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# Preface

India had relations with all Central Asian Republics since ages. In fact, before Islam became the mainstream religion in Central Asia, Buddhism was the supreme religion. These republics came into existence in 1990 after the disintegration of the USSR, which was the second most powerful global superpower during the era of the Cold War. The Bolshevik Revolution led by Vladimir Lenin came into the USSR in 1917 before that it was ruled by the monarchy known as Czar. It was considered as one of the most powerful monarchies in contemporary global system. Czars expanded geographical territory of USSR and included CARs in due process. During the time when Britain was the superpower and USSR was competing and many pundits of international system called this rivalry 'Great Game'. Central Asian republics were already under USSR's tutelage therefore Afghanistan was a buffer state between British India and Czarist Russia. British Empire was jealously watching expansion of Czarist Russia and to contain it divided turbulent Pakhtuns into two parts after demarcating 'Durand Line' in 1893. After partition India and Pakistan became two identity and Central Asian republics became remote neighbors. It is an open secret that united Kashmir has border with Central Asian republics and due to Nehru's historical blunder Kashmir was divided and we became remote neighbors of Central Asia. Without showing concern for the actual situation, fanatically following ideologies can go against the national interest, just as an authentic follower of Marxism can go against the perceived national interests of a Marxist government.<sup>[1]</sup> Nehru was obsessed with Wilsonian idealism and due to its obsession he ignored national interests and committed many mistakes of this category. Tibet, Kashmir and Chittagong Hill Tract's are significant among them. Our territorial connectivity was cut down with Central Asia due to Nehru's megalomania to become global harbinger of peace and for that obsession he brought Kashmir issue into the Security Council of the United Nations, which was not required because India was at the verge of final victory over Kashmir

and never in world history, one can find the victorious party is calling for mediation. One of the lesser discussed point is that due to Nehru's ill thought decisions, Central Asia which has been India's immediate neighbor become extended neighbor.

The great game was all about geopolitical and strategic rivalry between British Empire and Czarist Russia. The true sentiment of the Great Game was focused upon the theme of the receding power and influence of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey, which akin to the Hapburgs was breathing its last few decades in the fast changing European theater. The period between the Russo-Persian Treaty of 1813 along with the convention of 1907 laid the fundamental premise of the Great Game. The term "Great Game" is usually attributed to the British Intelligence Officer Arthur Connolly, who first coined the term in the officialdom. The popular term was introduced in the popular consciousness by Rudyard Kipling in his novel, *Kim*. To some, geopolitics plays a greater role in the region, which has been described as the "second Persian Gulf," the new "grand chessboard", the "heartland of the heartland" or the "Great Game II".<sup>[2]</sup> The Cold War complex also haunts the republics. Despite this unease, energy politics seems to be of greatest concern on this grand chessboard. The New Great Game has been initiated in this natural resources rich vast tract of land after the end of the Cold War and with the launching of the 'Operation Enduring Freedom' in Afghanistan by US led NATO forces to liquidate the Taliban and Al-Qaeda. It was a great relief for Central Asian Republics because these recently established countries were also confronting a survival war against terror groups namely IMU affiliated with Al-Qaeda. Due to its excellent geo-strategically location connected with Eurasian landmass, it had also became route for drug trafficking. It is a well established reality that drug traffickers are pumping a sizeable portion of their income into the terror factory. Despite relative stability, Afghanistan still produces roughly 2/3 of global Heroin production. After the withdrawal of NATO forces in December 2014, Afghan National Army is containing the rampaging Taliban and it has direct connectivity with the overall security situation and regimes stability in Central Asian Republics. Pakistan has been one of the major supply routes for Afghanistan due to its land locked situation. But, Central Asian Republics have opened another route from their territory for the NATO forces to commute war field logistics. Pakistan is also dreaming that in case of the establishment of its puppet

regime in Kabul, it will extend its imprint in Central Asia. During the Taliban era, India along with Iran and Russia forged an alliance to support the Northern Alliance against Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics were important elements of that alliance to defeat the forces of destruction and fear. Due to the long and porous border, ethnic convergences and other similarity, stability of Afghanistan remains critical for the sustainable development of Central Asian Republics. This area has abundance of natural resources particularly gas, oil and Uranium. Of the global powers that have prime energy interests in the region, the US, Russia and China are the leading competing forces, although nations such as Japan and India also have their sights on the region.<sup>[3]</sup> Due to all these factors new great game is on in this important arena and all important global powers are involved in this game. During the Cold War period (1945-1990), India-Central Asia relations remained casual because being under the USSR's clout Central Asia could not develop independent relations with India.

The countries of Central Asia are endowed with significant hydrocarbon and mineral resources and are close to India geographically. Kazakhstan is the largest producer of uranium and has huge gas and oil reserves as well. Similarly, Uzbekistan is also rich in gas, and is an important regional producer of gold along with Kyrgyzstan. Tajikistan has vast hydropower potential besides oil deposits, and Turkmenistan has the fourth largest gas reserves of the world. Geographically, the strategic location of these countries makes them a bridge between different regions of Asia and between Europe and Asia. Although the significance of the region in India's economic and energy security is clear, lack of direct surface connectivity has been affecting the economic engagement.

However, the recent inauguration of Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway line has given the region a short access to the Indian Ocean. India, on the other hand, has been making investment in Iran's Chabahar port. This alternative route has eased the business connectivity of the outside world with the region.<sup>[4]</sup> India and Iran have already got connected in Central Asia through this port while construction of the Delaram-Jarnej road in western Afghanistan will further improve connectivity between India and Central Asia. In fact, in April 2015, India's Surface Transport Minister and high profile

minister of Modi government, Nitin Gadkari during his visit to Iran stressed on the point that the newly developed Chahbhar port jointly built by India & Iran can prove to be instrumental in cementing relations between India and Central Asian countries. Prime Minister Modi's visit to this part of the world further witnessed many bilateral agreements ranging from energy supply to defense cooperation. Iranian President Rouhani and Indian Prime Minister Modi met in Ufa (Russia) in July 2015 and had a 90 minutes bilateral talk. During this meeting, it was pledged that India and Iran would accelerate their bilateral relations. In July 2015, Iran and the western world have inked a nuclear deal and now the whole gamut of the decade long sanctions imposed against Iran will gradually be lifted.

Iran is an extremely important country for promotion and protection of India's interests in Central Asia, Afghanistan and in the larger canvass of the Middle East due to convergences of interests. In 2015, long imposed sanctions were lifted from Iran. In the backdrop of this positive development in August 2015, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif visited New Delhi and met Prime Minister Modi and other ministers. Again it was reiterated that cooperation on all fronts will be accelerated. During one day visit of Mr. Zarif issues related to Islamic State threat, energy investments, Afghanistan and development of the Chahbahar port were discussed. He also stated that India is an important player in West Asia. Prime Minister Modi 'conveyed India's commitment to work with Iran for development of the Chahbahar port which would have far reaching benefit not only for the people of India and Iran, but also for Afghanistan and the entire Central Asian region. Mr. Zarif acknowledged India's support during turbulent times. It is expected that Prime Minister Modi may visit Tehran later this year.<sup>[5]</sup> As Iran has enormous energy reserves, the relationship between the two countries took a natural way of deepening. India is currently the 5<sup>th</sup> largest global energy consumer and by 2022 will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest energy consumer leaving Japan and Russia behind. It is also opined by sections of global economic pundits that by 2042 India will be representing 23% of the global GDP. For the sustainability of India's growth saga, sustainable and diverse supply of energy is a must.

Energy security has been vital for sustainable growth since ages. Although early scholars and realist practitioners may not have obviously included economic concerns in their works, latecomers have

started featuring energy resources in the political realist analysis of international relations. Gilpin regards Thucydides' work on the *History of the Peloponnesian War* to be partially driven by energy competition; at that time it was wheat to fuel human bodies.<sup>[6]</sup> Undoubtedly, India also has strong interests in Central Asia. As the second largest growing economy in the world, India relies heavily on energy imports to sustain its domestic economic expansion. According to the International Energy Outlook, India was the fifth largest oil consumer in 2007 and its demand grew to almost 3 million barrels per day (bbl/d) in 2008.<sup>[7]</sup> At present, 68 percent of its oil is imported, and its dependency on oil imports is expected to increase to 92 percent by 2020.<sup>[8]</sup> Within this context, considerable progress by India to obtaining Central Asian resources has been made. For instance, since 2004 India has invested \$ 3 billion in the Sakhalin-3 oil field and the joint Russian-Kazakh Kurmangazy oil field in Central Asia.<sup>[9]</sup> India also signed an agreement with Uzbekistan to launch a \$ US 60 million joint venture for India's state-owned gas utility.<sup>[10]</sup>

Iran is not only important for fulfilling India's energy needs rather due to its geographical proximity it is emerging India's gateway to Central Asia. India's interests in CARs is converging with Iran therefore in the backdrop of lifting the long sanctions, Iran is all set to expand its imprint in CAR'S. Drug traffickers are the major source of resource provider for terror outfits of Central Asia. It has also created havoc in Iran. Since last two decades more than 3,000 Iranian security guards have been killed by the drug syndicates. India is also confronting with the tentacles of terror and drug money is the major sponsorship for that syndicate. In addition, due to the connections between regional terrorist groups in Central Asia and the insurgents in Kashmir and the Punjab, the region's cooperation is seen as instrumental to India's anti-terrorist security. India is also seen by the Central Asian countries as an important gatekeeper of regional terrorism: once the Kazakh President Nazarbayev publicly invited India to join the Shanghai Cooperative Organization (SCO) for the sake of facilitating anti-terrorism.<sup>[11]</sup> Consequently, in July 2015, India formally joined it. Hence, Central Asia is also involved in the Indian-Pakistani rivalry. In 2004, Uzbekistan was commissioned by the Indian Air Force Mid-Air-Refueling Squadron (MARS) to build three giant IL-78 MKI refuellers. Kazakhstan also signed a military cooperation agreement with India in 2002 for joint production of military hardware such as torpedoes

and heavy machine gun barrels.<sup>[12]</sup> All these gestures have irritated Pakistan. Indeed, India has shown its intention to respond to great power diplomacy in Central Asia by challenging the Big Three as well. For instance, Phunchok Stobdan, former Director of the Indian Cultural Center, once suggested that the US's growing presence in the region "forms a compelling reason for India's reclaiming its geopolitical rights and responsibilities in Central Asia".<sup>[13]</sup>

In the early part of 2000, India truly grasped the strategic importance of Central Asian states. This change in Indian attitude towards the region was motivated by a gamut of reasons. Indian leaders have acknowledged that Central Asia could be an effective catalyst in the stabilization process of Afghanistan.

It is well known that stability in Afghanistan is the best guarantee for security in South and Central Asia. Since 2001, Afghanistan has been relatively stable and Afghan National Army, nurtured by NATO led forces to contain rampage Taliban has been relatively successful to contain them. In the imagination of Central Asia and Afghanistan that had been artificially separated from each other for centuries, these questions respectively focusing on geography, identity and regional cooperation play a significant role.

Central Asia is Afghanistan's extended neighborhood not only on the basis of geographical continuity but also in terms of religious, cultural, spiritual and ethnic affinities. Afghanistan's Tajik, Hazara and Uzbek population and its Sunni Islamic tradition have established closer links with the peoples of Central Asian republics. Considering security problems transcending the Central and South Asian borders today, Afghanistan has also shared common strategic interests with its neighbours. Furthermore, in recent years, the initiatives to revitalize new Silk Road projects have emphasized the increasing importance of regional economic cooperation. The debates over Greater Central Asia have attracted a great deal of attraction once again.

The term, "Greater Central Asia" which was popularized by S. Frederick Starr in 2005 and labeled as a part of the US plans in Central Asia, has not fallen off the agenda in the last ten years. This term recognizes Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan as "comprising a single region"<sup>[14]</sup> an "emerging zone of which Afghanistan is the heart."<sup>[15]</sup> In 2008, Starr



published another policy paper supporting his original ideas. According to him, “The collapse of the USSR [the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics] was a transforming event, but its impact in Central Asia was incomplete. The five former Soviet republics gained sovereignty, but the former Soviet borders to the south and east remained sealed. ... [This term] accepts the reality that for two millennia both Xinjiang and Afghanistan has been integral components of the cultural zone of which the five former Soviet republics are a part.”<sup>[16]</sup> Similarly, Swanström in a report which was published in 2011 described the Greater Central Asia comprising Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, Afghanistan, and even Iran and Pakistan as a coherent and interconnected sub-region.<sup>[17]</sup>

It is argued that the integration of Afghanistan to both Central and South Asia, especially through security establishments and economic cooperation may bring stability and prosperity for the whole region. It is also claimed that supporting the vision of Greater Central Asia will be beneficial for all countries and peoples of the region including major players, Russia, China, US, and India.<sup>[18]</sup> United States and China has launched its own Silk Route projects in Central Asia. India has been late starter. India’s “Connect Central Asia” policy and International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) expanding India’s trade and investment links with Central Asia are other plans to bridge Central Asia and Afghanistan.<sup>[19]</sup>

India has great interest to ensure political stability, security and prosperity in Central Asia. New Delhi has developed a strategic approach towards Central Asian countries mostly based on security and energy issues. India rented Ayni airbase in Tajikistan in 2003 “in its quest for strategic footing in Central Asia,” but it lost this base to Russia in 2010 after Tajikistan declared that Moscow would be the only country to use the airbase.<sup>[20]</sup> With the aim of expanding its bilateral partnerships in the region, India launched the “Connect Central Asia” policy in 2012 to establish strategic and security cooperation particularly in the field of energy development.<sup>[21]</sup> This policy was first announced by the Minister of State for External Affairs, E. Ahamed on the occasion of First India-Central Asia Dialogue which was held on 12-13 June in 2012 in Bishkek. Mr. Ahamed explained Indian strategy towards the region as follows:

India is now looking intently at the region through the framework

of its 'Connect Central Asia' policy, which is based on pro-active political, economic and people-to-people engagement with Central Asian countries, both individually and collectively. I believe that India's active presence in the region will contribute to stability and development in the entire Central and South Asia region. ... A cooperative approach for embedding Afghanistan into a more meaningful regional economic and security framework would have benefits for the entire region. One way is to work towards converting Afghanistan into a hub for trade and energy, connecting Central and South Asia. [22]

The implementation of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project which was announced in 1995 and has recently revitalized carries a considerable potential to ensure regional economic integration and to create mutual dependency between Central and South Asia [23] On December 13, 2015, Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, Pakistani Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, and Indian Vice President Hamid Ansari summoned in Turkmenistan for launching the ground-breaking ceremony of TAPI, a pipeline project which is expected to be operational within the next four years. The 1,735-kilometer pipeline will transport 33 billion cubic metres of gas annually to South Asia for a period of 30 years. [24] The integration of Afghanistan to both Central and South Asia, especially through the security establishments and economic cooperation could be beneficial not only for the relatively weak and fragile states of the region, but also for the major regional players such as Russia, China, United States (U.S.) and India. But TAPI and IPI pipelines are passing through turbulent phase in Afghanistan and insurgency infested regions of Pakistan. Until these non-state actors are not contained, pipeline projects are bound to be delayed in implementation.

As far as India's inter-state diplomacy, the Mandala concept in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* precisely portrays a quasi-balance of power tactic in interactions among states. India needs to implement this policy in action in the context of the Central Asian Republics. The Vijigishu, who intends to establish its hegemony over others, should be aware of the motives of the other eleven kings of the Mandala in order to secure peace. [25] The circumstance of friends and foes changes with the existing political and economic situation. When the nation is situated

on the circumference, the Vijigishu is the enemy (ari). Next to the ari is the ally (mitra), then the enemy ally (arimitra), one's ally's ally (mitra mitra) then the enemy's ally's ally (arimitra mitra).<sup>[26]</sup> A smart and inscrutable leader should be required to play the political field with wit and strategy. As can be seen, protection rather than expansion is more important in state governance and the complex mandala concept is easy to ensure in case of Central Asia but successive Government has failed to do that. India till recently was pursuing its Central Asia policy in a low profile manner but since the arrival of the Modi Government in 2014, it has scaled up its central Asia policy and hell bent to ensure its national interests.

Central Asian states, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have common regional security problems such as environmental degradation, border disputes, migration, ethnic conflicts, energy security, and religious extremism. Russia by virtue of regional hegemon and China by virtue of its expanding economic might is already well counted along with lone global super power United States. India has been accused as late starter on many counts. But after May 2014 historical mandate, Modi government has taken many much needed steps to accelerate its presence in Central Asia. Prime Minister Modi's visit to five countries of Central Asia in July 2015 has indeed been viewed as a major initiative towards bridging the gap between India and Central Asia. Central Asia is extremely important for the promotion of our national interests. Energy security is of utmost importance. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are endowed with enormous hydrocarbon reserves. Two of these countries Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are in the Caspian littorals, thereby promising to open the door to other energy rich Caspian states. Connectivity through the North-South Transport Corridor featured in Modi's speeches in both the countries as much as the impending implementation of the two gas pipelines. These are implementable but hinges on the political situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>[27]</sup> After the nuclear deal Iran could be important facilitator of our interests in Central Asia. Prime Minister Modi became the maiden Indian PM to visit entire Central Asia since its inception and pledged a lot, now it is the time to implement possible assurances to promote our national interests. India must be proactive in this region as well.

In his 8-day trip to five Central Asian nations from 6 to 13 July,

2015, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi aimed to deepen economic and political cooperation in the region. During this visit, in Tashkent, Modi said the relationship between Central Asia and India has “ancient roots” and “now occupies a significant place in India’s future.” Similarly, Modi’s speech in Astana promising to “write a new chapter in an ancient relationship” between India and Central Asian states was highly optimistic.<sup>[28]</sup>

India also aims to construct a new trade corridor, International North-South Corridor (INSTC), a rail, road and shipping network connecting India with Russia via Central Asia. India is planning to bypass Pakistan and connect to Central Asia through this corridor. Furthermore, New Delhi is expected to establish an economic partnership with the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU), which is consisted of Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia, and Armenia in the years to come. These regional policies of India are also compatible with the U.S. strategy focusing on bolstering north-south trade, linking Central Asian states to India via Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Stability and sustainable development of Central Asia is in our larger interests. Our all important interests are converging. India has enormous soft power in the region and unlike Russia and China; India is always welcome by CAR.

Russia is a major player in Central Asia. Its growing proximity with China due to American pressure is well known. But in Central Asia, Russia and Chinese interests are diverging in longer terms therefore they are bound to follow different goals in longer terms. In contrast, India has no vested agenda like Russia, China and United States and in addition Central Asian Republics perceives India as a balancer within prevailing security architecture.

In post-cold war and post 9/11 scenario, India has emerged as the architect of south Asian security. Its expanding ties with Central Asia will be a positive situation for larger promotion of India’s foreign policy but in addition it will be a great leap forward for Central Asian Republics as India has manifested its aspiration to act as a balancer in the prevailing security architecture of Central Asia.

However, there are some challenges to Central Asia policy of India. Firstly, India does not share any borders with Central Asian states and

lacks direct route connections with the region. This prevents India from increasing its trade volumes with Central Asian countries. Secondly, Pakistan blocks every access of India to Central Asia not only in geographical but also in political sense. Finally, there is an ongoing competition among Russia, China, and the West and to a lesser degree, India over energy access and energy security in Central Asia. In this respect, especially China, being an energy-hungry country can be the potential rival for India in the future projects.

The Modi-led NDA-2 government must use its will power to accelerate its all-round relationship with Central Asia into a proactive mode as it has implemented 'Act East Policy'. For the promotion of our national interests in Central Asia, we need to sustain exclusive relationship with Russia, which has been dented a bit due to our expanding ties with the United States particularly in last decade. Deepening of our relationship with Central Asian Republics will further embolden India's national power and will boost India's ambitions as a global power. Accelerating our bilateral relationship with CAR therefore will be one of the critical foreign policy challenges for the Modi Government.

The Papers included in this volume are intended to analyze all these prevailing situation and going to suggest certain important policy recommendations which could be a facilitator of our mutual national interests.

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# **Drug Trafficking in Central Asia: India's Role and Interests**

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**Alok Kumar Gupta**

Drug trafficking of 'drugs of abuse' such as cocaine, heroin and amphetamines (synthetic stimulants) has long been a frustrating feature within the interactions and exchange of trade and commerce. Even according to UNODC 2015 report<sup>[1]</sup> drug use prevalence continues to be stable around the world, rather than on the wane. According to same report it is estimated that a total of 246 million people, slightly over 5 percent of those aged 15 to 64 years worldwide used an illicit drug in 2013. It further claims that globally some 27 million people are problem drug users, almost half of whom are people who inject drugs (PWID) out of which an estimated 1.65 million were living with HIV in 2013. Startlingly, the report says, globally one out of three drug users is a women, as also one out of five drug users in treatment is a women. Therefore, it is quite obvious that not only men but also women are victim of drug menace. One can only imagine the problem of drug menace that has been growing at a pace which is faster than the remedies which are being devised and implemented to check the production, distribution and trafficking of drugs. The problem not only persists but has been growing with development in the field of technology and communication. Advent of revolution in the field of telecommunication has further contributed towards expansion of the problem of trade, trafficking, production and proliferation of the drugs. Accordingly, this paper is an attempt to explore the menace of drug trafficking in one of the most prominent and notoriously infamous region of the world i.e. Central Asia.

## **Central Asia: Profile and Vulnerability**

Central Asia, sometimes also referred to as Middle Asia, is considered to be the core region of Asia, expanse of which spreads from Caspian Sea in the West to China in the East, Russia in the North

to Afghanistan in the South. It mainly consists of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. However, Afghanistan also is sometimes referred to as a Central Asian republic. Regional and geographic constructs are suggestive enough of the fact that Afghanistan has greater economic future with the republics of Central Asia. However, now Afghanistan is a formal member of South Asian group known as SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation); yet its natural affinity and geographical congruity with Central Asian region cannot be denied or negated. This region is a huge source of oil and gas. The region has long been a strategic location on account of its proximity to several great powers on the Eurasian landmass. The region never had a dominant stationary population nor was able to make use of its own natural resources for its own development. Thus, it has rarely throughout history become the seat of power for an empire or influential state. Central Asia has been divided, re-divided, conquered out of existence, and fragmented time and time again. The region, therefore, thus far has served more as the battleground for outside powers than as a power in its own right.

Accordingly, the region is conflict-prone and the presence of huge resource of oil and natural gas has put the region on the world map, thereby increasing its vulnerability. It shall be in the larger interests of the major powers of the world as well as non-state actors to keep the region in a state of turmoil or disturbance on a permanent basis so that they can exploit its resources at throw-away prices and in accordance with their interests. Therefore, rising terrorism, and on-going oil politics further add to the vulnerability of the region and continuance of the drug production and trafficking. Central Asian region is thus a victim of its own advantage which should have been its leverage to enter into bargaining with the major powers of the world. Drug menace is further adding to its instability.

Another important factor that contributes towards development of the drug trade in Central Asia is due to the region's geography. Three of Central Asia's southern states, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, share a collective border of about 3,000 km. with Afghanistan, which produces about 70 percent of world's heroin.<sup>[2]</sup> An estimated 99 percent of Central Asia's opiates originate from Afghanistan.<sup>[3]</sup> Afghanistan's geographical proximity, thus a great bane for Central Asian region.

