

**CENTRAL ASIAN SECURITY AND ROLE OF IRAN,  
1991-2005**

*Dissertation submitted to Jawaharlal Nehru University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the award of the degree of*

**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

**SAMIR PRASAD MEHER**



Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies

School of International Studies

**JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY**

New Delhi-110067

2013



# JAWAHARLAL NEHRU UNIVERSITY

School of International Studies

New Delhi-110067

Tel. : 2670 4365

Fax : (+91)-11-2674 1586

Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies

Date: 29.07.2013

## DECLARATION


I declare that the dissertation entitled "Central Asian Security and role of Iran, 1991-2005" submitted by me for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru University is my own work. The dissertation has not been submitted for any other degree of this University or any other university.

*Samir Prasad Meher*  
SAMIR PRASAD MEHER


## CERTIFICATE

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

*AS*  
PROF. ARUN KUMAR MOHANTY  
Chairperson, CRCAS/SIS

  
Chairperson  
Centre for Russian & Central Asian Studies  
School of International Studies  
JNU, New Delhi - 110 067

*Nalin Kumar Mohapatra*  
DR. NALIN KUMAR MOHAPATRA  
Supervisor

  
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR  
Centre for Russian & Central Asian Studies  
School of International Studies  
Jawaharlal Nehru University  
New Delhi - 110067

*Dedicated to*

*My Parents*

*And*

*Family Members*

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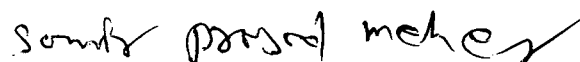
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## PREFACE

The dissolution of Soviet Union led to the emergence of five independent Central Asian Republics (CAR) namely Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan have been restless in to the current international politics. The factors like ethnic conflicts, separatist movements, emergence of the radical Islamic fundamentalism and narcotic and drugs trafficking cause a threat to Central Asian security. The end of the Soviet Union and led to the emergence of the five Central Asian Republics at the end of the 1990, created a dramatic situation within these countries. The one of the most critical questions was how these newly independent states would set about creating influential identities for themselves and their citizens. Furthermore, after the collapsed of Soviet Union these newly independent states with their weak economy, unstable political system and poor defense capability became vulnerable to external pressure and penetration.

Therefore, certain regional powers such as Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan as well as western powers like U.S.A attempted to fill the post Soviet power vacuum. Another important factor is the geopolitical importance of Central Asian region in which external players are competing with each other to secure a space for themselves.

In this historical backdrop, I have tried to focus on the security scenario in Central Asia and what role played by Iran in this region and how to maintain good relations with others external players in the world on the matter of security is the purpose of academic research. It has mainly focused upon the involvement of the external powers in Central Asian region and what problems is Iran facing in the aftermath of 9/11 incident. The study employs historical, analytical and descriptive methods based on primary and secondary sources to understand the central Asia-Iran historical and cultural relations in order to understand the new Iran's policy in Central Asia.

The present study will focus on Central Asian security and role of Iran from 1991 to 2005 and their objectives. The main objectives of the study is to examine whether Iran fulfil their objectives regarding the resolving the prevalent regional security problems of Central Asia. In this context these Central Asian security and



role of Iran are more important. The main objectives of the study are taken while conducting the research.

- The nature of Central Asian states in terms of its security concerns.
- The strategic and geopolitical importance of Central Asian states for Iran.
- The Central Asia-Iran relations particularly after the dissolution of Soviet Union.
- The major security threats in Central Asian regions and the role of Iran.
- The nature of economic interaction among Iran and Central Asian states.

The present dissertation has tried to analyse the Central Asian Security and role of Iran, 1991-2005. The research work has been divided into six chapters, chapter-I contains the introduction which deals with the theoretical and conceptual parameters of Security and the brief history and geographical location of Central Asian regions will be discussed. Chapter-II focuses on the geopolitical importance of Central Asian regions and how the New Great Game playing by the major players for energy and natural resources in these regions. Chapter-III concentrates on the Economic Cooperation and development between Central Asia and Iran in many fields such as multilateral and bilateral agreement. Chapter-IV will examine the regional cooperation of various organizations such as Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Central Asia- Iran relations. Chapter-V will examine how the role of the major powers in the world is playing in the Central Asian regions and what kind of security problems Iran are facing for this New Great Game. Finally, chapter –VI has summarily throws the light upon the whole research that has been undertaken in the previous chapters and has concluding observation and will explain how the objectives of the proposed research have been met in the preceding chapters. This chapter will summarize the findings and would also verify the hypotheses.

## **Abbreviation**

CAR: Central Asian Republics

CASCO: Caspian Sea Cooperation Organization

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency

CIS: Commonwealth of Independent States

CSR: Caspian Sea region

CSTO: Collective Security Treaty Organization

ECC: Eurasian Economic Community

ECO: Economic Cooperation Organization

EU: European Union

IMU: Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

IOC: International Oil Companies

IRP: Islamic Renaissance Party

MNCs: Multinational Companies

NAM: Non-Alignment Movement

NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization

NGO: Non-Governmental Organizations

OIC: Organization of Islamic Conference

ONGC: Oil and Natural Gas Corporation

PRC: People's Republic of China

RATS: Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure

SCO: Shanghai Cooperation Organization

TAEFOS: Trans-Asian European Fibre Optic System

TAP: Turkmenistan- Afghanistan-Pakistan

UNDP: United Nation Development Report

USA: United States of America

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republic

UTO: United Tajik Opposition

WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction

WTC: World Trade Centre

WTO: World Trade Organization

## Map of Iran



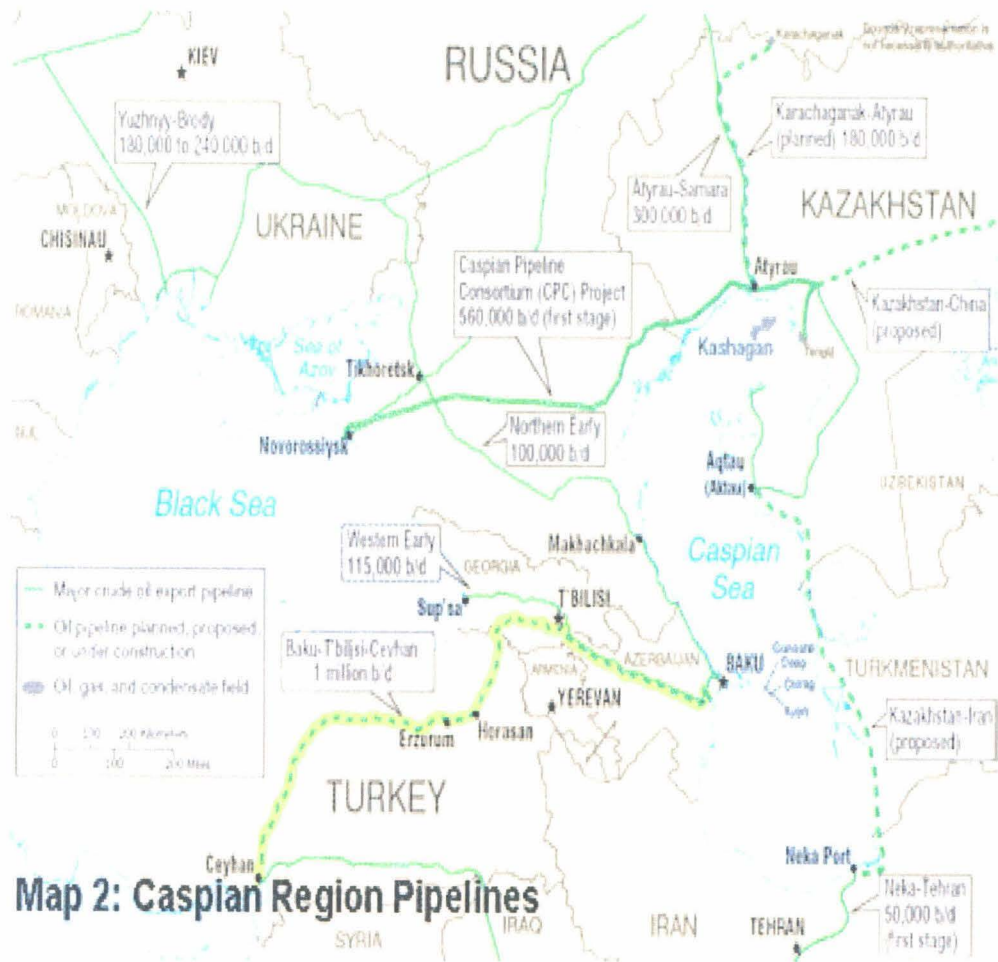
[http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d1/Iran\\_regions\\_map.png](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d1/Iran_regions_map.png)

## Map of Caspian Sea



<http://www.worldatlas.com/aatlas/infopage/caspianc.gif>

## Caspian Region Pipelines



[http://www.marcon.com/library/country\\_briefs/caspian\\_sea/casp\\_pipe\\_map.gif](http://www.marcon.com/library/country_briefs/caspian_sea/casp_pipe_map.gif)

# CHAPTER-1

## Introduction and Research Design

Geopolitically and culturally Central Asian state is regarded as one of the most important region of Eurasia. During the Soviet Period, Central Asia was a strong in security and stability and it was free from the conflict and it had felt no fear to the security from its neighbour's states because Central Asia was not more important for the external players due to its landlocked in nature and had many internal conflicts. The dissolution of Soviet Union and the emergence of new Central Asian states are becomes a main security concern for the countries which have geographically proximate with this region because of its huge natural resources and the growing competition by the external players. The cultural and political relations between Iran and Central Asia can be traced back to ancient times and continued even during the Soviet period. After the collapsed of the Soviet Union, five Central Asian republics (CAR) such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan got independent. In the post-1991 phase these states are acting as a bridge between Asia and Europe. Ancient history, traditional interest and geopolitical motivation played an important role in this region for making the relationship between Iran and Central Asia. The dissolution of Soviet Union and the Independence of the five Central Asian States has had an impact on Iran's geo- political situation. (Milbank 2002: 23).

The growing of the United State's unilateralism and the post 9/11 war on terrorism has improved Iran's security difficulties as Washington deployed the military forces along its borders. The strong U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and the stationing of the U.S. forces in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan increased the Iranian perception of its strategic encirclement (Milbank 2002: 23). Iran is interested in making closer relations with Central Asian region through increase regional integration and control of energy resources through the establishment of pipeline networks passing through its territory. The invasion of Iraq by the U.S. and its emergence as the only arbitrator of West Asia energy resources will have a long term implications for the broader security processes of Asia in which Central Asia cannot be protected from. In the recent years, Central Asian region is raising as an emerging market for its energy resources which have created new areas for external interest (Yousefi 2003: 227).

Therefore, it is likely that, in the coming years the competition among outside powers over the region and its resources is growing at a rapid rate. This is propelling for the new states to participate in the geopolitical procedure in this region. Within this structure of a competitive international system, the look for regional security and stability becomes critical for Iran which is engaged in a geopolitical and ideological as well as strategically conflicts with this region. The policy makers of Iran are progressively more understand the reality that, it should restore its obstacle with the neighbouring Central Asian states through a framework of “cooperative security” which will give to stability in this region as well as control the American plan in this region (Yousefi 2003: 227).

The preservation of peace and stability and avoidance of clash in the Central Asian regions are important for Iranian interests. Iran perceived that, the dissolution of Soviet Union will help it in reinforcing the Islamic world as the most of these Central Asian states are follower of Islam. Unfortunately, all the Central Asian States except Tajikistan was the only one state where Islamic movements had played an important role. Although, Iran did not play any role in the rise of the Islamist movements, it did build up close relations with the leading Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) (Djalili et al. 1998: 127).

Apart from the cultural connection, Iran has a deep economic interest in Central Asia and it aims at building road, rail line and energy pipeline networks. Iran provided the main straight non-Russian way to the market for both oil and gas from Central Asia. To control of the raising American influence in this region, Iran is interested to develop a land corridor from its territory to Afghanistan via Tajikistan and also develop transportation links with this region (Anega 2002: 1). Iran has also offered much financial assistance to increased accessible land connectivity with this region (Arman 2003: 1).

In the present time, Tehran is helping the southern route as the economically effective and interested in promoting better infrastructural and trade links with Central Asian states. However, Iran is facing major obstacles from both Russia and the United States to attaining its goal of securing Central Asian energy. In the aftermath of 9/11 incident, the presence of U.S. military bases and troops in Central Asia is the cause of ongoing fear for Iran. The main objectives of the U.S. policy in the Central Asian region have been to making its presence to think on the energy sectors of this region (Kuniholm 2000: 554).



The U.S. is also charged that Iran and Russia is having nuclear cooperation (Boese 2001). Due to the unfriendly relations with the United States, Iran's main objective is to build up closer relations with regional neighbours. In this regards, Russia is emerging as an important partner of Iran. In the recent years, Russia is supported to Iran on the nuclear matter in spite of the strong opposition from the western countries (Blagov 2003: 2). One of the important aspects of Iranian foreign policy in Central Asian region is to increased energy security of this region. Tehran can able to enter in Central Asian region and able to secure regional economic integration. Iran is also interested in increasing regional organization such as Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). Iran's important strategy is to make stronger regional collaboration, development of trade and economic Cooperation, providing transportations benefits and stressing actions to avoid conflict in this region. The Multilateral Policy of Iran is based on its supports or creation of regional Organization such as the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) (Markaze 1999: 227-257).

### **1.1 Historical background and geographical locations of Central Asia**

Central Asian state is very old and complex in nature for its ancient history and geography. It is an important part of the Asian Continent and it extends from the Caspian Sea in the west, China in the east, Iran and Afghanistan in the south and Russia in the north. Central Asia is a big region of various geographical importance including high Passes and Mountains. Most of the land of Central Asia is very dry and rough for farming. The Gobi Desert extends from the bottom of the Pamir. The main Rivers of this region include the Amu Darya, Syr Darya, Hari River and the Murghab River (Bosworth 1999). Water is an important resource for dry Central Asian states. The dryness of this region made the agriculture difficulty and its remoteness is inaccessible from much of the trade. Historically, Central Asian states had been closely attached to its nomadic peoples and the "Silk Road". The primordial sedentary population played an important role in the history of Central Asia. During the Pre-Islamic periods Central Asia was dominated by Iranian state. After the growth by Turkic peoples, Central Asia became the home for several Turkic including the Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Turkmen, Kyrgyz and Uyghur (Bosworth 1999).

## **1.2 Theoretical parameters of Security**

The end of the cold war and the dissolution of Soviet Union changed the security situation of the world as a whole. The word “security” has many implications such as both positive and negative. The physical survival of an individual is a negative one and the positive one can be considered as the well being of the nation and the society. According to Oxford dictionary the meaning of “security” is the state of being or feeling secure and the safety of a state or organization from external threat.<sup>1</sup>

The term “national security” has been emerged and grown up in the era of past Second World War period. At first, it is emerged as a military concept which can be applied in the case of maximizing the state power at the expense of other nations and the minimizing the state power in case of international cooperation but, the growing complexity of international system makes “national security” a multi-dimensional concept. While earlier “national security” signified only military respect, now it also includes social, economic and environmental aspects. After 1989, the global as well as regional security systems were subjected to change. It was the demand for a new situation which would cause for the creation of a new design of security framework and it was created according to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) security framework. Later on, it was adopted by most of the European and Asian countries (Klaus 1973).

In this new security framework, the area of security has popular in military along with political, economic and social aspects. Here, military security means the creation of a balance between political, strategic and military factors. Political security implies that the state strengthens society and protects it from external threats. Economic security means that every country can get all the raw materials without coercion by means of free trade and international monetary system. Social security means that the social peace is maintained in a given country by means of welfare state to fight the problems of unemployment (Sharma 2004: 5-6).

Later on, this security framework was universally valid but, it does not cover new security threats like terrorism in Asian security context and the regional security problems like internal ethnic conflict. Most of the Asian countries have authoritarian types of government where the people’s aspirations are suppressed by the state. Here,

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<sup>1</sup> Oxford, URL: <http://www.askoxford.com/dictionaries/?view=uk>

the state is regarded as a threat to its people because the disturbances like political violence and terrorism are the cause of the threats to the people and the problems like poverty, corruption, state terrorism force them to raise their voice against the existing authority through separatist movement and terrorist activities and it is the cause for the internal disturbance in the state (Buzan 1983: 65). Particularly, if we take in to account the security situation in Asian countries, we can know that security problem of these states are both internal and external which has been arisen since their independence. So, we should seek to analyses the security situation in newly independent Central Asian states through the theoretical parameters of “national security” (Buzan 1983: 65).

### **1.3 Central Asia on Security issue**

The dissolution of Soviet Union changed all the aspects of former Soviet Republics. The most dangerous consequences of the dissolution were Central Asian Military and Security grounds. The borders connecting to Iran and Afghanistan have been more danger and threat prone regions for Central Asia because of their growing terrorist activities in this region. The great power competitors such as China, U.S.A. and Russia are trying to control in Central Asian regions contributing to increasing their levels of Military and economic assistance (Kennedy 1989). The unstable Security situation of Central Asia has been increasing the tensions beside its regional borders. The Security of Central Asian borders is critically linked to the national security and interests of the every major country of the world.

