Chabahar sea port. On the other hand, Iran has also strong strategic ties with China than with India. Moreover, JCPOA and CAATSA likely to have indelible impacts over INSTC and Chabahar given the economic sanctions. As a result, it could pose a major challenge in front of INSTC and Chabahar sea port, which are India's major connectivity options for Central Asia.

The above mentioned Sino-Pak strategic alliance would also affect India's presence in the SCO as well. As India has not friendly ties with China and Pakistan for given of the border disputes with both the countries. Therefore, India wants to protect and promote its geostrategic and geo-economic interests from the nexus of these two countries. In this regard, India has installed its military outpost in Tajikistan (Ayani Air Base) especially to contain the influencer of Pakistan and China in the region. Sharma (2012), argued that India cannot counter the geostrategic and geo-economic clout of China, yet it can make use of assertive diplomacy to restrict Pakistan's geostrategic maneuvering in the Central Asian region.

India and Central Asian countries have started TAPI pipeline (1995) which has been anticipated to supply region's natural gas at the cheapest rate. Nonetheless, due to the China's diplomatic approach and other geopolitical dynamics, this pipeline has not yet materialized. On the contrary, China has proposed oil and natural gas pipelines with the CARs and both are functioning thus, indirectly effected the realization of the TAPI project. Abbhi (2015) argued that China has been jumped in the development of

Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline which has been now replacing by 'Iran-Pakistan-China (IPC) Pipeline'. The pipeline would not only provide accession to the energy market of Iran but also Central Asia and Middle East as well.

China is undoubtedly ahead of India regarding to the investments especially in the energy and connectivity projects in the Central Asian region. For instance, India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has acquired a stake in Turkmenistan's Caspian offshore blocks but the project has been failed to realize due to China's influence, whereas China has taken over Galkynysh gas field in Turkmenistan (Gurt, 2013). Moreover, India's ONGC had concluded an agreement in 2012 to purchase 8.4% interest in Kashagan oil field (Kazakhstan) which was cancelled by the latter due to the Chinese involvement in the same. Therefore, given the Chinese dominance in investment and connectivity, the Indian energy diplomacy has been met with setbacks.

A new regional initiative known as 'Dushanbe Four (2009)', comprising of Russia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Tajikistan, excluding India, was constituted to discuss the regional security issues, tackling terrorism and drug trafficking. Moreover, Russia and Pakistan are contemplating entering into a commercial defense agreement enabling Pakistan to purchase high-tech arms, ammunition and has been conducting joint military exercises with Russia. Thus, Russia has been trying to bring India and Pakistan on equal footing by moving closer to Pakistan to counter-balance the US presence in South Asia (Korybko, 2015). On the other hand, Central Asian countries have also proposed defence cooperation with Pakistan. Thus, the growing congruities among Russia, Pakistan and Central Asian countries are likely to pose major challenge to India in the Central Asian region.

Additionally, due to Russian impact, India has lost its Ayani military airbase in 2011, which had been the key to its strategic footprint in the Central Asian region.¹¹ Indeed, Russia has grown more concerned about China's and Pakistan's sensitivities as the airbase is close to their borders thereby, providing India psychological advantage in the region. Owing to the complex geo-politics in the region, Moscow is unlikely to

¹¹ Ayni Airbase, the Russian concerns. (2016). New Indian Express. Retrieved 21 December 2017, from <http://defenceforumindia.com/forum/threads/ayni-airbase-the-russian-concerns.78155/>.

allow any country's exclusive military presence in its backyard. In this regard, Singh (2016) opined that the current changing dynamic of geo-politics may turn Russia from strategic partner to a strange partner for India in general and in context of Central Asia in particular. Hence, Russia is now posing challenges to India in the Central Asian region.

Russia and China are no more rivals in the current geopolitical game due to the emergence of a new synergies of power equations in the world. Both are working collectively on the various energy and economic projects to hold the prominent position in the region and limit the presence of US. Thus, indirectly challenging India, as the latter has been providing India a geostrategic space both in Central and South Asia. Blank (2014) argued that Russia and China considering India as a major obstacle in the region against their vested interests. Thus, both has been cooperating and synergizing which is likely to become major challenges for India. For example, Russia has declared its strong support to CPEC and OBOR projects, initiated by China. It has been showing its willingness to link the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) with the China's BRI, which would not only enhance their economic dominance in the region but would also support Pakistan strategically (Saalman, 2017). Therefore, the evolving synergy between Russia-China and Pakistan would possibly affect India's multifaceted interests in the Central Asian region.

Like, Russia and China, the US is also a major power in the Central Asian geopolitical cobweb. In fact, its geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic stakes are the major factors that determine the role of the US in the Central Asian region. Currently, the US is the 3rd largest trading partner of CARs, after China and Russia. In fact, the huge untapped energy resources of the Central Asian countries coupled with the geopolitical penchants have moved it towards the region. Foshko (2012) argues that the US role in Central Asia has been conceived as mixed response to India's multifaceted interests in the region. In this context, Kubicek (2009) contended that the geo-politics of pipeline i.e., Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) has been remained a major concern for the US in the Central Asian region since 1999. Balie (2016) argued that the US has been pressurizing India not to participate in the IPI pipeline. In fact, the geopolitical strains between the US and Iran over the nuclear issue have further

complicated the IPI project. The US has induced both India and Pakistan not to cooperating with Iran over this pipeline, as it would not only end Iran's global isolation but would also allow it, to use the returns, for its nuclear enrichment. On the contrary, the US has been supporting India for the TAPI gas pipeline that circumvent both Russia and Iran (Reza & Heydar, 2012). Thus, with the geopolitical dynamics, India has almost abandoned the IPI pipeline since 2008. On the other hand, India had shifted towards the US and signed a civil nuclear agreement (2008), which had paved the way for civil nuclear cooperation between the two countries. Khan, Ahmad, and Ali (2016) have argued that cooperation with India has been a part of the US geostrategic psyche to prevent the rising China and resurging Russia in the CARs. Similarly, Kaura (2018), argued that the US cooperation with India, has blocked the possible emergence of strategic triplet i.e., Russia, India and China (RIC) for cooperation in the Central Asia. Thus, indirectly detached India from the Central Asia.