## **Afghanistan: The World's Drug Capital—A Curse for Central Asia**

Afghanistan has dominated the worldwide opium market for more than a decade. The heroin produced in this country feeds a global market worth some \$55 billion<sup>[4]</sup> annually, and most of the profits of the trade are made outside Afghanistan. Along with Afghanistan its neighbours are affected by trafficking as the drugs are moved to their key destination markets of Western Europe and the Russian Federation. According to the same report about one-third of the total heroin produced in Afghanistan is transported to Europe via the Balkan route, while a quarter is trafficked north to Central Asia and the Russian Federation along the northern route. This heroin is also increasingly meeting a rapidly growing share of Asian demand. Approximately 15-20 metric tons are estimated to be trafficked to China, while a further 25 metric tons are trafficked to other South-East countries. Around 35 metric tons are thought to be shipped to Africa, while the remainder supplies to markets in other parts of Asia, North America and Oceania.<sup>[5]</sup>

The Silk Road which once brought prosperity to Central Asia in the silk trade is now a highway for drugs from Afghanistan to Russia that has contributed to economic, political and social problems in the region. As mentioned above Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan share a collective boundary of nearly 3000 km with Afghanistan; and on the other Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan share a border with the Chinese province of Xinjiang, through which drug traffickers access major opiates producers such as Laos, Thailand and Myanmar. Central Asia's proximity to these states makes the region a hub for the drug trade throughout the world.<sup>[6]</sup>

It is widely known fact that during the Soviet era, Central Asia's border to Afghanistan was mostly blocked off with little cross-border trade or travel. When Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan in 1979, the border began to open up. Veterans from the war started bringing back heroin in small quantities, but as soon as its potential large profits were realized, criminal groups took over the trade.<sup>[7]</sup> Soviet Union created Central Asian States, often without ethnic or topographical considerations, causing them to be notoriously weak.<sup>[8]</sup> With the downfall of the Soviet Union's, poor border delimitations, transition to a capitalist economy and absence of historical statehood, led the Central Asian economy to collapse and political situation to become

chaotic.<sup>[9]</sup>Disadvantaged people in the region turned to drug trade for profit and took advantage of the lack of border controls.<sup>[10]</sup> Drugs became and continue to be a major source of funding for Islamic militant groups and warlords trying to gain control in the region.<sup>[11]</sup>

### **Osh: A City infamous as Drug Capital**

The Kyrgyz city of Osh in the Ferghana Valley is known as the “capital of the South” as well as the ‘Drug Capital’ of Central Asian region. The city is located on one of the major drug-trafficking routes from Afghanistan to Russia and Europe.<sup>[12]</sup> Drugs, mostly heroin, are brought from Afghan labs to Tajikistan and then into Osh. From there it is shipped north, to the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, across the border to Kazakhstan, and on to Russia.<sup>[13]</sup> There are number of factors that contribute towards making Osh the Drug Capital: Firstly, its geographical location, Kyrgyzstan shares a long, poorly controlled border with Tajikistan, which mostly runs through mountainous terrain, therefore, it is situated along the northern drug-trafficking route. Secondly, corruption and widely rampant poverty also plays a considerable role. The country of nearly 5.5 million people is one of the poorest among the former Soviet republics and Kyrgyz economy relies heavily on production from a few gold mines and cash sent home by migrant workers. Kyrgyzstan does not have rich energy reserves like its neighbours. Therefore, poverty makes it easy for drug dealers to recruit drug couriers. It is believed that up to one quarter of the heroin produced in the world crosses through Central Asia.<sup>[14]</sup> Kyrgyz drug control agency in Osh confiscated over six tons of various drugs in 2012 alone, including over 76 kilograms of heroin, 51 kilograms of hashish, over one ton of cannabis, and over five tons of drug precursors.<sup>[15]</sup>

Therefore, it is quite obvious that both the State and the City that is termed as the Drug Capitals of the world are situated in the Central Asian region one within a Central Asian country another on the fringe of regional boundary. A country with huge resources of oil and gas, with such illegal or contraband goods is bound to give rise to conflict and violence. Central Asia is seating on a powder keg on this count.

### **Impact of Drugs on Population and Society:**

Drug plays havoc for both the population as well as society. Easy

access is bound to take its toll on the population and society. The number of drug addicts in Osh has been steadily rising in recent years. Even those individuals who wish to get rid of the addiction find it unable to do so, just because it is easily available. Data from the regional narcotics centre indicates that there were 530 registered drug addicts in the Osh region and 1,400 in the city in 2012. But according to the Centre's chief as quoted in Radio Liberty report the real numbers are much higher.<sup>[16]</sup> It usually happens that many of the cases of drug addiction go unreported.

The illicit drug trade has created adverse social effects in Central Asian region. The numbers of drug users have been on the rise since 1990s as trafficking also facilitates the local population. Consequently, it fuels the spread of HIV/AIDS in the region as users share needles and perform unprotected sex. It was reported that at one point of time 60-70 percent registered HIV/AIDS cases were result of using shared needles.

Apart from social crisis in terms of drug users, related violence, and consequent diseases, another problem that society in the region suffered from has been widely rampant corruption of government officials. Reportedly, government officials at all levels are involved in the illicit drug trade in Central Asia.<sup>[17]</sup> The collapse of economies in the post-Soviet Union leads many low-paid government officials to corruption. They are offered bribe to turn a blind eye when smugglers transport drugs through the border. Such corruption of government officers were also on account of fear of retaliating violence by drug lords, if they ever try to oppose it. Thus, corruption in the region, evolved from passive low-level bribing to the direct involvement of state institutions and senior government officials.<sup>[18]</sup> Obviously then it would be next to impossible to break the vicious cycle and nexus of drug lords, traffickers, and the officials of the state institutions.

### **Drug and Violence:**

Drug undoubtedly leads to violence if the society is poverty stricken and different kinds of social fault-lines are present in the society. As for example Osh was the scene of ethnic tension in the summer of 2010 which left hundreds dead and thousand displaced. Corrupt officials and drug mafia reportedly played a role in inciting the violence.<sup>[19]</sup> Population which happens to be poor are increasingly

vulnerable to violence as they do not have any stake or anything to lose. Such population is easily instigated by the rent-seeking proclivities within the system which acts as a fuel to the fire.

The most brutal manifestation of the violence related to drug trafficking and trade, is terrorism and it knows no boundary. The Islamic militant groups, which the international community often deem as terrorist groups, use drugs to finance their campaigns. Organized crime, terrorism, and drug trade have become an interrelated problem. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), classified as a terrorist organization by the Clinton regime in 2000, has been deeply involved with drug trafficking.<sup>[20]</sup> Although the IMU, whose power was at the peak in the late 1990s, claimed to fight against the region's civil government in the name of the caliphate, it also appeared to be highly motivated by the drug trade.<sup>[21]</sup> The IMU had alliances with the Taliban government and al-Qaeda in Afghanistan along with members of Tajik government and from fighting together in the Tajik civil war. This allowed the IMU to easily transport drugs from Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Before the US military dismantled it in 2001, the IMU frequently made small incursions in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan around August, after the harvest of heroin. Allegedly, the IMU used incursions to create instability in the states and distract law enforcement to more easily transport the new heroin harvest.<sup>[22]</sup> The UNODC estimates that the IMU brought in 60 percent of the heroin traffic in the region. The IMU's deep involvement in the drug trade indicates that it may have focused more on criminal activities than political and religious aims.<sup>[23]</sup> Not only in Central Asia in other parts of the world also the drug trafficking have been truly a criminal activity ridden with organized violence and a source of funding terrorist organizations.

## **Role of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC):**

### **Other Initiatives<sup>[24]</sup>**

The UNODC pays special attention to Central Asia and one of its key projects in the region is aimed at strengthening of drug-control agencies and cross-border cooperation between Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.<sup>[25]</sup> UNODC announced in the year 2012 its decision to grant Kyrgyzstan almost 3.5 million dollar to fight drug trafficking.<sup>[26]</sup> The Regional Program for Afghanistan and Neighbouring Countries covers UNDOC support to anti-drug trafficking efforts in the

countries of Central Asia. This program is intent to provide a platform under which the shared responsibility between the countries in the region (Afghanistan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan) and the international community can be strategically planned and implemented as recommended by several Commissions on Narcotic Drugs and UN Security Council Resolutions. The program aims to target drug trafficking related threats via a number of goals which, in general aim to increase the capacity of the countries of the region in combating drug trafficking. The Goals of the Program include increasing border controls and information sharing amongst the countries of the region. Presumably by initiating frameworks and cooperation, these countries can improve their ability to monitor their respective borders, as well as share vital information which will mutually support border control efforts. It also seeks to increase use of evidence-based, joint investigations, as well as the use of forensic evidence.

The Paris Pact Initiative (PPI) represents a determined attempt by the international community to tackle the threat posed by the illicit production of opium in Afghanistan, in a spirit of partnership and cooperation. Launched by UNODC the first phase was principally a regional coordination program for countries affected by Afghan heroin trafficking, and concentrated principally on strengthening border controls, continuing to develop regional cooperation, and on activities within the field of Counter Narcotics Enforcement (CNE) including legal reform and institutional frameworks.

The Triangular Initiative (TI) established in direct response of the PPI Expert recommendations, called for greater cooperation in the field of counter narcotics. The TI aims to enhance cross-border cooperation in the field of counter-narcotics enforcement among Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. The TI has been major stimulus in drawing together Ministers and senior officials from these countries to discuss and agree upon measures to improve cross-border cooperation, CNE and trafficking and smuggling of precursor chemicals, to and from Afghanistan.

The Rainbow Strategy (RS) is an umbrella framework to facilitate the implementation of priority actions identified at the PPI Expert Round Tables. It consists of several operational plans each of which addresses key targets, allowing for constructive engagement with prime

regional actors, facilitating and supplementing interventions from national governments and other PP partners. There are other initiatives by UNODC like The Central Asian Regional and Information Coordination Centre (CARICC) which facilitate information and intelligence exchange and analysis and to assist in the coordination of operational activities of the various law enforcement agencies in the region.

The 2015 World Drug Report thematic focus is on Alternative Development, a long-term strategy aimed at developing alternative sources of income for farmers dependent on illicit drug cultivation. This activity is driven by many factors, including marginalization, the lack of security, and the social and political situations of rural communities. Alternative Development aims to reduce these vulnerabilities and ultimately eliminate the cultivation of illicit drugs. More than 40 years of experience have shown that this approach works when there is a long-term vision, adequate funding, and the political support to integrate it into a broader development and governance agenda.

Therefore, there is hardly any doubt that this international agency at the behest of UN has done remarkable service to the mankind by launching relevant schemes and measures to check the proliferation of drug production, traffic and trade. The agency requires to be aided and supported by all means and mechanism by different countries of the world to help deliver the service to the mankind.

### **India's Stakes and Role:**

Central Asia is the extended neighbourhood of South Asia as well as India. Both the regions are quite vulnerable on account of militancy, terrorism, internal ethnic and other conflicts. Therefore, the countries of the region are quite vulnerable to any instability and illegal activities either in the neighbourhood or in the extended neighbourhood. India too has its own set of vulnerabilities with soft targets in terms of huge population and particularly of youth. On the other hand, there are acute problems of unemployment, underemployment and poverty. Youth happens to be the most probable target both as a consumer of drugs and trafficker of the same. India from that point of view is more susceptible and requires to take extra measures so that its youths are not lured either into addiction or into trade and traffic of drugs. Indian



government and related agencies that need to understand the vulnerability of India as the drug menace has already reached India educational institutions and among the population.

On the other hand, India is getting increasingly proactive in Afghanistan which is the Drug capital of the world and from where it is exported illegally all over the world. Increasing communication with Afghanistan shall lead to its own pitfalls and problems if it is not done cautiously. India has the tendency to get into action once the problem escalates, which it shall have to shed and be consistently and continuously vigil. India has porous border with Nepal and Bhutan, the two tiny countries which may become a transit route. This shall also lead to pilferage of drugs in the immediate neighbourhood, thereby by creating violence. This shall again be a nuisance for India if there is peace deficit on its seams.

Therefore, India has a tremendous role to play in this regard. India must rise to occasion and strengthen the hands and initiatives of the international agencies by extending cooperation and intelligence toward information and action related to drug trafficking and proliferation in the neighbourhood and extended neighbourhood of Central Asian region. India also need to open its channel of communication with the Central Asian countries so that it can prevail upon them to check production and trafficking of drugs either to India or to other parts of the world. India being a peace loving country and given its international personality requires to stand up to it by fulfilling its responsibilities at the regional and international level. India's role, thus, shall be first in its own national interests and then in the larger interest of mankind.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The drug trade has been proliferating in Central Asia because of its weak states, huge oil and gas resources, and geo-strategic location. The several initiatives taken by UNODC are highly appreciable, even though according to many analyst the problem of drug trafficking and proliferation has escalated over the years, yet the initiatives have been able to check the pace of its growth. Fact remains that initiative devised by agencies to counter the spread of drug are often nullified by the corresponding advancement in the field of science and technology, expansion of globalization with consequent softening of border control

mechanism, growing incidence of poverty in the wake of growing capitalism. Therefore, it turns out to be a real challenge for the national and international agencies to not only maintain the pace of their counter-trafficking initiatives but also keep innovating the mechanism for the same. Threats posed by trafficking and proliferation of drug are a type of non-traditional threat to the security of a society and polity; therefore it requires to be addressed in the same non-traditional mechanism. The low volume of drug seizures (about 4 per cent of the estimated total opiate flows) indicates the lack of state power to regulate Central Asian borders as well as the corruption of its officials. Therefore, the first and foremost requirement is to consolidate political will on the part of existing governments in Central Asian region and then overhauling the existing state institutions and reforming both at the level of personal towards manning the task and mechanism adopted for countering trafficking and proliferation. Therefore, the propagation of the drug trade perpetuates the weakness of Central Asian states by destabilizing the region through financing militant Islamic groups' campaigns, increasing drug abuse, and the spread of AIDS/HIV. The international community has been attempting for years to combat the drug trade on an individual or bilateral basis. It is high time that the countries and political dispensation of the region realize the long term implications of the existing problem as it has potentials to transform the region into another middle east and a Syria and Iraq like situation. Drugs have played an important medicinal role in human society since time immemorial and must be allowed to be used in that sense and context, which shall be harmless. There is a long history of international trade for the same as well. However, the nature endowed the mankind something for good use and compensating the loss in health. Ironically enough that endowment of nature to mankind has been increasingly made a nuisance by certain recalcitrant elements of society which requires to be arrested at a faster pace with immediate effect. Central Asia if contained to this effect the result shall have deep and wide-ranging impact on the world.

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# **The Recent Indian Focus to Central Asia: Identifying the Drivers and Potential Outcomes**

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**Debashis Chakraborty & Anushree Chakraborty**

## **Indian Engagement with Central Asia**

Central Asia occupied a special place in India's early and medieval history, primarily from political perspective. Invaders from the region frequented India, sometimes just as raiders and at times assimilating with the local populace. For instance, Babur, the founder of the Mughal Dynasty, originally hailed from Fergana valley, currently in Uzbekistan. In addition, the region emerged as the middlepoint for trade and commerce between China and Rome along the silk route, which worked in India's advantage as well (Behera, 2002). The religious and cultural exchanges between India and Central Asia also enriched the relationship during the pre-medieval period.

With discovery of maritime trade route and political instabilities and warfare in West and Central Asia, the linkage however gradually waned in subsequent years. The scenario changed during Nineteenth Century, i.e., the 'Great Game' era, when the Russian empire considered the expanding British influence in South Asia, Afghanistan and Iran as a threat and gradually moved southwards to annex the Khanates of Kokand, Khiva and Bokhara in Central Asia (Hopkirk, 1990). The formation of Soviet republics along ethnic lines followed. After the Bolshevik revolution, the countries of the region remained part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) till its break-up in early nineties.

During the Soviet era, India's relation with the five Central Asian republics were routed through the prism of Moscow and hence remained limited. Their independence in nineties coincided with India's

economic reform programme that was launched in 1991. Since mid-nineties India adopted the twin strategy of improving ties with East and Southeast Asian countries ('Look East Policy') and the 'West' (Europe and the US). However, policies for deepening ties with the Central Asian economies was not actively pursued. The land-locked status of these countries, and the absence of overland direct trade route with India had been among the major underlying reasons.

Since the beginning of the new millennium, energy security related concerns forced India to re-think its geo-strategic priorities. Nevertheless, the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) released in 2004, after the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government came to power, did not explicitly identified improvement of ties with Central Asia as a priority area (NCMP, 2004). However, natural resource and petroleum products export orientation of the five Central Asian countries contributed significantly in changing the Indian approach. The diplomatic overture and deepening engagement was clearly visible when Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev, President of Kazakhstan, became the Chief Guest during the 2009 Republic Day parade in New Delhi.

India's engagement with the region was formalized further with the launch of the 'Connect Central Asia' Policy in 2012 at the *First India-Central Asia Dialogue*. During the conference, the Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. E. Ahamed called for engagements with the five countries, namely, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, through several channels (MEA, 2012). First, a strategic and security cooperation including counter-terrorism coordination was proposed. Second, enhancing bilateral trade through a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) was recommended. Third, cooperation in the field of energy and natural resources was proposed. Fourth, possibility of cooperation in key services sectors, namely, medical, higher education, construction etc., where India has emerged as a global player, was noted. Finally, creating road transportation connectivity by bridging the missing links in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) was proposed.

Central Asia, with their rich reserves of energy products and natural resources, presents abundant opportunities for partner countries. This has kick-started the 'Second Great Game' in the region, this time with economic rather than political aspirations. Russia, China and Turkey

enjoy locational as well as historical advantages in reaching out to these economies. India on the other hand, has been a late entrant to engage in this region. Despite the increasing importance of Central Asia in India's diplomatic canvas, the actual accomplishments have so far been limited. For instance, the operationalization of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline has been on the cards for a long time, with little actual success to cheer about. Conversely, China has made steady inroads in the energy sector of this region in extraction of petroleum and uranium resources on one hand and also in refining and pipeline operations through massive investments on the other (Wang, 2015).

During the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) period, the visit of Indian Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi to the five Central Asian countries during July 6-13, 2015 has therefore been undertaken at a crucial juncture. It is expected that the bilateral discussions will provide Indian business a deeper foothold in the region, apart from boosting various security concerns. The present analysis attempts to understand the significance of the region for India in terms of trade and other perspectives and is arranged as follows. First the economic relation between India and the region is presented. The other possible areas of collaborations are explored in the following section. Finally based on the discussions, the conclusions are drawn.

## **Trade Scenario**

India's trade balance scenario with Central Asian countries can be observed from Figure 1. It is observed that upto 2012 India witnessed a moderately rising trade balance with these economies, with occasional hick-ups. However, import of mineral fuels from Kazakhstan and other primary and mineral products from other countries have increased significantly since 2013. As a result of this growing imports, in 2014, India has experienced a huge trade deficit with respect to the region.

The brief trade profile of India with Central Asian countries has been summarized in Table 2. It is observed from the table that barring the exception of Kazakhstan, India maintains a high trade surplus with the other four economies. Table 1 reveals another interesting fact while India's export basket to these countries consists of value-added final products (e.g., apparel and garments, pharmaceuticals), the imports

generally includes mineral and primary products, semi-finished items and raw materials. In other words, Central Asia on one hand has an enormous potential to deepen its linkage with India as a supplier of quality raw materials. On the other hand, given their moderate growth path, they can emerge as an untapped market for India's value-added exports, especially at a time when growth scenario in the EU-US is not on the upswing since 2011. In particular, the availability of the raw materials from Central Asia can contribute significantly in the recently launched 'Make in India' initiative of India.

**Table 1: Brief Trade Profile of Central Asian Countries with India (US \$Million)**

Partner	India's Export Basket	India's Import Basket	India's Annual Average Trade Balance		
	2014	2014	2001-06	2007-12	2013-14
Kazakhstan	1. Pharmaceutical products (25.36%) 2. Apparel products, knitted / crocheted (20.33%) 3. Coffee, tea etc. (16.45%)	1. Mineral Fuels (85.74%) 2. Salt, sulphur (5.17%) 3. Ores and slag (3.17%)	46	33	-427
Kyrgyzstan	1. Apparel products, knitted / crocheted (36.82%) 2. Apparel products, not knitted / crocheted (23.87%) 3. Pharmaceutical products (17.59%)	1. Inorganic Chemicals (37.45%) 2. Aluminum products (32.51%) 3. Edible vegetables (24.69%)	28	27	36
Tajikistan	1. Apparel products, knitted / crocheted (29.29%) 2. Pharmaceutical products (25.00%) 3. Meat products (22.46%)	1. Ores and slag (95.86%) 2. Iron and Steel (3.95%) 3. Wading and non-wovens (0.08%)	2	4	52
Turkmenistan	1. Meat products (48.12%) 2. Pharmaceutical products (20.38%) 3. Machinery and equipment (19.64%)	1. Inorganic Chemicals (72.04%) 2. Cotton (24.26%) 3. Rubber products (2.38%)	7	32	68
Uzbekistan	1. Pharmaceutical products (28.31%) 2. Apparel products, knitted / crocheted (20.29%) 3. Automotive products (13.23%)	1. Fertilizers (37.64%) 2. Edible Vegetables (37.03%) 3. Lac, gum, resins (12.53%)	-10	26	107

Source: Constructed by authors from Trade Map data

In order to understand the influence of the 'Connect Central Asia' Policy launched in 2012 on India's trade integration with the region, Table 2 summarizes the share of these countries in India's trade basket



over 2001-12 and 2013-14 and vice versa. It is observed that the share of Kazakhstan in India's import basket has significantly improved after the dialogue meeting, while share of Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan has risen in export basket. Barring the exception of Kazakhstan, India as an export market has however not become important for Central Asian republics. Finally, except Kyrgyzstan, India has improved its share as an import sources for all other countries. Nevertheless, the absolute values of the shares for all the countries are too low, partly owing to the absence of direct land route connectivity.

**Table 2: Annual Average Trade Integration Scenario between India and Central Asia**

Partner	Partner's share in India's Overall Import		Partner's share in India's Overall Export		India's Share in Partner's Overall Export		India's Share in Partner's Overall Import	
	2001-12	2013-14	2001-12	2013-14	2001-12	2013-14	2001-12	2013-14
Kazakhstan	0.0306	0.1481	0.0864	0.0784	0.1637	0.8520	0.5620	0.5711
Kyrgyzstan	0.0005	0.0001	0.0261	0.0112	0.0941	0.0396	2.0063	0.5032
Tajikistan	0.0038	0.0005	0.0080	0.0165	0.9345	0.2788	0.7160	1.1948
Turkmenistan	0.0057	0.0031	0.0197	0.0252	0.2233	0.1231	0.9033	1.0224
Uzbekistan	0.0202	0.0080	0.0243	0.0443	0.6801	0.5961	0.6312	1.1843

Source: Constructed by authors from Trade Map data

To understand the Central Asia-India trade potential, the level of diversification in the trade baskets of the two sides needs to be analyzed. The *Herfindhal Concentration Index*(H) is used extensively in trade literature to understand the diversification / concentration in a country's trade pattern with respect to its partners. The 'H' index for Indian exports can be calculated by the following formula:

where  $x_i$  indicates the export of commodities at HS 2-digit level in a country's trade basket and X represents total exports in a particular year. Similarly, the index for imports can be calculated by considering the values of  $m_i$  and M respectively. Higher value of H indicates concentration of limited products in a country's trade basket in value terms and vice versa. It is expected that after formation of any trade preference arrangement / framework agreement the trade basket of the partner countries will experience greater diversification, i.e., H will register a decline.