#### **1.3.1 Regional security dimensions in Central Asia**

The main element of security is the four types such as Military, political, economic and social influence. If we take in to account of these above aspects of security problems in Central Asia, we find the five sets of issues cover the important relations of the concept of regional security. Their effect is important in the present situation and will most likely remain central to the future development of Central Asian region (Peimani 1998: 17-19). Firstly, the social issue expresses and explains the complicated historical, religious and ethnic problems of Central Asia that have provided ground for the presence of Iran, Turkey and Russia in that region and place them in better positions than other competitor to influence in the regional affairs.

Secondly, the economics factors express the consequences of the Russian domination in Central Asia and the main reason is behind that the present economic opportunity restriction faced by the Central Asian states and how these can force or encourage them to adopt one or another pattern with regional and non-regional states. Thirdly, the Military factors influence the independence of Central Asian states and why these states cannot have an existence completely independence from Russia, despite their new independence. These factors affect their relations with each other and with other states and finally, the political factors deals with issues that indicate the nature of regional states and the role of existing views and ideologies in shaping policies (Peimani 1998: 17-19).

So, these above factors are playing the major roles about the formation of regional grouping in Central Asian states.

### **1.3.2 Problems of Central Asian security after dissolution of Soviet Union**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Great Britain and Russia fought with each other to protect their foot hold over this huge land mass not only to achieve control over this region but also to spread their influence in the geographical importance of this Central Asian states. Currently, the “New Great Game” is playing among the major powers such as Russia, China and the U.S.A. for the natural resources of Central Asian region. The growing competition among the external players on Central Asian region made the security circumstances more critical. At present oil is an important source of energy all over the world. Central Asia has deposited huge hydrocarbon and natural gas resources have undoubtedly become a region of critical strategic importance and an object of an international activity and interests (Mohmmad 2000: 28).

The growth of radical Islamism is creating a security threat to the Central Asian states. After getting independence, the Central Asian political elites changed their political system and ruled in an authoritarian way. Although, all the five Central Asian states wanted to established institutional mechanism like constitutionalism and judicial system but these things are in the paper only and no real efforts are made by them to improve the democratic process of their republics. The disordered economic situation is the cause of the growth of unemployment, inflation and economic instability. In addition to this, the border conflicts, drug trafficking and terrorism within the regions has slow down the process of evolution from Soviet Republics to independent nation states (Monique et al. 2002: 68).

The growing radical Islamism is the cause of the Central Asian states to make the security situation more critical particularly, after the 9/11 incident. The Afghanistan is regarded as a major factor for the instabilities in Central Asian states and the “Terrorism” is regarded as the global problems where the major powers like U.S.A, China and Russia are engaged in this region and trying to remove it. The Chechnya’s Separatist Movement and the terrorist activities in Uighur autonomous regions have also bound both Russia and China to clean terrorist groups from these regions (Monique et al. 2002: 68).

### **1.3.3 Global aspect of Central Asia’s security**

Apart from the internal aspect as we have discussed above factors which have difficult the security situation of the Central Asian states. One can also talk about the role played by the external powers like Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are also the cause of creating difficulty in this region. The U.S. is now trying to make stronger its foot hold over the Central Asian region. Similarly, both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are trying to sponsor their own kind of Islam in this region which creates the situation more critical. Both China and Russia wanted to influence this region to support economic purpose as well as to control radical Islamic fundamentalism which may have harmful impact on their respective provinces of Xinjiang and Chechnya respectively (Anega 2002: 2).

The growing competition among the regional and extra regional powers in Central Asia makes critical threats for Iran on the Security issue because the attraction of major powers in the world in Central Asian regions creates a political instability and hostile nature among the actors. This is a big challenge for Iran how to maintain good and stable relations with Central Asian regions. The growing radical Islamism insurgency and terrorism in Afghanistan make a region problematic for Iran’s security issue. In the name of combating terrorism the western country particularly the U.S. has presence in Central Asian regions for exploiting oil and natural resources. Oil is the growing demands for all the major countries in the world (Anega 2002: 2).

The “New Great Game” is playing among the major players only for resources. Iran is trying to influence on Central Asian regions for their ancient culture, geographical proximity and Islamic religions. The growth of the United States existence in the Central Asian regions in the aftermath of 9/11 incident has increased the security challenges for Iran. American President Bush blamed that, Iran of being a part of an

“axis of evil”. The United States also charged on Iran for interfere in Afghanistan’s internal affairs and more seriously of growing weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). The strong U.S. military existence in Afghanistan and the place of U.S. forces in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan has critically increased Iranian view of strategic encirclement. It creates a big problem for Iran to maintain close relations with the Central Asian states (Anega 2002: 1).

The present study will make an attempt to explore the pattern of relationship since 1991. Though, Security is the main focus of the study, it cannot be understood and explains without looking at the historical, cultural, political and economic factors in mind. Apart from this the role of external actors like U.S.A, Russia, European Union (EU), Turkey and China will also be taken into account while studying this region so also the regional organizations like Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Iran is trying to influence this region in the field of energy security by connecting with this region through building transportation networks. In this regard Iran, China and Russia are coordinating with each other to ensure energy security in Central Asia so also to checkmate monopolization of energy resources by the United States.

Two hypotheses have been taken into consideration while conducting the research.

- That the Iran’s strategic proximity with Central Asian states as well as realignment in the global level are some of the factors shaping relations among these states.
- In the Central Asia, Iran is trying to strengthen its influence economically by making foreign investment through the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO).

In this historical backdrop, I have tried to focus on the security scenario in Central Asia and what role played by Iran in this region and how to make good relationship with other external players in the world on the matter of security is the purpose of academic research. It has mainly focused upon the involvement of the external powers in Central Asian region and what problem is Iran facing in the aftermath of 9/11 incident. The study employs historical, analytical and descriptive methods based on

primary and secondary sources to understand the Central Asia-Iran historical and cultural relations in order to understand the new Iran's policy and security situation in Central Asia.

The proposed research is a theoretical study which seeks to study on "Central Asian security and role of Iran, 1991-2005". The proposed study will briefly review the historical aspects of the Central Asia-Iran relations, the involvement of the external powers and the security threats in Iran. It is essential to understand the Central Asia-Iran historical and cultural relations in order to understand the new Iran's policy and security situation in Central Asia. The research will be enriched by employing historical, descriptive, comparative and analytical methods. It will also make an attempt to draw descriptive and causal inference based on the research.

## Chapter- 2

### **Geopolitical Importance of Central Asian States and role of Iran**

Geopolitics is the study of geographically influence on power relations in international politics. It is the study of relationship among geography, politics and economics mainly with respect to the foreign policy of a nation (Devetak 2012: 492). Geopolitics is a process of the foreign policy analysis which seeks to understand and predict of international political behaviour, mainly in terms of geographical variables. Geographical variables are the physical location, size, natural resources and technological progress of a state (Evans and Newnham 1998).

The study of geopolitics includes the group relationship between the interests of international political actors. The word “Geopolitics” was first coined by Rudolf Kjellen, a Swedish political scientist. Geopolitics is a combination of geography and politics. It refers to the relationship of international political power to the geographical locations. Geopolitics is a multidisciplinary in scope and it includes all the aspects of social sciences particularly international law and international relations (Cohen 1964: 24).

#### **2.1 Mackinder Heartland theory**

The Heartland theory has been coined by Sir Halford Mackinder, a British Astronomer. He gives a logical explanation through his “Heartland theory” that, the world as a functioning of geopolitical entity. His main intention of Heartland theory is to concern imperial Britain, a sea power of 19<sup>th</sup> century against the capture of Central Eurasia by Tsarist Russia, a big land based power of that time which could reduce the dominance of Britain and allow Russia to succeed over the world (Hagan 1942: 480).

Mackinder’s “Heartland Theory” says that the power that controls Central Asia is the big pivot that would at last appear as the most powerful state in international politics. The Heartland theory examines nowadays perspectives on the foreign policy of the U.S, Russian, China and European Union (EU) towards Central Asian states. Halford Mackinder reintroduced the concept of geopolitics to international politics through his Heartland Theory. He theorized that, in the industrial age the vast natural resources of Central Asia will provide as the geostrategic method for the country that controls it to become the champion of the world (Ibid.).



In the present day, the Heartland includes Russia and five Central Asian states such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan and is perceptible by the Caspian basin. After the dissolution of Soviet Union these new states comprise the current central part of the pivot region of Mackinder's Heartland theory. Historically, Russia has been the regional dominator of the Heartland. Though, that influence is being challenged by the United States. In the present day, "pivot area" refers to the Central Asia. According to the Mackinder Heartland theory, the five Central Asian states cover a broad area of land at the heart of the Eurasian continent. This area has become important in recent decades because the major powers such as the E.U, China, Russia and the U.S. looked to the region with new interest for give emphasis to the wealth of its natural resources (Kazemi 2003: 205-216).

Caspian energy reserves are calculated as one of the major and the most important in the world. The gathering of the major powers in the area has increased the competition and create possible for conflict as a result creating insecurity in the political development of the countries. The Central Asian region oil and natural gas resource is a main target for foreign policy that follows Mackinder's model of the Heartland Theory. Mackinder's "Geographical Pivot" theory is similar to present-day policy concerning Central Asia that the major powers such as the U.S, Russia, European Union (EU) and China contract seriously with Mackinderian geostrategic in their foreign policy discourse and such tell that the Heartland theory is still influential in their foreign policy outlook (Lutz 2003).

Evaluation of all the concept of things it is analysed that, Mackinder Heartland Theory is valid in today's foreign policy and policy analyses. Each major power in the world struggles for control and access to the Central Asian region's resources. For China, the main goal is to maintain regional stability both as a means for border security but as well as an assurance of stable economic relations. For the European Union, the main goal is to achieve economic access while at the same time support the democratization of those countries that are politically unstable (Blank 2007).

The Central Asian state is pivotally important in the present day as Mackinder has prescribed. Central Asia has not yet fully gives ways to Russian influence but is greatly influenced by Russian strategy for dominance. Russia still has considerable influence in determining pipeline routes and is the primary source for imported natural gas in most European states. The U.S. and the European Union (EU) on the

other hand are strengthening alliance with regional countries in order to maximize their economic power and political influence. Thus, in which way Central Asian energy resources are made easy to get to the U.S. and the European states is of growing importance in the foreign policies of those powers (Blank 2007).

It is clear that Mackinder's Heartland theory whether accepted directly or in principle is typical to the understanding of foreign policy relations in contemporary Central Asia.

## **2.2 Geopolitical significance of Central Asia during the Soviet period**

The Central Asian region is one of the most geopolitically significant regions of the world because of its huge energy and natural resources. Before the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Central Asian Republic (CAR) was a part of the Soviet Union. Although, Central Asian states had rich in natural resources, these regions were not developed because of their inter conflict, political instability, lack of technology, poor economic conditions and landlocked in nature (Amirahmadian 2006). The Central Asian states from the independence were an unreachable and unnecessary landmass to its neighbour's country. The Central Asian regions were struggling with economic crisis, political instability, ethnic conflict and many social, political and economic problems. The security problems of Central Asia were larger than the political and economic ones. It was that much unwanted and burden like that of Russia even did not hesitate to use the terms 'the near abroad' to Central Asia in the early years of its independence (Ibid.).

Until 1944, not only Russia but also all the major countries in the world were not to be interested in Central Asia. Central Asian regions were then not important for the regional and extra regional countries in the World. The proximate players such as Russia, China, Iran, Turkey etc. were trying to influence the Central Asian region on their own idea of thinking to take advantages of its geopolitical importance mainly oil and natural gas. Gradually, Central Asia developed as an important trade centre within the Soviet periphery because of its main economic regions like agriculture, extractive industries mainly oil, natural gas, coal, minerals and some metallurgy including Aluminium, Uranium and Petrochemical plants (Marat 2008).

### **2.3 Geopolitical Significance of Central Asia during the Post- Soviet Period**

After the dissolution of Soviet Union and the emergence of new 15 Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) including five Central Asian Republics (CAR) such as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, place this Central Asian region more advantageous and one of the most important places in the world history (Boris 1993: 89).

In the past, Britishers wanted to this region because for to achieve energy and natural resources and recently the United States is trying to establish its strong foot in this region for exploit Central Asian resources. This kind of competition nature among the Major Powers in the world and their influences methods on Central Asian states makes the Central Asian region one of the critical security situations in the world politics. The strategic location, energy resources, competition for pipeline routes and the attraction of number of regional and global players in these regions makes important for the 'New Great Game' in Central Asia. The struggle of military stands in Central Asian region has a new part to this competition (Boris 1993: 89).

Due to its rich energy resources, Central Asia is an attractive place for external players for investment and trade. The Central Asian regions are surrounded by some of the top growing economics in the world including China, Russia and India who are not only investing for this region but also competing among themselves to exploit Central Asian energy resources. This kind of completion environment among the major players in the world creates a critical situation for Iran to compete these Central Asian regions because Iran is already sanctioned by the western powers. Due to the growing markets, growing trade in agricultural commodities and the service sector, Central Asian states can be key trade links between Europe and Asia (Competitiveness Outlook 2011).

However, regional and trans-regional players are aware that the energy resource gift to Central Asia is most important for trade and investment in world market. These energy reserves form a source for economic growth and development in Central Asian region. Indeed, Central Asia is to become a major world supplier of energy, mainly in the oil and gas sectors. Energy mainly oil is the growing demands in the world markets for every country. With such opportunities and available natural resource reserves in Central Asian region, economic powers from all over the world have their eye on this region. Central Asia is borders of the two permanent members of the Security Council that is Russia and China, the two most powerful nations of the

world. They are not only providing the opportunities for trade and diplomatic power for Central Asia but also they provide an opportunity for the present world supremacy (Rasizade 2002). Therefore, to get control in Central Asian energy sectors is a fundamental for all the major powers in the world. China can join its extensive economic growth and use it as a tool to achieve a strong political support by taking control one of the most important regions of the world. Russia has lost this power bloc in 1991 and needs to recover its control in Central Asia so that it may continue to advantage by proxy (Rasizade 2002).

Geographically, Central Asia is the geographical centre of Asia and the heart of Eurasia lays in the middle half of the 'Silk Route' and strategically an important region for the entire major countries of the world. These regions have huge reserve of oil, hydrocarbons, natural gas and other rich minerals resources has access to Islamic countries like Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan, western countries, Turkey and openly contested between Russia, the U.S.A, China and even by India, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Central Asia emerged economically a weak region is blessed with huge natural resources and hydrocarbons (Ahmed 2000: 144).

However, the huge reserves of natural resources, oil and precious metals and other minerals resources are unexplored because these Central Asian countries are economically and technologically poor. Therefore, these countries cannot explore their resources without the outside help. As a result, these states were invited economically strong countries to utilised and explore their natural resources. Therefore, the economically strong country compete each other to explore the Central Asian energy and natural resources (Ahmed 2000: 144). The energy resources particularly, the oil and natural gas deposits have now become create the conflict in Central Asia introducing itself to what the Pakistani journalist Rashid Ahmed called 'The New Great Game'. He says, the region of Central Asia in reality represents, *"possibly the last explored and unexplored oil bears regions in the world and therefore, it is opening up generated huge excitement amongst international oil companies (IOC)"* (Ahmed 2000: 144).

#### **2.4 Central Asia: The New Great Game and role of Iran**

The main threat to Central Asian security is the internal aspect. The legitimacy crisis, quick social and economic changes, ethnic diversity and border disputes are the main

causes of insecurity in the Post-Soviet Central Asian states (Seyed 1994: 197). Apart from the internal aspects which have difficult for the security situation in Central Asia, the external factors have also played an important role for creating the problems in Central Asian regions that is a big challenge for Iran how to face and manage with them (Seyed 1994: 197).

#### **2.4.1 Pre-Soviet Period**

Geographically speaking Iran is a semi-landlocked country. It is strategically located at the important commercial and military routes. It covers the areas by Mountains which is facilitating Iran to develop a distinct cultural identity (Shireen 1990: 6-7). Central Asian states were a part of the Persian Empire. Iran perceived in Central Asian states in many ways. Such as Iran made close relations with Central Asian states due to its geographical proximity, historical and cultural similarity. Iran used its religious, cultural and historical reasons to make stronger relations with Central Asian states (Djalili et al. 1998: 127). Of all the Central Asian states, Tajikistan was the only one state where Islamic movements had played a significant role. Although, Iran did not play a leading role in the rise of the Tajiks Islamist movements, it did develop closer relations with the leading Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) (Djalili et al. 1998: 127).

