

Regional Security in Central Asia: The Role of India, 1996-2005

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DECLARATION

I declare that the dissertation entitled "**Regional Security in Central Asia: The Role of India, 1996-2005**" 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.

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CERTIFICATE

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

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*Dedicated to my affectionate
family*

Abbreviations

AIDS	Acquire Immune Deficiency Syndrome
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CAR	Central Asian Republics
CEPA	Compressive Economic Partnership Agreement
CICA	Conference on Interaction & Confidence-building Measures in Asia
CIS	Common wealth of Independent States
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation Committee
CRS	Congressional Research Service
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organisation
DoD	Department of Defence
DPMB	Defence Pacts and Military Blocs
ESCAP	Economic and Social Commission for Asia and Pacific
ETIM	East Turkmenistan Islamic Movement
EurasEC	Eurasian Economic Community
GUUAM Moldova	Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova
HIV	Human Immune Virus
IFRI	French Institute for International Relations
IMU	Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan
INSTC	International North-South Transport Corridor
ISI	Inter-Services Intelligence
ISIS	Islamic State in Iraq and Syria
IWRCC	Interstate Water Resources Coordination
JKLF	Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front
JUI	Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam
JWG	Joint Working Group

LeT	Lashkar-e-Taiba
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty of Organisation
OSCE	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
PFP	Partnership for Peace
	Pipeline
PKK	Kurdish Workers Party
POK	Pakistan Occupied Kashmir
RATS	Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure
RSC	Regional Security Complex
RSCT	Regional Security Complex Theory
SAARC	South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
TAPI	Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development Programme
USSR	United Soviet Socialist Republic
XUAR	Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region



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Chapter-1

Conceptual Framework of Regional Security

Introduction

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 was a very significant or milestone event in the international scenario. Due to collapse of the USSR, the consequences for the world politics included end of the Cold War, no more ideological conflict among states and shift from multi-polar world to unipolar world and so on. The most important result was that in 1991 five new independent in Central Asian Republics - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan came into existence. They have fundamentally changed the strategic configuration of the wider Central Asian regions and are attracting close international attention. The region today finds itself in a segment of revivalism both in terms of external interest as well as ongoing internal potential. The region's strategic re-emergence is compelling everybody to think about who will control this region next, following Mackinder's thesis of "he who controls the heartland, controls the world". After Central Asia's rebirth, the implications of geo-strategic upheaval could not be predicted with any certainty at that time.

The Central Asia region had experienced some intense inter-ethnic clashes immediately preceding to independence. "Growing ethno-nationalism combined with religious revivalism resulted in large-scale migration of Slavs from Russia to Central Asia. The security threats to independent statehood came not just from that endangered internal instability, but also from heightened insecurity from external threats. Along with the feeling of intense happiness and excitement of independence, there was a certain degree of vulnerability on economic and military weakness which added to the complex security problems of Central Asia. It acquired not only immense geopolitical implication but also experienced a power vacuum. As result, Central Asia region became crucial to the security many states, huge and small. The anxiety of some adversary filling the vacuity impelled neighbouring states to pursue influence in the region. Russia, China and India were bothered about the possible threats to their internal stability emanating from Central Asia. Other sides, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran and Pakistan were excited to gain maximum influence at the cost of their regional rivals.

Regional rivalries were receiving mixed up with various forms of religious radicalism. This resulted in making the region very volatile” (Patnaik, 2005).

Security scenario of the Central Asia region has evolved through three stages. The first period (1990-96) was till the mid-nineties before the upcoming of the Taliban to power. During this period, though Central Asian states were component of the Commonwealth of Independent States and its security complex, they sought to strengthen their relation with central Asian states. The second period (1996-2001) includes the Taliban years in Afghanistan. This period, Russia became the major security sponsor of Central Asian states, and continued the anti-Taliban front with support from states like Tajikistan, India and Iran. India faced with the acceleration of cross-border terrorism originating from Pakistan and Afghanistan, looking at Central Asia as a region with which its security interests converged. Third stage was started since 11 September 2001 terrorist attack in the United States. USA and Russia enlarged their attendance in the region. Central Asia is protected from external threats by strong security cover provided by these two military superpowers (Patnaik, 2005).

The regional security system in Central Asian is very significant for the security and stability from Indian perspective. There is a common security threat that the Central Asian states share with Indian counterpart. Rising cross border terrorism, supported by the Taliban government, sponsored by international terrorist groups and sustained by drug money, China influence in Central Asia through SCO, internal and external instability in Central Asia, Islamic extremism, the Uighur problem in Xinjiang are the biggest challenges for both sides. Therefore, there has been strengthening of their engagement over regional security issues for promoting peace and stability.

Evolution the Concept of Security

In order to analyse and understand the evolution of regional security it would be essential to deliberate upon the idea of security. Initially, security, (Latin: *securus* and *secura*) was referred by Cicero and Lukrez as “philosophical and psychological status of mind and it was used since 1st century as a key political context of Pax Romana” (Brauch 2003).

The concept of security is directly linked to the process of the formation of the nation state in Europe in the 17th Century. However, the concept of the security can be drawn back to the ideas of Hobbes, Lock, and Rousseau, who advocated the "Social Contract Theory" in order to root out the supposed insecurity prevailing in the 'State of Nature'. Later, the idea of national security became relevant. The concept of security that emerged during the period of Machiavelli's text, (*The Prince*; 1513) was equated with territorial defence (Barnett 2001: 25).

However, Treaty of Westphalia in 1648 was significant for development of the concept of national security, which initiated the demise of the church as the highest authority and ushered the era of sovereign political communities with the emergence of the territorially defined and militarily capable sovereign states (Barnett 2001: 26). System of the state developed in Europe and in other parts of world, the notion of national or state security assumed greater importance. However, right since its beginning, military security basically understood the idea of national security (Lahiry 2004: 57). After the Treaty of Westphalia, states were engaged in a system of cooperation and conflict with few formal rules to guide their behaviour.

The First World War 1914 inflicted a greater shock to European civilization than any previous upheaval, threatening not only revolutions in the social structures of states but also in composition of state system (Buzan 1983: 163). By 1945 advances in military technology had undercut the idea of national defence in several ways. It was difficult to protect or preserve the domestic sanctity of the state. After Second World War, security paradigm shifted according to the impact of democracy, arbitration, disarmament and collective security. It is known as classical political realist theory of security (Barnett 2001: 26).

Throughout Cold War period security was based on empowerment of military power as the cornerstone of national security. During this period John Hertz coined the term of Hobbes's "security dilemma" which he mentioned to as the tendency of countries "to obtain more and more power to escape the impact of others", a propensity that has caused in a vicious round of mutual arms build-up (Brauch 2003: 53).

However, the first crack in the bipolar structure in the 1960s paved the way for the re-emergence of regionalism. Under different pretexts and for different objectives, this phenomenon has been expanded to many regions of the world over the last thirty years.

Moreover, the fall of bipolarity encouraged this process as it removed the last structural barriers to the emergence of regional powers, which are dissatisfied with their role in international relations and feel strong enough to challenge the major powers over spheres of influence. In the absence of strong superpowers capable of imposing their political, economic, and military/security arrangements on their allies and satellites, multipolar international power in different parts of the world rose (Hooman 1998: 1)

On the other hand, the idea of security has faced genuine challenges from the shifting security and political circumstances in the world today. After Cold War period, for example, the integration Western states like (European Union- EU), as well as the suspension and disintegration of states, (Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia), have led to a 'security dilemma' among the states. The security setting in the existing world is further problematical by numerous hypotheses arising from the West, like End of End of History (Francis Fukuyama), Ideology (Daniel Bell) and Clash of Civilizations (Samuel P. Huntington). In fact, in the face of challenges, the concept of security has experienced a sea change over the last few decades. The field of security studies has expected domination within the broader arena of International Relations (Lahiry 2004: 57).

The end of the Cold War paved the way for the gradual appearance of multipolar World on the one hand, and emergence of regional powers to solve the regional problems on the other. This increased the importance of the regional security to solve both traditional and non-traditional threats. The concept of regional security has taken place to minimize or demise of fear from danger, fear or anxiety, and take a collective response to the threat in the region.

Then, the whole nature of security has been changed due to the emergence of decolonization and the process of globalization. In conventional conditions, security mainly refers to safeguard and defend the territorial sovereignty and integrity of the nation, the surrounding of domestic political order both the economy and polity, basically from other states. However, security envisages defence and state's welfare from other neighbouring states. But the process of globalization has made the whole world a 'global village'. The States and communities came together to encourage their common interests either forgetting or ignoring differences. Consequently in such an interdependent world, Barry Buzan advocated that the multi-dimensional perception of

security (as tacit in military terms) has assumed a means to a multidimensional idea of security, including within its fold economic, social, political and cultural security. The scope of studies therefore landed with the appearance of concepts like comprehensive security and cooperative security (Lahiry 2004: 58). Which also delivers the states with the largely operative regional security arrangement as it allows the formation of regional institutions as well as multinational organisations and provides the apparatus by which state can peacefully tackle challenges like traditional or non-traditional threats.