Therefore, the H index has been calculated with Central Asia-India export-import data to understand the diversification patterns over

2001-14, especially since the launch of the dialogue since 2012. It is observed from Table 3 that barring the exception of Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in export basket and Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in import basket, the concentration index has declined since 2012, indicating broad-basing of trade patterns. However, the numbers are still quite large. In other words, the trade patterns still depend heavily on a handful of commodities. The observations in Tables 2 and 3 collectively indicate that there is enormous potential for India to further expand and diversify its trade with Central Asian countries.

**Table 3: Concentration Index for Central Asian Countries in India's Trade Basket**

Partner	India's Export Basket		India's Import Basket	
	2001-12	2013-14	2001-12	2013-14
Kazakhstan	0.18	0.15	0.33	0.67
Kyrgyzstan	0.28	0.21	0.35	0.34
Tajikistan	0.23	0.25	0.82	0.80
Turkmenistan	0.22	0.27	0.54	0.58
Uzbekistan	0.23	0.18	0.41	0.28

*Source: Constructed by authors from Trade Map data*

Table 4 summarizes the bilateral *Trade Complementarity Index* (TCI) between India and EAC countries, higher values of which over time indicate increasing similarities between export basket of a country and import basket of its trade partner. The TCI is calculated by using the following formula:

where  $X_{ik}$  is share of commodity  $k$  in country  $i$ 's total exports, and  $M_{jk}$  is share of commodity  $k$  in country  $j$ 's total imports at HS 2-digit level. The TCI results reveals that while over 2005-14, India's export TCI has increased for all the five Central Asian countries, indicating a natural alignment in trade pattern, for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, a decline over 2010-14 is noticed. On the other hand, barring the exception of Kyrgyzstan, import complementarity has increased for all other economies over the same period. In other words, a rise in bilateral trade flows in both directions is expected in coming days.

**Table 4: Trade Complementarity Index of Central Asian Countries with India**

Partner	India Export - Partner Import			India Import - Partner Export		
	2005	2010	2014	2005	2010	2014
Kazakhstan	46.80	48.86	47.77	45.35	43.25	49.98
Kyrgyzstan	47.22	58.30	57.07	46.10	41.53	30.02
Tajikistan	27.58	32.90	56.23	9.45	14.16	22.39
Turkmenistan	33.56	38.70	41.06	36.46	38.19	41.32
Uzbekistan	43.60	47.62	44.85	39.01	39.08	40.90

Source: Constructed by authors from Trade Map data

Finally, the *Trade Intensity Index* (TII), which reveals whether a region exports more (as a percentage) to a given destination than the world does on average or not has been calculated between India and the Central Asian countries by the following formula. In the numerator,  $X_{sd}$  refers to the bilateral exports of a given country pair, while  $X_{sw}$  indicates their global exports. In the denominator,  $X_{wd}$  and  $X_{wy}$  represents world's export to a country pair and to the world respectively.

The summarized results in Table 5 shows that the TII of India with the five Central Asian republics has consistently been lower than '1', signifying that the trade relation is 'non-intense'. The results in Tables 4 and 5 collectively indicate that launching of a CECA with the Central Asian republic through policy intervention may substantially enhance Indian exports, but imports are also likely to go up. The overall trade balance scenario, as a result of any formal trade agreement, will however depend on several factors.

**Table 5: Trade Intensity Index of Central Asian Countries with India and Rivals**

Partner	2005	2010	2014
Kazakhstan	0.056	0.038	0.125
Kyrgyzstan*	0.029	0.005	0.005
Tajikistan	0.008	0.007	0.008
Turkmenistan	0.023	0.008	0.014
Uzbekistan	0.041	0.015	0.025

Source: Constructed by authors from Trade Map data

Which set of countries are presently involved in the second 'Great Game', wooing the Central Asian republics for their natural and mineral

resources? Table 6 summarizes the major trade partners of the region. It is observed that Russia, China, EU members, Turkey and other Central Asian republics as well as other ex-Soviet states are among the partners of these countries. Therefore any Indian initiative for trade promotion with the region needs to factor in the existing trade arrangements of the region.

**Table 6: Select Trade Partners of Central Asian Countries**

Partner	Average Contribution in Export Basket (%)		Average Contribution in Import Basket (%)	
	2001-07	2008-14	2001-07	2008-14
Kazakhstan	1. Italy (13.33) 2. China (10.10) 3. Russia (13.62) 4. Netherlands (2.78) 5. Turkey (0.97) 6. India (0.08)	1. Italy (17.54) 2. China (15.42) 3. Russia (7.37) 4. Netherlands (8.20) 5. Turkey (1.23) 6. India (0.38)	1. Russia (38.69) 2. China (6.51) 3. Germany (8.07) 4. USA (5.59) 5. Turkey (2.51) 6. India (0.69)	1. Russia (34.54) 2. China (15.17) 3. Germany (6.11) 4. USA (4.87) 5. Turkey (2.19) 6. India (0.66)
Kyrgyzstan*	1. Switzerland (19.61) 2. Kazakhstan (13.42) 3. Russia (18.10) 4. China (5.21) 5. Turkey (2.95) 6. India (0.39)	1. Switzerland (32.78) 2. Kazakhstan (15.66) 3. Russia (14.71) 4. China (2.38) 5. Turkey (3.17) 6. India (0.19)	1. Russia (29.54) 2. China (11.17) 3. Kazakhstan (17.69) 4. Japan (1.10) 5. Turkey (2.97) 6. India (0.49)	1. Russia (34.47) 2. China (21.25) 3. Kazakhstan (9.85) 4. Japan (3.38) 5. Turkey (2.77) 6. India (0.53)
Tajikistan*	1. Turkey (9.23) 2. Russia (16.54) 3. China (1.87) 4. Kazakhstan (1.51) 5. Italy (7.25) 6. India (0.56)	1. Turkey (25.30) 2. Russia (12.00) 3. China (8.70) 4. Kazakhstan (6.85) 5. Italy (5.86) 6. India (1.12)	1. China (10.39) 2. Russia (23.11) 3. Kazakhstan (14.20) 4. Turkey (4.69) 5. Ukraine (5.88) 6. India (0.81)	1. China (45.74) 2. Russia (20.00) 3. Kazakhstan (10.03) 4. Turkey (5.32) 5. Ukraine (2.23) 6. India (0.81)
Turkmenistan	1. China (0.30) 2. Turkey (4.19) 3. Italy (4.29) 4. Ukraine (65.10) 5. Russia (1.33) 6. India (0.21)	1. China (49.15) 2. Turkey (7.48) 3. Italy (4.55) 4. Ukraine (15.22) 5. Russia (1.98) 6. India (0.21)	1. Turkey (11.61) 2. China (6.64) 3. Iran (6.19) 4. USA (9.88) 5. Russia (13.23) 6. India (1.01)	1. Turkey (21.76) 2. China (15.40) 3. Iran (3.95) 4. USA (2.76) 5. Russia (15.58) 6. India (1.09)
Uzbekistan	1. China (6.76) 2. Turkey (0.11) 3. Italy (5.33) 4. UK (20.51) 5. Russia (5.29) 6. India (0.71)	1. China (17.11) 2. Turkey (3.14) 3. Italy (11.11) 4. UK (19.91) 5. Russia (11.75) 6. India (0.63)	1.China (7.03) 2.South Korea (13.18) 3.Russia (24.59) 4.Kazakhstan (7.99) 5.Turkey (4.68) 6.India (0.55)	1. China (17.34) 2. South Korea (15.81) 3. Russia (20.55) 4. Kazakhstan (11.58) 5. Turkey (3.99) 6. India (0.55)

Source: Constructed by authors from Trade Map data

## The Recent Indian Focus to Central Asia: Identifying the Drivers and Potential Outcomes

*Note: For \* countries, import data available upto 2013, figures in parenthesis shows percentage shares*

Promotion of trade with Central Asian countries requires a two-pronged approach: first, formation of a CECA and second, establishment of a trade corridor. On the former front, presently the countries barring Uzbekistan are involved in discussions over formation of Central Asian Union (CAU). Therefore unlike the Indo-ASEAN Free Trade Agreement (FTA), India may here need to negotiate separately with CAU and Uzbekistan that will add to the transaction costs. Among other arrangements, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are members of Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) also involving Armenia, Belarus and Russia. They are also involved in FTAs with other ex-Soviet countries. Given the fact that India, unlike Russia and China, does not share land border with Central Asia and the already existing trade preferences between these economies, entry of the CECA might play a key role in fueling India's trade with these economies. The launch of negotiations for the FTA between India and the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus, and Kazakhstan in 2013 is a positive step in this regard.

On the second front, Asian Development Bank (ADB) has launched the Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Program in 1997 to facilitate economic cooperation among the participants: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. CAREC has contributed significantly in financing intra-bloc infrastructure projects, focusing particularly on road transport as well customs cooperation (ADB, undated). Given the fact that India presently does not share land border with any of the member countries, the need to complete the ongoing SAARC road and rail connectivity discussions is underlined in no uncertain terms. The SAARC transport connectivity negotiations, once completed, would enable India on western front to reach Kabul and other destinations in Afghanistan through Pakistan (Ismail, 2014). This would enable India to access the existing CAREC connectivity linkages. Indian Prime Minister Mr. Modi has already re-affirmed India's intention to secure connectivity with the region at the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting at Ufa. There is also need to hasten the negotiations on INSTC that links 'India Ocean and Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran, and onward to northern Europe via St. Petersburg in Russia' (Singh Roy, 2015). It deserves mention that the joint India-Iran

initiative to develop the Chahbahar Port in Iran and connect it by road to Afghanistan can play a crucial link in this regard (Balooch, 2009). These initiatives will also enable India to devise an effective alternative to the 'Eurasian Land Bridge', which enables China to reach Europe's doorsteps.

### **Other Collaborations**

One of the major collaboration of India with Central Asia involves the proposed TAPI pipeline that will transport natural gas from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan first into Pakistan and then ultimately to India. Given India's growing energy demands and the need to diversify from environmentally more damaging fossil fuels (e.g., oil and coal), the pipeline is of major significance for the country. The volatility of the region has however been one of the prime reasons behind the slow progress so far. Since mid-2015, after Prime Minister Mr. Modi's visit to Central Asia, India is trying to take up the matter with Pakistan and complete the pipeline related work at the earliest. However, there may be further delays owing to the fact that given the downturn in global oil prices, India has recently expressed willingness to renegotiate the price at which it had earlier promised to buy the natural gas from Turkmenistan (Choudhary, 2015).

India has also enhanced its collaboration with the Central Asian countries through the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), which is a political, economic and security cooperation forum. The original members to this arrangement were China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Given the growing economic clout of the member countries, the bloc is likely to play a crucial role in the global geo-strategic platform in coming days. India initially joined the SCO as an observer member and is expected to shortly become a full member in coming days (Singh Roy, 2015). Obtaining full membership would enable India to fulfill its objectives under the 'Connect Central Asia' policy, namely enhancing trade and investment flows, trade in energy products and security collaborations. It deserves mention that the statement of the SCO countries at the regional economic cooperation meeting on 15 December 2015 at Zhengzhou has also underlined the need for promotion of bilateral goods and service trade flows (SCO, 2015).

## The Way Forward

The Indian overture to the Central Asian countries since 2012 and the recent participation to the 'Second Great Game' is very much shaped by its evolving geo-strategic considerations. First, given the recent devaluation of Yuan and the economic downturn in the 'West', there is a growing need to look for a stable export market. The Central Asian countries, with their moderate growth pattern, provides a good market for Indian exports. Second, their rich energy and natural resource export profile fits well with India's import requirement. Third, it is important to note that India's journey to Central Asia does not end there but travel further north. For instance, the persistent Indian diplomacy has resulted in Russia allowing ONGC Videsh Limited to acquire a 15 percent stake in CSJC Vankorneft, the owner of the second largest oil and gas field in Siberia (Business Standard, 2015) in 2015. Also the potential to reach European markets through Central Asia may open up an alternate trade route for Indian container exports. Therefore, keeping a cordial and mutually beneficial economic cooperation with Central Asia is essential for India in its own long-term interest. Finally, the Chinese presence in Central Asia is already giving rise to ecological and security debates (Peyrouse, 2015). The evolving Indian participation can provide an effective counterweight to the growing Chinese presence in Central Asia and add to the regional stability.

Due to the limited land route connectivity to the region, India's economic and political linkage are presently limited in Central Asia. However, the International North-South Transport Corridor initiative, once ready, will significantly facilitate Indian's trade with the region by reducing transport time (Patil, 2015). Therefore, active participation to secure completion of this initiative and persistent proactive diplomatic interactions would enable India to deepen its presence in Central Asia in days to come.

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## India and the 'New Great Game' in Central Asia: A Giant or A Pigmy?

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**Deepak Yadav**

Central Asia and India have long traditions of social-cultural, religious, political and economic contact since remote antiquity. The two regions have common and contiguous borders, climatic continuity, similar geographical features and geo-cultural affinity. There has always been uninterrupted flow of people, material and the ideas between the two. There are extensive references to people of Central Asia in Indian literature like Atharvaveda, Vamsa Brahmana of Samveda, Aitareya Brahmana, Satapatha Brahmana, Puranas, Manusmriti, Ramayana, Mahabharata, Raghuvamsa, Brihat-Katha -Manjari, Katha-Saritsagara, Rajaratrangini, Mudra-rakshasa, Kavymimansa and host of other old Sanskrit literature.

In the post-cold war period, the Central Asian countries have engaged themselves in nation building and consolidation of their statehoods. The pessimistic scenarios feared in the early nineties of Central Asia disintegrating have not fortunately been realized. No state has become a failing state. On the contrary, countries like Kazakhstan have made great strides. At the same time, the Central Asian countries continue to face daunting socio-economic and security problems.<sup>1</sup>The relations among themselves are far from smooth. Issues like environmental degradation, border disputes, migration, ethnic conflicts, energy security, and religious extremism & fundamentalism pose serious challenge to regional stability.

India has great interest to ensure political stability, security and prosperity in Central Asia. New Delhi has developed a strategic approach towards Central Asian countries mostly based on security and energy issues. India rented Ayni airbase in Tajikistan in 2003 "in its quest for strategic footing in Central Asia," but it lost this base to Russia in 2010 after Tajikistan declared that Moscow would be the

only country to use the airbase.<sup>2</sup> With the aim of developing strong bilateral partnerships in the region particularly on energy supply, India signed the pacts with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan on the import of uranium. Furthermore, India launched the “*Connect Central Asia*” policy in 2012 to establish strategic and security cooperation particularly in the field of energy development.<sup>3</sup>

### **India’s ‘Connect Central Asia’ Policy**

India’s ‘*Connect Central Asia*’ Policy is a broad-based approach, including political, security, economic and cultural connections. On 12 June 2012 India’s Minister of State for External Affairs Shri E. Ahamed gave a Keynote address at First India-Central Asia Dialogue. He outlined some of the elements of India’s ‘Connect Central Asia’ policy as follows:

1. India will continue to build on our strong political relations through the exchange of high level visits. Its leaders will continue to interact closely both in bilateral and multilateral fora.
2. India will strengthen its strategic and security cooperation. India already has strategic partnerships in place with some Central Asian countries. In focus will be military training, joint research, counter-terrorism coordination and close consultations on Afghanistan.
3. India will step up multilateral engagement with Central Asian partners using the synergy of joint efforts through existing fora like the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) and the Custom Union. India has already proposed a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement to integrate its markets with the unifying Eurasian space.
4. India looks to Central Asia as a long term partner in energy, and natural resources. Central Asia possesses large cultivable tracts of land and it sees potential for India to cooperate in production of profitable crops with value addition.
5. The medical field is another area that offers huge potential for cooperation. India is ready to extend cooperation by setting up civil hospitals/clinics in Central Asia.
6. India’s higher education system delivers at a fraction of the fees charged by Western universities. Keeping this in mind, India would like to assist in the setting up of a Central Asian University in Bishkek that could come up as a centre of excellence to impart world class education in areas like Information Technology, management, philosophy and languages.

7. India is working on setting up a Central Asian e-network with its hub in India, to deliver, tele-education and tele-medicine connectivity, linking all the five Central Asian States.
8. Indian companies can showcase its capability in the construction sector and build world class structures at competitive rates. Central Asian countries, especially Kazakhstan, have almost limitless reserves of iron ore and coal, as well as abundant cheap electricity. India can help set up several medium size steel rolling mills, producing its requirement of specific products.
9. As for land connectivity, India has reactivated the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). India & Central Asian nations need to join our efforts to discuss ways to bridge the missing links in the Corridor at the earliest and also work on other connecting spurs along the route.
10. Absence of a viable banking infrastructure in the region is a major barrier to trade and investment. Indian banks can expand their presence if they see a favourable policy environment.
11. India will jointly work to improve air connectivity between our countries. India is one of the biggest markets for outbound travellers estimated at USD 21 billion in 2011. Many countries have opened tourist offices in India to woo Indian tourists. Central Asian countries could emerge as attractive holiday destinations for tourists and even for the Indian film industry which likes to depict exotic foreign locales in its films.
12. Connections between our peoples are the most vital linkages to sustain our deep engagement. I would particularly like to emphasise exchanges between youth and the future leaders of India and Central Asia. India already has a robust exchange of students. India will encourage regular exchanges of scholars, academics, civil society and youth delegations to gain deeper insights into each other's cultures.<sup>4</sup>

### **Russia and China in Central Asia: Where Does India Stand?**

China's presence and influence in Central Asia - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan - have been increasing. The westward strategy articulated by Chinese President Xi Jinping in his "*New Silk Road* economic belt" highlights Central Asia's importance for Chinese economy and development. Central Asia is resource rich, and, because of its proximity to China offers a great opportunity for cheap, reliable energy imports. China has been investing billions of dollars in the energy sector which include a series

of contracts with Kazakhstan worth \$30 billion, 31 agreements of \$15 billion value with Uzbekistan, and natural gas transactions with Turkmenistan in 2013, which reached about \$16 billion. China has also provided loans and aid of \$8 billion to Turkmenistan and is expected to provide at least \$1 billion to Tajikistan. Last year, China upgraded relations with Kyrgyzstan to a strategic level. Perhaps more important, Beijing views Central Asian countries as important allies in the fight against Islamic extremists that foment ethnic unrest in China's west; Xinjiang is a sovereignty issue, and therefore a "core interest." Finally, as the US rebalances to East Asia, China seeks strategic space to the west.<sup>5</sup> Last year Russia's Gazprom and the China National Petroleum Corporation signed a \$400 billion contract to jointly build a gas pipeline.

If Ukraine is Russia's front yard, then Central Asia must be considered its back yard. Russia has longstanding historical, economic, and political ties to Central Asian governments. Moscow has sought to consolidate those relationships through regional integration initiatives such as the Commonwealth of Independent States, the Customs Union, and the Eurasian Economic Union. Moscow is especially keen to maintain control of Central Asian energy and resource exports to protect its own position in the market: Central Asia is a potential competitor to Russia's energy exports, the lifeblood of the Russian economy. Its ownership of the old Soviet pipeline network offers control over Central Asia energy exports. Russia is also able to enhance the quality of its own product by blending it with higher quality oil from Kazakhstan, while maintaining control over price and supply.<sup>6</sup>

Russia has benefited from its historical, linguistic, economic and political ties with Central Asian countries from the very beginning of their independence. After a short period of recovery, Russia reasserted its strategic ambitions in Central Asia as well as in other ex-Soviet republics by declaring its "Near Abroad Doctrine" in 1993. Central Asian states are economically and politically highly dependent on Russia. Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are the main instruments for Russia to keep the Central Asian states in its own sphere of influence.<sup>7</sup>

After resolving border disputes among Shanghai Five's three members, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Beijing has further deepened economic, military and political cooperation with Central

Asian states. China plays a pro-active role in the fields of trade, energy security, investments, combating terrorism and fundamentalism, illegal transactions, and organized crime and also aims to increase its soft power in the region.<sup>8</sup>

Indian leaders have acknowledged that Central Asia could be an effective catalyst in the normalization of Indo-Pak relations and the stabilization process of Afghanistan. The emergence of predominantly Muslim but, in fact, multi-ethnic and multi-religious CARs has added a new strategic dimension to the geopolitics of the whole of Asia and more so, for the countries located in its immediate neighbourhood. Central Asia lies at the strategic junction between two nuclear powers, Russia and China, and at the interface between Russia and the Islamic world. It shares borders with Afghanistan, which is a major source of spreading religious extremism in the region.

India has a vital interest in the security and political stability of this region. Obviously given the Kashmir angle, India cannot be walled off from the political developments which take place in the Central Asian region. Any advance by Islamic extremist groups in the CARs could invigorate similar elements active in Kashmir. For reasons dictated by geography, India's strategic concerns are tied up with the regions bordering its north and northwest. Pakistan in its northwest continues to be antagonistic towards India. Pakistan is already sponsoring cross-border terrorism in Kashmir. For India, the Kashmir issue pertains not to four million Muslims living in Kashmir Valley alone, but to the peace and security of 130 million Muslims elsewhere in India.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, for India the geostrategic importance of CARs is immense. Under no circumstance can India ignore this region.

The implementation of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project which was announced in 1995 and has recently revitalized carries a considerable potential to ensure regional economic integration and to create mutual dependency between Central and South Asia.<sup>10</sup> The 1,735-kilometer pipeline will transport 33 billion cubic metres of gas annually to South Asia for a period of 30 years. The integration of Afghanistan to both Central and South Asia, especially through the security establishments and economic cooperation could be beneficial not only for the relatively weak and fragile states of the region, but also for the major regional players such as Russia, China, United States (U.S.) and India.<sup>11</sup>

India has invested US\$100 million in free trade zone in Chabahar. The Chinese are also getting interested in Chabahar and have announced Euro 60 million credits to Iran to upgrade the Port. The significance of Chabahar Port is that it will facilitate a transit route to land-locked Afghanistan. Despite direct road links, Pakistan does not allow transit facility from India to Afghanistan. Therefore, connectivity through the Chabahar Port could become an important route linking India to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

In his 8-day trip to five Central Asian nations from 6 to 13 July, 2015, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi aimed to deepen economic and political cooperation in the region. During this visit, in Tashkent, Modi said the relationship between Central Asia and India has “ancient roots” and “now occupies a significant place in India’s future.” Similarly, Modi’s speech in Astana promising to “write a new chapter in an ancient relationship” between India and Central Asian states was highly optimistic.<sup>12</sup>

### **What Needs to be Done by India?**

The role of India can be welcomed by Central Asian states. Firstly, for Central Asian states, India is a balancing factor that may ensure their strategic autonomy against Chinese and Russian dominance. Central Asian states have not attempted to balance India by aligning with each other or Pakistan so far.<sup>13</sup>

Secondly, for energy-rich countries of Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan that need to diversify their economic partnerships, especially in terms of hydropower and energy export, India could be an alternative market as well as a geopolitical counterweight.

Thirdly, India as an extended neighbour of CARs has major geostrategic and economic interests in this region. The future prospects for cooperation between Central Asia and India in the field of energy security seem to be very important.

Fourthly, peace and stability in CARs and Afghanistan seem to be the most crucial factor for India’s security. There is already a realisation by world powers of the danger posed by religious extremism and terrorism. In fact, the problem of terrorism is not only being addressed



at the bilateral level but also in various regional forums like Shanghai Five and Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA).

Fifthly, another problem related to terrorism, and one that confronts India, Russia and CARs is that of drug trafficking. A lucrative drugs trade in Central Asia poses a major threat to stability in Central Asia. Central Asia was the hardest hit by the explosion in Afghan heroin. The Russian mafia, its ties to Afghanistan established during the Soviet occupation, used their networks to move heroin through Central Asia, Russia, and the Baltics into Europe. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan developed important opium routes and became significant opium producers themselves. Drugs are penetrating into Russia along two main channels. First, from the "golden triangle" of Southeast Asia via the Far East; the second from Southwest Asia—mainly Afghanistan and Pakistan—via Central Asia and the South Caucasus.