Therefore, Iran's religious influence in Central Asian states expanded to Tajikistan because of its same religious and ethnicity. Iran's Islamic nature focuses on Central Asian states because of its major Muslim populations. Iran perceived the co-religionist neighbouring states where it could spread the Islamic Revolution. During the Soviet period Iran wanted to develop economic relations with Central Asian states (Edmund 2001: 179) Iran signed many bilateral and multilateral agreements with these states. The new border routes were opened. The new shipping routes from Iran to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan were established at Caspian Sea. To develop regional cooperation, free trade zones were introduced in Sarakhs (on the border with Turkmenistan) and Bandar Anzali (Caspian port). Iran gives special importance to Turkmenistan which is the only one Central Asian state that borders with Iran (Edmund 2001: 179).

#### **2.4.2 Iran's foreign policy after the dissolution of the Soviet Union**

Iran perceived that the dissolution of the Soviet Union is the cause of the reinforcement of Islamic world and thought that new space had been made for the spreading of Islamic ideologies in Central Asian states. In that situation the Iranian leadership predicated its strategy to Central Asia on Islamic ideology (Pahlevan 1998: 74).

Iran makes cultural relations with Central Asian states such as scholarly exchange programmes, cooperation in educational fields and offering of scholarship and student exchange programmes. Iran also makes close ties with Central Asian states through the establishment of road, rail line and energy pipeline networks. The breakdown of the Soviet Union gave Iran huge opportunities to develop not only its cultural connection but also to exploit its geostrategic location (Weitz 2006: 156). As the Central Asian states are largely Muslim population, Iran has tried to expand cultural relations by focusing on Islam. The Iranian government tried to restore religion in Central Asian states by distributing religious books, broadcasting Iranian television and radio training mullahs in Iranian religious schools and opening schools and mosques in Central Asian countries (Weitz 2006: 156).

Given the landlocked nature of the Central Asian states, Iran has huge economic potential to offer the Central Asian States through routes not only into the Indian Subcontinent but also port facilities in Iran. Iran has made inroads in the Central Asian states by focusing on trade and infrastructure investment with a focus on Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Armenia. "Tehran's aim is to create a diffuse patchwork of regional ties and institutions that can serve as a counterbalance to U.S. geopolitical pressure" (Kucera 2006).

Iran looks for the common "cultural heritage" that shares with Central Asian states and hopes this common cultural heritage will play a strong role in its future relations with this region. Iran used its geographic advantage to influence the multilateral economic dealings with Central Asian states. Iran develops its "oil swapping" deals with Central Asian states and Azerbaijan. According to these arrangements, crude oil from the Central Asian region is sent to the refineries in northern Iran in exchange for continued delivery of equal amounts of Iranian oil for export from Persian Gulf ports (Edmund 2001: 179). For suitable land access to the outside world and avoiding Russia, Iran offers different alternative ways for transporting Central Asian oil and natural gas to world markets. Therefore, the agreement has been signed between Iran and

Turkmenistan for construction of pipeline for Turkmenistan natural gas and between Kazakhstan and Iran for an “oil swapping” agreement. The 300 kilometre railway which links Mashad to Turkmenistan’s Tejen was opened in 1996. The Mashad-Tejen railway is Iran’s first connection to Central Asian rail network. The 200 kilometre pipeline between Kurdkoy and Korpece in Turkmenistan has made Iran a bridge for Turkmen gas to Europe (Edmund 2001: 179).

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is an important option for Iran in order to maintain regional cooperation and security. It was established by Turkey, Iran and Pakistan in 1985 to promote economic, technical and cultural cooperation among the founding states (David 1998: 85). In 1992, it was joined by Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The addition of the new Central Asian states has given the organization a central position for Iran. Tehran has perceived the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) as an opportunity towards establishment of an Islamic economic and political union (David 1998: 85).

Iran’s main interest is to maintaining peace and stability with Central Asian region. The unstable security situation in Central Asia presents direct military problems for Iran. Iran tries to increase its regional influence in Central Asia by focusing on the land corridor to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Iran offers the shortest way to export Central Asian oil and natural gas to international markets. However, the ongoing social and political changes in Iran and Central Asia create a new opportunities for bilateral and multilateral relations between them (Ibid.).

#### **2.4.3 Iran’s adopted the policy in the Aftermath of 9/11 incident**

The dissolution of Soviet Union and the formation of new independent states make a power gap that led to the active involvement of extra regional powers. The United States as a single superpower used the collapse of Soviets and creation of the new militarily weak states as a chance to broaden its supremacy to Central Asia (Anega 2002: 2).

The September 11 attacks bring great changes between Iran and U.S.A relations. Since then the tension between the two countries has reached new stage. As Afghanistan emerged as a supporter and protector of terrorist groups particularly Al Quaida, Central Asian states became very important for the U.S.A to combat against the Taliban regime and the Al Quaida presence in Afghanistan. Since then U.S. forces

are available in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan to fight against terrorism. The Bagram air base which is 40 miles from Kabul has emerged as a major U.S. military service with 5000 troops stationed there. This is even larger than the base at Kandahar where nearly 4000 U.S. troops are stationed (Anega 2002: 1). The enhancement of the U.S. existence in the region in the wake of 9/11 has increased security challenges for Iran how to maintain peace and security in this region.

The U.S. also accused Iran of interfering in Afghanistan's internal affairs and more seriously of developing weapons of mass destruction (WMD). The strong military presence in Afghanistan and the stationing of U.S. forces in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan has critically increased Iranian view of strategic encirclement. Because of the unfriendly relationship between Iran and the United States, the collapse of the Soviet Union was undesirable by Iran which already had security problems. The Soviet Union was Iran's main supporter for its conflict against the United States (Kramer 1996).

Therefore, its dissolution means loss of support and the major weapon supplier for Iran. The increasing United States activities in this region again insecurity for Iran and forced it to make a good relationship with Central Asia states. The U.S. feared that Iran would back radical Islamic movements in these new Muslim countries and strongly created Islamic regimes (Kramer 1996). Thus, the U.S. advised the Turkic states to adopt Turkish model which was based on secularism, liberal democracy and free market economy. In 1992, the U.S Secretary of State James Baker during a trip to Central Asian capitals stated that "the newly independent countries should adopt the secular and democratic Turkish model for their political and economic development (Kramer 1996).

The foreign policy of Iran in Central Asia is basically making good relations with other major powers such as Russia, China, European Union (EU) and other regional powers in order to stop the U.S warning. Iran wants to make a balance of power because it feels heavy U.S control due to presence of U.S. military bases in the region of Manas Airbase, in the Gulf, in Iraq and Afghanistan and activities of the U.S supporter such as Turkey and Israel (Subodh 2003: 106).

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Iran has made good relations with Russia to counter the U.S. threat. As the civil war between the ex-communists and democratic Islamist coalition in Tajikistan, Iran did not intertere to assist the Islamist coalition. While, the Tajiks are historically and culturally linked to Iran and speak



Persian but Iran could not help them because Iran could not take risk its relations with Russia. To Support to Tajik Islamist opposition would damage its relations with Russia (Mohiaddin 1995: 128).

The main aspect of Russian-Iranian collaboration is in nuclear issues. Moscow has supported Iran in constructing a nuclear reactor at the port of Bushehr at the value of about one billion dollars. The Russian continue with sending Russian engineers and technicians give Iran with the possibility for technological transfer and train Iranian nuclear experts (Chatham House Report 2006: 41).

The U.S. has firmly opposed the completion of the reactor and has advised Russia to stop assistance to the construction of plant. As Iran's secret uranium development project was pictured in November 2003, the U.S. has tried to convince Russia to stop support with Iran. Although, meeting Putin at Bratislava in February 2005, Bush failed to stop Russian support for Iran (Mohamed 2005: 35). Russia finds strategically to have good relations with Iran. The First thing is that Russia does not want the U.S. to have more power in the Persian Gulf. Secondly, Russia does not want to see an Iran which disturbs Russian interests in Central Asia. Thirdly, Russia requires Iran to keep silent about the Chechen crisis and finally Iran stands as cover for Russia in Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) against resolutions that would threaten Russian interests (Vladimir and Alexander 2005: 56).

Caspian dispute is one of the important matters for Iran relations with Central Asian states. Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have boundaries with the Caspian Sea also called the Caspian littoral states. The Caspian Sea has huge oil and gas reserves. The main crisis is the position of Caspian is whether it should be considered as a Sea or lake (Bulent 2002: 38).

Iran rejected Caspian to be a sea because to avoid foreign countries particularly the U.S. to be active on the Caspian Sea. After the dissolution of Soviet Union, both Russia and Iran claimed that the new states had no right on the Caspian Sea. It claimed that the Caspian Sea should be divided among the five bordering states according the coastline length. Iran did not agree to this plan because it would provide Iran the smallest share. Though, when Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan prepared bilateral agreements concerning the position of Caspian, Iran has absent alone in the subject. Therefore, it has come to the situation that the sea should be divided into equal portion that is 20 per cent to every state (Bernard 1996).

Iran's foreign policy in Central Asia is mainly making strong relations with the major powers to counter the U.S threat. Iran's major supporter was Russia which had a close commercial, military and energy agreements. The major cooperation between them has been construction of Bushehr Nuclear Plant. Iran has also wanted to make good relationship with its neighbours particularly Turkmenistan. It has entered in to various regional collaboration projects, such as Mashad-Tejen railway, Kurdkoy-Korpece pipeline and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) (Stephen et al. 1993).

Since the beginning of the Islamic Republic in 1979, Iranian foreign policy has broaden from the two important sources namely a continually unstable regional environment and the need of a group ridden republican, theocratic polity with its own single system of checks and balances and to the difficult decision making (Nabi 2002: 103-119). Iranian system has changed through the dissolution of Soviet Union and the U.S. subjecting it to damage of full sanctions. The whole geopolitics has been forced to Iranian foreign policy mainly in the Persian Gulf and Central Asian region. The Taliban regime is regarded as a present danger for Iran and its Central Asian neighbours has been replaced with an American state that comprises a big change affecting Central Asia to the loss of Iran's long term interests. Undoubtedly, the Iranian "new insecurity" disagreement is excite by the Bush Administration's anti Iran policy under the direction of the "axis of evil" which faced in Washington's open ended post 9/11 war on international terrorism (Tarock 1997).

Iran argues that the post 9/11 developments have shown the limits of U.S. and Russian relations. This is perceived as a good sign for Iran. Iranian leaders hoped that, Russia's has the ability to counterbalance of the interfering U.S power. Iranian government has started a number of foreign policy changes tried to attractive national security. These include adopting a new approach toward the United States create closer ties to Russia, improving Iran's role and image in the international community and international organizations, promoting better relations with the Arab world particularly in the Persian Gulf, steady cooperation with Turkey and Pakistan enhancing regional cooperation, exploring new security arrangements and at the same time improvement its military preparedness. Generally, these changes do not sign a discontinuity with the past they are only a reordering of Iran's foreign main concern given the orders of definite national security interests (Abdullaev and Catherine 2001) Before 9/11 incident, there was a rare collaboration between Iran and the U.S. for the

period of the Afghan Civil War. Iran together with the United States, Russia and the countries which are bordering with Afghanistan attended the U.N sponsored meetings in New York aim to stop the internal conflict in Afghanistan. Iran and the United States also participated in the U.N sponsored group in Geneva which also included Italy and Germany (Katzman 2003).

Post-9/11 phase also observe a small period helpful correlation between the U.S. and Iran in concentrate on the problem of Afghanistan. As per the Iranian political sources, members of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps helped with the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the U.S Special Operations Forces in providing and financing the commanders of the Northern Alliance. The Cyprus Group favoured by the Iranian government to take part in the negotiations in Bonn and Germany to begin a peace method in the war torn country (Rubin and Batmanglich 2008).

While the United States partly depended on Tehran's good will for stabilizing and set up a new order in Afghanistan both sides come in to an understood agreement on limited assistance because of the similar importance. Both Washington and Tehran had a concentration in peace and stability after of war in Afghanistan in 2001, however inspired by different factors. Therefore, it is argued that while for the U.S the major priority was speedy success in the war against terrorism, the Iranian government was focused by the outlook of follow its plans for regional cooperation make easy by enlarged stability on its eastern border and a new Afghan government favourably arranged to Iran (Rubin and Batmanglich 2008).

## **2.5 Regional Geopolitics**

The relationship of Turkey with the Central Asian states must be examined within the limits of its membership of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), its close relations with the United States and its growing interest in Caspian energy. After the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991, Turkey moved to build close relations with the post- soviet Muslim states with which it shared aspects of heritage, ethnic kingship and language (Olcott 1996: 25-26). Turkey was hope to contain Iranian penetration and to displace the Russian role in the region by present a Turkish model of secular democracy, market economics and pro-western orientation for the new independent Turkish states to practice. Both the U.S and international financial organizations including the World Bank grant assistance to the central Asian states through turkey as a way of strengthen its efforts (Olcott 1996: 25-26).

The collapsed of the Soviet Union seemed to be open a new opportunities for spreading Iranian influence in Central Asia. But, Iran faced major problems in influencing the newly independent states in this region. One of the difficulties of Iran was its limited knowledge in Central Asia and another problem was to understand the ideological differences in the former Soviet Central Asian republics. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and coming out of the Central Asian states, Iran's notion of the region increased (Dario 2010).

Iran saw its concentrations as being limited not only to the Persian Gulf or the Shia populated states but also port as a growing interest in Central Asia and using Afghanistan as a passageway to Central Asia. South Asia is also come out as one of the major markets for Central Asian resources and hence an important goal for Iran's for profit interests. Therefore, to allow itself a possibility to play a most important role in the wider region, Iran drop its support for fully Shiite groups and extended its support to include other groups in Afghanistan. Iran became more cautious of the American role in the region (Bulent et al. 2013). However, Iran provides the shortest and cheapest routes for the transfer of the energy resources of Central Asia and thus hope to play a major role in oil politics, restraint of Iran was so important for the U.S. Secondly, it has maintain a close alliance with Syria and support for militant groups like Hamas and Hezbollah as a means to support the Palestinian reason in it look for to increase its influence among the Muslim nations. Iran's closing of nuclear services according to the desires of the U.S. could have approved it good economic profits in the region but at the cost of its aim to play the role of an independent regional power (Bulent et al. 2013).

Therefore, the U.S. restraint strategy and Iran's role in the region have to be understood in the context of their geopolitical interests. To include Iran and to meet its geopolitical interests, the U.S. is focused more to Pakistan; as a result limits this U.S-Iranian collaboration in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, the U.S. contributes to more go beyond interests with Iran than it does with its supporter Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. They have common interest in the stability and economic reform of Afghanistan. Though, geopolitics has predetermined different, so far at the same time antagonistic roles are to be played by the U.S. and Iran in Afghanistan. Iran's attempts to counter the U.S. role and military presence in Afghanistan have lead to its provision of support to the Taliban in terms of funding and arms. It has even

organized members of the Hezbollah militant group to begin intelligence and revolution activities (Robert 2013).

Iran has argued for the role of the U.N to set up a broad based government in Afghanistan even if the U.S has begun a most important role to unimportant the contribution of Iran in the declaration of the Afghan problem. Iran to facilitate support its long term interests has required political and economic integration with Central Asia (Ibid.). Therefore, it has begun rebuilding activities in Afghanistan and made Herat a bridge to Central Asia. Iran's long term interests in Afghanistan rest on its ambitions to become a major regional power in the Middle East and Central Asian region. Iran's ambitions to develop nuclear energy to act as a bridge between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf on the one hand and Central Asia and South Asia on the other for the energy supplies and its aspiration for a leadership role in the Middle East and Central Asian regions are some of the long term objectives that have been issued into Iran's foreign policy making (Ibid.).

Therefore, Iran's role in Afghanistan requires to be examining from the perspective of its long term interest in its immediate neighbourhood. The "New Great Game" for power and position in Central Asia will continue. The United States, Russia, China and other neighbours to maintain a balance of power on its own ways. The most important is that the domestic stability of Central Asian states is the main policy goal of Central Asia's neighbours and the United States. All the regional and extra regional powers are trying to influence in Central Asian regions in their own way. All the major powers have focused on Central Asia states only on energy resources (Dianne 1996).

The growing competition among the major powers in the world on Central Asian region energy resources creates the problems for Iran. Therefore, Iran tries to make close relations with the Central Asian states to provide some aid and assistant. The Economic cooperation of Iran to the Central Asian regions is the important for to make a close relations between the Central Asia and Iran.

## Chapter-3

### Central Asia-Iran Economic Cooperation

The Economic Cooperation is a part of the trend in economic globalization. Economic collaboration is necessary for any state or regions and any country to compete effectively in today's global economy. Economic cooperation can take many forms. It can mean a simply bilateral trade agreement between two countries on tariff and trade barriers or complete integration with single currencies, labour markets and economic policies. Central Asian states have had geographically, historically, socially and culturally linkages with Iran. In fact, during the Soviet period Central Asian region was part of the imperial Iranian state. In the wake up of the industrial revolution, Iran was drawn in to the European imperialist power game in Central Asia (Abidi 1993: 45).