The scholarly work of Rumer, Sokolsky, and Stronski (2016) acknowledge that with regard to the India-Central Asia geo-economic relations, the US has been on the same note as Russia and China. In fact, the US has been countering the IPI pipeline which would otherwise provide oxygen to India's emerging economy and subsequently leverage in the energy markets of Iran as well as in the Central Asia.

Thus, the above analyses illustrations that India has been practical outfoxed by China in the Central Asian region, especially in the geo-economic aspect. While as on the other hand, Russia and the US have been providing India geostrategic space in the Central Asian region. Nevertheless, in the changing geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic settings, all the major powers are in one way or other way pushing Indian stakes in backyard in the Central Asian region. Moreover, India has also been challenged by the growing menace of non-traditional security threats such as, terrorism, extremism, small arms proliferation, drug trafficking including visa problems, information gap, language barrier, etc. that too have woe India in the Central Asian region.

6.9 India's Central Asia Policy: Russia as a Bridge Link

Although, India has been facing several challenges in the Central Asia region given the regional and global geopolitical dynamics, but, at the same time there are possible options to diminish the challenges and enhance its influence in the region. In fact, taking into account the presence of several players in the Central Asian region, India would prefer to cooperate with regional and extra regional actors to protect and promote its presence in the region. Now, how does one see Russia in the Indo-Central Asian relations in the changing dynamics?

Although India-Russia relationship has undergone metamorphic changes in view of the complex contemporary geopolitical environment in general and in the context of Central Asia in particular. The relationships, however, has been a symbol of all-weather friendship both at bilateral and multilateral level. As a matter of fact, usually in any two democratic countries, difference of views exists but given the good-will and an insightful political leadership the ties can be kept in balanced mode. In this context, Russia's former President Dmitry Medvedev (2008-2012) visited India and hailed India as a 'Privileged Strategic Partner' in 2010. Similarly, India's PM Manmohan Singh (2004-2014) had visited Russia, wherein he said, 'Russia has stood by India at critical moments of great global challenge, when our resources and friends were limited and few... Friendship with Russia enjoys complete political consensus, good will and public support in India.'¹²

Due to the reciprocities and congruities of mutual interests, Russia has been stood for India's viable option in the Central Asian region to protect and promote its interests and counter its adversaries. Indeed, the less competitive strategic relations between India-Russia in Central Asia has been figured as an areas of common concerns for both the countries. Russia would like to consolidate the Western flank of Central Asia by enhancing cooperation with India. It can also hope to balance the growing Chinese influence in the region through collective efforts. Indeed, the rising China's economic forays in Central Asian region has surpassed Russia as a leading

¹² Press Information Bureau. (2013). Address by Prime Minister at the Moscow State Institute of International Relations. Retrieved 9 May 2016, from <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/mbErel.aspx?relid=100145>

trading partner, broken its monopoly of energy pipelines. Amid Russia's declining economic clout, China has been vigorously pushing for its Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) which would connect China to Europe via Central Asia. Baykova (2016) argued that China could be building an alternative to Russia led CSTO, if the latter does not join this initiative. Thus, it clearly indicates that China is not an ally of Russia in Central Asia. Moreover, its recent proposal to establish an anti-terrorism alliance with Afghanistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan is astonishing as it excludes Russia in this anti-terrorism grouping.

China's increasing leverage in Central Asia has consequently declined Kremlin's influence in the CARs. Hence, to rebalance China's geo-economic forays, India would milk the situation by siding with Russia thereby enhance its presence in the region. Indeed, Russia has been supporting India's geostrategic and geo-economic engagements with the Central Asian countries. In 2000, Russia agreed to work on INSTC, which is a tripartite transit agreement among India, Iran and Turkmenistan. The completion of this transit corridor would cut transportation costs (30%) and shipment time (10-15 days) from India to Europe. The major geostrategic advantage for India's participation in the 'multi modal corridor' (INSTC) is that it would enable India to connect directly with Central Asia and Europe, circumventing its arch rival Pakistan and turbulent Afghanistan. Russia has long been supporting this route to serve its geopolitical interests. Indeed, several Russian companies have been working on INSTC providing assistances in terms of expertise, logistical, and skilled personnel to build this transnational transport corridor. In fact, one branch of the INSTC now goes to Aktau on Kazakh side of the Caspian Sea. Therefore, it would be easier and inexpensive for Russia to provide the Eurasian region with commodities from India than from European countries (Chaudhury, 2017). Russia also plans to open Siberian and Far Eastern region to the outside world. It is possible if one branch of the Trans-Siberian railway from Omsk Oblast could be connected to Aktau in Kazakhstan. Such an option is not difficult as Aktau is already well connected by road and rail routes and it would permit Kazakhstan to widen its trade options with India. Hence, it could be India-Iran-Kazakhstan and Russia corridor giving this region an outlet in southern direction.