Finally, Central Asian region also remains highly vulnerable to the smuggling of fissile material for WMD. This region lies between two nuclear superpowers—Russia and China and also its neighbours, the two new nuclear powers, India and Pakistan. During the Soviet period Central Asia was the raw material base for its nuclear programme. After independence, Kazakhstan has closed its nuclear test range and has committed itself to being a non-nuclear weapon state under the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty (NPT), but it has not lost its potential of being a nuclear power. Uzbekistan has the world's third largest uranium deposits. Tajikistan also has uranium reserves and the capability of enrichment. Kyrgyzstan, meanwhile, has a lot of nuclear waste left over as a legacy of the former Soviet Union. Thus, in this region there is a serious threat of the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) Routes, which have been created for other illegal trafficking, can also be used for transporting components of WMD.

## **Conclusion**

India is now looking intently at the region through the framework of its 'Connect Central Asia' policy, which is based on pro-active political, economic and people-to-people engagement with Central Asian countries, both individually and collectively. India's active presence in the region will contribute to stability and development in

the entire Central and South Asia region. In this analysis, we must factor in the regional situation and especially the challenge of rebuilding the Afghan nation. A cooperative approach for embedding Afghanistan into a more meaningful regional economic and security framework would have benefits for the entire region. One way is to work towards converting Afghanistan into a hub for trade and energy, connecting Central and South Asia. The landmark agreement for the construction of the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) pipeline has put the spotlight on the importance of Central Asia for India's future energy plans. It would also greatly benefit Afghanistan.

Central Asian countries could also gain from the techno-economic-potential of India, which could be accessed in cooperative, mutually beneficial partnerships. Central Asia's desire for diversifying hydro-power and energy export routes would correspond with India's quest for diversifying imports. India will be keen to invest in setting up downstream production facilities, instead of exporting raw materials out of the region through expensive pipelines. The approach could differ from those seeking exclusively to pump out Central Asia's riches

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# Xinjiang Today

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*Mahesh Ranjan Debata*

## **Introduction**

Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR) on the northwestern part of China borders Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, Russia, Mongolia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Three of these bordering countries – Russia, India and Pakistan – are nuclear powers. Inside China, it borders two sensitive autonomous regions – Tibet and Inner Mongolia, which are in the same mould as Xinjiang to carve out their own separate homelands out of China. In terms of geographical territory, XUAR is the largest province of China with Uyghur Muslims as the majority. The strategic importance of this region stems from the fact that there is a sizeable Muslim population in almost all the countries abutting this region, a complex topography, history, ethno-cultural and religious diversity as well as abundant natural resources like oil, natural gas and other minerals. Since the last eight decades, this region has been in news because the Uyghur demand a separate East Turkestan republic out of China. In the past the East Turkestan republic was established in Xinjiang twice, in 1930s and 1940s. Since establishment of People's Republic of China in 1949, the Uyghurs have been continuing their demands for a separate state, mostly through revolts, and are now resorting to violent separatist and terrorist activities in recent times to achieve their goal.

The Baren uprising on 5 April 1990 marked the beginning of violent separatism in Xinjiang. The situation in Xinjiang took a dramatic turn with emergence of independent Central Asian states in the neighborhood. Taking advantage of the volatile security situation, some hostile forces, particularly the Islamic fundamentalists, rose up to the occasion and tried to fill the vacuum in the name of Islam. They renewed their efforts to activate networks and strengthen their activities in the region. Through vigorous preaching and propaganda

of radical Islam, the Islamists wanted to make the whole of Central Asia a bastion of radical Islam. Fergana Valley region became an important target, where these forces tried to nurture their evil designs in the name of revitalizing the traditional culture and protecting the interests of the minority people.<sup>1</sup> As Xinjiang province shares its borders with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and their religious and cultural ethos are almost similar, it could not insulate itself from the influence of radical Islam. As such, the radical Islamists in the Xinjiang province found ready allies in their Central Asian cousins to bolster up their ambitious designs. While the internal support base of radical Islam remained Hizb ut-Tahrir,<sup>2</sup> Eastern Turkestan Party of God, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM)<sup>3</sup> and the Party of Islamic Reformers, the external support poured in mostly from Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>4</sup> Another important factor that gave a fillip to the growth of radical Islam in Xinjiang was the Taliban coming to power in Afghanistan in 1996. The radical Islamic forces got an instant breeding ground next door for training in subversive and terrorist activities. In this context, this paper seeks to analyse the situation in Xinjiang in details, especially the situation after the end of Cold War, which witnessed a flurry of activities threatening peace and stability in the region. It will briefly deal with human rights issues in this sensitive province of China and how the international community perceives it. In addition, this paper dilates upon the Chinese strategy to deal with the situation in Xinjiang and highlights the latest Chinese strategy of “One Belt and One Road”.

### **Xinjiang in the post Cold War Period**

After the Soviet disintegration in 1991, China feared a security vacuum endangering Central Asia’s stability, which would affect its already volatile Xinjiang region. The Chinese leadership expressed concern over the possible spillover of terrorism from Central Asia into Xinjiang working as a source of inspiration and support for Uyghur separatists and the radical Muslims.<sup>5</sup> The situation in war-torn Afghanistan, rise of political Islam in the region and outbreak of civil war in Tajikistan in 1992 added fuel to the Chinese apprehensions as did sporadic violent activities in Xinjiang between 1989 and 1993.<sup>6</sup> Two more important factors are noteworthy here: 1. Chinese leadership suspected USA to use the Uyghur card to browbeat China, as it did in the case of Tibet; and 2. China was skeptical of another key player,

Russia, for being conspicuous by its presence in Xinjiang for over a period of three decades, and being instrumental in provoking Uyghurs against the Chinese during the Cold War period. Even though both China and Russia have buried their hatchet in 2005 ending all conflicts and tensions over their long border and have come together on many bilateral, regional and global issues, Russia's support to independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia undermined a key element of China's foreign policy in Central Asia - opposition to separatism.<sup>7</sup> Thus the issue of establishing security and stability in Xinjiang became more relevant.<sup>8</sup>

### **Human Rights Issues in Xinjiang**

The problem in Xinjiang started with the Chinese Central government's idea of bestowing autonomous region status on Xinjiang after 1949. The Communist Party structure duplicates the Autonomous Region's administrative structure at every level. In this power hierarchy, the Party always has the last word and Party leaders at every level are always Han. The Uyghur are only ever second in the chain of command within the "autonomous" region of Xinjiang. Even though the situation has improved to certain extent, the minorities remain under-represented within regional Party hierarchy. In fact, the autonomous status of "Xinjiang" exists only on paper and this is criticized by many Uyghur people including officials who would like to see it exist in practice. The "sinicization" of the region, especially through the combination of these factors, coupled with the total restriction on any political activities, the lack of space to express oneself and the continuous repression, increasing use of Mandarin (for example in the field of education, and in the work place) and the progressive marginalization of the Uyghur language is also perceived as a threat to the survival of Uyghur identity and culture. Finally, the various restrictions imposed by the Chinese authorities on religious freedom in Xinjiang is seen as a direct attack on their identity. Religious education is banned for people below the age of 18. Mosques and religious staff must all be registered. Any new religious building also requires authorization. Religious publications are controlled particularly severely by the authorities. The Xinjiang People's Publication House appears to be the only publishing house with the authority to publish Muslim literature in the region. Pilgrimage to Mecca is restricted to around 2,000 people and those permitted to

undertake the haj are effectively chosen by the Islamic Association of China. Most of them are Hui (who are ethnic Chinese but Muslim) rather than Turkic-speaking. Yet, for the Uyghur being Muslim is an integral part of the cultural identity. This link between ethnic awareness and Islam means that any restriction on Islam is seen as an attack on Uyghur identity. The combination of these factors, coupled with the total restriction on any political activities, the lack of space to express oneself and the continuous repression of the ethnic Uyghurs have showcased a kind of human rights violation in the region.<sup>9</sup>

### **Xinjiang and International Community**

Also the international community looks at this issue in a very different manner. China has been branded as an anti-Muslim nation worldwide by the human rights groups as well as the Muslim nations for the alleged suppression of the Uyghurs. General Frank Taylor, US State Department's Ambassador for counter-terrorism said, "we are pleased with the cooperation we have received from China since 9/11." However, he made it clear that the US would not support Beijing's effort to paint Uyghur Muslim nationalists in Xinjiang as "terrorists." Though some of them have indulged in violence, Taylor said that the legitimate economic and social issues facing the people XUAR need political solutions, not counter-terrorism. Taylor also said that US has not changed its values and continues to hold very dearly its concern in areas such as 'human rights.'<sup>10</sup> Chinese crackdown has been criticized by security experts, academicians, media and human rights Organisations besides the Uyghurs worldwide. Describing "one man's freedom fighter is another man's terrorist", Martha Brill Olcott says that though a substantial number of Uyghurs are strongly against the Chinese government, a very few have joined the terrorist organizations like Al Qaeda. Martha and some other Central Asia experts say that China is using the "War on Terror" as an opportunity to strike against the Uyghurs for their continued resistance in Xinjiang.<sup>11</sup> Martha predicted that the decade long conflict between the Uyghurs and the Chinese authorities would continue even after the "War on Terror" is over with Uyghurs resisting Chinese authority and China targeting the Uyghur separatists.<sup>12</sup>

According to a report of Amnesty International in 2004, the Chinese crackdown on the so-called three "evil forces" (separatists, terrorists and religious extremists) is resulting in serious and widespread human



rights violations in Xinjiang.<sup>13</sup> On 16 January 2002, Human Rights Watch's Research Consultant, Ms. Mickey Spiegel said that political prisoners have been executed in Xinjiang. She questioned the Chinese government's charges against Uyghur separatists as there is no evidence of violent acts by the Uyghurs in many cases. Mickey added that it is very difficult to get information about the names of prisoners, the charges brought against them and their legal fate.<sup>14</sup>

## **Chinese Central Government and Xinjiang Issue**

In a response to the international criticism about the Chinese policies in Xinjiang that have resulted in human rights violations, China's State Council released a *White Paper* in May 2003 titled "The History and Development of Xinjiang." The *White Paper* stated that "after the 11 September (2001) incident, the voices calling for an international anti-terrorist struggle and cooperation have become louder and louder. In order to get out of their predicament, the 'East Turkistan' forces once again have raised the banner of 'human rights,' 'freedom of religion' and 'interests of ethnic minorities,' and fabricated claims that 'the Chinese government is using every opportunity to oppress ethnic minorities,' to mislead the public and deceive world opinion in order to escape blows dealt by the international struggle against terrorism."<sup>15</sup> The *White Paper* asserted that the rights of ethnic minorities in the region were fully protected including freedom of religious belief.<sup>16</sup> Besides, a slew of measures, which are often dubbed as "carrot and stick" policies, the recent Chinese strategy of "One Belt and One Road" corroborates the fact how important Xinjiang is for China.

## **One Belt and One Road Strategy**

Chinese President Xi Jinping while delivering a speech at Nazarbayev University, Astana (Kazakhstan) on 7 September 2013, proposed a Silk Road Economic Belt, which aims at all round development of the entire belt that would boost trade, transit and traffic connectivity, besides facilitating and augmenting people-to-people contacts. The Belt covers 18 countries in Asia and Europe with a total land area of 50 million square kms and a population of 3 billion people. The Chinese government has been mobilizing the politicians, bureaucrats, scholars, journalists, businessmen and common people of the countries being covered in this Belt through seminars/

conferences, symposium, workshops etc. in support of this initiative. For India, the Silk Road Economic Belt is important because of its historical, cultural and economic and trade connection with the Silk Route for the last 2,500 years or so. It now seems that this Belt could be a stepping stone to revive civilizational ties between India and the regions along the Silk Route, such as Xinjiang and Central Asia.

The Silk Road Economic Belt and the Maritime Silk Road are two ambitious initiatives proposed by the Chinese Central government to revive the old route of trade, commerce and people-to-people contacts. The Belt starts from Xi'an in central China and moves west through Lanzhou (Gansu), Urumqi and Korgas (Xinjiang). Then it runs southwest from Central Asia to northern Iran before swinging west through Iraq, Syria and Turkey. From Turkish capital of Istanbul, the Belt crosses the Bosphorus Strait and heads northwest through European countries such as Bulgaria, Romania, the Czech Republic and Germany. Reaching Duisburg in Germany, it turns north to Rotterdam in the Netherlands from where, it moves south to Venice (Italy) where it meets up with the Maritime Silk Road. The proposed Maritime Silk Road begins in Quanzhou in Fujian province of China, and touches three important Chinese cities such as Guangzhou, Beihai, and Haikou before heading south to the Malacca Strait. From Kuala Lumpur, the Maritime Silk Road heads to Indian city of Kolkata and then crosses the rest of the Indian Ocean to reach Kenyan capital, Nairobi. From Nairobi, the Maritime Silk Road goes north around the Horn of Africa and moves through the Red Sea into the Mediterranean, with a stop in Athens before meeting the Silk Road Economic Belt in Venice.<sup>17</sup>

The Silk Road Economic Belt is a huge reservoir of abundant energy, mining, tourism, cultural and agricultural resources.<sup>18</sup>A report by official Chinese daily Xinhua summarizes the importance of the Belt: "with economic exchanges, China hopes to gain closer cultural and political ties with each of the countries along the Silk Road Economic Belt- resulting in a new model of 'mutual respect and mutual trust.' The Silk Road Economic Belt creates not just an economic trade route, but a community with 'common interests, fate and responsibilities. The Silk Road Economic Belt represents China's visions for an interdependent economic and political community stretching from East Asia to Western Europe."<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusion

This strategically important region of Xinjiang, through which almost half of Silk Route passes through, has become a major cause of concern for China. The region has been a theatre of violent separatist and terrorist activities by Uyghur ethnic group in the last few years, the bloodiest being the riots of 5 July 2009 that killed almost 200 people and injured 1,600 others. This has compelled Chinese authorities to resort to several measures, most importantly to develop good neighbourly relations with Central Asian countries, where the largest population of Uyghurs live outside Xinjiang, may be a total number of one million and with whom the Uyghurs share common history, culture and religion. China has been making diplomatic efforts at the bilateral, multilateral and international levels to mobilize the international public opinion against the Uyghur terrorists. China extended its support to UN Security Council resolutions condemning global terrorism. In order to combat the radical Islamists, China started cooperating with the Central Asian Republics and Russia through regional security mechanisms like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). China has also participated in various bilateral and multilateral anti-terror exercises. In sum, China vows to make all out efforts to secure this strategic frontier from all sorts of evils, be it internal subversion or external influences.

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# United States Involvement in the New Great Game: The US Policy in the New Central Asia

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Manan Dwivedi

## Introduction: All About America: Central Asia Comes as a Corollary

United States of America exists as a nation which has an avowed objective to succeed as a domination force field in the international system. United States is a nation par excellence which survives in the global firmament with its military power, geo political alliances, a century or so lead over the rest of the nations of the world and the hyper puissance of its economy. It's the definition of the nation's interest defined as " economic clout" which remains as the driving dictum of the American Dream across the century. This is one warped reading of the entire scenario. United States of America, as a nation has to its credit the all egalitarian, turnpike of, " Liberty, Equality, Fraternity"<sup>[1]</sup> as part of the nation's declaration of Independence which is a valid Universal document from which emanate the myriad United Nations declaratory proclamations and declamations. It is a jaundiced reading to contend that United States carried out a slew of external interventions under the garb of humanitarian interventions.

The nation on Mount Sinai has its task cut out in consonance with the narrative of the Hollywood Cinematic construct, " Who's Afraid of John Doe?" in which the male protagonist accidentally, lands up, in a jail and later on is catapulted to being the cynosure of all eyes as Mr. John Doe is made out to be a social activist unparalleled who is able to transform the lives of people with his Don Juan agility and his Samaritan ways. United States of America, too, was catapulted to the centre of the world stage with Great Britain sliding into Global obscurity after the denouement of World War-II. United States has

earned now the sobriquet of being the World's " Warring Joker" and the, " Regulator-Balancer" State as it goes on to build new alliances and strengthen old ones in palavers such as, " cooperative-competitive endeavors" with an eye on the new frontiers where the Asian actors such as the People's Republic of China and the Indian Union have gone before in places such as Africa, South Asia, South East Asia and finally the objective region of this paper, that is, Central Asia.

### **The Central Asian Situation: An exercise in "Flitting Alliances"**

It can be safely reiterated that the grand international system is found to be regulated and balanced by the idea of a 'Central-All-Powerful Balancer'. The nations of the world need not be herded in a flock but they need to be maneuvered in a balanced out scenario. The world needs and has always required a well accoutered and Regimenting ordering agent who can facilitate the spawning and the maintenance of the " Regimes of the Days"<sup>[2]</sup> and what better way to do it then the Central Asian Republics which girdle the interconnecting region from the oil rich and volatile and unstable West Asia and a rather stolid but FATA troubled South Asia. With the advent of the strong State terrorist organizations such as the Islamic state/ the Daesh, the myriad nations in the region have new encumbrances heaped upon them. West Asia has already acquired a vitriolic, conflicting and religiously and politically cantankerous connotation for itself. The same ought not to run true for Central Asia.

In the Cultural and the popular idiom, the Central Asian Republics of the order of Kazhakistan, Turkmenistan, Tazakisthan, Krygysthan, etc, are nothing but the offshoots of the Russian empire during the heydays of Communism.<sup>[3]</sup> The all the " Stans" as C Rajamohan calls them as, have become part of the SCO ( Shanghai Cooperation Organization) with the Chinese playing more of the role as averse to the Russians.<sup>[4]</sup> The Soviet Union should be the key player as the Central Asian region was gradually assuming significance for the US as United States would have depended upon the region's oil resources in the near future in order to end its dependence on the Middle Eastern oil. United States had strategically inclined itself to think in terms of the Caspian Sea oil in the nineties if the geo-politics of West Asia did not permit them to extend their expanse in the region. But, with the advent of the American Shale oil and natural Gas, the entire 'idiom' of the American dependency on Middle East and South



America went to the backburner. The new found American self sufficiency through Shale and fracking processes have served as a long lasting shot in arm for the geo political ambitions of United States along with the larger scenario in West Asia. These strategic developments can be related to the Great Game of the 'yore' and the 'contemporary context'.

### **What is the Great Game all About?**

The Great Game is all about the geo political and power rivalry between the British Empire and the Czarist Russia in the hey days and the pre modern days of cavalry battles and sword charges. The Battle of Balaclava<sup>[5]</sup> fought in the 18 50's is a poignant instance of the way in which the Crimean war was fought between the British Empire and the Russians where pitched battles fought in the 'Turkish redoubts'<sup>[6]</sup> in the Crimean battlefields. It was here that the Turk fighters in tandem with the receding prestige of the Ottoman Empire, withdrew and ran away while the brave British contingent of the cavalry of the Light brigade led by Lord Callaghan, fought on bravely before being mauled by the Soviet cannons and swords due to the strategic mistakes on the part of the British commanders.<sup>[7]</sup>

The true sentiment of the Great Game was focused upon the theme of the receding power and influence of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey which akin to the Hapburgs was breathing its last few decades in the fast changing European theater. The period between the Russo-Persian Treaty of 1813 along with the Anglo Russian convention of 1907 laid the fundamental premise of the Great Game. The post World War-II times was also marked by the regional shenanigans and maneuvers of the Great powers such as Great Britain and Soviet Empire in order to get the largest pie of the power cake in the Central Asian region. The term Great Game is usually attributed to the British Army Intelligence Officer, Arthur Conolly who first coined the term in the officialdom. The popular term was introduced in the popular consciousness by Rudyard Kipling in his novel, Kim. In the novella, Kim, the entire narrative revolves around a plot which is marked by the Great Game. The male protagonist, Kim, is made to follow the Russian agents in the Indian hinterland along with the jewel gamblers in the Himalayan terrain, The male protagonist, Kim, runs after the priceless items which have been stolen and does not let them fall in the hands of the Russians which could have extended their dominance

in the region with usurping the valuables belonging to India. Kim's role can be highlighted by the idea of the centrality of the Great Game in the narrative of the Novella, *Kim*. Rudyard Kipling can be summarized as, "After three years of schooling, Kim is given a government appointment so that he can begin his role in the Great Game. Before this appointment begins however, he is granted time to take a much-deserved break. Kim rejoins the lama and at the behest of Kim's superior, Hurree Chunder Mookherjee, they make a trip to the Himalayas. Here the espionage and spiritual threads of the story collide, with the lama unwittingly falling into conflict with Russian intelligence agents."<sup>[8]</sup> The era of espionage and the divisions between the whites and the non whites along with the over arch of the Imperial *nom de plume* form the core tenet of the novella *Kim* which marks the core characteristic of the Great Game of the 19th and the 20th century.

The American Great Game in the region of Central Asia is characterized by the squabble for power, influence and resources in the region between nations such as Russia, China and others. Alexander Cooley Writes in *Foreign Affairs*, "In the last decade, the world has started taking more notice of Central Asia. For the United States and its allies, the region is a valuable supply hub for the Afghanistan war effort. For Russia, it is an arena in which to exert political influence. For China, it is a source of energy and a critical partner for stabilizing and developing the restive Xinjiang province in the Middle Kingdom's west. Some commentators have referred to Washington, Moscow, and Beijing's renewed activity in the region as a modern iteration of the Great Game."<sup>[9]</sup> The author further contends that, "Unlike the British and Russian empires in their era of competition and conquest, the Central Asian governments are working to use renewed external involvement to their sovereign advantage, fending off disruptive demands and reinforcing their political control at home. Accordingly, the Central Asian case today is not a throwback to the past but a guide to what is to come: the rise of new players and the decline of Western influence in a multipolar world."<sup>[10]</sup> The nations in the region which were previously the part of the Soviet nation have developed the knack to play the great powers such as United States against others in order to make them slug it out for the utilization and the management of the region's natural resources. The Americans find it advantageous that in the post recession world in the international system, the Central Asian , "Stans" are progressive and inclined to be forthcoming to the

trading insights and maneuvers of the nations such as themselves. Washington can be convenient in its bilateral and multilateral diplomatic understandings in the region as its influence through its Fleets in the nearby seas is a factor to be contended with. The region is strategically significant for United States with the American presence in Iraq and Afghanistan and the presence of the dreaded Daesh/ ISIS in Syria and Iraq. Thus, the fact that Central Asian ‘Stans’ also happen to be Moslem dominated republics, the American concern is always present as the threat of their power centres being taken over by regional fundamentalist movements such as In Xinxiang, always remains a prime possibility. The Central Asian Republics can also become Prime partners in the instrument to counter the Terrorist and insurgent movements as part of the larger global and American Coalition of GWOT, ( Global War on Terrorism.)

With the People’s Republic of China, too, releasing its Eurasian dream adding to the Chinese Dream, the OBOR, or the Chinese Silk Route in the twenty first century can be another bone of contention. The Americans can take a resounding note of the Chinese stratagem which aims to connect the entire Eurasian region with the chief objective of making the Chinese Trade and Investment mobile in the Eurasian region linking up Europe with the Far East. United States of America will be a wary and concerned observer of the ‘Chinese Dream’ in Central Asia after India and China have already divided the dark continent between themselves. The Great game now is not only about the ambitions of nations such as India and China but also the non Asian global powers such as the hyper power of Washington.