The dissolution of the Soviet Union brought in to clear focus on the critical geopolitical position of Iran as the connection between the landlocked Central Asian states and the outside of the world. All the five northern regions of Iran such as Khorasan, Gilan, Muzandaran and East and west Azerbaijan share land and Sea borders with the Central Asian regions (Tehran Times 1992). The landlocked countries of Central Asia are looking for entry to the land route and the open Sea. This has brought in to a clear focus on the geographical location of Iran. It can lead a new era of collaboration among these countries of this region. The Iranian daily wrote, "*Iran gateway to the outside of the world for the landlocked Central Asia* (Tehran Times 1992).

Although. Pakistan's Port of Karachi is closer to the Central Asian countries, at present the political instability in Afghanistan checks this alternatives route. Iran can provide transportation services to Central Asian countries to Europe via Turkey, the Persian Gulf and the Southern Ports of Bandar Abbas and Chah Bahar. These Ports are nearer than the Ports of the former Soviet Union and therefore, it can make available a price competent opening for trade and investment. Iran signed many bilateral and multilateral trade agreements with the Central Asian states. Iran hoped that this agreement will strengthen both country development and prosperity for

future. So, Iran makes good relations with Central Asian states for providing economic support (Ibid.).

### **3.1 Economic Cooperation between Central Asia and Iran**

Iran's decided to develop its influences in Central Asia through the common diplomatic, political, commercial and cultural approaches. Iran followed its policies at the international and bilateral levels. On the first add it supported admission of the five Central Asian states in the Non-alignment Movement (NAM) and was not indifferent to their entry in to the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). Iran also welcomed to these Central Asian republics (CAR) to the Summit meeting of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). Iran also took active interest in support to the creation of a regional grouping of the littoral states of the Caspian Sea. Iran mobbed an international congress for scientific and cultural cooperation among and within the Central Asian states (Abidi 1993: 46).

Iran signed more than one hundred agreements and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Central Asian region. Iran hopes that the future will be certainly show that these states will come again to the world of Iran. Iran tries to improve many economic relations with the newly independent of Central Asian states. Iran signed many bilateral and multilateral agreements with these new Central Asian regions. Visa restrictions were simplicity and new border passages were opened. New shipping ways from Iran to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan were begin at the Caspian Sea (Ibid.).

To develop regional collaboration free trade zones were introduced in Sarakhs on the border with Turkmenistan and the Bandar Anzali (Caspian port). Iran gives special importance to Turkmenistan which is the single Central Asian state that shares borders with Iran because of spreading his Islamic religion. Among all the Central Asian regions, the closest relations of Iran are with Turkmenistan. A 300 kilometer railway line which links Mashad to Tejen of Turkmenistan was opened in 1996. The Mashad-Tejen railway is the first link to Central Asian rail network of Iran. The 200 kilometer pipeline between Kurdkoy and Korpece in Turkmenistan has made Iran a connection for transport Turkmen gas to Europe (Edmund 2001: 179). As Iran is a main gas importer of Central Asian states, Turkmenistan is the second largest gas

producer in former Soviet Republics. Therefore, Iran aims to resolve its gas shortage from Turkmenistan gas field (Edmund 2001: 179)

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is an important alternative for Iran in order to maintain regional cooperation and security. It was founded by Turkey, Iran and Pakistan in 1985 to promote economic, technical and cultural cooperation among the founding states. In 1992, it was joined by Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 (David 1998: 85). The inclusion of the new Central Asian states has given the organization more important position because the members of Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) hope that these Central Asian states have huge energy and natural resources that get to easy for the members states through this organization. Tehran has perceived the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) as an opportunity towards establishment of an Islamic economic and political union (David 1998: 85).

The Caspian dispute is one of the important issues in Iran's relations with the Central Asian states. Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have boundaries with the Caspian Sea. The Caspian Sea is famous for its rich oil and natural gas reserves make it creates of controversy among the littoral states problem is the status of Caspian Sea whether it should be considered as a sea or lake (Bulent 2002: 38).

While beginning of the main pipeline competition for the near future, Iran continues to make its own "micro-pipelines" such as the Neka-Rey Pipeline construct to assist oil exchanges programmed with the Caspian states. The Most important among the potential trade associates is Kazakhstan which is at present busy in oil trades with Iran. Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev has specifically supported a North-South pipeline to the Persian Gulf through Iran (Narsi 1998: 20-21).

Under the exchanges agreement, Iran receives crude oil from the Caspian manufacturers through the port of Neka in the exchange for Iran's Persian Gulf crude oil which is simply exported to other markets. Both Iran and Kazakhstan have given serious thought to the probable building of a Kazakh-Iranian pipeline through Turkmenistan. Iran has also suggested to Azerbaijan to settle in the Iran-USSR gas pipeline which has been inactive for more than ten years as an oil pipeline (Narsi 1998: 20-21). Discussions are also in progress for an Iran-Armenia pipeline. Another



associated Iranian action importance mentioning is a \$226 million agreement with a group connecting Sweden's GVA consultants. Iran's Sadra and the National Iranian Oil Company for the building of oil fix on a probable stage at a depth of 1,000 meters in the Caspian Sea (Narsi 1998: 20-21).

Iran has recently added serious economic influence to its diplomatic dealings in the Caspian region. The larger scope of Iran's economic participation with its neighbours, the larger the possibility that it will enter in to a collective security arrangement with them. However, the U.S supported Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline has more isolated Iran and has given more instability to Iran-Azerbaijan relations (Recknagel 2003: 2). The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline makes Washington-Ankara-Baku line more powerful in the process to join together the energy resources of Central Asia into the world market. On the other hand, the pipeline also reduces the importance of both Russia and Iran in the energy game. Iran's attempts are to increase regional integration and control of energy resources through the establishment of pipeline networks pass through its territory (Recknagel 2003: 2).

The maintenance of peace and stability and keep away from conflict in the Central Asian regions are the main interest of Iran, particularly in the oil and energy sectors. Iran's emphasis on Central Asian regions on the improvement of cultural ties such as the scholarly exchanges, cooperation in education fields, the offering of scholarship and student exchanges. Iran also does assist to Central Asia on the economic through improved infrastructural and economic integration to establishment of road, rail line and energy pipeline networks etc. (Recknagel 2003: 2).

Iran's economic interest is maintaining stability in Central Asian region come into views to be more important than any ideological desire to spread the Islamic revolution or support politics built on ethnic ties. This is fact that by Iran's continuing attempts to build up good relations with the Rahmanov government in Tajikistan which has break down on Islamic groups and maintains to make limited development in power contribution with the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP). During the Tajikistan civil war, Iran reportedly supplied some level of support to the Islamic Renaissance Party (IRP) (Anega 2002: 1).

During this period, Iran supported and hosted meetings between the opposite sides. Although, Iran's reportedly support to the United Tajik Opposition (UTO) during the war, it has tried to improve its relations with the Rahmanov government. Iran is now searching to build up a land corridor from its territory to Afghanistan via Tajikistan.

There is a bigger focus on increasing transportation links a direct flight has been introduced between Tehran and Dushanbe the capital of Tajikistan. Iran also plans to construct a hydro-electric power station in Tajikistan as well as opening a cement manufacturing plant (Anega 2002: 2). Iran has also undertaking over \$31 million in loans and funding to complete the five kilometre Anzab Tunnel. The Tunnel secures to join central Tajikistan to the second largest city Khujand while by passing an active route via Uzbekistan (Arman 2003: 1).

Iran wants the Central Asian states to ship their oil and gas via Iran to the Persian Gulf. Tehran supports the southern route as the most economically workable and environmentally the safest. It is also trying to promote better infrastructural and trade links with these Central Asian states. During his visit to Kazakhstan, president Khatami stressed Iran's interest in Central Asian energy as he required Kazakhstan's support to construct an oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to the Persian Gulf via Iran. The proposed pipeline would be construct on the lines of the gas pipeline from Western Turkmenistan to Southern Iran, effectively launched in 1997 (Recknagel 2003: 2).

Both Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan are also participating in the so called "oil swap" by which Iran imports their oil for domestic use while selling equal amounts of Iranian oil to the world market on their behalf. Since their independence, the Central Asian countries have needed economic, financial and technological assistance. Therefore, the central goal of their foreign policies has been to increase admission to these resources which has led them to move toward those states that could satisfy their economic and financial requirements (Ibid.). Iran, due to its limited economic, financial and technologies joined with its own developmental needs has been a less attractive associate for this Central Asian Republics (CAR) in comparison to the Western states such as China, Russia, Turkey and the Gulf Arab states. It is difficult to decide whether the availability of economic resources would have facilitated Iran to defeat the impact of its other responsibility, although definitely it would have pointed their negative impact. The burden of economic sanction by the United States and its policy of Iran's isolation force to Iran make relations with these Central Asian regions get more importance (Ibid.).

### **3.1.1 Development of Transportation, Infrastructure, Trade and Investments**

Iran has attempted to expand its transportation networks both road and rail line and to enlarge and develop its ports in order to improve its attractiveness to Central Asian

countries as the best link between them and in the outside world. The first action in this way was launched in May 1996 of the railroad connecting Mashhad in north-eastern Iran to Sarakhs at the Iran-Turkmenistan border. The service was being presented at by the heads of states and governments of Central Asian and other neighbouring countries including Turkish president Suleiman Demirel. He called the event as the coming to life of a historic legend transfer to the Silk Road (Mohan 2003).

This was followed by the achievement of the Bafgh-Mashhad railroad which successfully connects Central Asia to the port of Bandar Abbas in the Persian Gulf. Iran is also construction a railroad to connect its Chah Bahar port in the Sea of Oman to Zaranj on the Afghan border. This railroad will facilitate transportation trade between India and Afghanistan through Iran and will offer a new outlet to the sea for Afghanistan (Mohan 2003). Iran has also been improvement its rail system and construction new links particularly a rail link from Kerman Province to Zahedan which is linked by rail to Quetta in Pakistan and a railroad linking Mashhad to Herat in Afghanistan. These networks will ultimately connect Iran to India and will also run through Afghanistan to Tajikistan (Ibid.).

### **3.1.2 Development of Road, Electricity and Energy Networks**

Iran has been assisting some Central Asian countries to develop and repair their infrastructure, road and rail networks. Iranian companies have been active in repairing and construction of a number of roads in Kyrgyzstan including two phases of the Jalalabad-Azgen road. In the Tajikistan, Iran is also assisting in the building of the Aznab Hydro-Tunnel as well as the road connecting from Dushanbe to China. In the Turkmenistan, Iran took the responsibility to construct the road connection from Bajgiran in Iran to Ashgabat in Turkmenistan plus the Turkmenbashi-Ashgabat road which is 500 kilometres long (Saeed and Tajmohammad 2008).

In the Tajikistan, Iran is engaged in the construction and financing of a number of dams and hydraulic power plants including the Sangtoudah and Raqoun power plants. In 2004, during the visited of Iran president Muhammad Khatami to Tajikistan dedicated Iran to covering half of the \$500 million cost of the hydroelectric plant on the Vakhsh River as well as Iranian engineers and companies are employed in the technical planning and development of the Eini electric power station in Tajikistan and a factory to construct low expenditure price (IRNA 2008).

Iran's private sector has been engaged in improving the republic's medical infrastructure. It was information that Iranian doctors have built Central Asia's best provided cardiology hospital in Dushanbe the capital of Tajikistan. The hospital is staffed with Iranian doctors and nurses (Fars News Agency 2009).

Iran has been willing to establish energy relations with Central Asian regions as both a dependable energy source and export market and as the best export route. Iran's aims to become a major export route have so far been dissatisfied mainly because of Western opposition. Though, Russia has not been willing to see Iran come out as a competitor to itself for the export of Central Asian energy. It has also exchange arrangements with Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan and imports 14 billion cubic meters of natural gas from Turkmenistan through the Korbeje in Turkmenistan and Kordkuy in Iran pipeline (Iranian Diplomacy 2009).

### **3.1.3 Development of Investment, Aid and Trade**

The most serious problem of Iran is in the dealing with the Central Asia has been its inadequate financial resources which have made it very difficult for Iran to offer substantial aid and investment to these Central Asian countries. In Central Asia, due to its ethnic and linguistic similarity, Tajikistan has obtained the bulk of Iranian support. According to Utker Omarev, the World Bank's economic affairs expert, this assist in Tajikistan has helped to stabilize Tajikistan to some degree particularly in given that before to the U.S. attack on Afghanistan. Tajikistan was of a small interest to the United States and Europe and gets a little support (Abbas 2007).

On 5<sup>th</sup> January 1994. Iran and Turkmenistan signed their first postal and telecommunication contract which has helped to the establishment of a 480 Channel telephone exchange linking Tehran to Ashkabad. There has been considerable development in the whole level of trade and investment between the two countries. About 1000 tones of goods are exchanged between Iran and Turkmenistan daily of which half comprise Iranian exports includes mainly citrus fruit, food and engine oil. Iran can use its geographic benefit to influence the multi-lateral economic contact in the Central Asian region. Iran is increasing its "oil swapping" deals with Central Asian states and Azerbaijan. According to these agreements, crude oil from the region is send to the refineries in northern Iran in exchange for carry on from release of equal amounts of Iranian oil for export from Persian Gulf ports (Abbas 2007). A multiple pipeline come close to that includes an Iranian route can establish to be a politically

and economically desirable solution. Iran provided the shortest way to export Central Asian oil and natural gas to international markets. This network will undoubtedly play a major role in future relation with the Caspian and Central Asia region to gas and oil consumers on the Indian subcontinent and in the Far East (Ibid.).

Pakistan has been pushing hard for a share in this future by attempt to become linked to the Iranian and Central Asian energy and gas fields. To having safety consideration with Iran in this regard, Pakistan arrives at the agreement with Turkmenistan whereby a gas pipeline would link from Pakistan to Central Asia via Afghanistan. This will show to be a major link in the rising multinational gas pipeline networks beginning from Iran and Central Asia. Therefore, Afghanistan's lack of security will prove to be a major problem to the functioning of a trans-Afghanistan pipeline project (Colin 1995: 8).

Iran looks for to enhance its regional influence by focusing interest on its main application to the Central Asian republics as a land corridor to the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Teheran has underway building on several free trade zones along its northern border. A railway line from its Persian Gulf port of Bandar Abbas to link the national railway network at Bafq has been finished. It has an expansion from Mashhad to Sarakhs, completing the link between Iran and Turkmenistan. Moreover, a private sector Iranian company is planning an eleven hundred mile railway from the new port of Chah Bahar direct to Sarakhs cutting seventy five hundred miles from the standard sea journey between Asia and Europe (Colin 1995: 8). Long back Iran and Turkmenistan started discussions on the building of a \$215 million pipeline to connect the gas field at Korpedzhe to Iranian passages, rebuilding of the Turkmen-Bashi gas refinery and function of the Siri refinery. Iran also offered 80 percent of the financing and is arranged to buy yearly up to eight billion cubic meters of Turkmen gas after the pipeline is in function (Niyazov 1995: 80-81).

Given the landlocked nature of this Central Asian region, Iran has great economic potential to offer to the landlocked Central Asian States through routes not only into the Indian Subcontinent but also port services in Iran. Iran has mainly made inroads in the Central Asian States by focused on trade and infrastructure investment with a centre of attention on Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Armenia. Iran had played an important role in constructing the "Anzab" tunnel that was to link the northern and southern parts of Tajikistan and provide a road corridor from China through Central Asia to the Persian Gulf (Kucera 2006).

In the context of a rising multi polar world order, Tehran has strategically positioned itself in regional organizations to take out maximum diplomatic influence. These comprise the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), a trade and investment group which comprises the countries from central Asia, Pakistan and Turkey and provides as an observer in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (Kucera 2006). Iran is moving from an originally inner familiarized economic organization to a more free and open market structure that wants to relate with the rest of the world. To get this, the government will further maintain to put forward plans aimed at improving the country's on the whole investment climate. Iran has added to the economic development and political stability of the Central Asian region and it is continue to do so in the future (Kucera 2006).

Iran's activity and achievement have been small. Because its own economy has been fragile, not capable to invest much in the developmental projects in the Central Asian republics (CAR) or enter in to joint ventures with other countries in order to do so. It is also because of the private companies and businessmen in Iran have had little knowledge in investing in foreign countries (Ibid.). Following international engagement in Central Asia after 2001, Tehran seems to be choosing for continued to unplanned cooperation with the states of Central Asia where it can. Tehran keeps away from any possibility of conflict of interests with the countries of the region. In spite of all the potential for cooperation, Iran is in no way a dominant player in the Central Asian region. Iran's own internal economic and political problems which are made inferior by the U.S. attempt to separate Iran slow down investments in the Central Asian region (Ibid.).