In terms of oil and gas pipeline politics, Russia has been better option for India. Indeed, Russia has been fostering TAPI pipeline which would enhance India's geo-economic interests in the Central Asian region. Joshi and Sharma (2017) argues that there could be a possibility of extending the TAPI pipeline to Russia or extension of a Russia-China pipeline to India. Moreover, it is Russia that has set up a 'joint working group' with India, to explore the possibility of bringing Russian energy to India either via the Afghanistan-Pakistan route or via China. Moreover, a free trade agreement between India and the Eurasian Union has been expected to be functional by 2020, which would further abate India's challenge in the Central Asia.¹³

In its Central Asia policy, India aspires to play an independent role, whereas on the other hand Russia has been trying to rejuvenate its cooperation with the CARs. It seems that there is ambiguity in Indian and Russian policies towards Central Asia but in actual terms it is not so. India's policy is evolving and any attempt to increase its engagements with the region would have to be one of the factors in Russian interests. However, India would like to be recognized as an independent player in its own right and not as a subordinate partner. In the changing geopolitical milieu of Central Asia, the approaches of India and Russia have differed. In fact, both the countries have been adapting to the shifting undercurrents in accordance with their respective multifaceted interests in the Central Asian region. In fact, the geopolitical considerations of security and stability in the region have not changed, so their convergences of interests. The differing perspectives offer an opportunity to understand each other's point of view and to chalk out a mutually beneficial strategy.

At the multilateral level, it is Russia that has enthusiastically supported India's bid into SCO. In fact, both India and Russia share compatibility of mutual interests in the SCO regional grouping. For instance, Russia has been attempting to rebalance the rising China that has been set alarm bells to Russia and India as well. In this connection, Russia has welcomed greater Indian involvement in the SCO club because it is only India that has the potential to counterpoise China in collaboration with Russia

¹³ EAEU-India free trade area to be functional by 2020—Russian official. (2015). *Russia Beyond the Headlines*. Retrieved 12 December 2017, from http://rbth.com/international/2015/12/24/eaeu-india-free-trade-area-to-befunctional-by-2020-russian-official_554445.

in the region (Mitra, 2017). Thus, the compatibility of mutual interests between India and Russia in Central Asia would help India to enhance its multifaceted interests in the region.

Last but not least, although Russia has shifted towards Pakistan in terms of arms supplies, conducting military exercises including its inclusion in the security talks with regard to Afghanistan security situation in the post-2014. Nevertheless, the defence market of Pakistan is smaller than that of India, which is world's largest arms importer. Kaura (2018) argues that as Kremlin develops its military cooperation with Pakistan, it would further enhance India's military and technical cooperation with Russia. Russia-Pakistan military cooperation does not yet qualify as a strategic shift, but a short term tactical move. On the other hand, India and Russia decided to base their strategic partnership on 'Make in India' initiative as India's PM Modi and President Putin agreed to build components of nuclear reactors and military helicopters in India (Roy, 2015). India-Russia has jointly venture weapons such as, 'BrahMos' missile. Therefore, Russia would not like to lose its profitable Indian defence market. In fact, Indian dependence on Russian arms is gigantic and arms contracts between them come with transfer of technology but with Pakistan, it is likely to be a buyer-seller military relationship. Moreover, Islamabad has been remained the chief arms importer of Beijing, accounting for 35% of its defence exports (SIPRI, 2016). Consequently, China would be unhappy to see Russia in the defence market of Pakistan. Thus, it would be accurate to say that Russia has been India's time tested friend both at bilateral and regional level.

Thus, the above analysis clearly indicates that although variances arise over certain issues between India and Russia however, the overall parallelism both at bilateral and regional levels definitely symbolizes the trust that has been still prevailing between them. In fact, both the countries have been paying considerable significance to this strategic friendship, which has reached at a phase where closeness with any other country would not make much of a difference to this partnership.

6.10 A Way Forward

India's relationship with Russia and Central Asia have always been friendly and cordial except a few twists in the former two's. The bedrock of this Indo-Russian relationship lay in mutually compatible geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic interests in Central Asian region. Indeed, the Central Asian countries were holding a pivotal position in the foreign policy radar of India and Russia. The former regards the region as its 'Extended Neighborhood or Near Abroad'. While as the latter has been considering it as its backyard, a buffer zone and a bridge link to Europe and Asia.

Given the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic significance of the region, the CARs have been consequently maintained and retained a pivotal position for major powers and regional actors for acquisition of influence, power and national interests including India and Russia. Moreover, the changing strategic equations between Moscow and Beijing and growing strategic proximity between the Russia and Pakistan have been creating apprehensions for the researcher that India enjoying strategic proximity with the region including Russia, may be seriously going to be effect. Nonetheless, it should be noted that India's relationship with Russia and Central Asia as well have been a history of strategic closeness and compatibility of mutual interests from eons. India-Russia strategic partnership and mutual trust has been natural and objective. Few examples in fact can be found in the political history of world that can resemble with this partnership. The questions however arise, what would be the long term effects, provided the three- India, Central Asia and Russia could come on one platform, geopolitically, geo-strategically and geo-economically.