The “One Belt and One Road Initiative,” is, definitely part of the Chinese Dream as it was released by the Chinese Development and Reforms Commission as a larger containment of powers such as India. Jacob Stokes writes, “Some have characterized it as China’s Marshall Plan, but Chinese leaders reject the comparison. As they see it, what they are doing is integrating Eurasia rather than drawing dividing lines, and focusing on economic growth rather than political influence. Yet therein lies the danger; if China does not skillfully balance investments and diplomacy with its search for political influence, it may find itself tangled in conflicts for which it is not prepared.”<sup>[11]</sup>

## **The Central American Pivot in the Central Asian Great Game:**

In the Great Game mode ordained by United States also, New Delhi too joins the bandwagon such as the one followed by United States by unfurling its own Diplomatic theme of, “Connect Central Asia” in tandem with the Prime Minister Modi’s policy of, “Act Asia” in order to festoon India in the fashion of Washington, over the larger and the specific firmament of central Asia as something which remains an American striving, too. The Americans could have talked about a “Central Asian Pivot” apart from the “South East Asian Pivot” which have already formulated as part of their Rebalancing in the Asian region. Going by, German geo politicians such as Hartford Mackinder, Mahan and Spykman, the rim land of the entire South Asia and the Persian Gulf was to be controlled by the nation which controls the ‘heartland’ which happens to be the Central Asian region and the Russian steppe slopes. This has been termed as a powerful and a dangerous idea by certain group of scholars, that is, the Heartland Theory.<sup>[12]</sup>

India under the rule of the National Democratic Alliance, too has evinced great interest in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Regime too has shown an inclination to influence the outcomes in Central Asia. India’s External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj too visited the region in order to firm up the traditional Indian ties with the region. It was in June 8, 2015 that PM Modi visited Central Asia with his instrument of foreign policy to wade through the Afghan quicksand and the Pakistani leverage in the region to carve out a niche for India. PM Modi visited the states such as- Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. M K Narayanan writes in the Hindu that, “This should prove to be an excellent opportunity for India to showcase its strengths, while extending a hand of friendship to a bloc of countries that have consistently sided with it over the years. India also needs as many allies as possible at this time, to ward off the potential challenge posed by the widening embrace of radical Islam.”<sup>[13]</sup> Thus, in line with the American and the a larger western take on ISIL and Global terror groups and modules, Prime Minister Narendra Modi too showcased the strength of the Indian coalition and resolve to counter global and cross border terrorism which has a safe heaven in parts of Pakistan and adjoining Afghanistan.

In the understanding of P M Modi’s strength of marking India as a

global actor, Indian access to Central Asia will open up Indian interests to the wild fires of vitriol and violence in West Asia, too. The Hindu, further reports that, “First, the post-Arab Spring fracturing of West Asian States into ethnic and sectarian fiefs has geo-political and geo-strategic implications. Second, India is marginalised from a region from which it obtains 70 per cent of its oil — this has economic implications. Third, the region is home to around 7 million Indians, and the region’s Foreign Exchange remittances add substantially to India’s Foreign Exchange Reserves.”<sup>[14]</sup> Thus, Central Asia for both India and United States is similar to a buffer as well as a conduit to the trials and tribulations of West Asia which open up the gates of regional conflict through central Asia for India.

External Affairs Minister, Sushma Swaraj, too visited Islamabad on 9-10, December, 2015 in the recent past to participate in the “Heart of Afghanistan conference”. Though India has been historically and traditionally aligned with the region as a gateway to the new great game in West and Central Asia, it has acquired the visage of being an outlier, external actor not much involved in the destiny and the BOP in the Central Asian region. India still seems to be searching for a new role in the besieged state of Afghanistan where India is avidly involved in capacity building and in the health, educational and infrastructure enhancement activities. Thus, India needs to carve out a greater role for itself in the region and the Indian participation in the “Heart of Afghanistan” conference also showcases the fact that Pakistan’s status and locus standi as the chief interlocutor in the Afghan conflict has been partially accepted by New Delhi.

In this dangerous game of geo-political one-upmanship and the shifting sands of balance of power, the Americans are the key players.

The American interest lies in the containment of terrorism, anti-democratization and political violence in Central Asia. The need of the hour is democratization in the region and the “Stans” which can strongly embed the Superpower in the region and the individual ex-Soviet social and political contexts. In some of the “Stans” the need for entrenching Democracy, its constituent institutions, an open and mature political culture along with a plural and secular way of doing Politics, are the much-needed sine qua non for a stable, cooperative and fulfilling future with United States. United States can serve as the “catapult” for the Central Asian Republics in order to festoon them in

the framework of global geo economic institutions like they did for a few other developing nations. The US-Central Asian partnership can also go ahead and develop on a cooperative trajectory which ushers in the economic, developmental and infrastructural upliftment of the Central Asian Republics with a novae, “Central Asian Marshall Plan” akin to the Global American Dream which once again pits the American interests against the expansionist and world domination objectives of the Chinese Dream in the Central Asian region.

A Rand Report sheds critical insight over the American role in Central Asian affairs apart from the blandly criticized American module of “ Democratization”. The incipient American presence in the region was that of towards a quintessentially landlocked and a remote and insignificant and quit region. The Rand Report explains it well. “ The current U.S. military presence in Central Asia is something of an historical accident. The question is whether or not it is also an anomaly. For the first ten years after Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan became independent, sovereign states, the United States saw its interests in the region as limited. What engagement there was demanded little from the U.S. military, and there seemed to be no particular reason that this should change in the future. The region was remote, landlocked, and of little strategic consequence.”<sup>[15]</sup>

The evolution of the American policy towards Central Asia marks very well the core component of the American national strategy. The Rand report writes about the argument that failed states such as Iraq and Afghanistan have become hot beds of terrorism and instability so the holistic American concern ought to be to contain nations such as the Central Asian Republics from sliding away into oblivion and anarchy. The Report informs us that, “Since September 11, 2001, it has become clear to the United States that the implications of political and economic problems in faraway states must now be understood as potential security threats, direct and indirect. Add to this the fact that the United States retains an interest in the development of energy resources in Central Asia and that many other states key to U.S. interests have their own concerns about the region”.<sup>[16]</sup> Thus, apart from the quintessential beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century argument about the worth of the natural resources in Central Asia, US eyes the restoration of

normalcy in the region too as a crucial condition to ascertain an American role playing in the “Novae Great Game”.

### Concluding Remarks

Americans don't go ahead with transactions without geo economic and geo strategic objectives. This national interest oriented policy in the context of South Asia ought not to be equated with a crassly Realistic and selfishly Hobbesian insight of US Foreign Policy. The US Department of state calls its policy towards Central Asia as an Enduring Great Game which is a long sighted and far sighted comprehension of the Russian and Chinese overtures as they unfold in the region which has the potential to become the energy hot bed of the future. The American contention in the Great Game is that the nations in the Central Asia should strive on towards establishing cordiality in their bilateral relations so that they can serve as an unscathed and smooth substratum for the nations individually and multilaterally to be in sync with the Global commerce, trade and international forums. The American vision in the Great Game is not characterized by conflict and rivalry. On the other hand, it is earmarked by a holistic and constructivist unison of the region which the American stand point perceives as the “hub” of global commerce and culture. US partners peacefully for technical guidance in the border security technology for nations such as Tajikistan and has managed the “true blue” non weaponised and non proliferative stature of the State of Uzbekistan as part of the US sponsored Disarmament Regime. The US strategy in the region is not that of crass and acrid conflict marked by a history ordained Great Game. The American standpoint is that the Chinese and Russian stakes can be conjoined with the Washington's stakes in the name of development and connectivity in a culturally vibrant Central Asia as part of the ‘au currant’ policy of US.

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## Indian Cinema in Central Asia: Improving Relations between Countries

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Madhvi

The Bollywood Film Industry is the largest producer of films in the world with respect to the number of people employed and films produced. But, in the past few decades, it has become more popular with other countries, especially the Central Asian Countries (namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan<sup>[1]</sup>). The Central Asian Cinema is very different from Indian Cinema as there are few set legacies and genres which they follow. 'The countries are known for different genres of Cinema (*Kazakhstan* - Soviet Documentaries, Eastern Style Romantics and Historical epics; *Kyrgyzstan* - Russian Soviet Films, Urban -Rural Differences theme; *Tajikistan* - Secularism, Social, Historical; *Turkmenistan* - State Government, Political Trends; *Uzbekistan* - Soviet, Independent)'. 'If we consider the historical aspects of the industry, it has been majorly focused upon Soviet nation building and international relations. Through Cinema in these countries, a historical account of the independent states and the entire journey over the twentieth century can be mapped'<sup>[2]</sup>. Cinema has developed through the years in these countries and has always been inclined towards articulation of Central Asia particularly. If the early cinema is considered, it was primarily focused over the Soviet Ethnography (1920s) addressing to issues of war and government. Through the medium of Cinema, the people of these countries were informed and educated about the illustrations of Modernity<sup>[3]</sup>. A Soviet Film industry (1930s) was soon formed and visual effects were developed in the industry along with the themes and genres (Cotton Industry history, women emancipation, land and property redistribution, International films, documentaries, tragic heroism, social transformations etc.<sup>[4]</sup>). The Post war period is also

known as the 'film famine' (1940s-50s)<sup>[5]</sup> period, as the filmmakers became more independent and moved towards other genres (comedy, drama etc.). Introduction of 'color', new studios and different genres led to a transformation in the Central Asia Cinema industry. In the next decade (1960s), new generation of filmmakers were introduced and Cinema was revolutionized with commercial and artistic genres<sup>[6]</sup>.

'India and Central Asian countries have had cultural and historical relations since the very beginning, symbolized by the *Saka* tribes and *Kushana* Empire, along with the flow of Buddhism from India to the Central Asian Lands and ideas of Sufism from Central Asia to India. Cultural initiatives (Tourism, Indian film festivals, events etc.) have been encompassed in order to promote the cultural relations between India and the Central Asian countries'<sup>[7]</sup>. Tourism and Cinema have always connected different countries through cultures and traditions, values and customs, which raise the familiarities and differential barriers between them and hence, strengthens their relationship through imparting knowledge through the medium of entertainment. Post India's Independence, the relations intensified further with introduction of Hindi as a subject in schools of Central Asian countries along with Hindi films and TV shows screening at a regular basis on the television<sup>[8]</sup>. Raj Kapoor and Nargis as the timeless couple was, and still is famous in these countries. Bollywood has always been embarking an interest that never faded over the years. Taking a case study of Kazakhstan, Indian films, culture, dance and music became very popular and India had a very strong influence over the audience of the country. 'People of that generation named their daughters 'Indira', when the Prime Minister Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru along with his daughter 'Indira Gandhi' visited Almaty for a day in 1955. An Indian Culture Centre was set up in Almaty in May 1994, which aimed at reviving and enhancing the cultural relations and mutual understanding between India and Kazakhstan. It promoted cultural and academic activities focused around performing arts (Indian Classical and Folk dances, Yoga, Hindi Language teaching, Literature, Lectures, Seminars, Talks, Photo Exhibitions and Indian Film screenings). Many Indian film personalities like Raj Babbar, Mithun Chakravarty, Alisha Chenoy, Daler Mehendi etc. visited the country in order to participate in International events, concerts etc. Indian Film festivals became more common in the country as the audience had a taste for Indian films especially post 2000' and gradually the demands increased, eventually strengthening the

relationship further, through the same medium of entertainment through culture, traditions and values<sup>[9]</sup>.

India's relations with the Central Asia have strengthened through the years, as India as a country has always had a 'peripheral presence' in these countries, and now, 'Central Asian leaders as well are approaching India as an alternative force<sup>[10]</sup>'. 'The External Affairs Ministry in 2012, at the First India-Central Asia dialogue spoke over the 'India's Connect Central Asia Policy' stated many relevant pointers with respect to Security, Natural resources, energy, medical field, and also about improving the connectivity between the countries, through tourism and Cinema'<sup>[11]</sup>. Also, Recently, the Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi visited the Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan) in order to bolster the affiliation with the respective countries with respect to 'trade, energy and defense'<sup>[12]</sup>, along with other issues (threats, security, health, education, info-tech <sup>[13]</sup> etc.). This visit was a success and led to more agreements and decisions in order to further intensify the relationship between the Central Asian countries and India.

Cinema is tremendous soft power leverage in Central Asia. We must converge soft and hard power and maximize our national interests. Other convergences are also there therefore Cinema could be facilitator for deepening ties between India and Central Asian Republics.

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## **Great Game in Central Asia: What India Must Do to Compete?**

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**Pramod Kumar Sharma**

In July 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit all the five countries of Central Asia since its inception, giving a clear indication that India is determined to develop a new level of ties with the countries of Central Asia. Needless to add, these countries have assumed huge significance for India for various reasons, one being the fact that they can prove to be instrument in meeting India's growing energy requirement in the coming years. The CAR region has also risen to prominence in the backdrop of "Operation Enduring Freedom" launched in 2001 as far as the global war against terror is concerned. It is in this context that this chapter attempts to understand the significance of Central Asia for India and to examine as to what extent India and the Countries of Central Asia have been able to deepen and expand their relations.

India is the 5<sup>th</sup> largest global energy consumer and will become the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest country by 2022. The prevailing anarchy in the Middle East, which has remained an important source of natural oil and gas for us till date, has caused concerns for India. At the same time, containing terror and drug trafficking have emerged another areas of common interests between CAS and India. Nursing the ambitions of emerging global power it is our moral duty to ensure peace and stability in this extended neighborhood. The Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan became independent in the 1990s. Since then, these countries have remained diplomatically engaged with India. In fact, New Delhi has developed strategic partnership with three of the five republics. In 2012, India announced the 'Connect Central Asia' policy and also announced to hold an India-Central Asia Dialogue at Track II annually in one of the republics. These measures have indeed contributed

significantly in strengthening India's bilateral relations with this region. For Instance, the recent inauguration of Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway line has given the region a short access to the Indian Ocean. India, on the other hand, has been making investment in Iran's Chabahar port. This alternative route has eased the business connectivity between the outside worlds with this region. This route has provided an alternative route to Afghanistan and reduced its dependence over Pakistan (Karachi port). Central Asia has already been connected by Zarnej-Delaram road constructed by India in Afghanistan and linked to Chabahar port. The BJP-led Government under the Prime Minister ship of Narendra Modi has already outlined its foreign policy priorities, in which Central Asia acquires a special place. This became very apparent in July 2015 when Prime Minister Modi visited all five nation states of CAR.

Since centuries till the disintegration of the USSR, the Countries of Central Asia remained under the control of the Soviet Union. However, the collapse of the Soviet Union freed these countries to choose a new path for their future. In addition, Central Asia's stature further got scaled up in the international arena , given the fact that other countries view this part of the world very crucial in securing access oil and gas. In fact, since the late 1990s, the International Energy Agency has viewed Central Asia as one of the largest undeveloped energy reserves in the world, especially for the production of oil and natural gas.<sup>[1]</sup> Given the increasingly pressing problems with energy supply and its sequential impact on the global economy as we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Central Asia has become a more significant region for energy studies. The five Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have emerged firmly onto the global energy stage.<sup>[2]</sup> Since the end of the last century, Barry Buzan, who co-worked with Wæver and de Wilde, has suggested five distinct sectors of security concern in the contemporary era: military, political, economic, environment and societal. "economic" security naturally includes the securing of natural resources.<sup>[3]</sup> India is energy starving country and estimated by the World Bank and other global economic pundits as the fastest growing country even superseding China by FY 2015-2016. For sustaining this tempo India requires uninterrupted flow of energy supply. Middle East is already engulfed with a gamut of inherent violence therefore Central Asia could be a better source of energy security. With the propelling energy demands to rampaging economy,

India needs to diversify energy supply. Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway line has been inaugurated and India is making investments in the Iranian port of Chabahar. This alternative route is expected to boost India's trade not only with Central Asia, but with Afghanistan as well. India can explore immense hydro power potentialities left unutilized. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have huge hydropower potential and both want to explore the resources. The hydropower resources of Tajikistan consist of 317 billion KWH per year and only 3-4 per cent of it has been utilized so far.<sup>[4]</sup> The Kyrgyz rivers' energy potential is about 160 billion kWh per year, and currently only 10 per cent of the potential is used.<sup>[5]</sup> Indian hydropower companies, including from the private sector, can invest in small and micro hydropower plants in the region.

From the perspective of nation-states, interests always trump ideologies because blindly following ideologies could result in deviation from national interests. If the two are in conflict, excessively fanatical ideological pursuit would be discouraged; and reporting of the regime's sacrificing the mere pursuit of ideologies would be toned down. Ideologies energy diplomacy has to retain flexibility for the regimes: that is the general acceptance in the home countries housing the energy resources. Without showing concern for the actual situation, fanatically following ideologies can go against the national interest, just as an authentic follower of Marxism can go against the perceived national interests of a Marxist government.<sup>[6]</sup> In statist regimes, excessively fanatical ideological pursuit would be discouraged; in less state-centric regimes, reports of the regimes' sacrificing the ideological pursuit would also be toned down. In other words, without the energy concerns, it is difficult to preach these ideologies with any sincerity on their own and once their dogmatic interpretations no longer serve state interests, they are effectively redundant.

Scholarly interest in Central Asia, which is commonly perceived as "landlocked, poor, peripheral, fearful, defenseless, Muslim, and undemocratic", has become widespread since the five republics gained independence.<sup>[7]</sup> There are many aspects to the importance of the region. Some scholars stress the significance of its Islamic religion while discussing security issues in Central Asia.<sup>[8]</sup> For some, geopolitics plays a greater role in the region, which has been described as the "Second Persian Gulf", the new "grand chessboard", the "heartland of the heartland" or the "Great Game II".<sup>[9]</sup> The Cold War complex also

haunts the republics. Despite this unease, energy politics seem to be of the greatest concern on this grand chessboard. Of the global powers that have prime energy interests in the region, the US, Russia and China are the leading competing forces, although nations such as Japan and India also have their sights on the region.<sup>[10]</sup> Various studies on energy encroachment in Central Asia share two common assumptions: the stakeholders are rationalist-based, and realist- or neo-realist-orientated.<sup>[11]</sup> Although early scholars and realist practitioners may not have obviously included economic concerns in their works, latecomers have started featuring energy resources in the political realist analysis of international relations.

Gilpin regards Thucydides' work on the History of the Peloponnesian War to be partially driven by energy competition; at that time it was wheat to fuel human bodies.<sup>[12]</sup> In the contemporary world, natural oil and gas has become the lifeline of energy and India is growing rapidly. Thus, how India will cop up with these challenges, it is an important challenge before Modi government to ensure uninterrupted energy supply to accelerate India's economic growth in coming decades.

Given the policies used by the US, Russia and China, one may well question whether another great power candidate adjacent to Central Asia, i.e. India, could apply the same strategy. Undoubtedly, India also has strong interests in Central Asia. As the second largest growing economy in the world, India relies heavily on energy imports to sustain its domestic economic expansion. According to the International Energy Outlook, India was the fifth largest oil consumer in 2007 and its demand grew to almost 3 million barrels per day (bbl/d) in 2008.<sup>[13]</sup> In 2009, 68 percent of its oil was imported, and its dependency on oil imports is expected to increase to 92 percent by 2020.<sup>[14]</sup> In this context, considerable progress by India to obtaining Central Asian resources has been made. For instance, since 2004, India has invested US\$3 billion in the Sakhalin-3 oil field and the joint Russian-Kazakh Kurmangazy oil field in Central Asia. India also signed an agreement with Uzbekistan to launch a US\$60 million joint venture for India's state-owned gas utility.<sup>[15]</sup>

The countries of Central Asia are endowed with significant hydrocarbon and mineral resources and are close to India geographically. Kazakhstan is the largest producer of uranium and has



huge gas and oil reserves as well. Similarly, Uzbekistan is also rich in gas, and is an important regional producer of gold along with Kyrgyzstan. Tajikistan has vast hydropower potential besides oil deposits, and Turkmenistan has the fourth largest gas reserves of the world. Geographically, the strategic location of these countries makes them a bridge between different regions of Asia and between Europe and Asia. Although the significance of the region in India's economic and energy security is clear, lack of direct surface connectivity has been affecting the economic engagement. However, the recent inauguration of Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway line has given the region a short access to the Indian Ocean. India, on the other hand, has been making investment in Iran's Chabahar port. This alternative route has eased the business connectivity of the outside world with the region.<sup>[16]</sup>

India and Iran have already got connected in Central Asia through this port while construction of the Delaram-Jarnej road in western Afghanistan will further improve connectivity between India and Central Asia. In fact, in April 2015, India's Surface Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari during his visit to Iran emphasized on the point that the newly developed Chahbhar port jointly built by India & Iran can prove to be instrumental in cementing relations between India and Central Asian countries. Prime Minister Modi's visit to this part of the world further witnessed many bilateral agreements ranging from energy supply to defense cooperation. Iranian President Rouhani and Indian Prime Minister Modi met in Ufa (Russia) in July 2015 and had a 90 minutes bilateral talk. During this meeting it was pledged that India and Iran will accelerate their bilateral relations. In July 2015, Iran and the western world have inked a nuclear deal and now the whole gamut of the decade long sanctions imposed against Iran will gradually be lifted. In August 2015, Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif visited New Delhi and met Prime Minister Modi and other ministers. Again it was reiterated that cooperation on all fronts will be accelerated. During one day visit of Mr. Zarif issues related to Islamic State threat, energy investments, Afghanistan and development of the Chahbhar port were discussed. He also stated that India is an important player in West Asia. Prime Minister Modi 'conveyed India's commitment to work with Iran for development of the Chahbhar port that would have far reaching benefit, not only for the people of India and Iran, but also for Afghanistan and the entire Central Asian region. Mr. Zarif acknowledged

India's support during turbulent times. It is expected that Prime Minister Modi may visit Tehran in 2016.<sup>[17]</sup> Iran has enormous energy reserves therefore relationship between the two countries took a natural way of deepening. India is currently 5<sup>th</sup> largest global energy consumer and by 2022 will be 3<sup>rd</sup> largest energy consumer leaving Japan and Russia behind. It is also opined by sections of global economic pundits that by 2042 India will be representing 23% of the global GDP. For the sustainability of India's growth saga, sustainable and diverse supply of energy is the need of the hour.

Iran is not only important for fulfilling India's energy needs but due to its geographical proximity it is emerging India's gateway to Central Asia. In addition, due to the connections between regional terrorist groups in Central Asia and the insurgents in Kashmir and the Punjab, the region's cooperation is seen as instrumental to India's anti-terrorist security. India is also seen by the Central Asian countries as an important gatekeeper of regional terrorism: once the Kazakh President Nazarbayev publicly invited India to join the Shanghai Cooperative Organization (SCO) for the sake of facilitating anti-terrorism.<sup>[18]</sup> Consequently, in July 2015, India formally joined it. Hence, Central Asia is also involved in the Indian-Pakistani rivalry. In 2004, Uzbekistan was commissioned by the Indian Air Force Mid-Air-Refueling Squadron (MARS) to build three giant IL-78 MKI refuellers. Kazakhstan also signed a military cooperation agreement with India in 2002 for joint production of military hardware such as torpedoes and heavy machine gun barrels.<sup>[19]</sup> All these gestures have irritated Pakistan. Indeed, India has shown its intention to respond to great power diplomacy in Central Asia by challenging the Big Three as well. For instance, Phunchok Stobdan, former Director of the Indian Cultural Center, once suggested that the US's growing presence in the region "forms a compelling reason for India's reclaiming its geopolitical rights and responsibilities in Central Asia".<sup>[20]</sup>

In the early 2000s, India has truly grasped the strategic importance of Central Asian states. This change in Indian attitude towards the region had been motivated by numerous reasons. Indian leaders have acknowledged that Central Asia could be an effective catalyst in the stabilization process of Afghanistan.