The effect of the Cold War on the process of evolving regional security dynamics was universal, and the end of the Cold War, therefore, marks the opening of a clear third stage, the post- Cold War period since 1990. The end of the Cold War had mainly three major impacts on the evolution of regional security; one, It raised the superpower overlap from Europe, and radically changed the arrangements of superpower diffusion in North East Asia with the Soviet Union disintegration in 1991. Fifteen new states and a new Regional Security Complex (RSC) came into the game. Second, by eliminating ideological conflict and Soviet Power from the equation, it greatly changed both the nature and intensify of international power penetration into Third World RSCs. Many regional level security dynamics emerged to get more operational autonomy than they had before because of the increased insignificance of the global powers to them and, third, the end of the Cold War exposed, and in several ways protected, the transfer in the nature of the security agenda to comprise a range of non-military issues and actors, which had been noticeable since 1970s.

In a nutshell, the meaning of security is very ambiguous and deeply contested. However, security is playing a very major role in every state to formulate their foreign policy. The simple meaning of security is the protection of the cherished values. The concept of regional security is intended to minimize or remove fear from danger or anxiety, and take a collective response to the threat in the region. Security can be categorised into two types - traditional and non-traditional security. The traditional concept of security is about the military security with the state as the main referent object. The primary function of the state is to defend the territorial integrity as well as promoting welfare of its subject. But on the other hand, non-traditional security is purely non-military security and comes from within the state where individual is the main referent objects. In his book, Barry Buzan elaborates, "*People, States and Fear*",

points out that “the notion of security was ‘too narrowly founded’, his goal was to, therefore, offer a ‘broader framework of security’ incorporating concepts that were not previously deliberated to be ingredient of the security puzzle such as regional security, or the societal and environmental sectors of security” (Buzan, 1991: 4-20).

Regional Security

Regional security is one of the most important concepts and trends in contemporary international politics in which sovereign states come together and make collective response towards regional threats as well as their challenges. The concept of regional security has become significant since it helps in minimizing threats in the region as well as it seeks to provide regional security mechanisms to such impending threats. With regional security mechanism, states may succeed in managing the problems such as ethnic, communal, sub-national and socio-economic tensions which often result in conflict situations in the region. There exists an assumption that a regional security mechanism can be evolved within the regional community appropriate to deal with conflicts whenever it occurs. The regional security mechanism seeks special power and responsibility to provide security to the region, which can bring stability in the region and secures the states from the threats; i.e. both traditional and non-traditional.

In the era of globalization, international community is interdependent. Lack of security in one state has its implications for overall security in the rest of the world community. To this extent, therefore, regional security will bring about fulfilling the collective interest of diverse regional actors. Regional security system is inextricably intertwined with the security of international system. So for most of the states in the international structure, the regional level is the vital one for the security analysis. The idea of regional security can be placed within the framework of international or global security and national or local security. It appears easier to achieve national and state level security but in an interconnected world that is not enough. Security at the regional level becomes the key issue.

The regional security and stability in Central Asia is directly connected to the process of the formation of the nation state. The Central Asian states have already begun the process of developing regional security mechanism. Initially, it is bound to be by trial and error. Each step ahead reveals new problems. The people of Central Asia have not

attained the status of advanced states so there will be challenges and mistakes will be committed. During the Soviet era sovereign authority was centralized in Moscow. But at present, with the formation of civil society and political statehood in Central Asia progress has been made towards mutual interdependence (Dononbaev, 2000). Since the emergence of the independent Central Asian states and disintegration of Soviet Union, there have been wide deliberations over developing a regional security mechanism for the Central Asian region. In this regard, the issues of regional security play a leading role in the foreign policies of the states of Central Asia after independence, and it is not an accident.

After the collapse of Soviet Union, the Central Asian countries do not possess adequate resource to maintain their stability and security in the region. The Political, military and also economic stability and prosperity are largely determined by the external powers such as Russia, West and China. They have played a significant role in the international systems of regional security. In this regards, the major powers such as Russia, China and the United States have contributed significantly to the emergence of regional security architecture. These major power's contributions can insure the long term security and stability in the region. However, rivalry between these three major powers on the issue of regional security in Central Asian has also surfaced. The sudden dissolution of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the new states of Central Asia have changed the entire geopolitical, economic and security landscape of Eurasia.

Regional Security Complex

The theory of RSC advanced by Ole Waever and Barry Buzan is anticipated to give a tool kit for the clarification of security dynamics at regional levels of the international situation. The description of a RSC is “a set of states whose major security perceptions and concerns are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another.” The conception of “security” is systematically separated into five sectors, such as military, societal, political and environmental. These sectors are synthesised through the social practices of actors which allow for the explanation of multi-dimensional, but logical RSCs (Buzan, Waever and Wilde 1998).

The beginning indicates for an examination of a RSC is its important arrangement which comprises the anarchic structure, boundary, polarity (the allocation of power

among the units) and social production (patterns of friendship and hostility among the units). Therefore, three possible developments are release for a RSC: preservation of the status quo, outside alteration (contraction or expansion of the boundary) and internal transformation (changes in social construction, polarity and, more rarely, anarchic structure). Buzan and Waever were provided a complete typology of RSCs. In a standard RSC, the polarity is defined by regional powers. Unipolar RSCs where the pole is signified by a huge power or a superpower are called centred. A RSC with two or more poles where each pole is a great power is a great-power RSC. To define the cases of high and strong security interdependence between RSCs, the term super-complex is coined. Within RSC sub-complexes, groups with specific arrangement of interactions might be existent (Buzan and Waever, 2003).

Barry Buzan defines security complex as “a group of states whose primary security concerns link together sufficiently closely that their national securities cannot realistically be considered apart from on another”. The regional complex states are protected into collective security concerns and connected to each other in such a way that the actions of one state to go forward its security are likely to have consequences also for other parts of the complex. It is significant to note that a 'security complex can exist and function regardless of whether or not the actors involved identify it (Jonson and Allison, 2001: 5-6).

The states of complex may be related by security concerns, regardless of whether the leaders of these states recognize the situations or not. Alexander Wendt (1999) pointed out, 'security complex' model has constructivist backgrounds, because the creation and operation of regional security complexes (RSCs) hinge on patterns of amity and enmity between the units in the system, which makes regional systems reliant of the actions and interpretations of actors, not just a mechanical reflection of the distribution of power. Buzan uses the terms 'enmity' and 'amity' to define the poles along the lines of division. Amity can be regarded as 'relationships ranging from genuine friendship to expectations of protection and support', while enmity can be understood as 'relationships set by suspicion and fear'. Patterns of relations of these kinds reflect issues such as border disputes, interests in ethnically related populations, ideological alignments and long-standing historical links (Jonson and Allison, 2001: 8).

Barry Buzan was a critical of security studies expert while taking his component in the above mentioned debates and suggested a new structure for regional security studies. Looking back, his proposition can be considered to be two categorises. First one is now named as the “classical security complex theory” and another is a wider version of this theory; “regional security complex theory”. The latter came from the aspiration to meet the needs of security analysts when investigating the complicated world formed as a result of the Cold War. Buzan’s chief goal was to contain as many different kinds of threats and actors as possible to the security studies as a reaction considered for traditionalist’s narrow agenda and state-centric focus. It was knowing his restrictions in order not to fall into the incoherency of the wider agenda criticized by the traditionalists. Therefore, he began with giving no main concern to any level of analysis. For this end, he depended on the hypothesis that after the Cold War, international relations would take on a more regionalized nature (Williams 1996, 81-93).

Buzan sets out the phrases of analysis as the relations between domestic security situation of societies, states and regional security complexes and at the arrangement level the great powers penetrating into matters of local complexes. However “it needs to be recognized that the degree of order and security at the regional level is crucially influenced by variables operating at the global and domestic levels” (Ayoob, 1999).

At the national level, at the early phases of state-making and its significance, nation building includes the use of vigorous means by the state in charge to encompass and combine its control over disputed demographic and protective space and counter-violence on the part of those segments of the population attacking the extension and consolidation of such control. “State building is not conducted within specific countries that are demographically, territorially or politically isolated from each other. Colonial legacies and ‘inadequate staleness’ lead to the proliferation of challenged territorial and demographic space and to frequent interstate clashes in post-colonial regions that extremely undermine regional order” (Bilgin 2002, 100-118).

On the counterpart, regional dynamics are determined not only by the domestic procedures of the nation building and state-building processes. They are also extremely inclined by the action of the universal balance of power and competitions among the major powers. “For their part, regional state elites attempt to utilize issues relating to

the global balance to enhance their own state and regime interests. This leads to the unavoidable intertwining not merely of global and regional, but of global and domestic dynamics as well. Together, the latter two have remarkable impact on issues of regional security, and for that reason, on the projection of creating a regional society. The post-Cold War era provided numerous examples that demonstrated the intermeshing of these three dynamics. Recurrently, the interests of global powers, mediated by domestic contests within states, and vice versa, appeared to determine the contours of the relationships of states within particular regions” (Ayoob, 1999:251-252).

Buzan points out that the central features of a regional security complex can be found in the lines of separation between states and in the power balance between them. The interchange of external and internal factors results in a structure for interaction between states in the region and with external powers. An interaction in the economic or even cultural field may develop into a mutual interest in developing cooperation in security and military affairs as well. An intensified network of contacts and exchanges may even foster common values and interests and consequently results in close security collaboration in the form of a 'security community' of states.

According to Jonson and Allison (2001), in order to understand the consequences of the engagement of external powers in Central Asia better, it is necessary to examine more closely the dynamics of the region with regard to conflict and cooperation and to consider what influences those dynamics. A distinction can be made between cooperative dynamics, which hamper conflicts, stimulate cooperation and strengthen peaceful relations between states of the region and conflictual dynamics which aggravate conflicts and tensions. Interaction between the commitment of external powers in the Central Asian region and regional dynamics works in both cooperative and conflictual directions.