From the geopolitical perspective, cooperation among India, Central Asia and Russia, if fully realized, can turn the zero-sum game in their favor. The budding political ties involve, government to government interactions, MOU's, high-level diplomatic exchanges at bilateral, institutional and multilateral levels can turn the game for mutual advantages. Steps in this direction have already been taken like, treaties on friendship and cooperation, Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measure in Asia (CICA), Foreign Office Consultations (FOC's) and Inter-Governmental Commissions (IGC's). The high-level diplomatic exchanges have also been playing a significant role in the development of trust and mutual advantages among India, Central Asia and

Russia. Moreover, India has been remained convinced that Russia has been and would remain a major player in the region, and generally pursued multifaceted cooperation with the latter particularly in strategic terms. India obviously would have welcomed democratic Central Asian region, nonetheless it preferred to allow it to happen at its own without the external interference. The point here is that the intensification in political engagements among India, Central Asia and Russia could provide a solid base and legal foundation for enhancing geostrategic and economic relationship. Indeed, the growing political patch-ups among the parties concerned have the potential to sideline the adversaries and enhance their respective mutual interests and leverage in the years to come.

India's cooperation with the Central Asia and Russia become even more vital when one looks into the formers growing demands for mineral resources especially oil and natural gas. As India has been demographically a giant country with 1.3 billion populations. It has the 6th largest economy in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 3rd in terms of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) in the world. Jain and Ummat (2015) acknowledge that India has been housing (17%) out of the total World population (7.6 billion) but, only having (0.4%) of oil, (0.4%) of gas and (6%) of coal reserves out of the world's total reserves. While as on the other hand, the Central Asia has a big market with 77 million populations endowed with vast untapped mineral resources and has a unique geographic and strategic location at the crossroads of Europe and Asia.

The IEA (2016) has observed that Kazakhstan has been producing (1.70 million) barrels petroleum per day while as, Turkmenistan has been producing natural gas more than (2.5Tcf), Uzbekistan is the 3rd largest natural gas producer of natural gas with (2Tcf) but seriously is being effected by the lack of the known-how technology and capital to further exploit its mineral resources. Likewise, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are the largest basin for the hydroelectric potentials which can meet the (60%) of world's electricity demands. Similarly, Russia is the largest country in the world in terms of geography, with a population of more than 0.144 billion and has been controlling most of the natural resources of the landlocked Central Asian countries through the transit corridors and pipelines.

The above analyses clearly indicate that there are huge reciprocal potentials among India, CARs and Russia, in terms of trade, investment and more importantly in the energy sector. Nonetheless, India's trade with the Eurasian region has been remained at the lowest ebb in comparison to other countries and regions of the world. Its trade with the Central Asia stood at less than US \$ 1 billion in 2017, while as at the same time India's trade with China stood at (US \$ 72.340 billion), US (US \$ 64.260 billion), EU (US \$ 160 billion), ASEAN (US \$ 650 billion), UAE India's trade volume stood at (US\$ 59.160 billion).

On the contrary, if India, Central Asia and Russia cooperate in these areas it could become a largest economic zone. Efforts have already been made in this direction like, the 'Green Corridor (INSTC)', TAPI, Ashgabat Agreement, Indian, joint initiatives in IT sector, and India's anticipated membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) could result into mutual interests and inter-regional integration. The full realization of their economic complementarities could not only change the regional geopolitical scenario but could also change the world order in their favor. Indeed, the increasing cooperation among these three regions consequently could check the exponential influence of China in the Eurasian region, which is in fact a shared concern of both India and Russia.

The security cooperation has been an important dimension of regional cooperation between India, Central Asia and Russia. Indeed, all have been facing mounting security threats ranging from, terrorism, extremism, political Islam, state sponsored and cross-border terrorism, small arms proliferations human and drug trafficking. Truly, India is facing cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir, Russia in Chechnya and Central Asia in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. Although, most of the Central Asian countries are secular countries but, the menace of fundamentalists and extremist Islamic groups have been growing over the years. The IMU has been the most terrifying threat to the region. Its loyalty towards the ISIS has been becoming a major regional security concerns of the stakeholder parties. The transnational character of the Taliban, Al Qaida, ISIS, IMU, HuT and other militant outfits have been generating a high degree of apprehension for India, Central Asia and Russia.

Any advancement of terrorist activities could invigorate similar elements active in Kashmir, Central Asia and Chechnya. However, if Russia, India and the Central Asian countries would come closer robustly, peaceful and stable Asia and Eurasia could be the possible outcome. Steps have been taken in this regard both at bilateral and multilateral level on part of Russia, Central Asia and India. For instance, there is a joint working group between India and Russia on terrorism, India's full membership in SCO and its possible inclusion into the 'Dushanbe Four' (2009), an anti-terrorist organization comprising of Russia, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Therefore, the greater security cooperation among them could contribute peace, harmony and development not only among the parties concerned but to the whole Asian, Eurasia and Middle-East as well.

6.11 Summary

It has been observed that India has shared long civilizational and historical interactions with the Central Asian region. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union including India's shift in foreign policy approach from Nehruvian idealism towards pragmatism had broken mutual trust and cooperation. Given the geo-political, geo-strategic and economic importance of the CARs including the growing regional and global maneuvering for establishing spheres of influence in the region had consequently caused serious concern for India and Russia as being test-tested friends.