India has great interest to ensure political stability, security and prosperity in Central Asia. New Delhi has developed a strategic

approach towards Central Asian countries mostly based on security and energy issues. India rented Ayni airbase in Tajikistan in 2003 “in its quest for strategic footing in Central Asia,” but it lost this base to Russia in 2010 after Tajikistan declared that Moscow would be the only country to use the airbase.<sup>[21]</sup> With the aim of developing strong bilateral partnerships in the region particularly on energy supply, India signed the pacts with Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan on the import of uranium. Furthermore, India launched the “Connect Central Asia” policy in 2012 to establish strategic and security cooperation particularly in the field of energy development.<sup>[22]</sup> This policy was first announced by the Minister of State for External Affairs, E. Ahamed on the occasion of First India-Central Asia Dialogue which was held on 12-13 June in 2012 in Bishkek. Mr. Ahamed explained Indian strategy towards the region as follows:

“India is now looking intently at the region through the framework of its ‘Connect Central Asia’ policy, which is based on pro-active political, economic and people-to-people engagement with Central Asian countries, both individually and collectively. I believe that India’s active presence in the region will contribute to stability and development in the entire Central and South Asia region. ... A cooperative approach for embedding Afghanistan into a more meaningful regional economic and security framework would have benefits for the entire region. One way is to work towards converting Afghanistan into a hub for trade and energy, connecting Central and South Asia.”<sup>[23]</sup>

The implementation of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project which was announced in 1995 and has recently revitalized carries a considerable potential to ensure regional economic integration and to create mutual dependency between Central and South Asia.<sup>[24]</sup> On December 13, 2015, Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, Pakistani Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif, and Indian Vice President Hamid Ansari summoned in Turkmenistan for launching the ground-breaking ceremony of TAPI, a pipeline project which is expected to be operational within the next four years. The 1,735-KM pipeline will transport 33 billion cubic metres of gas annually to South Asia for a period of 30 years.<sup>[25]</sup> The integration of Afghanistan to both

Central and South Asia, especially through the security establishments and economic cooperation could be beneficial not only for the relatively weak and fragile states of the region, but also for the major regional players such as Russia, China, United States (U.S.) and India.

As far as India's inter-state diplomacy, the Mandala concept in Kautilya's *Arthashastra* precisely portrays a quasi-balance of power tactic in interactions among states. The Vijigishu, who intends to establish its hegemony over others, should be aware of the motives of the other eleven kings of the Mandala in order to secure peace.<sup>[26]</sup> The circumstances of friends and foes changes with the existing political and economic situation. When the nation is situated on the circumference, the Vijigishu is the enemy (ari). Next to the ari is the ally (mitra), then the enemy ally (arimitra), one's ally's ally (mitra mitra) then the enemy's ally's ally (arimitra mitra).<sup>[27]</sup> A smart and inscrutable leader should be required to play the political field with wit and strategy. As can be seen, protection rather than expansion is more important in state governance and the complex mandala concept is easy to ensure in case of Central Asia but successive Government has failed to do that. India till recently was pursuing its Central Asia policy in a low profile manner but since the arrival of the Modi Government in 2014, it has scaled up its central Asia policy and hell bent to ensure its national interests.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Prime Minister Modi's visit to five countries of Central Asia in July 2015 has been viewed as a major initiative towards bridging the gap between India and Central Asia. Central Asia is extremely important for the promotion of our national interests. Energy security is of utmost importance. Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are endowed with enormous hydrocarbon reserves. Two of these countries Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are in the Caspian littorals, thereby promising to open the door to other energy rich Caspian states. Connectivity through the North-South Transport Corridor featured in Modi's speeches in both countries as much as the impending implementation of the two gas pipelines. These are implementable but hinges on the political situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan.<sup>[28]</sup> After the nuclear deal Iran could be important facilitator of our interests in Central Asia. Prime Minister Modi has visited entire Central Asia and

pledged a lot, now it is the time to implement possible assurances to promote our national interests.

India has immense opportunities to expand its national interests in Central Asia and needless to say that Central Asian Republics will be finding a balancer in the prevailing security architecture with a proactive India. Russia has to compete with China in Central Asia in foreseeable future due to their ambitious strategic interests but in contrast India has no divergences with Russia today and tomorrow therefore India must convince that despite its expanding ties with the United States, it respect Russia as one of the oldest and reliable global partner. Stability in Afghanistan has not established till date despite gamut of regional and global efforts. Right from the commencement of 'Operation Enduring Freedom' Pakistan has remained the recipient of largest largesse from the United States due to its participation in 'global war against terror'. Despite that it provided safe havens to Osama Bin Laden and Mullah Omar. More importantly, as the senior most US military officer in 2011, Admiral Mike Mullen, told the US Congress , the Haqqani network is a "veritable arm of the Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency."<sup>[29]</sup> Pakistani military has sustained the unique Afghan policy since 1979 not to stabilize Afghanistan and use it as rear base. In December 2014, NATO forces have withdrawn from Afghanistan. New Afghan President, Ashraf Ghani has taken some conciliatory steps to garner Pakistani support for peace but since 2009 every year more than 2500 innocent people have been killed and Pakistani invisible hands are responsible for these deadly attacks. Combined right from 2009 till July 2015, 16,874 people have been killed in terror related violence<sup>[30]</sup> Right from January 2015 to July 2015, 4,921 people have been killed which is self-explanatory. President Ghani showed his will to cooperate with Pakistan but increasing number of casualties has forced him to change his mind. President Ashraf Ghani lambasted Pakistan recently over a wave of insurgent attacks in the capital Kabul that killed at least 56 people. "The last few days have shown that suicide bomber training camps and bomb-producing factories which are killing our people are as active as before in Pakistan," Ghani told a news conference.

"We hoped for peace but we are receiving messages of war from Pakistan",<sup>[31]</sup> President Ghani is now candidly aware about the core motives of Pakistan. Now India along with likeminded countries like

Iran, Russia, United States, Central Asian Republics, China must take every steps to stabilize Afghanistan.

Stability in Central Asia is well connected with the stability of Afghanistan. Drug traffickers have also used Central Asia to transport their assets to Europe due to its territorial proximity with Eurasian landmass. Russia, Iran and India along with Central Asian Republics must retrieve the spirit of Northern Alliance and even they must garner the support of China to contain the menace of terror and affiliated work like drug trafficking. Growing Indo-Iran cooperation will be a push factor for the promotion of larger Indian interests in Central Asia. PM Modi much awaited Iran tour is going to take place within months, it is bound to further deepen our relationship with Iran and physical connectivity will be further expanded towards Afghanistan and Central Asia. Stability of Afghanistan is necessity for peaceful security ambience in South, South West and Central Asia. India must pour the investments in Central Asia from government and private both sectors.

It is the demand of the hour. India has enormous soft power leverage in the region and unlike Russia and China, India is always welcome by CAR. Time has come to make a cocktail of soft and hard power and implement in Central Asia. India could also provide its excellent expertise in science and technology sector to boost sustainable development in Central Asia. Accelerating our bilateral relationship with CAR will be one of the critical foreign policy tasks for the Modi Government.

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## **Recrudescence of Geo-Cultural Affinity of India and Central Asia**

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**Ruchi Ramesh**

Ancient India and Central Asia have long traditions of social-cultural, religious, political and economic contact since remote antiquity. The two regions have common and contiguous borders, climatic continuity, similar geographical features and cultural affinity. There has been uninterrupted flow of people, material and the ideas between the two. The archaeological excavations in the Amu valley in Southern Uzbekistan, in Afrasiab on North-eastern edge of Samarkand and some other places in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Tak - mak in Kirghizstan add further evidence of the existence of links between Ancient India and Central Asia since remote antiquity.

The discovery of manuscripts in Xinjiang (China) and many other valuable excavation finds substantively establish that India and eastern Central Asian region of Xinjiang were also in extensive political, cultural and religious intercourse with each other. Dynasties of India came from Central Asia as invaders and dynasties of Indian origin also ruled in Khotan and other places in Central Asia. In classical Indian tradition clan of the Shakas, Yavanas, Kambojas, Pahlavas, Paradas etc. are also attested to have been coming as invaders from Central Asia to India in pre-Christian times. They were finally absorbed into the community of Kshatriyas of Indian society. Manusmriti asserts that the Kambojas, Sakas, Yavanas, Paradas, Pahlavas etc. were originally Kshatriyas of good birth but were gradually degraded to the barbaric status due to their not following the Brahmans and the Brahmanical code of conduct, the foreign hordes into the social set-up of Hindus. The foreigners were expected to practice same normal pieties as the Hindus and the later in return regarded them henceforth as belonging to their own social organization. The ancient testimony from Manu presents a conclusive proof of a perfect intercourse which had existed between

the people of Oxus(Central Asia ) and those of the Ganges in remote antiquity. Alberuni in his classic work *Alberuni's India* testifies that five hordes viz. Shakas ,Yavanas, Kambojas, Paradas and Pahlavas belong to his own people i.e. Central Asia. Whatever may be the value of these conjectures, this literary tradition definitely alludes to intimate relations between the Indians and Central Asians and whatever they have found that has been remarkable.

These scholars revisited the Indian sources with a fresh perspective, excavated a wealth of information from British and Russian colonial records. After the Sino- Indian border conflict of 1962 the relationships of India and Central Asia were shaped by Delhi's closeness to the Kremlin , but India's presence in the region was mostly limited to cultural exchanges. The Central Asia was referred to as 'our near abroad' and India began to develop bilateral relations with the five new republics of Central Asia. The launch of a new 'Connect Central Asia' policy in New Delhi in June 2012 gave a new boost to the relationship of India and Central Asia .

### **Edge Over Neighbors :**

In 1991 the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of six sovereign states in Central Asia for neighbouring countries are being gauged in terms of political, economics, religion , geography and culture and the change opened up new opportunities for India and other neighbouring countries .The independent republics of Central Asia brought new vigor to the study of Indo-central Asian relations. Encouraged by the new culture of 'openness' in the former Soviet republics , historians from Central Asia ,India , Europe and North America began to investigate the possibility that earlier study may have overlooked or misinterpreted some aspects of Indo-Central Asian. For long time India had meaningful interaction with the Central Asian Muslim states through Moscow. Indo-Soviet relation was a factor to reckon with and this has helped New Delhi to operate in the then Soviet Central Asian Republics. India has an edge over Pakistan as the later has marginal interaction with Central Asia as the Soviet Union has hostile relations with Islamabad. The process of economic liberalization that began in India in 1991 coincided with the start of economic reforms in Central Asia. As a result of these reforms, India's growth rate has increased. The Central Asian economies, however, are still in the process of economic and political transformation, moving

forward at varying paces. The number of institutions like CSTO ,EURASEC etc. have been floated by Russia to develop and maintain its relationships with Central Asia. Russia provides outlet to Central Asia and also hosts a large number of migrants. All exports to Europe are through Russian oil and gas pipelines. The Central Asia will remain at the centre-stage of big powers' rivalry both geo-politically and geo-economically so long as it possesses huge reserves of oil and natural gas. The reserves of oil and gas as well as the possibility of transit transportation are main attractions of Central Asia. This region is landlocked and trains can cross over the Eurasian continent faster and cheaper than ships. The Middle Eastern oil and gas has dominated the energy industry for long in the past , but political instability in the region has compelled the enthusiastic buyers to find new places and Central Asian Region has been observed and predicted the region to enjoy the dominance that the Middle East had been. Certainly the Central Asia is at par with Gulf in terms of potential for oil and gas and another key thing about the region is that it is surrounded by energy hungry markets with Europe to the west, China to the east and in the future, the Indian sub-continent to the south. Central Asia is becoming power hub and its position is strengthened by the fact that the region has land borders . During 1990s , Russia was the only connecting point of Central Asian countries with Europe.

Most of the Central Asian oil and gas was being transported to other countries via Russia. Russia is still important player in this region.<sup>[1]</sup> It would also be useful to resuscitate, by way of commemorating Mirza Muhammed Haidar Dulati (1500-1551), who was the Kazakh icon in Indian history and the Governor of Kashmir under the Mughul emperor Humayun. The Kazakhs have resurrected Haidar Dulati as their national hero. Dulati is an important reference value and a symbol of old linkages between India and Kazakhstan. India has not been able to make significant inroads into Central Asia, a region of vital strategic importance. Central Asia had a considerable impact on the polity and economy all through Indian history. Trade routes linking ancient Uttara-Paath to the Silk Road also carried Indian religion, philosophy and science beyond to Inner and Eastern Asia. The Central Asian sections were expanded around 144BC by Han dynasty largely through the missions and explorations of Chinese imperial envoy Zhang Qian. In addition to economic trade the silk route served as a means of carrying out cultural trade among civilizations along its network.

## Converging Relations

Indo-Central Asia were not new to one another. From the days of the Delhi Sultanate to the demise of the Mughal empire, the Indo-Central Asia interaction was quite obvious and significant. However, with the imposition of British rule in the subcontinent and the Russian expansion beyond the Trans-Caucasus region, Indo-Central Asian links began to fade. The decolonization of the subcontinent in 1947 witnessed close and meaningful Indo-Soviet interaction at various levels. It was owing to the compatible relationship held by Moscow and New Delhi that India managed to establish ties with the Soviet Central Asian states. No doubt ancient ties between India and Central Asia serve as a basis for establishing their relations in a changed regional and global situation. While tracing old ties with Central Asia, an Indian writer, Niranjan M. Khilnani, stated that ' In ancient times and in the Middle Ages between India and Central Asia there was a great process of reciprocal cultural enrichment. It was a creative assimilation, a process that worked both ways. The two regions enriched each other by making their contributions. This was fully manifested for example in the Manichean religion which as we know has sprung from the ancient Iranian religion and can be traced to Zoroastrianism. Mani, the founder of this teaching himself travelled to India and had followers there. Many Manichean ideas were absorbed by the Indian culture. Cultural contacts between India and Central Asia had an impact on the works of Firdousi and Biruni. Sufism was a synthesis of two principles - India pantheism and Muslim mysticism. For many centuries it played an important part in the development of poetry in Central Asia, Iran and India. The contribution made by the Central Asian people in the course of cultural interaction with India was steadily increasing. This is borne out by the work of Amir Khusro Dehlevi. The Central Asian contribution became still greater when Babur founded the Mughal dynasty'.

Khilnani also examined the impact of colonial rule in India and Central Asia. He explained that 'The establishment of colonial rule in India and later in Central Asia artificially served the traditional links between the people of these two lands. The British Colonialists increasingly strove to isolate the people of India from those of Central Asia. But their effort failed. It is of great importance to note that idea of socialism reached India from Russia not from Britain. The struggle waged by the people of Central Asia after October Revolution of 1917

for their social and national integration inspired the freedom fighters and intellectuals alike. After 1947, the brotherhood of India and Central Asia deepened on the bases of new values of life based on liberty, equality and fraternity.<sup>[2]</sup>

The testimony of historic and cultural affinity of Indo-Central Asian relations an Indian scholar explains : Since Jawaharlal Nehru's two visits to this area in 1956 and 1961, India has forged special cultural and economic links with Central Asia even while these republics were part of the Soviet realm. The Soviets did not look askance at this. As a result, there has been a tradition of exchanging scholars, intellectuals, scientists and artists between India and Central Asia. Large number of Indian students educated in the university and other institutions of higher learning in Tashkent, provide a good link between the two countries. Dance ensembles and ballet troupes from these republics have been visiting India for years. In recent years, they have visited this country also as tourists. Indian movies and Indian music are popular throughout Central Asia. All this has built up a significant amount of warmth and affection for India amongst the peoples of these republics.

The year 2006 marks the 50th anniversary of the official visit of Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi to Kazakhstan. Their visit in 1956 had left a deep imprint about India in Kazakhstan. Soon after her visit, thousands of girls born were named after Indira. Indira is now Kazakhized and it is a symbol of pride and power of women in Kazakhstan.

The international conference on a glorious epoch in the history of spiritual exchange between the peoples of India and Central Asia known as the 'Kushan period' was held in 1968 in Dushanbe. The city of Dushanbe was called as the starting point of the Kushan dynasty. The conference unveiled different aspects of cultural exchange between the peoples of India and Central Asia. It also showed the significance of Indian culture on the culture of Central Asian people during those days. It was also disclosed in that conference that the history of Panchatantra

was a pertinent example of the spread of Indian wisdom in Central Asia. Its translation into Persian, with an intermediately Arabic translation known as 'Kalila and Dimna', became a cultural treasure of

the peoples of Central Asia. Investing on the existing long and close ties of India and Central Asia is definitely can really bring them to fruition.

Geographically also India is close to the countries of Central Asia. The strategic location of these countries makes them a bridge between different regions of Asia and between Europe and Asia .India lacks direct surface connectivity has affected economic engagements. The recent inauguration of Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway line has given the short access to the Indian ocean and India's investment in Iran's Chabahar port will also ease the business connectivity.

The deepening relationship with China is comparatively recent feature . China's primary interest has been to make use of vast mineral resources of Central Asia. China has sought to build connectivity of various kinds with Central Asia . The much needed consumer goods are supplied to Central Asia by China as a result Central Asian countries are developing a kind of dependency on China . China is following strategic approach to Central Asia. It has offered \$10 billion grant and aid to members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization(SCO). The China Central Asia Gas Pipeline Project was launched on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2012. China's total trade with Central Asia is to the tune of \$46 billion in 2012.

On the other hand US has used Central Asia to achieve its logistical and military objectives in Afghanistan in the past decade or so. Central Asian countries have provided land and air routes to the US for supplies to Afghanistan. These routes will also be used when the US withdraws from Afghanistan. Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan have been direct beneficiaries. The withdrawal of the US troops from Afghanistan would result in dilution of the US influence in Central Asia.

During recent (July,2015 ) Mr. Modi's visit, India signed several deals in energy, trade, culture and security sectors with the five nations of Central Asia. India signed a fresh deal with Kazakhstan to secure 5,000 tonnes of uranium supply over the next four years. Kazakhstan is the world's largest producer of uranium and the deal has ensured a steady supply of fuel for India's 21 operating nuclear reactors. In Turkmenistan, the long-awaited TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline was discussed and Mr Modi termed the project as a "key pillar" of economic engagement between the two



countries. Mr Modi emphasized in all the five capitals that India is interested in promoting more cultural activities. He has also signed deals to promote tourism between India and the region.<sup>[3]</sup>

India was slow to react to swift changes in the Central Asian republics. However, the 21<sup>st</sup> century has brought a new aroma in India –Central Asia relationship. Yet, bilateral and multilateral engagements between both the proximate neighbors are far from satisfactory. India requires strategic clarity and importantly out-of-the-box thinking to forge and foster economic integration and political cooperation with the North-Central Asia. Among several reasons why India must stake its claims in Central Asia and rejuvenate its policy initiatives towards the region, the foremost is to gain substantial footprint on the hydrocarbon map of the region, to check the rise of radical Islamic agenda of Pakistan to hinder India's security interests; to keep a watch on drug trafficking and potential weapon proliferation seriously afflicting India's security interests; and to promote India's interests in commercial sector. India's 'Look North Policy' –an obvious corollary to India's 'Look East Policy' initiative taken years back to connect India with the energy –rich nations of Central Asia. An effort has also been made to know how Look North Policy is crucial for India in mapping its global strategic vision,

A key focus of the PM's trips in the last one year has been to counter the growing influence of China in Asian and African economies. It is indeed quite disappointing that despite having strong cultural ties with many Central Asian economies, we have been unable to upstage China in economic and energy cooperation. One is hopeful that the Prime Minister's visit would help in advancing our strategic interests and enable Indian firms to expand operations in Central Asia.

Notwithstanding the political goodwill, India has not been able to make commercial progress in Central Asia or has achieved significant stakes in region's strategic mineral and energy resource. India's total trade with the region is only about \$230 million. The recent failure of bid for Petro Kazakhstan by OVL-Mittal combine only reinforced the impression that India lacks a clearly defined Central Asia policy. Influential circles feel that India's policy is directionless, uncoordinated, unfocused and devoid of an overall strategic intent. However, India's experiences in Central Asia over the past decade demonstrate the challenges of competing with China on energy issues and with Russia

on matters of regional security. India has managed to secure only a tenuous foothold in Central Asia when considered alongside other major players in the region. India has yet to translate the aspirations of its recent Connect Central Asia policy statement into strategic and sustained policy action. Despite much talk of India's growing role in Central Asia, it remains essentially a minor player and is unable to compete with China and Russia

### **Concluding Remarks**

The 'great game'-jockeying for power and position in Central Asia will continue. The outcome of the contest for regional influence is still unclear. The cultural achievements which took place under Mughal rule in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries were not an exclusively 'Indian' phenomenon rather they were the result of happy synthesis of elements from throughout the Asian lands where Persian- Islamic culture was dominant. The new security environment provides both challenges and opportunities for India to influence Central Asian affairs. Pakistan's failure does not mean India's success, nor does Central Asia's distrust of Pakistan's Islamic agenda make it pro-Indian. India is yet to capitalize on this ostensibly pivotal role in Central Asia. It continues to lag behind Russia and especially China in the region. China's obstructionism towards Indian efforts to engage in Central Asia also suggests that it may view India as a 'stalking horse' for the United States. India can take an advantage of its geo-cultural relations to become a significant player in the region to work on as regarded by Robson "giant structures and prospects". As China is well advanced in the process of building its own 'Silk Road', well before US-India plans to revive the historical trading route have got beyond the drawing-board. As illustrated in earlier description

India has immense soft power leverage in Central Asia. Since the adoption of LPG process in 1991, India has accumulated almost all important elements of regional power. It has lucrative ambitions to become a global power. For that it must play pro active role in Central Asia. It must use its tremendous edge of soft power to maximize its presence in Central Asia. India could be a cheap provider of science & technology given its expanding command over science and technology. India has an umbilical link with Central Asia taking its leverage India should chalk out a well-planned strategy keeping in view its

strengths and weaknesses to mitigate the preponderance of other strong players in Central Asia .

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# Joining the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Bandwagon: What Does India Stand to Gain?

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Utham Kumar Jamadhagni & Ramakrishnan Ramani

## Introduction

*“The policy authority for tackling global problems still belongs to the states, while the sources of the problems and potential solutions are situated at transnational, regional or global level”. - Thakur and Van Langenhove (Global Governance) <sup>[1]</sup>*

This is the central thought of Multilateralism. Nations around the world increasingly depend on this collective concept as they individually seem to be less capable of meeting regional or global challenges.

Since the end of the Cold War in the closing years of 1980s the world has seen a rising number of erstwhile small countries playing a bigger role in regional affairs. This is reflected in global organisations such as the United Nations, BRICS and their presence and collective synergy in influential forums such as G20.

Multilateralism in Asia and across the world is driven by multiple developments such as Globalisation, increasing security interdependency, resource sharing, international trade and commerce, cultural influence and so on.

In line with this increasing need for Multilateralism comes the need for an entity such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

## Introduction

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) was founded in Shanghai on June 2001 with six member states: People's Republic of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Together, the member states encompass geography of over 30 million square kilometer, which can be translated to about 3/5 of the entire Eurasian landmass. In terms of population, the SCO impacts 1.455 billion people. That is about a quarter of the world's total population.