Regional dynamics are often so strong that they make external powers to fall in line with the prevailing pattern of power relations and separating lines between states of the region at the time when such powers begin to engage with regional ones. However, outside powers do have influence over the regional security complex. This can be done by influencing the conditions of the region, which affects the policy choices and policy making of the states there which results in a further chain of events. The state's engagement with other states in international relations has 'spill over' impacts which

implies that with the changing of relations of enmity and cooperation in one region will result in similar positive or negative changes to other regions.

Regional Security in the Context of Central Asia

The Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) provides to an analysis apprehensive with the security challenges of the post-Soviet Central Asian states. It is applied to Central Asia, because it has numerous opportunities that facilitate analysts to distinguish among the complicated methods of the regional security structural design, unlike realist and neo-realist paradigms.

Central Asia can be measured as “a regional security complex with consider to the disorganized transition the region went from side to side in the aftermath of the give way of the Soviet Union for two core reasons. Firstly, it is understandable that the familiar heritage of the five Central Asian states by the side of with their forming of a consistent system in cultural and geographical terms put in to the arrangement of an independent Central Asia as a regional security complex”. However, Central Asia has been a significant position for qualified strength of inter-state security relations creating regional patterns. These regional patterns are fashioned by the demarcation in the middle of the units of the complex, patterns of antagonism and harmony among these units and as a consequence, lastly the allocation of power. It should be noted that according to Roy Allison, they will utilize “friendship” and “mistrust” instead of antagonism and harmony as these states were part of the equal empire until recently. For that reason, it is too inflexible to argue an antagonism versus harmony among them as the means Buzan argues in structural terms (Allison and Jonson, 2001:8).

Secondly, Central Asia can be considered as “the ground for the interplay of internal and external factors resulting in a structure within which the states of the region form the regional patterns of interaction between each other and external powers as well. To grasp these interactions and possibilities for change in Central Asia, one should take into account the cooperative dynamics that prevent tensions, stimulate cooperation and conflictual dynamics that aggravate tensions, shaping the regional structure that is

mutually constituted with the actors. This brings us mainly to the recent version of the regional security complex theory” (Allison and Jonson, 2001:8-14).

This perspective, representation the line starting from household conditions to regional stage and then to universal arrangement, concerning the household level under the rubric of supportive dynamics, one can determine numerous factors. The general inheritance of the Soviet Union, common history and cultural camaraderie can be cited in this category. On the other hand, under the rubric of conflictual dynamics, cultural trouble, competing national strategies, political and economic challenges, namely nation and state building processes, social conditions, fundamentalist Islamic tendencies, and water disputes can be cited. “Though the conflictual dynamics signify to growing tensions, proportions of cooperative and conflictual dynamics form an equilibrium where the Central Asian states went for the middle ground regarding the criteria for friendship and suspicion. The states of the region distinguish each other as threats but completed encouragement arrangements to decrease security dilemmas as discerned in many attempts of regionalism and also in the several organizations the Central Asian States have participated, one of which appears to be the SCO” (Allison and Jonson, 2001:14-18).

Central Asia is a regional security complex and security community region for its geopolitical security scenario. In his book *‘People, States and Fear’*, Barry Buzan applies the analysis on regional security complex (RSC). The present security architecture in CA can be better described by considering all levels of CA insecurity. In this regard, the combination of Barry Buzan’s Regional Security Complex theory and Karl W. Deutsch’s notion of ‘security community’ proves to be a valuable instrument for analysing the regional security. The collaboration within RSC is defined by the patterns of “amity and enmity between states” that stems from distribution of power within the RSC, long-term historical links and particular issues such as border disputes, ethnic relations, common culture and so on (Klimenko 1998).

The major advantage of Buzan’s approach is comprehensive analysis of regional security by concentrating on three levels of RSC: domestic (domestically created uncertainties), regional (common security concerns and adaptation of mechanism to tackle them) and international (role of external powers in the region). At the same time,

his theory attracts only general picture of security architecture. It responds to the questions of “what is happening on one or the other level?” and “when it happens?” But it does not give an answer to the question “why?” Basically, Buzan’s theory is empty in content and value free. It can prove the different spectrum of intense relationships that can range from excellent relations to wars that is in fact also one of the intense relationships, but this does not explain why countries take one or the other dangerous steps.

The concept of RCS traced back to Karl Deutsch’s theory of “security community,” a group of people or states incorporated to the point that they resolve their tensions without resort to war. Deutsch goes deeper into understanding why states go further from being a security complex meaning simple security interdependence, which still has the possible of going into war, to becoming a security community that excludes struggling. In this opinion, “the combination of the RSC theory and the theory of security community provides a good theoretical framework to study regional security as they meaningfully supplement each other. The RSC theory helps to structure the analysis of security architecture by splitting it into three levels, whereas the security community concept provides deeper insights into the internal characteristics of states that influence the security dynamic in the region” (Klimenko, 2011).

In the international level analysis, after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, scholars and policy makers have started to talk about the new “Great Game” in Central Asia. Indeed, due to the vast energy resources and significant geo-strategic situation CA has become a zone of competing interests of many players of the international arena. Nowadays, in addition to the Russian and U.S. presence, the strategic environment in CA is also characterized by considerable involvement of China. Overall, the interests of great powers focus on two spheres: political/security and economic.

From the regional or interstate level of analysis, there is a number of security concerns that unites all CA countries: problems of water/energy management and potential for conflict among CA states related to it, and border security that includes such issues as drug trafficking and the spread of Islamic extremism. At the domestic or local level of analysis, CA has significant potential for internal conflicts due to the considerable concerns regarding difficult economic conditions, human security and possible ethnic

clashes. The situation becomes worse with the presence of incompetent governments and corruption.

Independence was so sudden from former the USSR that the new countries in Central Asia did not know what kind of relations would develop among themselves and with other states. There is serious territorial disputes, presence of large ethnic minorities, and the incidents of inter-ethnic conflict that happened in 1989-90, the spectre of war and civil war affecting neighbours. Lack of a strong regular armed force heightened their fears from more powerful neighbours. The vulnerability of the new states could start a competition for influence in Central Asia. Some scholars even talked of a "new great game", especially with the region's oil and gas resources coming to international limelight. In this perspective, there is need for regional mechanism to securitisation for Central Asian region in the process of local and global level.

Definition, Rationale and Scope of the Study:

The regional security and stability in Central Asia is directly connected to the process of the formation of the nation state. The Central Asian states have already begun the process of developing regional security mechanism. Since the disintegration of Soviet Union and emergence of independent Central Asian states, there have been wide deliberations over developing a regional security mechanism for the Central Asian region to address the regional tensions. Political, military, and, to a large extent, economic stability in the region have been sustained by external factors, which include Russia, West, and China. They also have played a significant role in the international systems of regional security. The dissertation will study Post-Soviet Regionalism in Central Asia and related tensions over contested territorial claims, inter-ethnic conflicts and economic conflicts and role of major power in shaping regional security in Central Asia. The proposed study focuses on both the role and function of external and Central Asian states in defining the Central Asian regional security and its changing dynamics and finally the study will give a special focus on India's engagement with this region.

Research Objectives:

1. Define the concept of security and regional security, its various forms, debates, interpretations and directions over time, changes and current discourses.
2. To find out how regional security complex in theory and practice has become a major instrument for engagement in the Central Asian context.
3. To unravel the security scenario in the Central Asian region
4. To analyse the role of external power like Russia, China, USA, Turkey, Iran for regional security in Central Asia.
5. To find out India's role in the context of regional security issues in Central Asia.
6. To provide a plausible prediction of India's future engagement with the Central Asian region.

Research Questions:

1. Does the regional security framework have importance in the context of Central Asian states?
2. What are the regional security issues and challenges facing both India and Central Asia?
3. Are the Central Asian states adequately responding to regional security issues?
4. What is the role of external powers to address the regional security issues in Central Asia?
5. Is India's involvement in the Central Asian regions effective in tackling the rising insecurity and vulnerability in the region?
6. Does India's association in Central Asia bring perceptible changes of security in the region and what are its implications for India?

Hypotheses:

1. India's involvement in Central Asian security started with support to the Northern Alliance to counter Taliban sponsor to terrorism and Pakistan's search for "Strategic Depth".
2. India's joining the SCO as an observer helped broaden the cooperation beyond Afghanistan and created multilateral cooperation against terrorism, drugs, human and arms trafficking in Central Asia and other member states.

Research Methodology:

The propose study would be based on the historical, descriptive and analytical methods of research. The study will be based on the critical analysis of how India's regional security issues promoted her to widen the relationship in Central Asia region. In order to prepare an academic report it will take numbers of variables such as treaties, agreements, speeches of the leadership of both India and Central Asia states, governmental and official documents, journals, magazines, thesis, newspapers, books, media etc. The proposed of study will also use the inductive and deductive methods of research. The primary and secondary sources will be taken into consultation for the study. The primary sources will be official data, documents, treaties between India and Central Asian states. The secondary sources will be books, journals, newspapers and articles as well as internet sources. The relevant information from lectures, seminars, workshop and symposium will be using in filling the gap.

Tentative Chapters:

This proposed chapter divided into the following five chapters.

Chapter-1: Introduction and Conceptual Framework

The introductory chapter in brief will discuss the evolution of security and regional security in Central Asian region as well as international perspective. It also offers analysis of the theory and practice in various forms, debates, interpretations and directions, over time changes and current discourses.