In fact, India had realized that Central Asia has been a distinct region, an immediate vicinity and whose patterns of relations have had an impact on the regional dynamics. Equally, Russia regarded this region, strategic backyard and a space of privileged interests. India has introduced several policy frameworks such as Extended Neighbourhood Policy, Look West Policy, Look North Policy and the Connect Central Asia policy, a Track II initiative to fast-track India's engagements with the Central Asian countries. However, India's approach remained more or less ineffective in solidifying its interests in the region. Moreover, the changing dynamics of geo-politics of Central Asia has put Indian multifaceted interests at risk. The Russia's growing tilt towards China and Pakistan and China's rising economic clout in the

Central Asia have challenged India's geostrategic and geo-economic forays in the Central Asian region. Despite, India's shift towards the US, Russia has been still a primary option to meet India's multifaceted interests in the Central Asian region. Russia has been a major partner for the realization of India's major projects in the Central Asia like, the INSTC, TAPI, joint initiatives in IT sector, and India's anticipated membership in the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). Above all, Russia has supported India's full membership in SCO to rebalance the rising China in the Central Asia. In this connection, Russia has welcomed greater Indian involvement in the Central Asian region because it is India that has the potential to counterpoise China in collaboration with Russia in the region.

Chapter-Seven

Conclusion

Russia's relationship with the Central Asian region has been established since the recorded history. Aftermath of the breakup, Russia was in perplexed situation, how to frame and follow its foreign policy vis-à-vis Central Asia. Ultimately, the changing dynamics had compelled Russia to reorient its policy towards Central Asia. The resurgence of Russia in Central Asia, one way or the other has also been effected the Indo-Central Asian relations. Thus, the study of thesis has been carried out in the background of changing Russia's geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic position *vis-à-vis*, the US, China, Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and India in the Central Asian region. Moreover, this work would also analyze how Russia has acted as a bridge and ridge for India's geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic interests in the Central Asian region. In the light of knowledge gap, extracted from reviewing the available literature in the context of Russia's multi-faceted engagements with the CARs including India's efforts to enhance its relationship with the region, the thesis had set the following objectives:

Objectives

1. To analyze, the Profile of the Central Asian Republics (CARs) in the context of different geopolitical theory;
2. To examine the changing dynamics of the Russia-Central Asia relations in the post-Cold War era;
3. To examine Russia in the New Great Game of Central Asia;
4. To investigate India's foreign policy challenges and options in the Central Asian region.

The first objective has been achieved in the Chapter-Three of this study. This chapter has examined the collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequently how Central Asian countries have emerged as independent countries. It has been found that the Central Asian countries have not launched any liberation movement, rather independence was offered to these countries. Since times immemorial, the region had been given different names like, Transoxiana, Turon, Mavaraun-al-Nahr, Inner Asia,

and Turkestan. However, in the Tashkent Meeting (1993), the region was given a unique name *i.e.*, 'Central Asia' comprising of the five countries. Moreover, this chapter has discussed the profile of the CAR, scrutinized their political setups, economic structures and socio-cultural composition of the Central Asian countries since 1990's.

As for as the political systems of the CARs are concerned, it has been found that most of these countries have been following the authoritarian political regimes. The President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev has remained in office since April 24, 1990, followed by the Emomali Rakhmonov of Tajikistan (1992-Till Date), Islamic Karimov of Uzbekistan (1990-2016) and Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow of Turkmenistan (2006-Till Date). Kyrgyzstan, although, made some efforts towards political liberalization but the authoritarian character has remained intact.

It has been observed that since independence (1990s), the Central Asian economies have gradually been transformed from command to market oriented. To boost economic performances and private sector competitiveness, structural reforms have been put into practice. The Central Asia has been moving in the direction of modernization of industrial sector along with the boosting of the service sector through business-friendly fiscal policies. Moreover, investments in hydrocarbons and mineral resources coupled with the global commodity boom have left indelible imprints in the Central Asian economies. Kazakhstan has been taken the lead in terms of PPP followed by Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. However, the annual growth rates of the Central Asian economies have been remained volatile, largely because of fluctuations in global prices particularly of oil and natural gas.

In terms of the Socio-cultural composition of Central Asian countries, this chapter has found that the region has been housing different ethnic groups such as, the Iranians, Turks, Tatars, Uighurs, Karakalpak, and others. The transnational character of the ethnic groups extends to the neighboring countries like Russia, Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and China. However, it has been found, that in all the Central Asian countries the Russian influence has been remained significant especially in terms of culture and language *vis-à-vis* China, Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan. In fact, it has been studied that Russian is used for administrative and educational purposes and has become the lingua franca of the Central Asian countries.

The same chapter has also discussed the concept of geo-politics within the framework of different geopolitical theories. In fact, the geopolitical theories such as, Organic theory, Heartland theory, Rimland theory, and Air Power Theory have been discussed. The analyses of these theories still reveal that Central Asian region occupies a vital importance to both regional and extra-regional players.

The second objective has been attained in the Chapter-Four of this work. In this chapter, efforts have been made to examine the changing dynamics of Russia's relationship with the Central Asian countries. It has been observed that, Russia had been enjoying multi-faceted cooperations with the region. The region had been remained under the exclusive control of the Tsarist-Russia and then the Soviet Union for hundreds of years. However, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union (1991) and the subsequent emergence of the Central Asian countries, the relationship has become enervated, given the paradigmatic shift of Russia foreign policy towards the West and altogether ignored Central Asia.