At the same time Iran is going to be separated by West because of its nuclear case, Iran come again its eyes more to the East. East for Iran means Asian countries. Naturally an economic relation between Central Asia and eastern neighbours is broadening particularly; cheap goods in Xinjiang region in China are very attractive for Central Asian traders (Shahana 2013). Iran's bilateral relations with Turkmenistan and Afghanistan have better performance. The present trend shows that Iran's economic interest of geographical proximity, cultural and historical linkages, common faith and accessibility of cheap sources of energy for producing intermediate and consumer goods give a clear frame over the contestants including Turkey in Central Asia. It seems that the landlocked countries of Central Asia are also looking for

entrance to the land route and the open Sea. Iran can be called the gateway to the outside of the world for the land locked Central Asia (Shahana 2013).

So, Iran can lead a new era of collaboration among the Central Asian region. Iran has provided the best route to the Central Asian region and the chance of developing a rail link at the initial lending to warm water Ports in the Persian Gulf. When it becomes visible, this will possibly to give Tehran with an opportunity that no other nation would have (Eugene 2003). Iran will maintain to consult with Central Asian states on many issues particularly on border security, stabilization in Afghanistan, transport way in to the Russian and Chinese markets and the development of regional energy markets will probably be the main forcers of Tehran's diplomacy in the region in the near period. Tehran will also use its contacts with these states to induce the Iranian people that U.S. efforts to isolate the Islamic Republic are useless. Though, these attempts are unlikely to considerably change the present developments in the post-Soviet Central Asia. Tehran's capability to influence the regional circumstances is strictly limited (Eugene 2003).

However, this situation is partly a result of Iran's sanctions associated to the economic difficulty and wants to avoid open tensions with definite non-regional players such as Russia and Turkey. It is also a purpose of foreign policy that moves to showed by Central Asian governments themselves. As some analysts have pointed out that, these countries have undergone radical transforms in their own view over the past decade and no longer do they see themselves as living in a landlocked, isolated region whose relations with the external world depend completely on Russia or Iran. The rising U.S, Chinese, Turkish and Arab presence in this region has given them a sense of self-importance and a much wider option of partners and opportunities among which Iran does not seem that attractive (Ibid.).

Iran has the most important economic concentrations in south-western Central Asia, even if, its presence is limited and its strategic interest lies mainly in the Gulf region. Iranian geography controls Central Asian entrance to the Persian or Arab Gulf and Iran has been an important transport route for regional goods such as Uzbek Cotton (Theodore 1993). There have been attempts to increase Iranian rail infrastructure that may simplicity transport from Turkmenistan to the Gulf 128 which may provide to further Central Asian transits through Iran. Iran's cultural relations to Tajikistan and its shared border with Turkmenistan also provide it some level of influence in the region. The economic aspect to this correlation is somewhat one

sided. Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan all rely deeply on Iran for transits to ports, while Iran is simply dependent on any Central Asian economy (Theodore 1993).

Thus, Iran could apply significant influence on these states, although it has had little incentive to interrupt their economies. The Official Iranian statements concerning Central Asia have long reflected a friendly foreign policy designed try to enlarge Iranian influence and trade relation to the region. Iran has also wanted to improve bilateral trade with each state and to achieve political influence but only to a limited extent Iran does not want to make vulnerable its relationship with Russia a distant more important friend by interfering in what Moscow views as its backyard (Alexander 2008). Iran also expects to apply influence through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in which Iran holds observer status. Iran applied to become a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2008 probable hoping to enhance its influence with China and Central Asia (Alexander 2008).

Though, the Iranian request was denied in 2010 due to new rules that forbid the attainment of any state under U.N sanctions a move broadly seen to reflect a want among member states not to irritate the U.S. The example of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in some ways provides as an indication of the state of broader U.S-Iranian rivalry in Central Asia. Iran indirectly loses to the U.S. in what was a mainly symbolic move anyway, because the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is mainly a mechanism to facilitate Chinese trade (Ibid.).

The United States attempts in Central have centered on stabilizing Afghanistan after U.S. led forces deposed its Taliban government followed by the attempts to help bring regional stability, encourage democracy and friendly governments develop the flow of energy exports and provide other U.S. trade and investment interests. The competition with Iran has played a major role in the U.S. decision-making but it has not been the heavy force (Shahrbanou 2013). As the U.S. plans to withdraw its forces and transfer responsibility for security and governance to the Afghan central government the U.S will have to re estimate its interests in the region particularly with regard to Iran and Pakistan. US-Iranian competition in Afghanistan, Central Asia and Pakistan has so far purposed as a reflection rather than constrain of broader the U.S-Iranian competition. As the U.S. presence goes backs from the region after 2014, Iran may pace in to fill part of the resulting power blankness (Shahrbanou 2013).



Therefore, more likely is that Russia and China will improve their existence in Central Asia while Afghanistan and Pakistan will continue to struggle with devastating domestic problems. Iran's capacity to compete with the U.S is limited in Central Asia where Russian and Chinese influences are persistent and deeply rooted. In Pakistan, Iran's ability to compete with the U.S is troubled by Pakistan's dysfunctional politics and Pakistani doubt of Iranian objectives. It is only in Afghanistan that Iran possesses a true capability to compete with the U.S in a significant way; though, as change continues, Iranian incentives for destabilization of U.S. attempts in Afghanistan will weaken as Iran once again faces its historic challenges of dealing with Afghan instability, narcotics trafficking and negligent border security (Ibid.). It does not mean that Iranian and U.S. competition could not become aggressive if the U.S and Iran were to go to war in other regions. Therefore, the most likely result is limited to take actions on terrorism that will not have a strategic impact on any regional state and regional states will attempt to end of restrain. As for the broader issues of regional development and economic and political integration, these will be driven by the uncertain view of a stable India-Pakistani peace, development following a stable Transition in Afghanistan, internal development in Central Asia and the future course of Russian and Chinese influence. These changes are likely to be slow and gather force at least half a decade in the future a time period where the present structure of U.S-Iranian competition may have effortlessness or been resolved by force in other regions (Ibid.).

Iran hopes that the active discussion with the Central Asian states can bring friendship relation and more beneficial than conflict. The methods of influence have been calm thus; Iran has offered various incentives, but no successful result has get. Therefore, Iran joins with Central Asian states in the regional Organization such as the ECO and Iran hopes that it will help in future relations with Central Asian region.

## Chapter-4

### The Regional Cooperation and Central Asia-Iran Relations

The Regional cooperation is a mark of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Regional organizations are created by states located in an area in order to assist in economic, political, scientific and military features and achieve the objectives. Nowadays, in addition to quantitative expansion, Regional organizations have successfully developments in the international system. Today, the systemic structure of international relations rests on regional cooperation; Collective actions of sovereign nation-states are theoretical and practical confrontation to all the countries particularly in the Central Asia. The Central Asian region's vast oil and natural resources have made Central Asia an object of make stronger in international activity and interest of the regional and trans-regional powers. In the context of strengthen global interest in the energy resources of Central Asia, the unstable situation in this region is the cause of concerns (Linn 2012: 96-97). The Central Asian states formed a geographically importance regions. share a common history, similar cultures and social structures and were a part of single state system under the Soviet regime. Both the periods are very important because of two reasons: first, the Central Asian Republics (CAR) are passing through a transitional phase and secondly, Russia, the former hegemony of the Central Asian region is trying to maintain its influence in the Central Asian region while the other external actors are motivated to give a new figure to the national identities of the Central Asian states (Linn 2012: 96-97).

During more than seven decades of Soviet rule (1917-1991) Central Asia remained free from internal conflicts and felt no threats to its security from neighbouring powers. But after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Central Asian region has become the focus of international politics. The newly independent Central Asian states cannot solve their numerous problems through the unilateral action. Under such circumstance these Central Asian Republic (CAR) have realized the need for regional cooperation in Central Asia which is further strengthened by shared of common language, common history, common experience. common religions and geographical proximity. Regional Cooperation is need for every country for development and good relations (ibid.). The Central Asian states

have been gradually working towards regional cooperation through their membership in various regional forums such as Commonwealth of Independence States (CIS), the Central Asian Economic Union now called the Central Asian Economic Community and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) etc. Iran has also emphasized regional cooperation in its relations with Central Asian countries both in the context of the Regional Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The following are the important regional organizations that bind the good relations ship among the member nations such as the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (ibid.).

#### **4.1 The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)**

The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is an important option for Iran in order to maintain regional cooperation and security with Central Asian regions. Central Asia was a very important event for the Iranian foreign policy through the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) is an intergovernmental organization (Ahmad 1973). It provides a platform to discuss the way to improve development and promote trade and investment opportunities. The common purposes of ECO are to establish a single market for goods and services. The ECO was founded by Turkey, Iran and Pakistan in 1985 to support economic, technical, cultural, historical, linguistic, religious and political cooperation among the founding members and their constituent states. It was the successor organization of Regional Cooperation for Development (RCD), a regional organization founded by the same country in 1964 to promote multidimensional regional cooperation aimed at creating conditions for continued socio-economic growth in its funding states (Ahmad 1973).

In 1992, the ECO was joined by seven new members namely Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The 28<sup>th</sup> November, 1992 is celebrated as the ECO day. On this day all seven states were officially

admitted to the ECO as full members. Now increasing the number of ECO member states to ten.<sup>2</sup>

The inclusion of the new Central Asian states has given the organization a more important position because the ECO member state thought that it will be easy to make a trade and exchange programmed with the huge natural resources reserved Central Asian states. Tehran has observed the ECO as a good opportunity towards the organization of an Islamic economic and political union (David 1998: 85). The ECO's permanent secretariat and cultural department are located in Tehran, its economic bureau is situated in Turkey and its scientific bureau is in Pakistan. The ECO has a technical committees and specialized institutions such as ECO shipping company, air project, chamber of commerce, trade and development bank and various directorates. It provides as an opportunity to discuss regional disputes. Though, the nature of conflict interests of Iran, Azerbaijan and Turkey reasons creates the situation in which no progress can be made in the execution of the ECO projects (Edmund 2001: 181).

#### **4.1.1 The Objectives and functions of the ECO**

The region in which the ECO functions is rich in mineral, energy and human resources. It has also entrance to open seas through the Mediterranean Sea and the Persian Gulf or Oman Sea or Arabian Sea and an international land link connecting Asia to Europe through the Caucasus. The ECO is a regional economic organization. The main aim of ECO is to "support the conditions for sustainable economic development, to increase on the basis standard of living and quality of life in the Member States through mobilization of economic and social prospective of the region by promoting regional economic cooperation and the progressive removal of trade barriers within the ECO region and development of intra and inter-regional trade" (ECO 1997). In addition to these economic and trade related functions, the ECO has also follows the collaboration in the social, cultural and scientific fields. The ECO has a huge and emergent governing body extend throughout its member states (ECO 2007). It is composed of four main institutions that work directly with the ECO's regional organizations such as the ECO Shipping Company, the ECO Chamber of Commerce and Industry as well as with ECO's specialized agencies such as the ECO

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<sup>2</sup>Economic Cooperation Organisation" URL:  
[http://www.ecosecretariat.org/Detail\\_info/About\\_ECO\\_D.htm](http://www.ecosecretariat.org/Detail_info/About_ECO_D.htm), Accessed on June 10, 2013.

Cultural Institute and the ECO Science Foundation. The most important institutions are the Council of Ministers. The council of ministers composed of the foreign ministers of its member states or other ministerial level officials. This is the highest decision making organ of the organization. It meets at least once in a year. The organ in charge of the basic policies, strategies and guidelines for the implementation of the programs of regional cooperation is the Regional Planning Council. It meets once in a year at minimum (ECO 2007). It consists of the member states heads of the national planning organizations. Implementation of the policies granted by the Council of Ministers is the duty of the Council of Permanent Representatives. It consists of the member states representatives namely the ambassadors of the member states to Iran recognized as the representatives to the ECO. Finally, the ECO Secretariat both harmonizes and examines the working of ECO activities and prepares the Council of Ministers programs and projects. It consists of six directorates under the supervision of the ECO Secretary General such as the directorates of industry and agriculture, trade and investment, energy, mineral, transport and communications, economic, research, statistics and project research (ECO 2007).

Economic growth is the ECO's main area of activity. Within this context, the ECO finds and promotes the ways to assist and go faster economic development through the support of trade and investment opportunities. The ECO's long term objective is to establish a single market for goods and services. This aims is similar to the European Union's economic objective but without its attached political, military and security goals including the aim of uniting all its member states. Various policies have been introduced and tariff agreements have been arrived to facilitate trade and the transportation of goods through the member states. As part of its plan to promote intraregional trade and to assist the transport of goods in the region, a major agreement has been conclude the ECO Transit Trade Agreement signed on March 15, 1995 in Islamabad and put into force on March 15, 1998 (ECO 1995). In terms of the infrastructure development, reliable and efficient transport such as road, rail, ports and airports and telecommunication networks in the ECO region has become a main concern. They comprise various road and rail road projects between and among the ECO states as well as those connecting them to other states. The projects comprise highway and railroad projects linking Central Asia to Iran through which the ECO states can entrance by land the markets of other members such as Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Turkey and the international markets through Persian Gulf ports of Iran or those

of its neighbouring ECO members. The Tajan-Sarakhs-Mashhad railroad which connecting Turkmenistan's railroad network (linked to the other Central Asian states) to the Iranian network (already connected to Pakistan, Azerbaijan and Turkey) is one of the most important example that was completed in May 1996 (Peimani 1998). The other goal has been the expansion, modernization and upgrading of the ECO region's telecommunication systems. Connecting the telecommunication networks of Central Asia, Iran, Turkey and Azerbaijan to the Trans-Asian European Fibre Optic System (TAEFOS) has mainly been understood (Peimani 1998).

The main purpose of the ECO's transport and telecommunication projects is to ensure that member states are all interconnected by roads, railways, airlines and modern telecommunication systems. The main target has been to provide landlocked members such as the Central Asian countries, Azerbaijan and Afghanistan to easy admission to open Sea through Iran to the Persian Gulf and the Oman Sea through Pakistan to the Indian Ocean and through Turkey to the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. There are many other areas of interest of the ECO such as the energy development of both for meeting the growing needs of its member states and also for export to non-ECO markets, regional cooperation on agriculture and industry and health. Member states have been connected in bilateral and multilateral projects in these fields but cooperation in these areas has been limited (Peimani 2009: 306).

#### **4.1.2 The Role of Iran in Central Asian region through the ECO**

Iran supported to Central Asian states admission into the revived of the ECO. Through the ECO Iran works with Turkey and Pakistan and to compete for influence within Central Asia to provide a framework for supporting economic changes, to provide help, coordinate of investment funds and to divide up responsibility for the huge effort required to modernize Central Asia. In the 1992 summit, the ECO decided that Turkey would focus on education, administration and industrial management where as Pakistan on transport, communications, banking and services and Iran on oil and mineral resources (Dietrich 1993: 47). In the perspective of a rising multi polar world order, Iran has advantageously positioned itself in through the regional organizations to take out greatest diplomatic power to influence in Central Asian states. These include the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), a trade and investment group which includes the countries from central Asia, Pakistan and Turkey. The growth of the ECO was an Iranian plan because for that Iran will get

benefit from all the fields. Iran's idea of the region is defined at least in part by religious identity. Turkmenistan is the only Central Asian state which shares its border with Iran, is an unwilling member of multilateral groupings and Uzbekistan which is an important linkage for all transport and trade promotion proposals has been indifferent (Dietrich 1993: 47).

It can be argued that ECO discussions and agreements have already facilitated to provide a framework for concrete projects connecting to Iran with Central Asia. In recent times, the work has continued to expand and join together the ECO rail network. The other project was the construction of a 200 kilometer pipeline between Korpedzhe in Turkmenistan and Kord-Kuy in Iran permitting the export of Turkmen gas into the Iranian gas network (BBC Monitoring 1996: 1). Iran funding the \$160 million project which was imagined as the first step towards the export of Turkmen gas to Turkey and Europe via Iran. A links between the Iranian and Turkmen electricity grids was ended in 2000. Most recently, Iran has been employed in road construction projects in north-west Afghanistan providing new routes to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. These new links either have already or will have economic significance (BBC Monitoring 1996: 1). The eleven regional heads of state get together at the opening of the Mashhad to Tejen rail connection to hear Iran's President Rafsanjani praise the broader significance of the project, he said that "The world is moving towards greater regional cooperation and sustained and regionally coordinated economic growth and development will consolidate peace and stability and pave the way for the enhancement of international relations (BBC Monitoring 1996: 1).

Through the regional organizations Iran wanted to maintain good relations with his neighbouring and member states. Iran main intention is how to exploited the central Asian oil and natural resources that's why Iran try to make a close ties through Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The others players of ECO founding members like Turkey and Pakistan are also trying to influence in their own view of thought on Central Asian states to get benefit from Central Asian energy resources. In the recent times, all the founding members of the ECO are focused on Central Asian states to provided aid and other facilities for exploited Central Asian energy and natural resources. Therefore, the ECO is a means and through the name of ECO these players are dominating the Central Asian region for their own benefit. This competition on Central Asian states creates Iran security environment. So, Iran is

maintaining close relations with the neighbouring countries and ECO's member states (Akbar 2012).