Chapter-2: Challenges to Regional Security in Central Asia

This chapter would focus on the regional security issues and challenges in Central Asian region. It will also elaborate on the importance of these issues and securitisation of these challenges.

Chapter-3: Role of external powers and regional security issues in Central Asia

The third chapter will discuss the role of external powers especially Russia, China, USA, Iran and Turkey in the Central Asian region. It will also discuss the role of external powers, the competitive and cooperative aspects of their engagement.

Chapter-4: India and regional security issues in Central Asia

This chapter will examine and focus on the role of India in regional security issues in central Asia. How will be India's strategy of engagement in this region is being calibrated bilaterally and through its observer states in the SCO.

Chapter-5: Conclusion

The concluding chapter will summarize the finding and observation and it also test the hypotheses and answer the research questions.

Chapter-2

Challenges to Regional Security in Central Asia

Introduction

Central Asia is one of the diverse regions of the world which is situated in the centre of the Eurasian continent. Its area extends from the Caspian Sea in the west to the boundary of Western China in the east. It occupies an area of 3,994,400 square kilometres which is little less than the total area of the European Union and almost half the area of the US (Kembayev 2009: 186). With the result, Central Asia borders on the strategically most important regions of the Eurasian continent, situated in the east are China and the countries of the Asia-Pacific region; in the south-Afghanistan, Middle East and the number of other Islamic states; on the west are the Caucasus region, Turkey, Russia and Europe.

Central Asia has been re-emerged from the fragments of the USSR in 1991 as one of the new regions, having immense significance with regards to regional security. With the disappearance of the power of USSR, there was no mechanism to deal with regional and internal conflicts. The negative trend has been strengthened by the low economic development, lack of trust and high degree of intra-state as well as inter-state conflicts (Swanstrom 2004: 41). Central Asia has been suffering from such problems like, terrorism, extremism, separatism, existence of extremely unstable regional environment (Afghanistan, Ferghana Valley and Northern Caucasus); vulnerable border, expansion of drug trade, conflicting interests of leading powers and religious extremism.

After USSR period, the region was apparent as mostly unstable and fragile. Significantly, the CARs have been facing differences arising out of border and water conflicts. Critical security issue which could have had a negative impact on the regional security, have not transformed into serious conflicts. This is a fact, however, that Central Asia continues to develop serious long-term security Challenges. Along with traditional security risks, it has encountered a completely new set of challenges in the

changed security paradigm which is still developing. In all five republics, there is very sluggish progress of economic and political reforms. This has caused in a build-up of many unresolved problems. The problem of corruption is infuriated by the illegal narcotics trade. The other security dilemmas have been chiefly the threat of religious extremism, ethnic issues, small arms proliferations, sharing of water resources and environment problems (Roy 2009: 90-91).

The region of Central Asia is caught in the whirlpool of security challenges and threats that may appear episodic but are determinative. The biggest threat to regional permanence comes from Afghanistan in the activities of radical extremists and drug traffickers. Islamic radicalism and appearances of separatism and extremism using terrorist methods add to the instability in Central Asia. Increasing rivalry among major powers has also appeared in the region for accessing petroleum resources, which have been viewed by these powers as alternative to the instable West Asian and Caspian regions. These actors are not only combining their position but also increasing their presence in the region through complex modes of relationships that promote collaboration as well as a trigger for competition. A kind of polarisation of relations among Russia, China and US has been happening in the region. The strategic competition is compounded by the weakening security in Afghanistan. As militant Islamists permeate from across the Afghan border into Tajikistan, regional stability is coming under severe challenge. The result is a state of strategic insecurity as a medium-term prospect. Regional security in Central Asia is presently multi-level and unstructured and often contradictory. The ongoing struggle for spheres of influence among challenging projects "Russia's "Eurasian Space" project, America's "Greater Middle East Initiative", China's "Assimilation" project, and the EU's "Integration" project and last but not least the potential embarrassment of the region in the "World Islamic Caliphate" project"(Bhadrakumar 2009) are also challenging the regional security in Central Asia.

Aggravation of Inter-Ethnic Relations in Central Asia

Soon after the declaration of Independence, a crisis of ethnic identity began to shape the image of the Central Asian region. At the same time, it is too early to tell about mass nationalism or mass political Islam. Currently each republic has to face its own

combination of possibilities in order to move forward or regress to the past. Often, ethnic divisions within and between the Central Asian republics were perceived as the primary source of conflict throughout the region. During Soviet period, all citizens were combined under the poster of a new historical community- the Soviet people. But Instantly after the collapse of the Soviet Union, ethnic unity were completely fragmented on the one hand and ethnic clashes between mainly Central Asian Muslims began to emerge on the other (Tabyshalieva 2000: 79).

The problem of the potential rise of inter-ethnic conflict in the Central Asian region can be qualified as a challenge to security. A significant potentiality for the rise of an inter-ethnic conflict continues to remain in this region. In the Central Asian conditions of shortage of arable land, unresolved problem of redistribution of power and water resources and sharp demographic explosions, any ordinary ethnic conflict can easily change into a widespread inter-ethnic confrontation (Dmitriyenko 2004: 88-89).

Central Asia is something of an ethnic tinder-box, with an intermixture of ethnic groups in large numbers in each state. It must be said to the credit of the Central Asian leaders, however, that they have managed to contain these conflicts, keeping their adverse fallout to the minimum level (Kumar, Satish 2000: 47). Ethnic nationalism is a major factor provoking increase ethnic conflicts. It has led to ethnic polarisation, growth of separatism and irredentism.

Recently, in 2000 Kazakhstan, Russians constituted 37 per cent of population, next to the Kazakhs, who were 42 per cent. In Kyrgyzstan, the Kyrgyz, the Russian and the Uzbeks were 52, 22 and 13 per cent respectively. In Tajikistan, while Tajiks were 65 per cent, the Uzbeks constituted 25 per cent, while Russian and Uzbeks were 1 and 9 per cent respectively. And in Uzbekistan, the most populated state, the Russians and Tajiks constituted 8 and 5 per cent of the population respectively, while Uzbeks were 71 per cent (Kumar, Satish 2000: 47).

The large presence of Russians in Kazakhstan, and their important role in economy and administration of their country, made it necessary for the Kazakh President to be sensitive to their aspirations. The move to shift the capital of Kazakhstan from Almaty to Astana (former Akmola) was meant as much to maintain strategic control over the country to keep the Russian population happy. The presence of such a large percentage of Russian population in Kazakhstan is an important factor in preventing any conflict

between the Russian Federation and Kazakhstan. However, at the same time in Tajikistan, in which Uzbeks constitute 25 per cent of the population, the Uzbek-Tajik conflict keeps occurring in various forms. The Uzbeks are constantly afraid of Tajik designs on Samarkand and Bukhara. Uzbeks, on the other hand, have often been accused by the Tajik government of meddling in the civil war between 1992-97 (Kumar, Satish 2000: 48).

In this regards, the region's ethnic fragmentation can be considered on several levels: between the new states themselves, between Slavs (Russians and Ukrainians) and native people, mostly the traditional, rural sections of the ethnic groups (for Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan: between indigenous ethnic groups, for example, Tajik and Turkic-speaking peoples) and within similar ethnic groups. In each of the Central Asian states, there are also internal cleavages within the titular nationality, stemming from regional and clan differences. These take the form of rivalry between north and south (in Kyrgyzstan), between the three Zhuz hordes (in Kazakhstan), or between different provinces (in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) (Tabyshalieva 2000: 79).

Scholars of Central Asia continue to anticipate serious ethnic violence within the Ferghana Valley. The area of ethnic Uzbek and Kyrgyz population in the region present the most significant source of ethnic tension, more than a decade after the Soviet dissolution. The legacy of Soviets in the geographic political arrangement of the Ferghana Valley guarantees powerful multicultural and multi-ethnic contact. Before the Bolsheviks drew administrative border in Central Asia, the Ferghana Valley was a mutual space. Now Ferghana Valley covers portion of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan and contains a mixture of ethnic discrimination. The biggest ethnic strains in Ferghana Valley have occurred between Uzbek and Kyrgyz populations, which are mixed in the area, with some Uzbek villages lying in Kyrgyzstan and Kyrgyz villages in Uzbekistan (George, Julie 2009: 92).

Ethnic conflicts in Ferghana valley in early 1990s legitimated early scholarly anxiety regarding the ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks symbolised by ethnic violence in Osh and Uzgen (both in Kyrgyzstan). It seems that a reaction to the rearrangement of economic and land resources between Kyrgyz and Uzbek villages during a period of economic shakiness, members of each ethnic group acted to punish alleged crimes in order to expel Uzbeks from the Osh city. A total of 171 people died during aggressive altercation

during one week (June 4-10, 1990). Thousands others fell victim to rape and assault (George, 2009: 92).

Islamic Fundamentalism and Terrorism

Religious extremism and its violent manifestation have been perceived as the most potent single menace to the security and stability of post-Soviet Central Asia. The leadership of Independent Central Asian states was steeped in the values of communism, which had been super imposed on an Islamic society with strong traditions of Sufism going back to medieval times. It was naive on the part of Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran to believe that the newly independent Muslim states of Central Asia would be easy targets for induction of their respective brands of Islam(Kumar, Satish 2000: 46).