Economically, Russia's relations with the Central countries had also debilitated. Its trade with the five Central Asian countries had reached at the lowest ebb (US \$ 59226 million in 1991 to the US \$ 3695 million in 1999). Russia had expelled the CARs from the rubble zone and leaving them in the lurch (1993). Moreover, Russia had adopted an economic policy of 'Shaking off the Burden' and cancellation of financial subsidies for the Central Asian countries. Thus, Russia's economic relationship with the CARs had declined considerably during the early 1990's.

Strategically, Russia has reduced the military spending (US \$ 164 billion to the US \$ 73) during 1991-1995 period. Consequently, it generated a sense of insecurity on the part of Central Asian countries. The 'Collective Security Treaty' of Russia with the CARs had become non-functional. The deployment of Russian troops in the region had come down the lowest level. Moreover, passive reactions on part of Russia had not prevented the escalation of the civil war in Tajikistan (1992-1997), the rising menace of non-state actors (IMU, HuT), the flow of drugs and small arms proliferation in the region. It clearly indicates that Central Asian countries had exposed to strategic vulnerabilities and given this the region had lost faith on Russia as the security umbrella.

Meanwhile, the regional dynamics have been changed. In this backdrop, Russia was compelled to re-engage its foreign policy towards the Central Asia. Importantly, Russia's economic interdependence, its ethnic closeness, the rise of radical Islam, and more importantly the strategic maneuverings of regional and extra-regional players toward this region had obliged Russia to re-energize its relationship with the Central Asian countries and thereby, to restore its lost influence in the region. Consequently, made its paradigmatic shift towards the Central Asian countries.

Russia has reoriented its foreign policy approach towards the region. It has been declared the CARs as its 'Strategic Backyard' and a 'Space of Vital Interest', under the Primakov Doctrine. Moreover, Russia had rented the site of the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, stationed Russian troops in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan, and pressurized the CARs to ensure their adherence to the Russia led Collective Security Treaty (CST) of the CIS. Importantly, the change in the political leadership has strengthened the multifaceted relations with the region. Under the President Putin's regime, all the Central Asian countries became Russia's strategic partners, and four of them, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, have become military allies. Apart, the extreme rise in the oil and natural gas prices have swelled the Kremlin's coffers that in turn, pushed Russia towards Central Asia. Political leaders' personal ties with the political elites of the CARs, lead to political rapprochement with the region. No criticism on part of the Russian leadership of the Central Asian authoritarian rule, no support for referendum for changing the political regime and tenure of presidencies have become the hallmarks of the relationship. Russian leadership had given highest priority to Kazakhstan, stitched strategic alliances with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, paid due respect to Uzbekistan and also brought self-isolated Turkmenistan in its ambit.

Russia has focused towards the security cooperation with the Central Asian countries. It has signed several military and security agreements with the CARs. In fact, Russia had reacted instantly towards ethnic crisis of Kyrgyzstan and tajiksatn and also assumed responsibility to manage the regional security challenges. This is borne out of bilateral military ties with the CARs as well as under the auspices of regional multilateral agreements.

The economic cooperation with the Central Asian has been increased substantially. Currently, its trade with the CARs stood at (US \$ 25 billion). Moreover, Russia has maintained its monopoly over the transits of natural resources of Central Asian countries. Thus, Russia has restored its lost influence both at bilateral and multilateral level. In fact, the multilateral institutions like, CSTO, SCO, EurAsEC, CU, SES, and EEU played an important role in boosting Russia's relationship with the Central Asian countries.

The third objective of the study has been achieved in the Chapter-Five. The collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent emergence of the Central Asian countries had created a power vacuum in the region. Moreover, given the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic significance of the CARs, it become the pivotal area for regional and extra-regional players. The major powers like the US, Russia and China, and regional actors like, Turkey, Iran, India, and Pakistan have been actively outmaneuvering the presence of other actors to enhance their respective interests and leverage in the region.

In this zero-sum game, China like Russia has been adhering to stabilize the authoritarian political regimes of the CARs, *vis-à-vis* the US and its European allies. China in collaboration with Russia have pressurized the US to vacate its military bases in Central Asia. In terms of economics, China is one of the largest trade partners of the CARs. China's trade with Central Asia stood at (US \$ 30 billion) in 2017, followed by Russia (US \$ 25 billion); and the US (US \$ 19 billion). China has broken the Russian monopoly over the Central Asian countries' oil and gas pipelines. At the same time China has been cooperating with Russia in the economic sphere in the Central Asian region. The Chinese and Russian projects like, BRI and EEU have been converging, to outfox the US influence in the region.

Unlike Russia and China, the US has been urging the Central Asian countries for promoting the democracy and political pluralism. Nonetheless, procedural political systems based on regular elections in the Central Asian region have remained in embryo. Following the 9/11 attacks (2001), the CARs became the frontline states of the US led OEF (2001) in Afghanistan. It had established its military bases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, close to the borders of Russia, China and Iran. Consequently, the US

presence in the region had caused security dilemma to the former's adversaries like, Russia, China and Iran. However, the post-2014 had witnessed the US military decline in the region. It had left its military bases, the NDN was closed by the CARs and Russia as well. While at the same time, the US has instituted the C5+1 (CARs plus US; 2015), mechanism to balance the rising assertiveness of Russia and China in the Central Asian region.

The US has been supporting for the diversification of energy routes, supporting free market economies and integration with the supra-national financial institution. For this, the US has adopted the 'Open Door' and 'Equal Access' Policy (1990's), Silk Road Strategic Acts' (1999, 2006) and the New Silk Route Initiative (2011) to restrict both Russia, China in the region.