The objectives of this Central Asian multilateral organisation are to:

1. Build inter-state relations
2. Boost cooperation across areas - political, commercial, economy, scientific, cultural, and others
3. Enhance regional security; thus, promote a peaceful and conducive environment for development
4. Create opportunities to leverage development evangelists such as the Asian Development Bank and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

Since inception, specific development activities were aggressively pursued. For example, an initial project that was signed off was to develop international road transport in the region. In September 2003, an agreement was signed for multilateral trade and economic cooperation was initiated. This agreement defines the scope of economic activities in SCO.

In January 2004, a dedicated 'Secretariat' was established for administrative purposes.

The initial agenda of SCO was on 'confidence-building' to help demilitarise international borders of neighbouring member states, thus easing up on undue 'security' tension. Since then, its scope has expanded to include greater military cooperation (joint security exercises), with focus on key (and growing) specifics such as sharing intelligence and joint counterterrorism activities.

### **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: Member States**

*(As published by Shanghai Cooperation Organisation)<sup>[2]</sup>*

## **Joining the Bandwagon: What are the Expectations?**

In July 2015 at the Ufa Summit, SCO opened up and extended south to include India and Pakistan, which after many years being 'Observers' will now be full members of the organisation. The accession process will be complete in 2016. With the addition of these two countries, SCO will expand its reach over an additional 1.5 billion people.

The expansion of the organisation seems to bring along the perception of value addition. China states that the expansion infuses "fresh vigor into the group's future development and boost its influence and appeal in the international arena."<sup>[3]</sup>

SCO has been weighed down by multiple issues, the least being the slow movement of agendas. There seems to be not big tangible outcomes from the many activities that are carried out. In such a scenario why did India want to join the group?

Alexander Gabuev, head of Russia in the Asia-Pacific Region program of the Carnegie Moscow Center states that countries in the region are interested in being part of the SCO bandwagon not because of the opportunities that the multilateral organisation offer, but because they do not want to fall behind the trend. This, he states, is the primary reason for India to join SCO.<sup>[4]</sup>

Though the security aspect of the organization seems to have taken a back seat in terms of priority, India is keen in pursuing this angle. At this juncture, it is worth recollecting the Ayni Air Force Base reconstruction issue in Tajikistan. India is a believer of the 'strategic depth' concept. Solid military bases in Central Asia would be strategic assets to India in case of conflicts with its neighbours.

For member states, India's inclusion is seen largely favourably. Russia, for example, sees the expansion as an opportunity to expand both the multilateral forum's political and economic potential, thus boosting its capability to counterbalance internal regional challenges. Russian President Vladimir Putin believes that the inclusion, especially India is positive. "India's SCO membership will open new vistas for cooperation."

"Over decades of independent development, India has achieved impressive success in social, economic, scientific, technological and

humanitarian spheres. I am confident that by joint efforts we will ensure further growth of the whole gamut of bilateral ties and partnership interaction in addressing the burning issues of regional and global agenda. This meets the fundamental interests of our nations and goes in line with providing international stability and security.”<sup>[5]</sup>

For the ‘lesser’ states - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan - being sandwiched between behemoths has been a matter of concern. Expansion in membership numbers brings political variety and thus an opportunity to build new relationships and strengthen existing partnerships.

However, the admission of these two antagonistic countries also brings out a bit of skepticism. Is the SCO increasingly becoming a less synchronous entity by admitting these two ‘not so friendly’ states? Scholars believe that the inclusion of new members with conflicting bilateral relations, such as India and Pakistan, may not bring cohesive efficiencies. This becomes especially so when a key feature of SCO is security oriented – countering terrorism, fighting separatism, and sharing security information.

From the commercial and economic perspective there is much to be gained. The creation of an SCO Development Bank has been in the works for a while. The addition of these two South Asian countries may improve the chances of its reality. In fact, India, which is interested in tapping the potential Central Asian markets, will be a source of funds. Being an energy-hungry country with immense market potential, India could very well vitalise ambitious development plans in the region - a win-win opportunity for all the states involved.

India also looks at this as an opportunity to help stabilize regional security considering the United States’ slow reduction of forces in the region – Afghanistan-Pakistan, Indian Ocean Region, Asia-Pacific, and even extended regions such as the Middle East.

From the ‘brand India’ angle, India takes this membership as a step to strengthen its profile in the Central Asian region and this, in turn, will help up its commercial aspirations especially in key areas such as infrastructure and energy.



## Areas of Concern

On the other side, there are concerns. Dr. Farzana Shaikh, Associate Fellow, Asia Programme - Chatham House states, “expansion into South Asia comes with important benefits for the security bloc, but the old rivals could create as much turmoil as opportunity.”<sup>[6]</sup>

On similar lines, experts across member countries and outside have raised concerns on the inclusion of India and Pakistan in SCO. Some commentators have stressed that SCO enlargement might weaken the organisation’s vulnerable internal cohesion. Another area of concern is the bilateral issue between India and Pakistan - the Kashmir issue. Another area of concern is the China-India border dispute and its support of communist-driven insurgency in the country. These issues, it is feared, would challenge the smooth functioning of the SCO. These are in addition to the power project play in the South Asian region - especially in the Indian Ocean. As both the countries are also rivals in accessing sources of valuable energy to feed their ever-hungry industries, their mutual antagonism would influence the functioning of the SCO and energy sources in the region.

India also has questioned China’s Silk Road project. But more importantly, it has been vociferously against the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) claiming that a part of the corridor runs through occupied Indian territory in Kashmir.

With regards to its relationship with Russia in SCO, India has been viewed to be close to the United States, especially at a time when the US’ relationship with Russia is at its nadir over the Ukraine issue. Recently, Russia had lifted its arms embargo on Pakistan - an act that India protests as it would compromise regional security balance in the region.

## Implications for India

**Security Perspective:** Joining the SCO is directly in line with the country’s foreign policy. In particular, it gives a fill-up in certain critical areas such as counter terrorism and separatism. This holds good as the founding countries – Russia and China – too face these issues. Thus, a formal multilateral entity composing of like states will help India strengthen its strategic ties with the member states, build

intelligence sharing frameworks, thus positively impacting regional security.

The country's effort to become a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council is also expected to get a boost by leveraging the vote of SCO member states.

**Bilateral Relations With Pakistan:** So, how would the membership of India and Pakistan in SCO help them ease tensions and build confidence? It is of interest to note that this membership for India and Pakistan is a first. It is the first time that both countries are co-members of a security-oriented organization.

Leading (read 'influential') members countries such as China and Russia, especially the former, have deep commercial interests that also depends on the cooperation between India and Pakistan. BBC Monitoring states, "This is also in Beijing's interest given its grand plans for the Silk Road Economic Belt project that seeks to build connectivity infrastructure linking China to Europe via Central Asia."<sup>[7]</sup>

"And given Chinese influence over Pakistan, the forum can become an important contact point between New Delhi and Islamabad to sort out their differences," BBC Monitoring adds.

In this context, the leadership of both countries will be put into a position where they will come face to face to engage in regional developmental programmes – the greater need may force bilateral reconciliation.

**Commercial Interests:** Commercial interests rule the roost in most governmental bilateral and multilateral interests. It has indeed become so fundamental that even the most orthodox security engagements have a commercial angle to it.

However, the commercial relationship India has with countries in this region are not strong or promising. Part of the blame rests on India's myopic political and strategic relations inadequately powered by its foreign policy. Another factor is due to the lack of direct geographic connectivity with countries in this region.

In this scenario, SCO would play the role of a 'force multiplier' of sorts. As stated earlier, SCO provides India a new channel to reach out

more strongly and with less international noise to member states in the Central Asia. Of particular interest to India are domains such as infrastructure development, energy, machinery, and so on. By becoming a full member, India could directly participate in impactful projects with members states. For example India, with its expertise, can play a big role in the Central Asian initiative to connect member countries and their neighbours. The construction of new roads and railways to rebuild ancient trade routes between member countries will help open this geography to not just the neighbouring region, but to India as well. The 'New Silk Route' will be a highway to regional economic prosperity. Efforts towards it will automatically double up as confidence building measures among the states involved in the project.<sup>[8]</sup>

Internal commercial sub-groups can also be tapped to mutual advantage. The forum provides yet another platform for India to leverage its tremendous industry-rich resources and potential to enhance economic and energy ties. The efforts to bring Russia's hydrocarbons to India through Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan bring out the importance of this region for India's future energy cooperation plans.

India will also stand to gain from member countries' energy needs when they look at diversifying their energy export routes, such as by establishing downstream production facilities. Experts from Russia are strongly in sync with this thought. As stated in the previous section, they state that India's commercial interests in the region and the organisation are completely in line with member states.<sup>[9]</sup>

### **Leveraging the Opportunity**

After over a decade of being an Observer, India is now finding itself within the core group of being full-fledge member. The opportunities of being one are immense, notwithstanding the underlying current of bilateral biases and relationships. Having privy to the ongoing of the SCO and the member states, it would be in India's good stead if it continues to deeply monitor from within and actively participate in all commercial and developmental activities.

Secondly, as China is viewed as the larger threat to India in multiple areas - security and economic, it would be very important for India to not bring extra-regional issues within the gambit of SCO and thus be perceived as thwarting mutually developmental opportunities. Rather,

India should work on improving its bilateral relationship especially on niche commercial fronts. In the same lines, Indian industry bodies should encourage companies to strengthen ties with their Chinese counterparts.

In parallel, India should leverage other multilateral groups such as BRICS that includes other members (In this case, Russia). Mutual interests are likely to encourage partnership in regional and international initiatives.

Multilateralism is about 'equality' and working towards mutually inclusive common good. With this as the core, India should work on significantly improving its relationship with all SCO member states in all areas of engagement.

The External Affairs Ministry of India, during the Summit of the Heads of States in 2011 stated, "SCO members and observers could cooperate more in the future on regional and global threats arising out of climate change, environmental security, food security, energy security, particularly non-conventional sources of energy, and other emerging issues which require a joint response for sustainable development. India stands ready to make a constructive contribution in these areas."<sup>[10]</sup> This should now be put into action in all earnestness.

In the arena of security, India should commit to help promote greater cooperation. For one, it could come up with new security models that are relevant to securing the region against new security threats such as ISIS.

India is viewed as a robust democracy, a political value system that is promoted by leading powers across the world. It is also seen as a promoter of peace. It should leverage this perception to its advantage in this forum. But in doing so, it should not play less in other regional forums. As stated earlier in this section, rather, India should cross-leverage its relationship to strengthen its agenda in SCO.

Finally, India should tune its foreign policy to encompass its new position as an extra-regional, but core member, of the SCO.

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# **The Changing Dimensions of Security and The India's Central Asia Policy: Some Reflections**

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**Suresh R**

With the end of the cold war, the concept of security has come under analysis from scholars of international relations and other discipline. In the classical formulation, security is about how nation states use force to manage threats to their territorial integrity, their autonomy, and their domestic political order, primarily from other nation states. This classical national security formulation has been criticized on various grounds. A nation may be secure but does not mean that all people living in that nation are secure. The social economic and political orders prevalent in that nation have an implication on the security of the people.

The debates on security is centered mainly on the assumptions about what security is, what is being secured, the causes of insecurity, and how best to address insecurity. International relations theorists and policy experts have varying perspectives on these questions, which have evolved and have had changing levels of acceptance over time. Realists and neo-realists emphasise the nation state as the central referent of security, both as the lens through which security is understood, as well as the tool by which security is best maintained. Liberal theorists recognize a wider set of values embedded in the concept of the state and state security, in the methods and means to address insecurity, and the actors involved. The critical constructivist scholars understand that the interests and identities of nation states are themselves constructed by the distribution of ideas and interests within the state-based system and this shapes a state's security interests and how these are conceived, and in turn impacts upon the actions necessary to ensure security. Thus there are divergent views with regard to concept of security, whose security, that is whether the

security of the nation or people, the causes of insecurity, and how to ensure security.

The Westphalia state system had made nation states as the basic unit in the international system. And nation states are sovereign and independent. Each nation decides their internal and external policies. The prime responsibility of a nation state is to promote and protect its national interests. The national interests of nation states are mainly to ensure peace, security and prosperity within its territories. However they differ with regard to the means adopted to achieve these national interests. Some nations employ aggressive means and some peaceful methods. And foreign policy of a nation is the means to achieve their respective national interests. Therefore, though the national interests are similar nations frame divergent foreign policy, which in turn is conditioned by the interplay of internal and external factors. Thus, the foreign policy changes in accordance with the transformations in the internal and external conditions so also the security policy.

Independent India took the initiative to a nonaligned foreign policy rooted on the Indian tradition of faith in nonviolence. However, the cold war politics of super power rivalry and competitions along with an unfriendly atmosphere in the South Asian region prompted India to fall in the lines of power politics as propounded by the realist. The ensuing armament, arms race and competitions prompted India to keep its nuclear weapon option open and also involve in a 'civilian cum military alliances' with the former Soviet Union. At that period the international politics was purely based on power politics and India and likeminded nations had only limited policy options to ensure security of the nation from external threat.

However, the end of cold war and the on-going globalization process along with the proliferation of non-traditional threat to security of the nations led to accelerated pace of multilateralism in international relations. Though the great powers are not ready to accept the new developments, the post-cold war events such as threat from non-state actors to the security of nation, the global economic slowdown, and global climate change compelled even the most militarily powerful nation to seek multilateral approach to address these trans-border menaces.

The ideological confrontations during the cold war led to armament,



arms race between the capitalist bloc and communist bloc nations. During the cold war period military security was the dominant security concern of nation states as the threat to security of nations emanates solely from rival nation states. However, in the changed context of international power structure and the advent of non-traditional threat to the security of nations along with the on-going economic integration at the global level and greater interaction of people across the world transcending artificial territorial boundaries compelled the nation states to evolve a common strategy to address emerging security concerns.

The global movements towards democratization and protection and promotion of human rights supported by ICT once again brought individuals rights and security into focal point. It appears that even if nations are secure people living there may not be secure. The civil wars taken place in some nation states to protect the rights of multi-ethnic groups or the demand for right to self-determinations of people are examples of such a situation. In this context security means people's security and international efforts are required to ensure people's security from any threat emanates from within or outside the nation states. Thus human security assumes great significance in the post-cold war era of profoundly interdependent global system.

The initiative taken by the new government at the federal level towards good neighbourhood and better relation with all along with focusing more on human security issues appears to be policies in the right direction. The shift from a land centric security paradigm to maritime security and coastal security are also visible in recent times. The government had also taken initiative towards engagement rather than estrangement with other nations in mitigating both the traditional and non-traditional security concerns. It appears that both the internal factors and external factors have influenced the government to take such a new initiative to ensure security.

## Traditional and Non-traditional Security Concerns

Type of Security	Referent Object	Responsibility to Protect	Possible Threats
Traditional Security	State	The Integrity of the State	Interstate War, Nuclear Proliferation
Non-traditional Security	State Regional Organizations International Organizations	The integrity of State and regions and whole world	Climate change security Water security Natural disaster Transnational terrorism Energy security Food security

Thus when it comes to security policies the internal and external factors are significant. The internal security challenges posed by various extremist organizations within India with external support can also better addressed through our focus on human security issues especially the poverty alleviation and reduction of unemployment. The good neighbourhood and a better relation with external powers are very important for India to address its own internal human security issues. India's efforts towards better relation and the move towards greater connectivity with Central Asian countries need to be viewed in the context of changing dimensions of security.

### India's Central Asia Policy

India has a cordial relation with Central Asia rooted in very long historical, cultural and economic ties. The Silk Route not only had connected the people and trade in the region but also the culture as well. Therefore India's approach to Central Asia is based on a policy of treating the region as extended neighbourhood. Central Asia is of great strategic importance to India. It appears that there are two major interests that India share with countries of the Central Asian region – security and counter terrorism on the one hand; and mutually beneficial economic interactions including usage of energy and natural resources on the other. India can play a major role in developing the region's connectivity infrastructure not only with South Asia but also to Europe. Such connectivity would be greatly beneficial to the mutual development of the South Asia and Central Asia region and also for durable peace and security in the region.

One of the major hurdles towards better relation is the connectivity with Central Asia. However the railway line from Kazakhstan -

Turkmenistan to Iran port Bandar Abbas provides access to Indian Ocean.<sup>1</sup> The abundant energy resources in the central Asian region would be beneficial to India and South Asian region to ensure energy security. Similarly if the agreement for the construction of the TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline comes to fruition it will further enhance the prosperity of the entire region. India has to frame its central Asia policy mainly considering two important factors. They are connectivity and energy security. The central Asia is a gateway to Europe and there is abundant source of hydrocarbon in the region. The recent visit of the India's Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi to all the Central Asian countries further enhanced the bilateral engagements. The five countries of Central Asia – Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan — are spread over 4 million square kilometres. Despite this enormous size, their combined population is only 60 million people. This agriculturally rich land of vast steppes contains large deposits of mineral resources, many of which remain unexplored. Thus once the land and maritime connectivity is established with this region a mutually beneficial development paradigm based on a blue economy can also be experimented in Central Asia.

India's Central Asia policy needs to consider two major aspects of national interest, security and development. A peaceful Central Asian region is very important for durable peace and security in South Asia. Thus from the security perspective Central Asia is very significant to India. As long as Pakistan and Afghanistan remain as the epicentre of global terrorism, the horizontal proliferation of terrorism need to be checked. In the developmental front India's new initiative towards engagement with all nations for mutual development would further cement the agriculture and natural resources based economy of the less populous Central Asia region. Moreover a new paradigm of development based on blue economy can well experimented in this region. Thus from the national security as well as human security perspective a cordial India – Central Asia relations are significant. The maritime connectivity with Central Asia through Iran and the land connectivity through Pakistan and Afghanistan need to be explored. The existence of grave non-traditional security concerns in the adjoining Pakistan and Afghanistan makes Central Asia vulnerable. Thus better relations with all Central Asian countries are indispensable for India's security.

## NOTES

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1. The operationalization of rail network between Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran linking Bandar Abbas port in Iran would give India much needed transport corridor to Central Asia, Russia and Europe through the port in Gujarat, according to Kazakhstan Ambassador to India Bulat Sarsenbayev. India and Kazakhstan are working on this key project to link the Central Asian country with South Asia's biggest country through rail and port via Turkmenistan and Iran as agreed during PM Narendra Modi's visit to Astana last July. "The railway link from Kazakhstan to Bandar Abbas Port in Iran via Turkmenistan will link Indian markets and exporters via Mundra port to not only Kazakhstan, but also rest of Central Asia besides Russia and Europe," Bulat Sarsenbayev **The Economic Times** 1 December 2015

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## **India and Central Asia: The Paradigmatic Shift in their Quest for Leadership in emerging Global Order**

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**Tridib Chakraborti & Bipasha Ghose Dastidar**

In the annals of world history, Central Asia always remains a focal point of power politics that was reflected in the numerous literatures of geo-politicians works. In the ancient times, Central Asia was taken to be the centre of the world mainly due to its conquests over the regions of India, Russia, Europe, China and Turkey. This was made clear by Sir Halford Mackinder, for whom the Central Asian landmass was the political cum gravitational hub since it enclosed the most number of frontiers than any other region. Mackinder in his writings categorically mentioned that, "It is the greatest natural fortress in the world, defended by polar ice caps, deserts, arid tableland and mountain ranges."<sup>1</sup> The geo-strategic location of Central Asia with the Central Asian republics lying at the junctures of Russia, Middle East, South Asia and the Far East has made the region take the centre stage. As a region, it always rich in natural resources, and given the completion of the railway projects Central Asia shall provide a passage for cargo flows to Asia and the Pacific region to Europe and West Asia. The Central Asian region has been an attractive site owing to its vast oil and gas reserves, along with hydrocarbons that have compelled the multiple companies from Iran, Russia, US and Turkey for making huge investments and thereby propagating the importance of Central Asian oil and natural gas worldwide.

As against this backdrop, there has been a growth of a close relationship between Central Asia and India, the former being referred to as India's 'extended neighbourhood'. Central Asia remains a strategic geographic location which can act as a bridge between different regions of Asia and between Europe and Asia. Although the significance of this region in India's energy and economic security in recent times is

amply clear but lack of direct land connectivity has been clearly affecting the economic engagement between India and Central Asia. Interestingly enough, the recent inauguration of Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway line has given this region a petite space to the Indian Ocean. India currently has been making investment in Iran's Chahabar port. This alternative route has eased the business connectivity of the outside world with the region.<sup>2</sup> This ongoing project with Iran could offer India a gateway to Central Asia.

Historically, both these regions influenced each other in terms of culture and civilization but currently the dimensions of outlook have changed with ample stress been given upon the economic engagement between the two countries. Besides these, India and Central Asia have made several collaborative efforts for procuring security, which if utilized properly might enable India to devise strategies preventing the spread of terrorism in the world. Though the position of Central Asia was in doldrums prior to the Second World War, the region gained momentum with the downfall of the former Soviet Union in 1990. While reiterating Sir Halford Mackinder's concept that, 'One who controls the heartland, controls the world', this region became a centre of power occupation and competition and thereby provided the starting point of the Great Game, which attempted to achieve a control over the entire territory that would not only ensure power but guarantee security for the respective players in the region.<sup>3</sup>

Central Asia is a formation of the five new republics namely Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. These countries have been taken as the current reserves of oil and natural gas all surrounding the Caspian Sea which have all led to the emergence of tanker routes, pipelines as prized possessions of the Great Game. As a result, the current scenario has witnessed India and China accompanied with the Russians, Americans, Iran and Pakistan to frame their own interests in the region, leading to rivalries among the countries of Azerbaijan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Armenia and Uzbekistan. The above mentioned point has been clearly endorsed with the following statement: 'It is a bloody muddle, made worse as before by outsiders'.<sup>4</sup>

### **India's Interest in Central Asia: Oil as a Means**

Oil and natural gas have been the two hotly debated topics within

the Central Asian ambit. Several questions relating to the construction of pipelines, passage of oil transportation formed a part of the Great Game hypothesis. Russia and the United States of America (USA) felt the need to develop a close understanding with the Central Asian region owing to their dependency for the oil and gas reserves, which has been also followed by the non-regional governments especially by Iran, China, Turkey, Pakistan and Israel who currently working actively in promoting their own national interests with the help of this region.

India has been a great strategic partner for Central Asia due to the former's energy requirements and the need of tackling terrorism. For India, oil and natural gas are the two prime vehicles of her energy requirements for which the Caspian basin acts as an important hydrocarbon reserve. This outlook of India was made clear through the Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd. (ONGC), which so far has bought 8.42% shares of Conoco Philips holdings in Kazakhstan. Besides this, India's presence has been also felt since India attempts to acquire high stakes in the Alibekmola and Kurmangazy oilfields, located in the areas owned by Kazakhstan accompanied with taking over the Kashagan oilfield of Kazakhstan and the arrival of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline in May 2012. The Indian presence in this region might provide a greater amount of stability in the entire region. Unfortunately, other actors mainly the presence of the US and China, and each of them competing with others to procure energy from this region has led to the emergence of a severe great game power politics in Central Asia. Thus, the Central Asian region has witnessed efforts placed by India, US and China for gaining access to the area which failed to begin on a positive note, since the US attempts of transporting the Caspian oil to international markets hampered the energy security of both India and China<sup>5</sup> thereby demanding a number of strategies on the part of India, China and Iran to counter such problems within the domain of Central Asian province

Subsequently, the US tried to free Central Asia from the clutches of Russian and Chinese dominance by advocating the former's linkages with the other countries to desist the domination of any single power. One possible way to achieve this is to have a direct access to India by the entry of the Central Asian goods via Pakistan and Afghanistan. This naturally brought similar to the Indian initiative of a North- South trade corridor which facilitated the passage of goods from Central Asia

to Russia via Iran and Pakistan. Indian participation in the petroleum sector has attracted bigger opportunities from Kazakhstan and the Caspian Sea region whereas suitable attempts has been witnessed in the Aksai and Karachaganak based consolidated construction company which have all culminated together in making Central Asia a Gulf model for India.<sup>6</sup> India has occupied a prominent position within the Central Asian market through the increasing demand of Indian commodities namely tea, fine chemicals and pharmaceuticals which got endorsed by New Delhi, Moscow and Tehran's agreement at St. Petersburg of sending Indian cargo to Russia through the North-South Trade Corridor.