Yet, the revival of Islam in Central Asia originated to some extent in the late 1980s when President Gorbachev's twin policy of 'Perestroika' and 'Glassnost' permitted people in the Soviet Union a measure of religious freedom. "However, no definite episode can be pointed to as the first introduction of Islam in Central Asia. During the periods of conquest and subjugation that mark the history of the region, Islam spread throughout and became an important social force. The complicated introduction of Islam to the region led to important differences in belief between the various peoples of the Central Asia. The current Muslim population is dominated by Sunni Muslims of the Hanafi branch, intermingled with a variety of Sufi sects and smaller Shi'a minority groups" (Trisko 2005: 377).

Ernest Gellner (1992) in his book *"Postmodernism, Reason and Religion"*, distinguishes two equivalent, often complementing, forms of Islam: high and low. "High-Islam" trusts on the scripture, the holy Koran and Hadith (Muhammadan traditions) and is thus puritan. Here the Koran and Hadith are unending and stay behind the eternal source of knowledge and deliverance. By contrast, "low Islam" relies heavily on local traditions approved from generation to generation. "High Islam" accompanies in the urban situation where access to literacy and religious literature is possible and clerical class has begun to safeguard scriptural legacies. This class enjoys the restricted privilege of understanding Islam in response to issues of the day, with reference to the Koran and Hadith. "Low Islam", on the other hand, flourishes

among nomadic people whose access to the religious education is seriously concentrated by the very nature of their mobile lifestyle and they are unlikely to have the necessary resources to support a permanent clerical class. It was based on existing social relation and practice. “High Islam” has an authoritarian quality as to how best society should conduct itself to meet Koranic goals. This distinction has important political implication. This implication is particularly applicable to Post-Soviet Central Asia. However 'high' and 'low' Islam are separate but mutually complementary. This corresponding nature simplifies the emergence of a hybrid Islam in Soviet Central Asia (Akbarzadeh 2001: 452).

In the initial phase of Soviet disintegration, Islam was the object of both fear and worship for the regional stability in Central Asia. “The revival of Muslim religious life in Post-Soviet Central Asia was seen into emergence of two different directions. The first direction was under the control of both the authorities and the official clergy; its visible result was a sharp increase in the number and level of activity of Muslim institutions. In 1990-91, for example, the number of working mosque alone increased about thirty times (from 160 to 5,000)” (Lipovsky, 1996).

The building of new mosques and madras’s was financed by Saudi Arabia, Iran and Turkey, who were competing for the support of the Central Asian Muslims. However, such operations were carried out legally, for the most part, and without opposition from authorities. The second and far more radical direction in the Muslim rebirth was shaped by the unofficial Islam since the years of Soviet rule, and this had an evident effect on radicalising their views. During the Soviet rule, Islam throughout Central Asia had been driven underground but even Soviet dictatorship could not suppress religion entirely. From the very beginning, and especially in Tajikistan and in Ferghana Valley, the unofficial clergy took up the radical positions and were antagonistic to both the communist leadership and the official clergy, whom they accused of collaboration with the authorities. The radical Muslims immediately started setting up a complex network of underground cells. These cells allowed them very quickly to escape the control of the authorities. Because of the existence of the equivalent and highly secret network of organizations, following bans on the fundamentalist activities proved ineffective. Authorities called it as Political Islam.

Political Islam, that is Islam as a director for political action, is often stigmatized as 'fundamentalism'. 'Wahabi' movement through was strange to the Central Asian brand of Islam and way of life. The negative symbol of political Islam was in sharp difference to the positive image of Islam and Islamic civilization, projected by the state officials. The Turkmen leadership has been admittedly more active in demanding Islamic civilization in the region as a national legacy than their Kyrgyz counterparts, but both states share a pre-occupation with describing a dichotomy between 'good' and 'bad' version of Islam (Akbarzadeh 2001: 451).

The character of political and radical Islam in Central Asia can be understood with the increase of Taliban in neighbouring Afghanistan, which served to strengthen the possibility of an Islamic government in the region. In addition, the civil war in Tajikistan had significant implications for regional stability and played into sensitivities of Islamist menace. In the discussion of security concerns in post-Soviet Central Asia, (Menon, 1995) in his article "In Shadow of the Bear: Security in post -Soviet Central Asia", claimed that "while militant Islam may emerge as a powerful political force, this is by no means a given". This view is also taken by Freedman (1997), who argued that "while initially many in Moscow fear that flow of Islamic radicalism would sweep the region, their fears remained unfounded. Thus the potential for radicalism was accredited even if these scholars did not believe it would be realised in the near future" (Trisko 2005: 378).

In this regards, keeping out or enclosure from the political structure has played a powerful role in radicalising movements. Wahabism, a traditional section of Islam with roots in Saudi Arabia, started making inroads to the Central Asia as early as 1992. The civil war in Tajikistan, which regards for a few years before it was brought under control through a peace agreement in June 1997, had strong sectarian undercurrents. The rise of the Taliban, strong militant Wahabist movement, in 1994 its rapid advance northwards, sent danger signals all over the Central Asian states. Central Asian leaders started raising their voice against the rising threat of fundamentalism, although Islam Karimov, the President of Uzbekistan, was the most enthusiastic of them all. Their fears came true when police officers in the eastern Uzbek town of Namangan were murdered in December 1997. The murder was attributed to a Wahabi plan against the state. In February 1998, the Uzbek Foreign Minister accused Pakistan of having taken away 400 Uzbek and trained them in Wahabi madras's in Pakistan. On 1 May 1998, the Uzbek

Parliament passed a law on religion to counter the threat of "aggressive Wahabis", laying down strict rules for registration of religious organizations. On 23 May, Tajikistan's Parliament passed a law outlawing all religious political parties in the country (Kumar, Satish 2000: 46).

However, the triumph of the extremists in Dushanbe delivered a severe terror to Uzbek President Karimov. He feared a domino effect. This describes Karimov's decision to send his troops to help the Tajik ex-communists. In this he had the support of the leaders of the other Central Asian republics as well as the implicit consent of Moscow. As Taliban were closing in on Mazar-i-sharif in late 1998, there was frantic diplomatic activity between Russia and the Central Asian states on how to ward off the threat of Islamic fundamentalism. The worst ever happened when the city of Tashkent was subjected to bomb explosions at four key locations on the morning of 16 February 1999. President Karimov blamed Islamist extremists from the Hizbollah movement for these explosions. An organization, calling itself the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan(IMU), in a broadcast from Radio Iran in Mashhad, said on 19 March that the government of Uzbekistan must go, for outdoing even the communist regime in oppressing Islam, or it would be removed by force (Kumar, Satish 2000: 47).

The revised emphasis on Arabic in some of the Central Asian states and their liberal attitude towards Islamic education imparted to their people created opportunities for Saudi Arabia to enter the region with an intention to expand the domain of Islam and undermine secularism professed by Central Asian people. The Pak-trained and sponsored *mujahideen* were sent as 'Allah's volunteers to spread the 'message' of Islam in Central Asia. The Saudi money facilitated Pakistani and Afghan *mujahideen* to play a role in which *drug mafia* also ushered in at a later stage (Asopa 2003: 40).

The Islamist opposition in Uzbekistan became a serious social, political and military threat to the Karimov administration that had in turn resorted to outright repression in response. Like the other governments under consideration, "President Karimov made initial attempts to accommodate the Islamist opposition. Concessions included the return of mosques to their previous use and the renaming of government posts to traditional Muslim terms. These measures proved ineffective in placating the opposition. Both secular and religious opposition parties have been restricted by authoritarianism and censorship, forcing them to confine their actions largely to the big

cities where government pleas that Uzbekistan is facing a dangerous time have, in the past, been met with support. More militant Islamist groups have focused their energies on the countryside, particularly the Fergana Valley. The marginalisation of all opposition groups has important implications for collective mobilisation. The Islamic threat is most strongly felt in Uzbekistan where militants have been able to repeatedly out with Uzbek armed forces” (Trisko 2005: 380).

In Kazakhstan, “Islamists have played a negligible role in challenging the integrity of the political system although they have been active in the social sphere. President Nazarbaev has focused more on maintaining his patronage system and ending demands for democratic reform than addressing the Islamist threat. In the mid-1990s, Nazarbaev moved to undercut his domestic opposition through several institutional changes that were interpreted by some as motivated by the southern-led government. Islamist groups have not been permitted a role in the political system and are therefore forced to operate outside of that system. The power of an Islamist opposition is also constrained by the ethnic composition of the country” (Trisko 2005: 379).

The government of Kyrgyzstan was seen in the early 1990s as “the most liberal regime in the region as President Akayev promoted a view of the country as a Central Asian Switzerland where democracy and the free market could flourish. His rule followed the same pattern as President Nazarbayev and Karimov with an increasing centralisation of power in the presidency. The Islamist threat was not acknowledged in Kyrgyzstan until 1999 IMU attacks when Kyrgyz troops had to be mobilised after militants seized a number of villages near the Tajik border. Since then, the government has focused on increasing its military capacity. Osh is one of the main centres of the Islamic revival in Kyrgyzstan and was affected by the 1999 and 2001 IMU attacks. The protests originating in this region resulted in the taking over of government buildings, quickly spread to Bishkek” (Trisko 2005: 380-383).

The Islamist groups are seen as “a more salient challenge to the states in Central Asian countries as well as regimes. These groups pose a threat to regime survival in the Central Asian region. In this context Kazakhstan faced a low level of threat from an Islamist and non-Islamist opposition although it was perceived as a moderate threat. In Kyrgyzstan, a high level of non-Islamist opposition and the sustained, high level of threat in Uzbekistan from 1999 resulted in the marginalisation of all opposition groups

and any mobilization by citizens is perceived as a security threat. Initial attempts to accommodate Islamist groups were forestalled in the mid-1990s as the incumbent presidents in Central Asia acted to shore up their support in the context of the Taliban's rise to power in Afghanistan. Government efforts quickly shifted from co-optation to repression as a result of the 1999 attacks by the militant group Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU). This attack brought to light the physical security threat posed by Islamist groups” (Trisko 2005: 373-374).