Besides, the regional countries like, Iran, Turkey, and Pakistan have been making attempts to enhance their respective footsteps in the Central Asian region. These countries are sidelining with the major powers to protect and promote their respective geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic interests in the region.

The study has also analyzed Russia's re-balancing reciprocations *vis-à-vis* the major powers and regional actors in the Central Asian region. Russia has been supporting the authoritarian outlook of the local regimes. Its model of 'Sovereign Democracy' has in fact more appeal in the region, as it coincides with the local regimes political structures. Russia stood as bed-rock against the Western attempts for political reforms and change towards the democracy. It has opposed and all-together criticized the trans-national democratic moves, backed by West in general and the US in particular in its backyard.

Russia has been remained the chief security patron of the Central Asian countries, whereas on the contrary, there is no military presence of the US or China. At the multilateral level, Russia through the CSTO has restricted the CARs in aligning with the NATO or getting too involved with the US-led PfP program. Russia has veto power over the CIS members' military ties with the West, especially with the US. Consequently, the CSTO platform has provided Russia a license to meddle in the internal affairs of the CARs. It has been found that Russia has been focusing to strengthen the CSTO, so that the SCO, which is largely a Chinese organization, does

not supersede in the region. Although Russia is a member of the SCO, while as China is not a member country of CSTO. In fact, Russia's policy has been more intrusive within the framework of the CSTO than within the SCO. Russia aimed to transform the CSTO on a par with NATO, so that it can speak to the latter as an equal, and oblige the CARs to go through Russia before engaging in any military initiatives with the US or China. At the multilateral level, Russia has more leverage than China and the US especially, in terms of security engagements in the region. Thus, Russia has military leverage in its privileged zone of interest, vis-à-vis the US and China.

Economically, the study has also found that Russia has enhanced its economic cooperation with the Central Asian countries. Its trade with the CARs stood at the US \$ 18 billion in 2017. Moreover, it has been studied that with the exception of the China-Kazakhstan Oil Pipeline (2009), China-Turkmenistan Gas Pipeline (2009) and the BTC Pipeline (2006), Russia has monopolized the pipeline routes of the CARs. The Russian energy companies like Transneft and Gazprom, have been in a strong position and to controlled and monopolized the pipelines by signing long-term contracts, despite the persistent price disputes. Thus, Russia has been a leading player in the Central Asian region both at bilateral and multilateral level vis-à-vis the US and China. However, in the recent years, Russia's economic influence in the region has been taken-over by China, which is now a leading economic partner of the region.

The fourth objective has been achieved in Chapter-Six of this study. India has shared long civilizational and historical ties with the Central Asian region. Nonetheless, the colonial expansion of the Tsarist-Russia and the British had doodled India's interactions with this region. But, India's overall ties with the region have had friendly and cordial. After independence, India's ties with the Central Asian countries had shaped by former's strategic closeness with Russia. The bilateral relationship had reached its zenith after the signing of Indo-Soviet Treaty of peace, friendship, and cooperation (1971). India was one of the a few countries that had a consulate at Tashkent in Soviet Central Asia. Above all, Indian cultural was very vibrant, through television, movies, music and cultural exchanges. However, after the collapse of the Soviet Union including India's shift

in foreign policy approach from Nehruvian idealism towards pragmatism had broken mutual trust and cooperation.

Given the geo-political, geo-strategic and economic importance of the Central Asia, including the growing regional and extra-regional actors maneuvering for establishing spheres of influence in the region had consequently caused serious concern for India and Russia. India has been considering Central Asia a distinct region, an immediate vicinity and whose patterns of relations have an impact on and are impacted by developments either in Central Asia or South Asia.

In order to protect and promote its interests in the region, India has introduced several policy frameworks such as Extended Neighbourhood Policy, Look West Policy, Look North Policy and the Connect Central Asia policy. However, India's approach towards the region remained more or less ineffective in solidifying its footprints in the region. Indeed, India's economic relationship with the region has been remained at the lowest ebb due to lack of connectivity. Pakistan and China have blocked India's access to Central Asia. Furthermore, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) are likely to be affected INSTC and the Chabahar sea port given the geopolitical dynamics like increasing the dominance of China, unilateral withdrawal of Trump regime from Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), imposition of Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions (CAATSA). Moreover, China has outfoxed India in the economic and energy market of Central Asia.

Due to Russian impact, India has lost its lonely military airbase in Tajikistan (2011), which had been the key to its strategic footprint in the Central Asian region. Indeed, Russia has grown more concerned about China's and Pakistan's sensitivities as the airbase is close to their borders thereby, providing India psychological advantage in the region. Owing to the complex geo-politics in the region, Russia is unlikely to allow any country's exclusive military presence in its backyard.