The Central Asian region presented India with a plethora of opportunities. This got furthered in April 2006, after the Indian Prime Minister signed agreements with Uzbekistan including seven agreements in the oil and energy sector.<sup>7</sup> Indian emphasis upon strengthening bilateral relations with Central Asia came to the forefront after New Delhi set up a consulate in Tashkent and established trade relations with the Central Asian republics. On the one hand, Central Asia reaped a whole lot of benefits from this partnership in the form of a market economy, a viable stock market and management. On the other hand, the economic benefits of Indian programmes stressed upon the transformation of the Central Asian republics mainly Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. This initiative came into effect after India credited \$10 million to Tashkent in 1992 and 1993 coupled with signing a treaty that pledged for bilateral cooperation and coordinating efforts, thereby preventing the spread of terrorism, extremism and arms and drugs trafficking. In 1992, India became a signatory to several agreements for the development of hotel and textile industries with Almaty. In recent times, this is evident in Kazakhstan signing a contract between the ONGC Videsh Limited (OU) and the Kazmunaigas (KMG) followed by an exploration contract between India's Ministry of Oil and Gas and KMG in 2010.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, an agreement was signed between India and Turkmenistan in April 1992 that called for cooperation in the fields of natural gas extraction, processing of agricultural products, construction of hotels along with banking and chemicals. The same was reiterated in 1994 after Turkmenistan received a loan from India worth \$5 million stressing upon India's lack of interest in building ties with Tajikistan



and Kyrgyzstan. The above account gives us a brief idea about the fact that the Indian role in Central Asia depends upon the US and Chinese involvement with Pakistan that would also in a way be responsible for Pakistan's cooperation with Russia and Iran for gaining a strong foothold in the region. According to the academicians, India needs to adopt a middle path in between India and China for securing stability in Central Asia.

In addition to this, cooperative efforts are visible in India participating in the construction of the Trans- Afghan gas pipeline (TAP) starting from Turkmenistan's Daulatabad gas field paving the way for trustworthy relations between India, Central Asia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. In matters relating to energy consumption, India occupies the sixth position in the world which is expected to climb two notches higher followed by the US, Japan and China. Apart from being the fifth largest oil consumer, Indian investments have been US\$ 3 billion in the Sakhalin- 3 oil field along with the Russian- Kazakh Kurmangazy oil field in Central Asia. Besides these, India and Uzbekistan's US\$ 60 million joint venture for India's state- owned gas utility has been another important landmark. Therefore, it can be said that oil remains an important means of India's access to Central Asia receiving 75% of oil from the other countries and 25% from its own domestic sources which have acted as a major instrument in smoothening relations between India and the Central Asian republics.

### **US: Aggregating Interests in Central Asia**

The US government always has a special eye towards this region and that special attention got its momentum after the fall of former Soviet Union and the emergence of Central Asia as an independent political unit. The US initiatives towards this region got noticed with the creation of the pipeline transporting oil from Baku and Azerbaijan to Ceyhan and Turkey, often termed as the 'Silk Route'. With the passage of time, the US attention shifted towards the prevention of newly emerging Islamic Movement in Uzbekistan (IMU) after which the US stressed upon the strategies to tackle terrorism and focussed upon rebuilding its military capacity within the region. At the very outset, this proved to be difficult due to the lack of the US allies in the region. The US made its presence felt in this area by hosting a counterterrorism conference in Washington and where the Central Asian republic members were invited. Following this meeting, Washington called for

the creation of a Central Asian Border Security Initiative to provide \$3 million to Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, in order to develop their counterterrorism measures. Besides this, the Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev expressed its willingness of US investment for the development of its various oil and gas sectors. Unfortunately this offer was rejected by the US government on the ground that this government would change its structure from the existing system to a democratic one.

Apart from the above mentioned points, Russia collaborated with the US in their fight against the IMU and terrorism by setting up the Joint Working Group (JWG) on counterterrorism in 2000 that would keep a check on the terroristic activities of the Taliban and the IMU. The US and Russian support proved complementary to each other, since both of them realized the importance of working together in order to keep their positions intact within the Central Asian region, thereby giving the latter a new image which became visible through the US- Russian ties. Thus, from the above account it seems clear that the Central Asian region has gained importance for the US more after its inclusion in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, which accelerated the latter's relations with India, Afghanistan and Pakistan.<sup>9</sup>

### **The Russian Dilemma**

In the initial years of post-Cold War, the countries of Central Asia were not comfortable with new Russia. In these years, the Russian image had been generating fear for Central Asia. This situation received a major setback during the first Chechen war (1994-1996) which was an attempt of preventing Chechnya's separation from the Russian empire. This was also taken, on the one hand, to be the Russian crusade against Islam which earned the realization of the Central Asian leaders in support of the former's military strength regenerating the need of Russian power if the countries faced similar domestic tensions within themselves and on the other hand, the Russian empire had faced several confrontations with the US owing to the latter's denial of accepting the Russian power. Some of the major disturbances included the struggle for influence in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, control of access routes in the oil and gas pipelines, disregarding Russian human rights violations in Chechnya, selling nuclear materials to the so-called rogue states of Iran and North Korea and the US support to Taliban expansion to name a few.<sup>10</sup>

This Russian aggressive image led to a reverse portrait in the mindset of the Central Asian countries when Russia tried to curb a large portion of this region and bring them under its control. Countries namely Uzbekistan, adopted policies inimical to the Russian hegemony, which were visible in the former's withdrawal from a security pact headed by Moscow and instead joining Azerbaijan, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine in their struggle to free themselves from the Russian domination. As against such backdrop, Uzbekistan denied Moscow's attempt of establishing a military base in Tajikistan, coupled with joining a new Customs Union of the CIS countries. Unlike Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan followed a position of neutrality to support both Russia and the US during the Afghan civil war. This was mainly to secure one's own interests since Turkmenistan believed that peace in Afghanistan would ensure gas pipelines from Turkmenistan and Pakistan all of which came to a standstill with the increasing atrocities of the Taliban. Turkmenistan being the only Central Asian state, shares cordial relations with Pakistan for the fact that the latter provided an excellent passage for transporting military equipments to the Taliban and Russia, by prohibiting the entry of ethnic migrants from Russia within its territory and thereby according them both the Russian and Turkmen citizenship.<sup>11</sup>

Meanwhile, Russia under the leadership of Vladimir Putin, worked for the creation of an alliance that would act as a counterweight to the Western domination. For Russia, this alliance sought the membership of the Arab World, Central Asia, Iran, Eastern Europe, Caucasus, India and China. To turn this move into a reality, Russia made an attempt to tighten its influence over the Central Asian region which was witnessed in its efforts of controlling the oil, minerals and the defence industry and striving to form the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in 2003. Similar to India, Russian coordination was visualized in the projects of Kyrgyzstan against terrorism where talks were on for a Russian air military base in Kant along with its active role in the rapid deployment force containing troops from Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. Therefore, from the above account it seems clear that Central Asia has been an area of great interest for Russia that has been proved overtime with the growing influence of Russia over the Central Asian republics and vice-versa.<sup>12</sup>

## **India- China- Pakistan and Central Asia: Interplay of Interests**

India, China and Central Asia share a close connection which received attention in China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and India's ONGC cooperation for acquiring US\$ 573 million joint bid named Petro- Canada. Several dialogues for bringing about regional cooperation had been held between the oil suppliers namely Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the UAE along with the oil buyers like India, Japan, China and Korea, which reinforced the creation of an India- China axis within the Central Asian region. Besides this, terrorism as one of the chief agendas has emerged as a global menace occupying the topmost position in the foreign policy of almost every country in this region.<sup>13</sup> The Central Asian countries have devised strategies coupled with the joint use of armed forces for assisting in efforts placed by Russia. Russia under Vladimir Putin remains the key member of the anti- terrorist coalition that existed in Afghanistan and has emerged as one of the prime actors behind a Taliban less Afghanistan.

Besides Russia, efforts to combat terrorism were also evident on part of China after it called a Summit Meeting in Shanghai in 1996, with the five states sharing common borders namely Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Russia, China and Kyrgyzstan. This led to the creation of the Shanghai Five as well as stood for furthering cooperation against international terrorism, illegal drug and arms trafficking, migration and religious extremism. With Central Asia slowly inclining for help from China, the Shanghai Five changed its name to Shanghai Forum giving Uzbekistan an observer status, thereby building up a counter terrorism centre in Bishkek for tackling the efforts of Taliban. The countries like India, South Korea, Mongolia, Pakistan and Iran looked for membership in this forum which did not take place till it transformed itself to be called as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).<sup>14</sup> The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) came into being in 2001 through the initiatives of the Russian, Chinese, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. India gained the observer status in the organization along with Pakistan and Iran in 2005 and that was greatly fuelled by the former's participation in the SCO's Regional Anti- Terrorism Structure (RATS). As against this backdrop, both India and China held their first dialogue in 2013 regarding the Central Asian region with special emphasis on the issues of counter-terrorism, energy security, etc. The advent of radical Islam

and the entry of jihadist groups in Central Asia have posed a prime impediment to India's national security. India has always tried to maintain cordial relations with Afghanistan after the former signed a \$2 billion deal for Afghan reconstruction and a deal working towards strategic partnership in the country in 2011. These efforts received a boost after the Indian External Affairs Minister S M Krishna's visit to Afghanistan's neighbour, Tajikistan in 2012, where talks were held for close defence and security ties which saw the coming together of India, Russia and Tajikistan for extending their support to the Northern Alliance against the Taliban regime.<sup>15</sup>

But it needs to be remembered in this connection that the SCO's role in the Indian context cannot be overlooked. This organization mainly looked upon the promotion of trans- border peace, counter-terrorism efforts and security but for India this became a tool for accentuating regional economic integration, energy security, trade and other factors. Despite such coordinating attempts, the critics held this decision of India to join the organization inappropriate since they wanted India to work for a different regional set up which would include a larger portion of Central Asia with its six republics, along with India, China, Afghanistan, Iran, Japan, Russia, US, Turkey and Pakistan.

The Central Asian province emerged as an epicentre of great power politics involving China, Russia, US, the European Union (EU), Turkey, Pakistan and Iran as the key players. India's priorities in Central Asia lay in Afghanistan, the main focus of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism. India adopted an 'Extended Neighbourhood' policy towards the Central Asian states, which in due course of time called for an 'immediate and strategic neighbourhood'. The advent of Taliban and its engagement with the Pakistani cross- border terrorist forces greatly disturbed India's security. Taliban was taken to be a creative entity of the Pakistani Intelligence Agency and Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) which came to the forefront chiefly after Pakistan wanted an access to Central Asia by gaining strategic depth in Afghanistan.<sup>16</sup>

Pakistan's efforts have been chiefly triggered by Islamabad's fears of Indian control in the South Asian region and the antagonistic relationship that India shares with Pakistan. India's influence in Kabul in turn affected the Pakistan- Afghanistan relations which reinforced Pakistan to voice for the settlement of a Pashtun government in

Afghanistan since the 1950s. Pakistan had also been accused of providing training to the militants on its soil to fight in Kashmir and promoting terrorism against India. In Central Asia, though Pakistan had repeatedly denied its association with the Taliban, Islamabad's venture to make entire the Central Asia countries with more Islamic-oriented flavour rather than the presence of India and Russia in the turf of this region.<sup>17</sup> In addition to the above points, Pakistan had lent support to the Central Asian states in many transport and communication projects allowing them to pass through the Xinjiang province that would also serve as a guarantor of tariff-free overland trade among Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and China. With this Pakistani initiative the prime motive of the former was to reduce India's presence in the region and thereby attempt to estrange India from its entry to the international transport and communication highways.<sup>18</sup>

The Indian military base at Ayni in Tajikistan, the first military facility outside the country marked the beginning of India's entry in the so called Great Game of power politics in Central Asia. Both India and Central Asia share common concerns in matters such as drug trafficking, cross-border terrorism, bilateral trade, etc.<sup>19</sup> The phenomenon of Islamic fundamentalism has led to greater instability in the countries of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, China, India, Tajikistan and Pakistan, thereby enabling the Central Asian region transform itself into a reservoir of radical religious ideologies.<sup>20</sup> This calls for immediate action on the part of both India and Central Asia that would prevent the latter from being called a breeding ground of terrorism. Besides this, India has assisted the Central Asia in curbing terrorism through the Joint Working Group (JWG) on combating international terrorism in Uzbekistan, a JWG with Tajikistan on counterterrorism coupled with a JWG with Kyrgyzstan for preventing terrorist infiltration and such other crimes.<sup>21</sup>

India and Central Asia held talks over a plethora of urgent affairs that dealt with sharing intelligence information and the provision of adequate arms to the Central Asian republics. The Indian association with Central Asia is elucidated in the words of India's Foreign Secretary Shyam Saran, who once said: "India's destiny was interlinked with that of Asia. Geography imparted a unique position to India in the geopolitics of the Asian continent, with its ground reaching well-beyond South Asia and its interests straddling between different sub-

categories of Asia be it East Asia, West Asia, Central Asia, South Asia or Southeast Asia.”<sup>22</sup> India’s growing interest in Central Asia can be well established through the Connect- Central Asia policy that was brought forward by the Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahmed during the first India- Central Asia Dialogue held in June 2012 at Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.<sup>23</sup> This called for high- level visits, a new Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) for market integration, joint efforts for counterterrorism, joint research for strategic partnerships in the fields of management, energy and natural resources, information technology, etc. A special emphasis was also laid upon the construction of the transit routes to enhance the connectivity among the people of both India and Central Asia. Similarly, the India- Central Asia Dialogue 2 held in 2013, clearly advocates a new front comprising India, China and Kazakhstan by virtue of being members of the SCO who would place their joint efforts leading to the creation of an improved Afghanistan.<sup>24</sup>

In recent times, India’s relations with Central Asia have been accelerated after the former pledged to work with Turkmenistan for addressing the challenges of cross- border terrorism, extremism and such issues. This was hinted by the Indian Vice- President Hamid Ansari at the ground breaking ceremony of the TAPI gas pipeline, where he threw light upon the growing bond between the two nations that had grown stronger in the contemporary times. His address at the conference on neutrality marking the 20th Anniversary for the adoption of the ‘Permanent Neutrality’ status by Turkmenistan amply visualized such an approach by a Central Asian country as bearing a striking resemblance with Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) that worked for maintaining cordial relations with its neighbours for promoting peace and security in the region.<sup>25</sup> Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Turkmenistan in July 2015, reinforced this shared vision as is expressed by his statement, “Tomorrow, we will flag off the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline which we both recognize to be the key pillar of our economic engagement and which is in consonance with the particular emphasis that Turkmenistan puts on the economic aspect of neutrality.” Besides these, he assured India of a strong partnership securing regional and global peace along with sustainable development with all the five countries of Central Asia. India aimed at following the principles of peace, non-violence and the peaceful resolution of disputes which encompassed

neutrality.<sup>26</sup> In response to this Indian project, Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, proposed an alternative offer from his country, i.e. the TAPI project which would act as a bridge linking both South Asia and Central Asia, and thereby tried to restrain New Delhi's presence in the region.<sup>27</sup> It remains a fact that Central Asia remains a strategically important area for the promotion of India's national interest where the procurement of energy remains one of the prime factors. Unfortunately, this region by virtue of being in the stage of developing their economy and the combination of a number of other non-traditional factors, which link the region with its surrounding environment as well as the presence of some extra regional powers, make the area a more sensitive one in its entirety. Now the question appears to us, is how India can play a more effective role in its complex power equation in this region. In response to this, the best alternative that India can provide is to use its soft power as a vehicle to play a more effective role in this area. In other words, soft power could be the best possible means to trigger its Central Asian policy that would be more pragmatic than the other means. Above all, though this seems to be an immediate solution, the problem still lies in its application that would pose as a major challenge for the current leadership of the government of India.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Having analyzed the 'Great Game' power politics in the Central Asian region it can be said that this region has been successful in joining the efforts of Russia, China and the US along with India for combating the challenge of terrorism and preserving the territorial integrity of the region. This region has greatly witnessed concerted efforts on part of several countries that have sought to reshape the area giving it a new perspective. But the problem lies in the Central Asian republics themselves as they in their search for identity have failed to choose a one way path that in turn has led to serious misgivings among themselves. Therefore, the present need remains to wipe out the reign of Islamic fundamentalism thereby welcoming other countries to firmly establish themselves leading to the creation of a new picture of Central Asia.



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## Book Review

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**Indo-Pacific, Emerging Powers, Evolving Regions and Challenges to Global Governance, D. Gopal, Dalbir Ahlawat, (eds) Aakar, New Delhi, 2016, Pp-319, Price-Rs 995.00.**

—Reviewed by : Prof. S.N. Singh

Indo-Pacific region is gradually occupying the driving seat of the global economy. Security arena however is being controlled by United States of America despite its relative economic decline. Here also lies new architecture of power. China wants that this region should be dominated by her. India along with ASEAN, Japan, South Korea, and Australia wanted that both globe as well as Indo-Pacific must be multi polar. These divergences of national interests and aspirations kept Asian tigers within the ambit of 'trust deficit' and despite high voltage trade and commerce it has not been translated into strategic cooperation. It is vindicated with the propelling tension among China and its ASEAN neighbors on South China Sea and between China and Japan on East China Sea is self explanatory. John Mersheimer has coined the theory of 'Offensive Realism' and China has adopted this mode to embrace its weaker neighbors. That has also provides unique opportunity to India in the entire region. Since independence till the end of the cold war, Indian foreign policy has been reactive but it has been proactive in recent years. In the leadership of PM Modi it has got a new Phillip. India has nothing to do but only insist on adherence of international norms for the resolution of conflicts in the region and that baby step will put India as a balancer in this region. Fortunately India does not have land of maritime border disputes with major countries of the region.

Maritime security is panacea for smooth trade in this region. China has already launched 'maritime silk road' by investing \$ 40 billion. It

is upgrading its Navy (PLAN) to ensure smooth trade. But at the same time the Chinese has refused to be obeyed by the arrangements of the international laws in case of South & East China Sea's. The nation states of ASEAN are equally unhappy because they felt that a rising China is intended to dismantle the strategic autonomy of ASEAN countries.

Prof Gopal & Dr. Ahlawat has done excellent work while compiling this book. Twelve articles have been included and all scholars are top guns of the foreign policy. They have done an excellent work to put them as paper. The book is a comprehensive initiative to understand the gamut of contours of Indo-Pacific region and Indian role. This book is a must read for all those concerned who have an appetite to read and write on Indo-Pacific arena. It is also an eye opener for the formulators of policy.

*(The reviewer Prof. Singh is Dean, School of Political Studies, Central University of South Bihar, Gaya)*

**Modi's Foreign Policy; Challenges and Opportunities, N.N. Jha & Sudhir Singh (eds) Pentagon Press, New Delhi, 2016, Pp-376, Price-Rs 1295.00.**

—Reviewed by : *Dr. Utham Kumar Jamdagni*

Right from Keshore Madhubani to gamut of top guns of foreign policy keep saying since last one decade that 21<sup>st</sup> century will be an Asian century. Second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century has passed half as well but the much awaited Asian century has yet to arrive. European power started in fight against each other once they established their hegemony over the globe but the Asian powers are fighting bitter cold war against each other only in the anticipation of the Asian century.

New security architecture has yet to stabilize in Asia. China wants its own hegemony over Asia but multi-polar globe. India, ASEAN countries, Iran, Japan, South Korea and Australia wants that both Asia and globe must be multi-polar. United States of America wanted multi-polar Asia. These divergences of interests among major Asian countries kept them under the ambit of 'Prisoners Dilemma' and thus keep the old theory of balance of power alive.

China has defied relevant international laws which governs seas

in the case of South China Sea & East China Sea. Philippines is one of the disputants in South China Sea. It has approached to international court of justice for resolution of the matter. Its President has stated in 2014 that 'In case of South China Sea, the world is appeasing China as Hitler was appeased between both World Wars.' Japanese PM Shinzo Abe has already stated that good economic relations are not the guarantee of negation of war.

In the backdrop of this prevailing security architecture, India's role has become extremely significant. Modi government has adopted proactive foreign policy. It has also transformed Look East Policy into Act East Policy. In the case of South China Sea & East China Sea, it has openly stated that for the resolution of these disputes all parties need to be adhered with the relevant international laws. That has gone well with the disputants.

Modi govt had organized a big conclave of African leaders in October 2015 in which all Africans were duly represented. Africa is a ray of hope for 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is also crucial for India's growth. India has adopted a good speed in Africa and we must sustain this process.

In other regions and multi-national platforms, PM Modi have marked his imprint. On bilateral front relations with major countries have improved. In South Asia, with Sri-Lanka and Bangladesh, Modi govt. has improved a lot. Pakistan still remains a critical challenge. Stability in Afghanistan will be crucial for the globe.

In last 21 months of his tenure, PM Modi has visited over 23 countries in different regions of the globe. In some of the regions, our PM's had not visited since last three decades. Australia, Canada and Fiji come under this category and PM Modi visited all.

For UN reforms as well, PM has put in lot of efforts. Modi led NDA-2 govt. need to sustain this process. PM has also advocated the demand of justice based international economic order. PM has also marked our presence on developing and developed countries platforms. Fortunately we have ample space to expand. It is golden opportunity to maximize our national interests. Modi government is working meticulously to achieve these goals.

The changing power structure has provided ample opportunity for

our national interests without investing less. This has also an opportunity to India to realize its goal to become a global power. For that India has to decentralize the focal attention of its foreign policy in all regions of the globe and Modi government has meticulously done this much awaited work. It has also taken massive steps to ensure energy and maritime security. It has also taken significant steps to ensure our interests in the Indian Ocean region.

The Asia-Pacific region has become the pivot of global politics. This trend is bound to swell in the foreseeable future. India's profile has rapidly increased since the last two decades and now, India is being considered as an important country in shaping the power equilibrium at the global level in general and within the Asia Pacific in particular. The security architecture is also changing in the region and in this prevailing scenario, India has the golden opportunity to maximise its national interests. The sudden rise of China and its divergence of interests with India and many other important countries within the region have further complicated the situation. India had a coalition government from 1989 to 2014. The 2014 general elections gave a unique majority to the Modi-led BJP government. Modi has the historical mandate and with the strength of his will power and requirements of the country, he must sustain the process of proactive foreign policy. He also need to strengthen the implementation mechanism of assurances, India has made with other countries.

This book is a structured effort to look at the challenges for Modi government in the realm of foreign policy in a holistic manner. It has thirty articles which covers entire regions of the globe. The book will be extremely interesting for research scholars and diplomats

Ambassador N.N. Jha & Dr. Sudhir Singh have done excellent work while compiling this book. Thirty articles have been included and all scholars are relatively younger top guns of the foreign policy. They have done an excellent work to put them as paper. The book is a comprehensive initiative to understand the gamut of contours of Indian foreign policy. This book is a must read for all those concerned who have an appetite to read and write on Indian foreign policy. It is also an eye opener for the formulators of policy.

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