Islam was seen by the new national governments as “a parallel power structure contradicting their authority. Islam has historically been perceived as a threat because it can provide a worldview that can combine the 'intermixture of family, clan, tribal, sub-ethnic, and regional affiliations and loyalties' in a way that nationalism cannot. However, such assertions must be qualified. Ahmed Rashid contends that Islam has played a key role in sustaining clan, regional and ethnic solidarity in Central Asia. The outbreak of inter-ethnic but co-religionist violence in the Osh region of Kyrgyzstan in 1990 between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks is evidence that Islam has not been a consistently unifying factor (nor has nationalism). Nevertheless, the power of Islam remains an important regional concern” (Trisko 2005: 378).

In this regard, the focus of Islamic revivalism and radical Islam has been the Fergana Valley, a productive and compactly populated region with deeply religious residents divided between three different republics Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. The valley has traditionally been the centre of Islamist movement and served as “the main entry point to the region. Major radical groups which could be considered as precursor to IMU and HT were active in the Valley which has posed threats to regional security in Central Asia. In this respect, the governments of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have been able to harness their security forces for the maintenance of their regimes by emphasising the Islamist threat and turning to outside powers to increase their military capacity. The Islamist threat, while highlighting the inability of Central Asia's armed forces to control their borders and deal with insurgency, has brought increased military assistance to the region in support of both government and opposition groups. The dynamics have become especially important after September 11 and the launch of the Global War on Terror” (Trisko 2005: 380-381).

The re-emergence of Taliban and weakening condition in Afghanistan pose serious security challenges to the Central Asian States. Afghanistan has always drawn special attention during the SCO summit meetings. The fundamental Islamist attitudes have escalated in response to the US-led operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. Fundamentalist movements in Afghanistan and Pakistan have exploited this situation to generate its support base to carry out jihad and destabilize this region. Instability in Afghanistan is likely to spill over to Central Asia as well. The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), whose positive goal has been to overthrow Islam Karimov's regime, was weakened in the aftermath of the US war against terror in Afghanistan. There foreign stability in Afghanistan has serious penalty for entire Central Asian region and particularly for Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. As an immediate neighbour of Afghanistan, Tajikistan has been the sufferer of unwanted influence of instability in Afghanistan in the past, which led to the bloody civil war for many years. It also experiences the spill out over effects of the illegal drug flow (Roy 2009: 94).

Territorial and Border Disputes

The countries of Central Asia and adjoining states such as Russia and China are facing many challenges at present which began emerging after the disintegration of the USSR. The first and foremost among them is the border disputes among the countries of the region. The Soviets under the leadership of Stalin had re-drawn borders between republics in the 1920s. It has been argued that ethnic factors were not given consideration for the administrative purposes. The natural borders among the settlements of different groups of people were replaced by administrative ones. The separation of Central Asia into five republics planted the seeds for border dispute and territorial claims. Thus, all the Central Asian States have territorial claims on each other (Hooman 1998: 66). The new state borders of the republics do not resemble with their ethnic borders. Then there are some problems which are emerging from the region itself such as religious extremism, trans-border terrorism, separatism, illegal arms and drugs trafficking etc. These problems have been major concerns for regional security mechanism in Central Asia.

During Soviet period, there were several evidences of people of different nationalities and ethnic groups who lived for decades on either side of the borders of the Central

Asian republics. But it did not pose any serious problem since firstly all the republics were part of the Soviet Union and secondly socio-political and economic decisions were taken by the Centre in Moscow. These borders and boundaries did not pose any problem for the people and at any rate there were no security threat to republics. But as each of five Central Asian States became sovereign and independent, border security assumed new dimension. Ensuring territorial integrity has been matter of concern for each Central Asian States. Hence demarcation and delimitation of borders have become matters of priority as each country is independent and sovereign.

When Central Asian States achieved independence in 1991, they inherited boundary disputes and territorial conflicts. There are potential threats in the form of territorial claims, disagreement over border lines, and the rise of a regional hegemonic state (Hooman 1998: 66). For examples, the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan border has mixed Turkmen and Uzbek populations, and both countries claim various border territories. Similarly disputes have occurred over oil and gas facilities located in border regions. Uzbekistan has demanded ownership of these facilities, while Turkmenistan has charged Uzbekistan with depriving it of substantial revenues. However, this dispute was settled at a 1995 presidential conference, when Uzbekistan side agreed to share revenues from oil extraction with Turkmenistan. A production sharing agreement was signed for 1995-2015 to develop joint fields on the common border. In 1998 Turkmenistan unilaterally instituted visa requirements for Uzbekistani citizens living in the border areas. Uzbekistan in turn imposed similar regulations (Badykova 2005:78). The Kyrgyz SSR protested against its border line and demanded a return of some regions from Uzbekistan. The Tajik SSR also demanded that Samarkand and Bukhara be returned.

One of the major border disputes relates to Farghana Valley which has been shared by Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan and has the highest population density compared to other parts of these countries. Historically, the valley has long been ethnically heterogeneous and the first attempts to divide the territory in the 1920s led to disagreements and complaints among settlements. Once the countries in the region and their conditional borders were united as 'republics' under the USSR, any further disputes were suspended, but only until the republics became independent nations. With the collapse of the Soviet Union a number of analysts forecast a revival of regional territorial disputes and their escalation into conflicts in Central Asia. Although, these

claims were rejected to preserve the unity of territories and their management, the issue is yet to be resolved and is an obstacle for regional security. Once the states became independent, the Central Asian leaders realized that their conditional borders could become a source of unrest. Therefore, they tried to avoid border and territorial disputes and to solve the issue through friendly dialogue and good-neighbourly relations.

With regards to settlements of border disputes, it must be said to the credit of the Central Asian states, and their big neighbours Russia and China, that they have shown a very positive trend in resolving border disputes through peaceful means. The Soviet Union's long-standing border disputes with China were inherited by Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The first meeting of these three states along with Russia and China was held in Shanghai in April 1996 and they agreed upon confidence-building measures in the military field in the border areas. The second meeting of the five states was held in April 1997 and the five agreed upon mutual reduction of forces in border areas. The third meeting was held in July 1998 in Almaty that carried forward the process of confidence-building and consultations on security issues (Kumar, Satish 2000: 44).

Trafficking of Narcotics and Arms

Drug trafficking is a main source of non-traditional security threat pretence a serious danger to the stability of Central Asian states. The main reason for the expansion of narcotics trade is the continuation of situation in Afghanistan where narcotics trade has become the main source for the survival of the state. Today, 65% of the narcotics produced in neighbouring Afghanistan and going to the world market, pass through the territory of Central Asia, including Kazakhstan. According to the data available with the experts, 20% of the narcotics passing through Central Asia remain in the Countries of this region. Not only narcotic trade is on the increase, the level of drug-addiction is also rising (Dmitriyenko 2004: 86).

Recently, the magnitude of drug trafficking from Afghanistan to Central Asia, which has increased, seriously complicates the situation in Kazakhstan. For about 30 per cent of drugs get transferred through the northern route of Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan Kazakhstan. According to the UN estimate, at least 10 per cent of drugs going through the country in transit are used within. Thus, Central Asia has become not only a drug trafficking zone, but a zone of mass consumption of drugs (Dolzhikova 2008: 60).

Central Asia presents at birth many of the fundamentals for successful cross-border trade activities, both legal and illegal. The planned location of the Central Asian countries to a larger amount is responsible for a flourishing narcotics trade in this part of world on the one hand and common legacy during Soviet time paved the way on the other. All the countries had been republics of the former Soviet Union share common Soviet characteristics and speak a common language. Most had several ties to the people outside of their own republic, either through kin or by associations.

There is considerable compromise that narcotic trafficking has been a serious and immediate regional security threat. The global community is also worried about the unlawful drug trade and its negative implications for the stability and progress of Central Asian states themselves, which in turn may threaten states and civil society, damaging long-term economic development while compromise the rule of law (Jackson 2005: 41). Over the past decade, the role of Central Asia as a transport point has grown significantly. It has become the chief transportation route for narcotics from Afghanistan moving towards Russia, Eastern and the Western Europe. Afghanistan's geographical contiguity with Central Asian States greatly facilitates drug trade through this region. The successful drug trade in the region permit to separatist, radical religious and terrorist activities that have already sprung up in Central Asia to become financially self-sufficient.

In the political sphere, the main threat is that the narcotics mafia is not interested in regional and national stability. The enormous profits received from the smuggling of narcotics are used for promoting forces that have an unhelpful influence on the states of the region and beyond. The problem of narcotics is connected with the problem of international terrorism and religious extremism. Funds from the sale of narcotics are one of the main sources of financing the radical organisations in the Central Asian region. In the economic sphere, the criminalisation of economy may become the main problem. Presently, this is one of the major threats to the economies of several Central Asian countries (Dmitriyenko 2004: 86). There has been a strong link between the drug trade and various factors involved in this process. Local farmers, criminal networks and revolutionary groups are involved in this process to generate funds to achieve their objectives. These groups are not inaccessible from each other though they operate at different levels.