Like, China, Pakistan, and Russia, the US is also putting checks to India in the Central Asian region. Indeed, India's growing geostrategic nexus with the US could certainly impact its relationship with Russia and Central Asia as well. Moreover, the US has been pressurizing India not to participate in the IPI pipeline. In fact, the geopolitical

strains between the US and Iran over the nuclear issue have further complicated the IPI project. With the geopolitical dynamics, India has almost abandoned the pipeline since 2008. Thus, the geological, geostrategic and geo-economic maneuvering of major powers have challenged the multifaceted interests of India in Central Asia. Apart from geopolitical dynamics, India has also been challenged by the growing menace terrorism, extremism, small arms proliferation, drug trafficking including visa problems, information gap, language barrier, etc. that too have caused woe to India in the Central Asian region

Despite India's shift towards the US, Russia still remain a primary option to meet India's multifaceted interests in the Central Asian region. Due to the reciprocities and congruities of mutual interests, Russia has been stood for India's viable option in the Central Asian region to protect and promote its interests and counter its adversaries. Russia has been one of the major partners for the realization INSTC, TAPI, joint initiatives in IT sector, and India's anticipated membership in the EEU. Above all, Russia has supported India in the full membership of SCO to rebalance the rising China. In this connection, Russia has been applauding India's greater involvement in the region because it is India that has the potential to counterpoise China in collaboration with Russia in the region. Hence, despite the changing geopolitical dynamics in Central Asian region, Russia has been proved a better options for India in the Central Asian region. In fact, both the countries have been paying considerable significance to this strategic friendship, which has reached at a phase where closeness with any other country would not make much difference to this partnership.

Recommendations

The study provides significant recommendations on the basis of broad analysis of the study.

Renew Bilateralism with all Central Asian Countries Counties

After the demise of the Soviet Union the Central Asian region has once again become the Centre of attraction for major powers and regional actors like Russia, China, US, Iran, Turkey, India, and Pakistan. In fact, the regional and trans-regional

players are/were active to outmaneuver the strategic presence of other actors. Therefore, divergence of interests amongst the involved actors in the region has turned the Central Asia into a global pivot thus, caused serious challenges for Russian dominance. In order to strengthen its stand in Eurasia, Russia is focusing on regional integration. Off course, Moscow led multi-lateral initiatives like, CIS, CSTO, SCO, CU, and EEU so far have remained successful towards the re-integration of the region.

Given the geo-political, geo-strategic and geo-economic competition among regional and extra-regional players in the CARs, Russia should has to refurbish its bilateral ties with each Central Asian Countries. It should not only treat the region as a monolithic unit i.e., lumping all of the Central Asian countries together and interacts with them without differentiation of significance but should also enhance its relations on bilateral basis. Therefore, to make its diplomacy more effective and objective oriented, Russia must improve its relations with the regional countries, bilaterally.

To Promote Cooperation with the Regional and Extra-Regional Players

In order to protect and promote economic growth, infrastructural development, social cohesion etc., peace and stability are vital. Indeed, the process towards peace and stability in the CARs has remained critical for Moscow. Russia's competition with other actors in Central Asia should not close the doors to cooperation with them. As the ethnically diverse Central Asian region has remained a fertile recruitment ground for various terrorist outfits like, IMU, HuT, ISIS, Al Qaeda, Taliban, and others. In fact, Afghanistan sharing borders with both Central Asia and South Asia, has been remained critical from the Kashmir and Chechnya point of view, on part of India and Russia respectively. The rising phantom of terrorist outfits in this strategic arena and their possible spillover effects can dent the fabric of the regional security. Furthermore, lack of political maturity on part of CARs leadership has likely multiplied the sources of instability. Therefore, the achievement of regional stability has been holding a pivotal significance, for both Russia and India. Given the possibility that the Arab uprisings and the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan could spillover instability to Central Asia and South Asia as well. Greater security cooperation among them could contribute peace, harmony and development not only among the parties concerned but to the

whole Asian, Eurasia and Middle-East as well. Therefore, maintaining and strengthening cooperation between and amongst regional and extra-regional players both at bilateral and multilateral levels might be key to enhance Russian strategic leverage and India's chief objective in Eurasia.

Boost Economic Cooperation with all the Central Asian Countries

No doubt, Russia and India have speeded up economic cooperation with the Central Asia countries, yet, the total trade volume is meagre as compared to the China. Indeed, China is one of the largest trade partners of the CARs in comparison to Russia, US and India. Its trade stood at (US \$ 30 billion) in 2017, while as it is (US \$ 25 billion) of Russia, (US \$ 19 billion) of the US and less than (US \$ 1 billion) of India in the same time period. At the same time, India's trade with China stood at (US \$ 72.340 billion), US (US \$ 64.260 billion), EU (US \$ 160 billion), ASEAN (US \$ 650 billion), UAE India's trade volume stood at (US\$ 59.160 billion).

Therefore, if Russia and India have to surpass the economic rise of China in Central Asia in future, it needs to accelerate trade in terms of volume, diversity, and expand the direct ventures on both sides thereby may turn into a largest economic zone. The full realization of their economic complementarities could not only change the regional geopolitical scenario but could also change the world order in their favor. Indeed, the increasing cooperation among these three regions (Russia, Central Asia and India) consequently could check the exponential influence of China in the Eurasian region, which is in fact a shared concern of both India and Russia.

To Act as a Balancer amongst the US, Russia, and China

Since, all the three players are equally important to India so far as the economic rise of the country is concerned. However, the changing dynamics of geo-politics of Central Asia has put Indian multifaceted interests at risk. Indeed, Russia's growing tilt towards China and Pakistan and China's rising economic clout in the Central Asia has challenged both India and Russia in the Central Asian region. Indian policymakers should watch this situation closely. In this backdrop, India should thus be ready to use any avenue that moderates China's influence on Russia in Central Asia. One way to

do this is to act as a mediator between Russia and the West. India enjoys cordial relations with most Western countries, particularly the US. It also shares Russia's concerns regarding the growing strength of China. India should use its diplomatic goodwill to bring the two sides together on a shared platform, based on common interests and concerns. Thus, these events will have larger geopolitical consequences, which India could use to its advantage.

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