#### **4.2 The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) also known as the Shanghai Five founded by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan on April 26, 1996 in Shanghai, China, when their heads of state signed the Treaty on extending Military faith in Border regions (Yom 2002: 48-54; Akin 2005 and Craig 2003). The key objective for founding the SCO was to resolve border disputes started from the Soviet time. Apart from the bilateral agreements signed outside its framework among the China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to deal with territorial and border disputes, major multilateral agreements on border issues were then signed during its annual summits, held in Moscow in 1997, Almaty in 1998, Bishkek in 1999 and Dushanbe in 2000. These comprise the Agreement on Mutual Reduction of Military Forces in Border Regions, signed on April 24, 1997, in Moscow (SCO 1997). In 2001, Uzbekistan admitted as a new member of SCO. On June 15, 2001, the six heads of state signed the Declaration on the Establishment of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to reflect the new reality of the organization (Daly 2001). In addition to resolve the border disputes, the SCO is a meant to function as a regional forum to deal with the other issues of importance to its members includes the extremism, terrorism, separatism and drug trafficking. These have now become the major areas of cooperation among the SCO members (Daly 2001).

The SCO developed in the means of a confidence building and conventional force decline as well as agreements on trade and border separation. According to its Founding Declaration, the SCO aims "to strengthen the mutual trust and good neighbourly relations among the member states in many fields and to devote itself to safeguarding regional peace, security and stability; and to establishing a democratic, fair and rational new international political and economic order." The founding states also placed a particular emphasis on fighting against the so-called "three evils" of terrorism, separatism and extremism (Daly 2001). The SCO regarded to as the Shanghai Five and had five members such as China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan until 2001 when Uzbekistan joined the organization. It has six members but has articulated an interest in increasing its membership. The SCO has



granted observer status to four countries such as Mongolia, Iran, India and Pakistan. Mongolia obtained that status at the 2004 Tashkent summit and the others received it a year later at the SCO summit in Astana. All the four observer nations have expressed an interest in gaining full membership which will probably become a reality in the future for various reasons. One such main reason is the importance of Iran, India and Pakistan as regional powers with asserts to global status whose membership will undoubtedly turn to the SCO in to a major regional organization to be considered with. Because of the history of conflict between India and Pakistan, their membership will probably be simultaneous to avoid make unfriendly one or the other (Weitz 2009).

#### **4.2.1 The Objectives and functions of the SCO**

The SCO has two main permanent bodies to run its functions one is the Secretariat in Beijing and the other is the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) in Tashkent. Its secretary general and director of the executive committee are appointed by the organization's Council of Heads of the state for a period of three years. The official working languages of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) are the Chinese and the Russian. The SCO preside over its internal issues according to the "spirit of Shanghai" which is based on the principles of mutual trust and benefit, equality, mutual consultations, respect for the multifaceted cultures and aspiration to joint development (MFAPRC 2004). The SCO's security authorization provides room for a broad range of joint activities for its membership. It has the three main objectives such as fighting the "three evils" that is the extremism, terrorism and separatism. All its members have been worried about these threats for their countries and their region and most of them have actually suffered from one or all of these evils. Therefore, the SCO members assist with each other to deal with these threats. It is to be said that, the Chechen militants operating in Russia are also been engaged in the activities of the extremist groups in Central Asia such as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). Among the other activities, exchanges of intelligence on extremist, terrorist and separatist groups and simultaneous police raids on such groups in SCO countries have specified the SCO countries cooperation in the mentioned fields (Weitz 2006).

Since 2003, SCO members have also wanted to deal with the increasing menace of drugs and drug trafficking because of the increasing in the Afghanistan's drug production mainly opium and heroin to the point of overflowing to their countries.

The drugs have become a serious and most out of control problem for all the nations particularly in the Central Asian states (China Daily Report 2002). The SCO is not only a military group but also its main objective is to fight against extremism, terrorism and separatism needs military support despite cooperation among the law enforcement agencies of its member states. The SCO has taken other steps toward economic collaboration as reflected in the decisions made in the Moscow summit of October 26, 2005. It stresses the importance of establishing assistance in oil and gas exploration in building of oil and gas pipelines and in the field of high tech information and telecommunication technology (China Daily Report 2002). The SCO states agreed to set up at the earliest possible time specialist working groups on the issues of fuel and energy, modern information and telecommunication technology. The SCO is dedicated to construct trust and goodwill among its member's states. It look for to promote closer relations among its members not just in the security field but also in the political, economic, scientific, technical, energy, environmental, cultural and educational areas. In addition to security collaboration, China worried about the "huge economic and trade potential" of regional cooperation (China Daily Report 2002).

#### **4.2.2 The Role of Iran in Central Asian region through the SCO**

Iran is an observer of SCO. Iran has a good probability to become a full member in the near future for three main reasons. First, Iran is growing as a military power with influence in key strategic regions including the Persian Gulf and the Middle East. Second thing is the antagonism is increasing between Russia and the Western countries, particularly the United States and the third one is the China has rising disagreements with those countries and an progressively more negative view of Washington and its main Western supporters in the Central Asian countries. It looks that Iran has recently started a campaign to create an agreement about its membership among the SCO members (Associated Press 2008). Iran has the world's second largest oil and gas reserves with a strong potential for discovering the huge unexploited reservoirs. Thus, its membership in the SCO such as one of whose members Russia has the world's largest gas reserves and a large amount of oil will turn the SCO into the single major force in the international energy market with related political and economic influence (Ibid.). The fossil energy resources of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan will further make stronger this influence. Iran wants to

make close relations with Russia and China to simplicity the pressure from the United States. Iran might believe that a coalition with Moscow and Beijing will help end the getting bigger sanctions imposed against it by the United Nations Security Council as a result of Iran's denied to postpone its nuclear program. In addition, the Russia and China with their vast investment capabilities are good-looking as investors in the Iranian economy, particularly at the time when many Western companies and banks have been withdrawing due to the U.S and European Union sanctions (Ibid.). Iran also expects that as an observer of the SCO it would receive a strong political and security status to counter the threat of the U.S and Israeli air hits and could influence Russia to sell it more sophisticated weapons. Iran has an opportunity to regain traditional influence in Central Asia through the SCO. Hence, Iranians have established limited influence in ethnically similarities Tajikistan and their efforts to develop economic and political collaboration with regional Turkic speaking states have been mainly unsuccessful (Ibid.).

Whenever, to explain the objectives of the SCO and its interested observer states in terms of balance of power, this often overlooks the fact that the organization is more than an expression of power politics. The main reason is why the SCO is engaging with Iran, India and Pakistan is due to favourable political and bilateral developments in Eurasia in the past and the fact that these states have reasonable concerns about coordinating trade and infrastructure developments. Improved the interactions across Eurasia in all the directions assure to more the prospective of these states to find new markets and Central Asia will find itself in the middle of this trade network (Norling & Swanstrom 2007: 434-35). This cannot be say that these growing actions in Eurasia do not cause of disputes to Western interests but the benefits should also be accepted. The increased interdependence and regional cooperation in Eurasia will increased the costs of conflicts and hopefully provide a climate favourable to entrepreneurship and cross-border interactions, which in the end will advantage Western firms as well. However, the expectations of a fast institutionalization of a working multilateral regulatory trade framework should be angered. The SCO should rather be considered for what it has skilful thus far and how it is an effect of the growing ties and interdependence within Eurasia (Norling & Swanstrom 2007: 434-35).

### **4.3 The Caspian Sea Cooperation Organization (CASCO)**

At the same time as supporting the growth of the ECO at the 1992 Tehran summit, Iran took advantage of the event to start a new multilateral intergovernmental plan proposing the creation of a Caspian Sea Cooperation Organization (CASCO). These succeed the immediate backing of the other four littoral states such as Azerbaijan, Russia, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. In October 1992, they agreed to form six committees with responsibility for the legal status of the Caspian environmental protection, conservation and exploitation of biological resources, prospecting and exploiting mineral resources, shipping and ports and marine research. In 1993 the littoral states agreed to establish a joint Caspian Sea research centre (BBC Monitoring 2003: 10). There have been comparatively frequent meetings at the minister and deputy minister levels and agreements have been arrived on the environmental protection, biological resources and navigation. The most important such multilateral agreement was a compulsory convention on environmental protection signed in Tehran in November 2003 (BBC Monitoring 2003: 10). The Caspian Sea cooperation idea has special meaning for Iran to engaging with the four other littoral states which all are the former Soviet republics. The Caspian region has been the focused of Western particularly, the U.S. business and policy initiatives. Iran has been responsive to the threat of being excluded from a future Caspian Sea regional grouping to the dangers of a possible future militarization of the Caspian and to the danger of unfriendly foreign accession into the region concerns that are not collective by all of the other littoral states (Jalil 1996: 247-263).

The ongoing social and political changes in Iran and Central Asia should be created a new opportunities for bilateral and multilateral relations. In Iran, popular pressure on the Islamic regime to introduce the social and political reforms should be lead to improved relations with the West including the United States. Despite the recent traditional lead attack on the reformist movement in Iran, the country is likely to stay the course of reform (Herzig 2004: 503-517). A reformed Islamic Republic can play a leading role in the transportation of the Caspian energy resources to international markets. There are some disuniting factors which come in the conflict of regional cooperation in Central Asia. The disuniting factors are the ethnic problems, territorial disputes, sharing of common resources, ecological problems and irregular distribution of nuclear weapons, clash of leadership ambitions and the role played by

the external factors. In this situation regional cooperation is the best way to move forward together by resolving the problems. They have much in common to facilitate cooperative efforts (Herzig 2004: 503-517).

## **Chapter-5**

### **The role of Major Powers in Central Asian region and the Central Asian-Iran relations**

The significant strategic region of Central Asia got independence after the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. The Central Asian Republics (CAR) such as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan which connects the key regions of Asia and Europe. The Central Asia is a landlocked region in the heart of the Asia is unique because it was the counterpoint of the British and Russian empires in 19<sup>th</sup> Century. These Central Asian regions have still the same importance among the other major players in the world (Zehra 2012).

Even after the independence, Central Asia is not a stable region and some political crisis is still unsolved there. This situation is created by some major players in the world which includes the regional and trans-regional players looking after their own interests and own way of thought on this regions. The Central Asian region has more importance due to its geopolitical, geostrategic and eco-strategic points of view. Central Asia is dominated by Russian and Soviet for a long time (Ibid.).

The Central Asia states are once again emerging as a geopolitically significant region in the world politics. The geopolitical location of Central Asia in the heart of Eurasia is crucial for its geopolitical location. In the north the Central Asia is bordered by Russia hopeful to return to its “great power” position, the China is a future power connects Central Asia’s eastern border, to the west are Iran, Turkey and the Middle East while Afghanistan and Southern Asia are in the south. The Central Asia region is not only geographically and politically importance but also deeply historically importance. The Central Asian region enjoys a distinctive geo-strategic position not only in the centre of Asia but also in the heart of Eurasia (Ahrari 1994). The Central Asian regions are located at the connection of different regions and include the different civilizations such as the Persian, Indian, Chinese, European, Turkic and Arabian. The region is also forms a link between Russia, China and the Islamic world (Ibid.).

Due to the geopolitical significance of Central Asian regions, a number of regional powers have been trying to take reasonable and similarity with this region along with historical, geographical, ethnic and religious terms. The huge natural resources

particularly natural gas and oil have basically changed the strategic importance of the Central Asian region in the international politics. The focus of the international concentration on this region will certainly become significant and the “New Great Game” will be played by the major powers in the world looking dominance over Central Asian oil and natural gas (Marat 2008: 63-69).

Thus, oil remains a crucial energy source in the world. Undoubtedly, Central Asian region would become a critical strategic importance; the great effort among the outside powers to knock the huge hydrocarbon resources has already begun. In this new game, the geopolitical considerations are becoming important factors in winning contracts and routing the gas and oil pipelines (Ibid.). The increasing of Western attraction for exploiting the oil and gas deposits in Central Asian region has significantly the security challenged for the other regional players particularly the country like Iran. The admission of multinational companies (MNC's) is changing both the economic and political activities of Central Asian region. One of the main issues is that within the influence of the present Iran-America conflict on the geopolitical development of the Central Asian region (Ibid.).

The external powers are attracting on to the Central Asian region because of its huge natural resources. The Three Central Asian states namely Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan is a Caspian Sea littoral state have richly gifted with oil, natural gas and hydrocarbons (Tehran Times 2013). Uzbekistan has modest quantity of gas. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century ensuring energy security has become one of the main concerns of all the countries in the world. The global economy depends on timely and reliable delivery of energy. The Central Asian energy is comparatively costlier than in another place due to its landlocked in nature. Due to the poor technology and undeveloped, these Central Asian countries are inviting the economically stronger country to exploit their natural resources (Tehran Times 2013).

Therefore, the Western multinationals companies (MNC's) are involved at various stages for exploration, building an efficient pipeline network etc. Central Asia occupies a strategically important location and has a vast economic potential such as huge market, human and natural resources. It is well placed to become a self-sustained and self-sufficient region. The joint economic capacity of Central Asian states is quite high (Ibid.).The region possesses significant human, natural and industrial resources. A number of major global players show a high interest in this region and each of them practice its own interests and own way of thinking. Central

Asian territory has located between the two great powers such as the China and the Russia and the regional and trans-regional players such as Iran, Pakistan and India and to some extent Afghanistan. On the other points of views the trans-regional powers have changed it an important geopolitical region of the present Century with competition among them causing crisis in the Central Asian region (Ibid.).

One of the coordinates structuring of geopolitics in Central Asia since the disintegration of Soviet Union has been competition for development of Central Asian region oil and gas reserves. Political elites in Central Asia's producer states have viewed a broader national economic development (Marat 2008: 63-69). External actors have considered admission to the sector as one method to maintain regional influence as a way for improving their energy security and in the commercial term as a global renewal opportunity for major corporate players. The energy potential of Central Asian state has been an important element of geopolitical discussion both inside and outside of this region. The power vacuum created in the aftermath of Soviet dissolution has attracted many neighbouring countries in the region especially in the sphere of economic reconstruction (Marat 2008: 63-69).

Among the neighbouring countries, Iran and Turkey which share historical, cultural, ethnical, religious and linguistic similarity with these Central Asian republics (CAR) is the main rival for increasing their sphere of influence in Central Asia. Undoubtedly, the strategic importance of Central Asia in international relations is growing; the rivalries among Russia, China, United States, Iran, India and Pakistan are not mentioned in the continually changing pattern of relationship among the local states such as five former Soviet republics and Afghanistan make the region importance (Fuller 1994).

The Central Asia's strategic importance for Washington, Moscow and Beijing differ with each nation's perception of its strategic interests. Washington focuses primarily on Central Asia as an important threat in the war on terrorism. Moscow and Beijing view the region as an important for domestic interests (Ibid). This different kind of interest is a major factor in the competition among the states for influence in the Central Asian region. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century the world entered in to a new phase of globalization. In fact, there is no state remain in the map of the world that are not a part of this process. At the same time some countries and regions have emerged as a new player in the system of international relations. The Central Asian regions are the prominent among them (Ibid.).



## **5.1 The Role of the Major Players in Central Asian regions**

Having highlighted the different ways in which the Central Asian region is so important for world politics, it is now important to consider the various players involved in these regions, what their specific interests on the region are and how they are addressing those interests and trying to gain a stronger foothold in the area, as a result what difficulties face by Iran in the growing competition among the major powers in the Central Asian regions. The following are the major players broadly involved in the Central Asian region such as the United States, Russia, China, Iran, Turkey, India, Pakistan, European Union, Afghanistan, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Islamic world among these some are the bigger powers such as Russia and the U.S are the main players and constitute more to be play compare to the countries like India and Turkey.

### **5.1.1 The United States of America (U.S.A)**

The United States of America (U.S.A) is one of the most important players in the Central Asian region. Before the dissolution of Soviet Union, the U.S had not interested and not played an active role in the Central Asian region because this regions were faced many internal crisis and its landlocked in nature. After the dissolution of Soviet Union and emergence of 15 newly independent states created a huge geopolitical dimension in the world politics and it has attracted the interest of many regional and global actors in to the Central Asian regions (Nichol 2012: 1-64).

The cooperation between Central Asia and U.S.A is developing in the areas of trade and investment, energy, the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), countering terrorism and international crime including illegal drugs, money laundering and human trafficking, interactions between defence agencies and the promotion of democracy. Both the countries are making good attempt to ensure that their bilateral relations will grow into a long term strategic partnership. The U.S. interests in this region are for a long term in nature (Ibid.).

The increased of the U.S activity in Central Asian region on the fields of education and exchanges have an important means and a long term positive effect. The hegemonic interests of the United State in the post Cold war period have directly resulted in the growing interest of the U.S. in Central Asian region. The policy of the

U.S has not only focused on the improving of bilateral relations between individual Central Asian states but also has an aimed to providing their assistance with the U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) on the stabilization attempts in Afghanistan and their efforts to fight terrorism, proliferation and trafficking in arms, drugs and persons (Bacevich 2002).