As a result, “the Central Asian region from the mid-1990s onward saw a rapid increase of narcotics trafficking. Within several years, this had created huge social and political problems. On the societal level, addiction level grew rapidly, exacerbating an already precarious social institution. More alarmingly, non-state violent actors across the region managed to consolidate their position by financial gain from involvement in the drug trade and other emerging criminal operations- endangering the very survival of several states and weakening others. In parallel, state institutions in every state of the region, beyond, were affected by criminal infiltration-through corruption or the more serious practice of state capture, the wilful takeover of state institutions by individuals or groups connected to organized crime. By the early 2000s, it had become reasonably clear that the security of the region could not be understood without accounting for the drug trade and organized crime” (Cornell 2006: 38-39).

The five newly independent countries of Central Asia have become major drug production and trafficking centres, for which the region is increasingly in the danger of becoming "a new Colombia" (Turbiville 1992: 55). Illegal manufacture and expenditure of unprocessed drugs (raw Opium, cannabis) have long been a part of daily life for centuries in the region. However, the past decade has seen the commercialization and mass explosion of drug trafficking, as well as money laundering and the corruption that facilitates it.

A rising number of Central Asian are forced into the drug trade due to their failure to find legitimate means of living in their countries' shattered economics. The problem of unemployment paves the way for criminality, causing more social and political instability. Problems like lack of resources, growing corruption among law enforcement agencies etc. facilitate the activities of both drug trafficking and organised crime network. The illicit drug trafficking operation in Central Asia endangers not only of local population but also brings about negative implications for law and order, political, social and economic stability of the region. Drugs addiction damages physical, psychological and emotional health of whole sections of society. In this regards, Central Asian leaders have indicate concerns about the effect of narcotics trafficking on the stability and integrity of the region and the potential damage of related criminal activities to long term economic progress.

The growth of the trade across Central Asia and the general increase in the amount of drugs available in the region has facilitated drug addiction and gradually more serious problems in the region as well. From the 1990s, drug habit became more wide spread in Central Asia. Since independence, the numbers of drug users had gradually grown. Several factors contributed to this, including the breakdown of discipline and public order, the increasing presence of criminal groups active in society, easier access to drug. After the 9/11 events, the fight against terrorism, extremism and drug trade became the chief concern of internal and external policy of many countries. More often it began to be considered as a problem since drug trade residue the main factor of the growth of religious extremism and terrorism.

Drug trade is now regarding as one of the important factor risk family life and common social stability throughout Central Asia. All the Central Asian governments have articulated serious concern about rapid growth of HIV/AIDS associated with drug injection.

Drug trafficking is a major cause of non-traditional security threat affectation a serious danger to the security of Central Asian states. It is clear that Central Asian states were totally unqualified to deal with the threat posed by the proliferation of drugs and has no resources to pay for the massive economic and social costs associated with the problem. There is no shared regional understanding of the problem. Each country as substitute emphases only on its specific aspects. Those involved in the unlawful drug trade are interested in destabilizing the region to advance their goals. Drug money has and will support all sort of radical movement and terrorist organizations. The region can potentially become a major "hot spot". It is the high time that the world should pay closer concentration to this problem and helped out all these countries before it gets totally out of control. It requires a multi-prolonged approach on part of the state establishment of these states in fight the threat. Civil society can also play a significant role in this way in raising awareness of the negative penalty of drug compulsion.

The problems that threaten regional security in the Central Asia region include traditional as well as non-traditional risks and threats, terrorism, drug trade and illegal migration. Currently, Central Asian states which are characterized by a fragile state of stability in the face of many unresolved problems related to regional security are in the process of continuing their systemic transformation. Potential conflicts linked to

ethnicity still exist in several Central Asian states. Besides, there are other factors contributing for conflict situation such as territorial claims, international terrorists (Al-Qaeda, East Turkistan Islamic Movement etc), and dispute over sharing of waters and environmental problems. The differences in domestic and foreign policy of Central Asian countries contribute to the emergence of new controversial issues in interstate relations. For example, cross-border disputes between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, including enclaves in the Ferghana Valley, occur periodically (Dolzhikova 2008: 59).

In addition to significant conflict potential between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan (revolving around border territories, water sharing, and Uzbek Communities that are perceived as a threat in Turkmenistan), narco-trafficking and organized crime are major security concerns (Badykova 2005:76). Inefficient public administration and a combination of other factors like different models of state management (both formal/informal and traditional), contributed to corruption and widening the gulf between rich and poor thus resulting in wide dissatisfaction among the citizens. Against this background, public services are now in a state of underdevelopment, government agencies are becoming more like corporations and their effectiveness is extremely low (Dolzhikova 2008: 55). One of the main problems is the lack of credibility of the authorities in the society. Most of the Central Asian regimes have minimum credibility in the society. Due to the weakness of civil society there is limited participation in the political process as well.

Environment and Shortage of Water

Environment and water is taking on special importance in Central Asia. With the Semipalatinsk (the main Soviet nuclear test site), Baikanour (the principle Soviet space launch site), other metal mines, a booming hydrocarbons industry, many chemical plants, one of the world's largest aluminium factories and disturbingly high morbidity rates for a range of environmentally-linked maladies. Central Asia has been facing an environmental disaster (Turbiville 1992:55). However, Kazakhstan's Nevada Semipalatinsk movement had over a million members in 1990 and was effective in closing down Kazakhstan's largest nuclear site. Likewise, with the quickly shrinking Aral Sea, an immense cotton industry, huge desert, advancing desertification, concern over potable water, the dying Caspian Caviar trade, despite having one of the world's longest

rivers, and the fourth deepest lake in the world, Central Asia's water problems have been complex and compelling (Sievers 2002: 357).

Water is the key to the economic and political stability of Central Asia. It is well known that the reduced inflow of river waters from Amu Darya and Syr Darya had caused the Aral Sea to shrink. The shrinking of the Aral Sea has already become an emotional issue. The Aral Sea has shrunk by almost 30% over the past two decades (Sengupta 2009). Growth of agricultural activity with high water demand, related to cotton production, continues excessive water diversion for irrigation purposes from the Amu Darya River. Today, over 55 million people live in Central Asia with about 60 million hectares of land suitable for irrigation but the available water resource permit irrigation of only 10-12 million hectares, and that is already approaching the limit. By 2025, according to demographic estimates, this population may increase to 90 million. In order to meet the needs of the increased population it would be necessary to increase significantly the sowing areas for the production of food crops. In order provide jobs, new industries and work places will have to be created. Housing and public utilities will have to be enlarged. All this will require increase in the total water supply in the Central Asian Countries (Dmitriyenko 2004).

Water problems is governed by the change in the geo-political situation in the Central Asian region where the main river basins have trans-border character and the utilisation of their flow should take place according to a system agreed upon by the countries with common borders. The problem of water supply and joint utilisation of trans-border water resources has been one of the main potential factors of conflict, posing a real threat to the security of the Central Asian States. But it can very quickly take ethno-political colours and become a reason for spreading radical nationalistic feeling. That is why it is essential for each state not only to be extremely careful and constantly coordinate its actions with all other states, but it is also necessary to create authoritative collective bodies for searching compromise solutions and maintaining stability (Dmitriyenko 2004: 85). In this context water distribution system could entail serious destabilising potential to regional security.

Central Asian upstream countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, along the two major rivers of the region Amu Darya and Syr Darya prefer to maximize the use of the water for producing electricity for export and to meet domestic energy demands, especially

in the winter. They want to build new dams in order to provide a consistent supply of cheap and clean electricity to their populations as well as to their economies. At the same time, the downstream countries, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, have a preference to have maximum access to water for irrigation during the summer months, while also avoiding the floods caused by winter water releases. “They fear that new large dams will diminish the amount of water available for irrigation and further strengthen the control over water resources by upstream countries” (Krasznai 2009).

This preference of upstream countries to maximizing water resources lead to fear on the downstream countries and have been significantly challenging the regional security in Central Asian region. However, to manage with these inter-relationships in regional trade, the Central Asian governments have resorted to bilateral and multilateral agreements that control the qualities of water and energy (coal, electricity, and gas) that are exchanged between the countries and the standards at which they are exchanged.

There is a long history of mistrust and tension between Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan with respect to water and border issues. Both countries rely on water from the Amu Darya River for wide-ranging agricultural irrigation. This water sharing has been regulated by the bilateral Treaty of 1996, which stipulates that the Amu Darya's water be divided equally between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Afghanistan's prospective utilization of more Amu Darya water to develop agriculture and poppy crop alternatives could also threaten the delicate water balance between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Badykova 2005: 74).

In addition, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, in view of the limited reserves of oil and gas on their territory, are vitally interested in exploiting the energy potential formed in the upper reaches of the water resources. At the same time, an overwhelming part of the land suitable for agriculture is concentrated on the territory of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, which objectively determines the interest of these countries in the working of an irrigation regime for the utilisation of the water resources in the region (Dmitriyenko 2004: 84-85).

However in this regards, in February 1992, the Central Asian states signed the agreement “On Cooperation in the Area of Joint Management, Use and Protection of Water Resources of Interstate Sources”, establishing the Interstate Water Resources Coordination Committee (IWRCC) to manage joint cross-border water resources. The

Central Asian countries also signed the agreement "On Synergistic Actions Aimed at Solving Problems of the Aral Sea and Aral Area, Environmental Recovery, and Socio-economic Development of the Aral Region", proclaiming the collective responsibility for creating appropriate environmental conditions in the Aral area (Badykova 2005: 74). These rules were later accepted by the heads of states during meeting in 1994 in Nukus (Uzbekistan), in 1995 in Dashouz (Turkmenistan), and in 1997 in Almaty and Tashkent. Experience has also shown, however, the agreement cannot totally resolve tension among upstream and downstream water users (Paramonov 2006: 35).