The U.S. has in the last two decades become an increasingly voiced supporter of liberal democratic values and capitalistic free markets and wanted to encourage these systems in Central Asian regions. The U.S. has also improved the policy and aid to support the conflict amelioration, humanitarian requires economic development, transportation and communications, border controls, democracy and the creation of civil societies in Central Asia. The U.S. admission in to the Central Asian region is one way and the other way is a great loss for Russia. The U.S. did not want to give permission to the oil rich Central Asian region to become completely the Russian sphere of influence and it had to face the Russian challenges everywhere. Given the fragile economic condition of the post-independent Russia and unstable political structure, the U.S. emerged as success in many conflicts (Ibid.).

The main presence of the U.S. in Central Asian region was simply bi-dimensional; one is to get access to the Caspian oil and second is to break the Russian domination over the oil exports. Therefore, the grow of the Taliban and the later crisis of World Trade Centre (WTC) in 9/11, the U.S. role in Central Asian region has become more critical with the growing concerns of China, Russia and Iran. The huge natural energy resources in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and its strategic geographic location along with its dominance in the region, the U.S. interests and involvement in specific states have different over time (Blank 2001).

The U.S. investment in politically and economically has a broader plan for counterbalance the influences of the other major players in the region such as China, Russia and Iran. The U.S. policy makers have also a top interested in avoiding the growth of military technology and weapons by any terrorist group or even a state to minimize any possible danger. The U.S. has also often stressed its role as a superpower entitle it with the responsibility of maintaining human rights and increasing democratization and its military presence is necessary in the region. After the 9/11 attacks and the U.S. declaration of the “war on terrorism”, many Central Asian states including Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan became ready to

military partner of the U.S. massing alliance troops and providing admission of their airbases to the U.S.A (Ibid.).

The political inconsistencies and insecurity have often spoiled the U.S. interest in the Central Asian region. Furthermore, the U.S. energy firms have invested on oil and natural gas development in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan and successive administrations have backed various export routes to the West for these resources. The U.S. has managed to maintain bilateral relations with the Central Asian region by providing special aid provision in the humanitarian, health and education sectors. The U.S. interests should mainly focus on anti-terrorism, non-proliferation, regional cooperation and trade issues (Cohen 2001). The conflicts among the major powers like the U.S, Russia and the China along with other active regional and extra-regional actors over the Central Asian region mainly considered in different sectors as the return of the great game. The power emptiness was perceived in Central Asian region which is gifted to huge raw materials and energy resources cause of struggle for political control. Recently, the contest was to ensure the economic powers of the west by controlling the vast energy resources of Central Asian oil, natural gas and hydrocarbons (Cohen 2001).

Today the most part of the new great game consists of economic competition for jobs, pipelines, oil and gas, new market as well as political influence and strategically advantages. The Obama Administration's aims to improve the U.S. engagement in Central Asia on maximize support to the states with alliance and counter terrorist forces in the region. Furthermore, the growth of the region's energy sources and supply routes along with the intention to increased free trade and market economies in the region also provide the natural to U.S economic interests. A special centre of attention is to maintaining political stabilization and good governance on the region particularly in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, so that any future policy goal of the U.S. could be successfully implemented (Ibid.).

### **5.1.2 Russia**

Russia is also an another important player in the Central Asian region but its own economic problems and political disadvantage which are made worse by internal power struggle that create difficulty for Russia attempts to restore its domination in Central Asian region. Russia has been the historical partners of Central Asia and it is

an important to strengthen good neighbourly relations with them. The Central Asia region as a crossroads of economic, military, political, ethno-cultural and religious connections of Eurasia has always been a centre of political and business activity for Russia. Central Asia, in particular got more interest because of its strategic location at the cross roads of Russia, China and the Islamic world, geographical proximity and its political, economic and cultural past. From the geo-strategic points of view Russia has engaged in Central Asia for the following reasons such as to protect ethnic Russians in the Central Asian regions, to maintain access to important resources of the region such as oil, natural gas and to check the influence of the external powers in the Central Asian region particularly the United States (Jonson 1995).

Despite of all the weaknesses in the policies of Russia towards Central Asia, it is still remains the most important neighbour and a good partner in all the fields of regional stability. Russia is also interested to strengthening its position in Central Asian regions in the following ways:

- a) There is interdependence between Russia and Central Asia on delivery of raw materials and finished goods. Russia can have its position in international relations only if it continues to close trade and economic cooperation with Central Asian states.
- b) Russian interests are linked to geopolitical problems such as control over the major transport particularly the transportation and communications in Central Asia. Though, Russian activities are not success because due to its weakness economy and active advance of the U.S. and other players on the Central Asian region. For example, the American investment in the Central Asian region has gone beyond comparison to the investment of Russia and China.
- c) The share of the Russian population in a number of Central Asian regions is important. The protection of the rights of ethnic Russians is one of the most important concerns for Russia.
- d) The Russian presence in Central Asian region has been felt that in order to check the increase of extremist and religious ideas, proliferation of drugs, weapons, arms and ammunition.
- e) The Central Asia's manufactures of some kinds of industrial and agricultural goods which are the particular interests for Russia.

- f) To make relations with the regional organizations that Russia and Central Asia are members of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), Eurasian Economic Community (ECC) and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) are ruled by the principles relating to the activities of a voluntary nature and equal partnership and independent participation in such actions (James 1998).

Kazakhstan and Russia jointly invest in energy and power projects in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Furthermore, a decision has been taken to construct a Caspian gas pipeline and modernize the existing gas supply system for the transportation of natural gas from Central Asia. The Eurasian Development Bank established by Kazakhstan and Russia has already begun to finance a number of major projects in the region. Kazakhstan and Russia look are mainly in the economic field. Today Russia's geopolitical approach toward Central Asian countries has positive energetic and a great prospective for further development. The main security challenges for Russia in Central Asia are multiple and complex and any destabilization in the weakest Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan or the most dangerous Uzbekistan states will have immediate effects in Russia (Laruelle 2009: 1-11).

The two other important points of engagement in the sphere of Russia-Central Asian military cooperation includes the provisions of military equipment and collaboration between military-industrial complexes. On the multilateral level, the two Moscow started organizations such as the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) created in 2000 on the Kazakhstani proposal and the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) founded in 2002, are the major institutional frameworks of Russia-Central Asian collaborations (Ibid.). The economic goals of Russia in the Central Asian region focus in the needed to secure an important space on the energy sector. The Moscow's aims in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is to gain a strong hold over the sale of highly profitable oil products while Gazprom is responsibility to the exploration of Tajik gas deposits in Sargazon in the Khatlon region and in Rengan close to Dushanbe as well as of Kyrgyz gas deposits in the country's south. Gazprom is also hoping to obtain a share of the state run companies Kyrgyzgaz and Kyrgyzneftegaz as they enter the privatization phase (Ibid.).

With the association of corporate state interests, multiple objectives are now being to aimed such as to maintain political influence over the Central Asian regions through the control of resources, to continue collecting considerable transit revenues

from these landlocked countries, to slow down but not stop the emergence of competing export routes to China, Iran and Turkey and to meet the growing European energy demands (Ibid.).

#### **5.1.2.1 Iran-Russia Strategic Partnership aftermath of 9/11**

In the aftermath of 9/11 incident the Russian and Iranian relation became more strengthen. This comprise that the Russian sale of peaceful nuclear technology and conventional arms to Iran up to five billion dollars by 2005 as well as joint ventures in the energy and transportation fields. Iran has recently invited the Russian oil companies to participate in the operations on the huge South Pars gas field shared with Qatar. This is a part of more broad long-term energy collaboration probably to comprise Russia's involvement in the energy sector of Iran in the South Caspian (Abrar Eghtesadi 2002).

The North-South Corridor planned to connect Russian and Indian ports via Iran is a major project. If the project put into operation as planned that would qualitatively expand on the relations of interdependencies between the two countries. Iran, which is the depository country for this transportation corridor has already obtained Russia's first payment and several other countries including Azerbaijan and Armenia have officially expressed their interest in joining the project (Ibid.). The Corridor needs the building of new roads and railroad links which is depended in turn of Iran's financial standing which is always connected to the ups and downs of oil prices given the government's reliance on oil revenues for more than eighty percent of its annual budget. Without support from the international financial institutions, the North-South Corridor is unlikely to happen as planned and support seems improbable as long as the United States remains committed to economic sanctions and Iran's isolation just as the Iranian government has directly blamed the United States for strong offer to join the World Trade Organization (WTO). The U.S. gatekeepers of the WTO are unlikely to change their attitude on Iran by any strategic give from Tehran think to be geared toward its fixed strategic interests (Michael and James 2001).

#### **5.1.2.2 Iran's in the Race for the Caspian Sea**

Iran has continued to dedicate on the idea of shared on sovereignty and the double notion that it is entitled to twenty percent of the Sea's surface water and marine resources. Iran has used to its cooperation attitude along the following lines:

- Iran no longer maintains on the idea of equal shares for all states and simply demands a twenty percent share based on the principle of equity ill attention back to the 1921 and 1940 Iran-Soviet Union Agreements denoting shared protection of the Sea.
- Iran has got smaller from its previous hard stance toward Baku and has boarded on a new time of “complementarity of interests” between Iran and Azerbaijan that comprises closed-door negotiations for “shared ownership” of the disputed Alborz oil field.
- Iran has contributed in the preparation of a convention on the environmental protection of the Caspian Sea which has a “polluter pays” requirement and calls for restoration of the inactive Caspian Sea Council.
- Iran and Russia have co-authored a similar multilateral convention on the living resources of the Caspian Sea also called a fishery agreement (Kucera 2013).

While frame out of the major pipeline race for the probable future, Iran continues to construct its own “micro-pipelines” such as the Neka-Rey Pipeline built to facilitate oil exchanges with the Caspian states. Most notable among the prospective trade partners is Kazakhstan which is currently engaged in oil exchanges with Iran. Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev has expressly favoured a North-South pipeline to the Persian Gulf through Iran (Narsi 1998: 20-21).

Under the exchanges agreement, Iran takes crude oil from the Caspian producers through the port of Neka in exchange for Iran’s Persian Gulf crude oil which is easily exported to other markets. Both Iran and Kazakhstan have given serious consideration to the possible construction of a Kazakh-Iranian pipeline through Turkmenistan (Ibid.). Iran has also proposed to Azerbaijan to get used to the Iran-USSR gas pipeline which has been inactive for over ten years as an oil pipeline (Interfax 2002). Discussions are also under way for an Iran-Armenia pipeline. Another related Iranian activity worth mentioning is a \$226 million contract with a group involving Sweden’s GVA consultants Iran’s Sadra and the National Iranian Oil Company for the construction of an oil fix on a possible submersible platform at a depth of 1,000 meters in the Caspian Sea (Associate Press 2001). The growing authoritarian rule within the Central Asian region within the older generation and latent similarity to the previously Soviet culture as a civilization connection are all expressions of the

stabilization of Russian rule in the region. While Russia has clear political and economic concerns, it has problems in consistently implementing policies that particularly address those concerns. This has undermined Moscow's effectiveness in securing its interests in Central Asia in the period of the new great game. Though, the extensive and much effective historical, political, cultural and economic ties Russia imitation over the years with the former Soviet republics in Central Asia should not be taken lightly (Ibid.).

### **5.1.3 China**

The china has been the historical partners of the Central Asian region and trying to strengthen good neighbourly relations with these regions. Central Asian region is a natural factor that has been influencing regional processes in a certain way. Central Asia share common concerns of a regional nature with China that are particularly the geographic proximity. China shares a long common border with the Central Asian Republic (CAR) of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. China has also certain common ethnicity, culture and language with the northern part of the Kazakhstan. The border dispute was other issues which have created a lot of discomfort, discontent and disturbance between China and Central Asia since the Soviet dissolution. The geopolitical interests of Beijing in Central Asia focus mainly on the issues of regional security. China is mainly interested in friendly, stable and predictable neighbourly relations with the Central Asian countries immediately bordering the difficult western regions of the People's Republic of China (PRC), namely Xinjiang (Valerie 1995).

This vector of the People's Republic of China (PRC) external policy is largely agree with the interest of the Central Asian countries that join particular importance to strengthening regional security and the proximity of conflicts in Afghanistan. Simultaneously, Central Asian countries give priority to multilateral cooperation with China primarily in the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Chinese influence on the economic development of Central Asian region is an important goal. The market availability of goods in Central Asian countries still mainly depends on the Chinese imports (Ibid.).

The engine driving ambitions of China in the Central Asian regions is powered by its concerns against the 'three evils' such as separatism, fundamentalism and extremism (Demirtas 2010). Beijing has been successful development in the commonalities between its own interests and those of the Central Asian regions in the



context of containing not only the potential for radicalization within their populations but also to act as protections against the spread of Islamic fundamentalism to the North and the East from Afghanistan and Pakistan. Given that disorder in any of the Central Asian regions would decline this safeguard against extremism, the Chinese have actively tried to strengthen the counter terrorist abilities of these states through joint exercises and transfer of knowledge (Ibid.). A stake in the oil and gas fields in Kazakhstan, Iran, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and the Caspian is extremely valuable to the Chinese government which has put much effort into understanding it. Both the state owned and private companies have purchased equity shares in Kazakhstan, Iran and Russia to expand China's strategic energy base (Ibid.).

China's interests in Central Asia are also related to economic aspects a reliable supply and demand relationship based on fair and reasonable prices of oil and gas. China's relations with the Central Asian states are geared to slow economic collaboration between Central Asia and China. Soon after the dissolution of Soviet Union and the emergence of new Central Asian states, China has established the various communication and transport links. Central Asia has provided a huge and good market for the cheaper Chinese goods. China is also looking for the Caspian Sea region (CSR) for oil and natural gas matters. China has emerged as a major player in Kazakhstan's oil exploration efforts and Turkmenistan's gas explorations which would provide China with future energy security (Rumer 2002).

The most important protective geostrategic approach to the Central Asian region is aggressive partnerships with the region in the context of trade and infrastructure development. The broader focus of the Chinese approach is on the development of communication and transportation infrastructure (Roy and Jonson 2001). The broader strategy imperatives require it to exploit the Central Asian region as the perfect transportation route and a bridge between the country and Europe thus, cutting the transaction costs, reducing transit time and providing greater efficiency to trade between the Europe and China. The aggressive role of China is creating praise in the Central Asia; the country has undermined the role of International Financial Institutions such as the World Bank by offering large loans with lesser conditions. This has changed the focus of the Central Asian region to China as an important source of funding and providing China with important break offs in a high risks game of supremacy in the region (Roy and Jonson 2001).

The participation of China in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has been based on its shared interest with Russia to keep competition in the form of the U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) out of the region as well as to maintain political stability in the Central Asian regions to prevent the promotion of extremism and terrorism. The Chinese have continued its policy of a lighter venture into the Central Asian regions over the best part of the last decade. It remains to be seen if and when the Chinese begin to take a more dominant approach in the Central Asian regions (Ibid.).

#### **5.1.4 Turkey**

Turkey's influence was greatest in the first few months after the Central Asian states got independence. The advantages of Turkey enjoying in its role in Central Asia was the active western support to it against Iran. The U.S. continues to encourage Turkey's role in Central Asia and used it as waterway pipe for transporting the available energy resources of Caspian Sea region through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline with the active support and role of Turkey. In the late 1990's, Turkey had reduced its ambitions in the Central Asian region and allowing the private sector, civil society and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) to take an active role in making inroads into the Central Asian regions which were provided with government support when necessary (Cornell 2003: 1-20).

This new practical line emphasized more on political, economic and cultural interactions with the Central Asian states. The Turkey's policy towards Central Asian Republics (CAR) is based on the following principles:

- a) To give to the consolidation of their state structuring.
- b) To protect the political and economic stability and promote regional cooperation.
- c) To encourage political and economic reforms.
- d) To support their integration with the international community and Euro-Atlantic structures.
- e) To develop the bilateral relations in all fields on the basis of equality, mutual interest and respect for sovereignty.
- f) To maintain the transportation of their energy resources to international markets freely and through alternative routes (Republic of Turkey Website 2010).

Turkey's evolving contemporary approach to the Central Asian States has three salient features such as:

1. Balancing its relations in the region with the other great powers such as Russia, Iran, China, India and Pakistan.
2. Work on policy's that create stability and security in the region.
3. Facilitate energy relations, particularly regarding transportation routes (Frost 2008).

Turkey looks for a more powerful role in strengthening the independence and sovereignty of social, political and judicial structures in the Central Asian countries and mediating the intra and inters country conflicts institutionalizing relationship between these countries and enhancing the ability of these countries to completely join together with the international community through multi-lateral organizations (Niklas 2007: 1-2).

However, the rules of the game have been exposed. Turkey with a moderately weak economy and huge population was in no position to extend substantial aid for the fragile economies of the Central Asian states. However, it is no doubt to say that, turkey had tried its best to influence in Central Asian region whatever method it felt appropriate.

### **5.1.5 India**

India had historically and culturally links with the Central Asian region in the past. India has its own geo-strategic and geo-economic interests in the Central Asian region. On the other hand India has made the good will of the Central Asian Republic (CAR), since it did not have any radical design or agenda in the region. Being a secular and democratic country with mixed economy, India attracted the attention of the transition economy in Central Asia (Schaffer and Hate 2007: 1-3).

However, with the promotion of Islamic fundamentalism by Pakistan and Taliban's hold over Afghanistan sent a wrong signal to India's engagements with its northern neighbours in Central Asia. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the emergence of new power players in the Central Asian region. India's growing significance as global players and the interest and prominence in the Central Asian region has developed. The growing energy needs of India and the potential energy resources that Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan

have to offer are not the only driving forces for India in the region but Central Asia is also an important as an opportunity for access to Afghanistan, where India wants to be a significant player and to uninteresting Pakistani influence. India's involvement in Central Asia includes energy ties, trade and investment and the beginnings of a military relationship (Schaffer and Hate 2007: 1-3).

The Central Asian states that emerged after the dissolution of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR) offer huge potential for Indian markets to take advantage of it. Kazakhstan has substantial oil, Turkmenistan has gas, Uzbekistan has more modest hydrocarbon resources and Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have surplus hydro power makes attractive to India to invest and trade in this region (Ibid.). However, India has already started to take initiative to address this issue, India's public sector energy company, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Videsh already has 15 percent ownership stake in Kazakhstan's Alibekmola oil field and has announced \$1.5 billion investment in the joint Russian-Kazakh Kurmangazy oil field in the Caspian Sea (Ibid.).

India is looking to import gas from Turkmenistan through a potential pipeline via Afghanistan and Pakistan. However, such a project has several political barriers that India would have to deal with before making any development. This is one of the crucial geo-strategic implications for India that future investments and potential expansion to foreign markets is not only a financial but also a critical political decision for India; especially when it concerns in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Developing an intra regional transportation infrastructure and promotion of bilateral economic ties is the key to India's energy project. India's trade with Central Asia is to the tune of approximately U.S \$200 million, an insignificant portion of India's overall international trade. India is also trying to advance bilateral economic relations with several Central Asian states; it has extended lines of credit to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and has supplied 30 percent of Kazakhstan's pharmaceutical needs. Creating the military ties through joint ventures is also a strategically beneficial undertaking for India. India's primary military cooperation has been with Tajikistan, its closest physical neighbour in the region; a relationship which can prove to be mutually beneficial. The cooperation between India and Central Asian states in the field of energy is very important factors. Energy security for India is no less important than military security (Ibid.).

Therefore, India has been eager to enter into agreement with Central Asian states to meet its future energy needs. India is also trying to make tie with Central Asia in economic cooperation through joint ventures in banking, insurances, agriculture, information technology and pharmaceutical industry while commodities like tea, pharmaceutical drugs and fine chemicals have already established a foothold in Central Asian Market. Another major factor for India in the region is Pakistan's role in the region's economic and political development. As traditional competitors both India and Pakistan seek not only to exceed the other but also politically and economically weaken the other's presence in the Central Asian region and in the international field. Afghanistan is a key appearance of this competitive relationship. Pakistan's interests are positioned in neutralizing a potential threat from the Afghan regime so as to not have an extension of the Indian threat (Ibid.).

India's role and developing influence in the Central Asian region is complex. Pakistan's geographical location is probably the most important consideration in Indian economic expansion. Moreover, Pakistan can also offer a competitive challenge to growing Indian domination in the region as its interests are not very divergent from India's. Russia also plays a very critical role in the region and any future Indian necessary must factor in this vital dynamic (Schaffer and Hate 2007: 1-3).

#### **5.1.6 Pakistan**

The vast interest of Pakistan in the Central Asia Republics (CAR) stemmed from the economic, geo-strategic and political benefits provides to this struggling nation. Pakistan offered political support, economic integration and ideological solidarity to Central Asian states which was hoped to surface the way for a broader strategic unity. In the initial years after the independence of Central Asian states, Pakistan moved to present itself as a powerful modern Islamic country with a strong historical and cultural links with the Central Asian region. The defeat of radical Islamic forces and Taliban has created obstacle for Pakistan. Yet, Pakistan is neither a regional economic power nor does it have direct overland connection with Central Asian region. The Central Asian states opposing radical Islam have moved away from Pakistan (Burke and Lawrence 1990).

In addition to this, the installation of an anti-Taliban regime in Afghanistan has further ensured that neither Pakistan nor the fundamentalists get strategic power in the

region. The Islamic neighbours of Central Asia are not likely to be major factors to influence the future way of Central Asia's development. The Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) that bounds together all the Central Asian states along with Iran, Turkey and Pakistan has not so far succeeded due to the differences among major partners. The three major powers such as Iran, Turkey and Pakistan view the organization as a forum to promote their own interests in Central Asia rather than seeking integration among the member states. While Iran would like to use the organization to set up an Islamic common market, Turkey does not share these perspectives. Central Asian states are against its politicization which is what Iran and Pakistan have been determining for and that too with their own brand of politics. The Trade relations with these landlocked countries had the potential to be the only solution for Pakistan's economic problems (Shah 2003). Along with cheaper imports, Pakistan could also benefit from transit income by providing access through the Karakoram Highway to its neighbouring industrial giants such as India and China. Similarly, the historical importance of this resources rich Central Asian region, Pakistan could Predict the centre stage it could get in the energy war of the New Great Game by providing the shortest route for the Central Asian countries via Gwadar Port to the Arabian Sea. This would help Pakistan fulfill its long term energy needs through the projects such as the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) oil and gas pipeline (Shah 2003).

Furthermore, Pakistan's electricity needs that are huge burden on its economic life could easily be lifted by access to abundant Kyrgyz hydroelectric power. Thus, favorable trade relations with the region could result in a significant strengthen of Pakistan's stressed economy. If Pakistan became the economic opportunity and increased support of the Central Asian republics, it would be of central importance to the world hegemony and would become a major regional player. The close relations with Central Asia would allow Pakistan to enjoy other strategic benefits such as an alternate trade route and arms exchange. Another area of strategic interest for Pakistan was the aim of expanding its weapon supply which it could achieve by enjoying arms trade with Central Asia (Ibid.).

Pakistan made the speedy jump by being the second country after Turkey to extend diplomatic relations with the Central Asian States. According to Ahmed Rashid. "the Pakistani foreign policy makers had two diverging views about how to approach Central Asia. The "moderate cabinet" consisting of Sardar Asif Ali promoted the

banner of economic ties whereas the Jamaat leader Qazi Hussain propagated the idea of “Islamic guidance” for the newly liberated” (Ahmed 1994).

The Pakistani policy makers saw this is an opportunity to form a large regional grouping stretching from the Arabian Sea in the south to the Black Sea in the west based on the common religious identity of Islam (Roy 2006). Pakistan welcomed these Central Asian states with slogans of Muslim brotherhood. Pakistan was one of the major players that in the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan. It had played a major role in driving out the Russian army that consisted of various ethnicities from Central Asia, including Uzbeks, Tajiks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz and Turkmen (Khwaja 2003). Pakistan’s foreign policy may not be successful, particularly when Pakistan’s objectives to form a multilateral defence agreement were not needed once the Central Asian regions signed the Commonwealth of Independence States (CIS) collective security agreement in May 1992 (Smith 1996: 147-175). Therefore, Pakistan ultimately realized it needed a policy change, since the religious common identity it shared with the Central Asian republics was not materializing in its favour.

With the failure of its first foreign policy approach, Pakistan turned towards building cultural and economic ties with the Central Asian states. In the late 1991, Pakistan offered \$30 million in credit to Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan while simultaneously proposing joint ventures in cotton, textiles, pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, surgical instruments, telecommunication and agro-industry (Khwaja 2003). Pakistan also took multilateral initiatives such as including the Central Asian Republics to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) with diplomats driving in from all five nations to formulate the possibility of ‘The Quetta Plan of Action’ to improve the bilateral relations. Pakistan signed respective trade, technology and training agreements with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (Smith 1996: 147-175).

Furthermore, Pakistan also changed its approach of religious similarity introduced shared religious identity which its focus on cultural exchange such as donation of a printing press to publish the Quran, sponsoring attendees for the World Islamic Conference and sponsoring various student exchange programs were among its strategies to promote a sense of cultural similarity. In this phase, Pakistan’s future with the Central Asian region looked bright when Pakistan’s Foreign Secretary Shaharyar Khan came on record and stated. “We are at the starting post of a new era in this region” (Ahmed 1994).

The disorder in neighbouring Afghanistan and Tajikistan, Pakistan's consistent support for the Taliban government in Afghanistan joined with internal unrest in the country have all led to a political void between Pakistan and the five Central Asian republics. The intention of the Central Asian Republic (CAR) surfaced in early in 2001 when Pakistan applied for observer status in Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Central Asian members of the organization blocked its entry (Roy 2006). It was now clear that the Central Asian Countries wanted to push away from any association with Pakistan. The civil wars in Tajikistan and Afghanistan have led to economic consequences for Pakistan. Due to the territory and geographical location, it is expected that any pipeline destined for Pakistan must pass through southern and eastern Afghanistan (Dhaka 2004).

The Pakistan's internal insecure environment has been a cause of major setbacks to any progress with these Central Asian countries. Furthermore, the domestic issue that directly affects Central Asian Republic (CAR) involvement in Pakistan's situation in the Baluchistan. Since the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipeline passes through Baluchistan, the civil unrest in this south-western region has become a major disruption of progress on the pipeline issue. Until there is a positive breakthrough in Baluchistan, the ambitious Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline project will remain a pipe dream. The other initiatives such as the simplification of Uzbek-Pakistan visa process and the proposed road link between Chitral and Ishkashim from the Wakhan border show that Pakistan still has prospects of entering the New Great Game (Ibid.).

However, Pakistan may face a number of constraints and obstacles in fulfilling its dreams of being a prominent player in the New Great Game. It can plan a policy that may ensure better results for Pakistan, if not the best. Although, it is next to impossible for Pakistan to influence its external surrounding and the fall over effects, Pakistan does need to be careful in planning itself accordingly while also improving the internal condition of the country. Apart from this, Central Asia is quite sensitive to the nationalistic and religious moves by its Islamic neighbours. After all the fall of Taliban leading to the western penetration in to the region has reduced the role of Islamic states in Central Asia to a minimum (Ibid.).

#### **5.1.7 European Union**

The European Union is a reliable partner for Central Asian countries from their independence. At present the European Union (EU) maintains the strongest relations



with Central Asia having signed comprehensive agreements on partnership and cooperation. The European Commission's regional bureau has its central office in the capital of Kazakhstan, Astana. For many years the Central Asian region remained marginalized in European foreign affairs policy. The areas of energy and security moved into the focus of a heightened interest on the part of the European Union (EU) to the Central Asian region. The Central Asian mineral resources are largely attracted to the European Union. Therefore, developing dialogue on energy issues with the Central Asian region, mainly with Kazakhstan is the central importance to the European Union (International Crisis Group 2006).

#### **5.1.8 Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is another Muslim country occupies a primary position in the security issues of Central Asian region not so much because of the oil issue but because of the widespread picture of the Taliban controlled Afghanistan as a centre of aggressive and expansionist radical Islam. Taliban which assumed a stronghold in Afghanistan is not only just created security threats to the regional establishment but also demanded immediate attention of global players by its deadly inhuman acts. The cause of 9/11 incident is standing example of that. Although, Taliban is no more there in Afghanistan after the 'operation Enduring freedom' operated by the United States of America in the aftermath 9/11 incident, its vulnerability and presence of military alliance presents sufficient challenges to the security and prosperity of the regional countries, particularly in the Central Asian Republic (CAR) (Marlene et al. 2013).

#### **5.1.9 Islamic world**

The central Asian region turn hoped to take advantage of the geopolitical vacuum that confronted the region following the dissolution of Soviet Union. Islamic countries like Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan thought that they would be attractive partners in the new game. Both Turkey and Iran took steps to convince the Central Asian region to recognize their respective role in the region. In the process Turkey and Iran have themselves become rivals in trying to create spheres of influence at the Southern positions of the former Soviet territory. Turkey has been concerned that Iran may attempt to turn Muslim nationalities towards theocracy. While Iran was worried that Turkey's active role in the Central Asian region is aimed

at pan-Turkism. Thus, this ensured the competition for winning over the heart and minds of the Turks-Muslim peoples of the region (Shahrbanou 2013).

## **CHAPTER-6**

### **CONCLUSION**

Central Asia consists of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan cover a vast area in the Eurasian land. Historically, this region played a prominent role in connecting east to west and south to north. The so-called “Silk Rout” connecting Persia and China in the Roman Empire, which was a transit point of trade in the ancient period passed through this region. Iran being due to its ancient history, geographical proximity and cultural affinity make a closer tie with the Central Asian region. The Central Asian region is not developed because of its internal conflicts and land locked in nature. Previously, the British attracted in this region for energy and natural resources but, in the present context the huge natural resources of Central Asian region are attracting the external power on this region. Although, these states have enough natural resources, due to the lack of knowledge and proper planning they are unable to exploit the resources because of their economic backwardness. As a result, these Central Asian states invited the economically strong country for investment and to exploit their resources. In this situation, many external players interested to invest in this Central Asian region for exploiting their energy and natural resources. Therefore, the “Great Game” competition is growing in this region among the major players in the world. The dissolution of Soviet Union left these newly independent states in the current international politics.

The growth of radical Islam is creating a security threats to these Central Asian states. The regional security problems like the border conflicts, drug trafficking and terrorism within these republics hampered the growth of their development. These republics do not have proper military capability to check the external threats. Because of their capability to address these problems Central Asian Republics were engaged in different bilateral and multilateral agreements with Russia, China and the U.S.A. The security threats like Islamic fundamentalism, cross-border terrorism etc. in Central Asian region has made them to depend upon the neighbouring country for military assistance.

Russia influence in Central Asian region is age old and rooted in history, culture, civilizations and ethnicity. The objectives of Russia in recent years are to obtain the energy and resources from these regions. Therefore, Russia is providing number of

assistant and aid to Central Asia for maintaining closer relations, Apart from Russia, China has also been enhancing its influence in the Central Asian region. Due to the declining of Russia's economy, the Central Asian states are oriented towards China for further military and economy assistance. China has also signed a number of economic and military treaties with Central Asian Republics (CAR) to get the hold over this region. The major objective of China in Central Asian region is to secure natural resources and also to contain radical Islamic fundamentalism in its North West frontier provinces of Xinjiang bordering Central Asian region.

The U.S. and its multinational companies have also entered in the Central Asian region to exploit the natural resources. In this case, it is competing with Russia and Chinese multinational companies in the present oil politics.

In this "New Great Game" for energy, Iran is facing security problems. The growing competition of major powers in the world in Central Asian regions for energy and resources creates a security situation critical for Iran. The growing U.S. unilateralism and stationing of its forces in Afghanistan makes the Iranian security critical. Therefore, Iran is trying to make closer relations with its neighbouring states to check the U.S. threats. Due to the hostile relations with the United States, Iran's primary goal is to develop closer cooperation with regional neighbours. In this regards, Russia is emerging as an important partner of Iran. In recent years, Russia supported Iran on the nuclear stand despite stiff opposition from the western countries. Apart from Russia Iran uses relations with the Central Asian region to check America's unilateral move. Iran wanted that through Islamic religion it maintains closer ties with Central Asian region but, the growing radical Islamic Fundamentalism and the growing terrorist activities in Afghanistan make the Security situation critical for Iran to make a close relation with Central Asian region. Russia, the old partner of also makes closer relations with Russia in the field of nuclear supply. Iran thought to make close relations with Russia will check the U.S. threats. Despite, the U.S. sanction on Iran, Russia and Iran have a good relations in the field of nuclear issue. One of the significant aspects of Iranian foreign policy in Central Asian region is to strengthening energy security of this region. Tehran can able to penetrate in this region and able to consolidate regional economic integration. The Central Asian Republics have engaged in multilateral grouping like Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). The main objective of the regional grouping is to promote peace, stability and

economic development of its member state. As a founder member of ECO, Iran hoped that it ensures closer relations with Central Asian regions and also to protection from the U.S. threats. Iran influences its relations in Central Asian region through ECO is aimed at to provide some aid and facilities to Central Asian regions. However due to the economic crisis in Iran itself it is not helping these states financially.

Due to the hostile relations with the United States, Iran's primary goal is to develop closer cooperation with regional neighbors. In this regards, Russia is emerging as an important partner of Iran. In recent years, Russia supported Iran on the nuclear stand despite stiff opposition from the western countries. One of the significant aspects of Iranian foreign policy in Central Asian region is to strengthening energy security of this region. Tehran can able to penetrate in this region and able to consolidate regional economic integration.

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