Indeed, Sievers (2002) analysis that the water conflicts in Central Asia may work to reduce regional stability in two major ways. First, they may lead to open conflicts among states. Second, they may internally fail states so that such states lose the ability to address non-state threats to constancy, such as those presented by terrorist networks, drug cartels, and separatist movements.

Caspian Sea and Ideological Conflicts

The Caspian Sea has been one of the richest oil regions of the world. The energy wealth of the Caspian Sea is becoming a cause of the conflict of geo-political and geo-economic interest of many states, oil consumers, as well as large multinational companies and a number of international organizations. The interests of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan clash in the Caspian region since their territories touch the Caspian Sea. At the same time, Tajikistan, Armenia, Georgia, Turkey, Pakistan and the Countries of South-East Asia want to profit from the transportation of hydrocarbons. The problem is becoming serious because the legal status of the Caspian Sea remains unresolved thus complicating the mutual relations of the Caspian states. Central Asia region has been a zone where various forces pursue dwell-aimed policies. After 9/11 events in the US, by carrying out anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan and making use of complex inner political and economic situations in the countries of the region (Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan) American was able to strengthen its military and political influence in Central Asia. For Central Asia, any form of confrontation among the above-mentioned states, especially a Russia-US confrontation, poses the threat of fragmentation of the region into adversarial camps which in turn presupposes narrowing down of the field of manoeuvring in their external relations, which can have a rather negative effect on their

national interest (Dmitriyenko 2004: 83-84). In this respect, Central Asian Security has very much to do with the geo-economic interest of the Central Asian Republics.

In this regard, another obstacle to regional security in Central Asia is that 'in the present geopolitical environment, the region has been showing to the conflicting ideologies, namely, Western democratic movements, Soviet ideological trends (the quasi-democratic), and Islamic ideological tendencies. The US and other European countries want to see liberal democratic states in the region. At the same time countries like Russia and China have confident and supported the existing regime without worrying about the question of democracy. In addition, countries like Saudi Arabia have been helpful of Islamic ideological trends in this region. These conflicting ideological trends add to the existing problems now a day's which are facing all the Central Asian Republics (Roy 2009: 94).

The issue of extremism and terrorism pose a grave threat to the stability of Central Asia. Reducing Islamic terrorist movements in the region due to the ongoing anti-terrorist operations in Afghanistan has been a serious challenge to the Central Asian security. In general, the problem does not lie in the existence of radical Islamic groups, but in the possibility of expanding their social and ideological base. A number of structural units of international terrorist organizations, containing the Islamic Party of Turkmenistan, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, East Turkistan Islamic Movement, Jammāt Mujahideen and Hizb-ut-Tahrir operate in the region. These clandestine groups are particularly active in the territory of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, mostly due to the socio-economic and political instability in these countries (Dolzhikova 2008: 59).

One of the major security challenges in Central Asian region is that, with scarce financial and material resources and old-fashioned armaments and structures inherited from the Soviet Union, Kyrgyzstan has limited defence potential. This was apparent during the IMU incursions into Batken Oblast in 1999-2000. Currently, no real regional security systems exist (Slay 2005: 43). This reflects deep competition between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan over regional leadership issues, 'different perceptions of potential threats, unresolved sensitive security issues (enclaves, demarcation of borders, shared natural resources, etc.) and differing assessments of other countries security potential'. The situation worsened considerably after the 1999-2000 events in Batken, when

Uzbekistan planted mines along its borders with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Many Kyrgyz shepherds and livestock have been killed by these mines (Ibid).

Political Structure and Challenges to Regional Security

The mistake of the regional actors is at first view one of the main problems to the regional stability in Central Asia. “Political structures in Central Asia are still rather weak with battered economies that make the Central Asian states weak both politically and financially. Drug traders prefer to conduct their business in or through weak states and if possible takeover crucial elements of the state apparatus. The drug trade has impacted the regional stability and national cohesion negatively in Central Asia. The current states are weak and the national identities are not strong enough to create effective and solid states. The clans still have an important power position in the region at the expense of the national governments. For the region to integrate into regional organizations, this creates difficulties, because the states are neither strong nor confident enough to engage in regional organizations. The perception is that any limitation of national jurisdiction can initiate the division of the states in the region. It has also proven especially difficult to engage in multilateral cooperation without any external powers such as Russia or China” (Swanstrom 2004:41-42).

Economic growth is now being known as a necessary tool for ensuring stability and security to the nation as well as region. At present, one of the most dangerous tendencies in Central Asia is the growth of disintegration processes in the region. Different approaches to the reformation of the economy, differences in perceptions about the paths and degree of integration within the framework of Central Asian Republics and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), setting a part of interests of various states participating in the formation of the regional security system in Central Asia etc. have acted as the strongest factors for the intensification of potential disintegration processes in the region. It may be noted that many intra-and inter-regional unions (e.g. Central Asian Union) were playing mainly the deliberative functions, and were not able to become organisations capable of resisting the disintegrative tendencies and take practical decisions to resolve the differences and contradiction between participating states, particularly in relations to the problems of water utilisation, borders etc (Dmitriyenko 2004: 87).

For instances, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have adopted comparatively open and democratic free-market systems, while Uzbekistan, not willing to reform its political institutions, has a relatively closed economy. Turkmenistan is a severe case of an authoritarian state which has returned to medieval tyranny. The leader of Uzbekistan though points to essential to fight the Islamic threat, facilitate market reforms and 'prepare' the society for democracy. Tajikistan government was unable to control country's situation due to regional and clan-based clashes (Tabyshalieva 2000: 80).

Domestic policies and developments in each of the Central Asian countries have the possible to affect indirectly, but strongly, other countries in the region, even if these policies are not planned to do so. An extreme example is the civil conflict in Tajikistan in the 1990s, which caused flows of refugees into Kyrgyzstan and further north, changed the security condition in the region and smashed the region's investment and pleasant appearance so on. The governments of Central Asia had no capacity to successfully control cross-border movements of people, goods, and capital. The lack of experience of the newly created government structures with very short institutional memories attached with governance deficiency (corruption, lack of responsibility, etc.) produce substantial gaps between policy and performance. Therefore, domestic policies that create large differences (e.g., between internal and export prices, higher taxes than in neighbouring countries, subsidized vs. market prices across the border, etc.) vis-a-vis neighbouring countries generate negative feedback (Slay 2005:43). This condition creates spill over effect on the issues of regional security in the Central Asian countries. This shows the extent of challenges of regional security to the Central Asian Countries.

Recurrent threats of political destabilization superimpose on a whole range of unresolved socio-economic problems. Poor market infrastructure and lack of an effective and stable economic development strategy create low investment attraction of Central Asian economies. In addition to purely domestic factors, there are number of regional issues, which threaten the security of the region. Various forms of extremism and terrorism, usage of drugs and drug trafficking and illegal migration across Central Asia are already having negative impact on Central Asia's security (Dolzhikova 2008:51).

Socio-economic situation is the main determining factor of internal political stability in Central Asia. This factor is important for regional political stability given that all the Central Asian countries, apart from Kazakhstan, have been going through difficult economic situation. Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan continue to experience serious problems in their economic and social development, which have a direct negative impact on social and political stability in these countries (Dolzhekova, 2008: 51-52).

Economic problems remain unresolved to a large extent. In case of Tajikistan, civil war destroyed the entire economic infrastructure. In other cases, it has been lack of resources, complex structure of the economy, and shortage of skilled manpower due to brain drain, poor governance and corruption, which crippled the economic manageability. Agrarian sectors of the economies of the region were unable to reform. Almost all the Central Asian States have serious problems in agriculture, which remains the most sensitive sector of their economies. Since this sector employs too many people, radical reform measures could lead to severe social and economic costs.

In each of the countries of the region, a major chunk of population is employed in agriculture, which was originally having a low yield. Rate of unemployment and poverty in Central Asia remains relatively high due to the low efficiency of agriculture, small crop area, and low degree of industrial mechanization, collapse of industrial sector and rapid population growth. There is a problem of weak state control over economies in varying degrees. In some cases, the economy still remains under the influence of elite groups which actually have privatized some assets besides creating obstacles to positive changes in the economy as it could affect their status. The overwhelming majority of these states have not yet completed the reform of their governance system which in turn determines the development of the state and political organisms (Dolzhekova, 2008: 52-53).

Thus, relations between the states of the Central Asian region, as they are at present, cannot be called sufficiently efficient. Excessive obsession with independence, unjustified competition and less regard for mutual requirements-these and other factors do not facilitate mutually beneficial cooperation. As a result, the regional economic union has not been sufficiently developed (Dmitriyenko 2004: 89).

Chapter-3

Role of external powers and regional security issues in Central Asia

Geopolitical scenario in Central Asia

Central Asia has emerged as a geo-strategically significant region since its inception in 1991. Central Asia borders with strategically most important regions of the Eurasian continent. China and the countries of the Asia-Pacific region are situated on its east while on the western front, the Caucasus, Turkey, Europe and Russia are situated. Afghanistan, West Asia and a number of other Islamic states are situated on its southern border.

Alexander von Humboldt introduced the concept of Central Asia is a divergent region of the world in 1843. However, the boundaries of Central Asia were substance to several definitions for a long time. But after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, the most common meaning of Central Asia contains all the five Central Asian successor states which are Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. There are many factors which are responsible for their common regional identity. First, these states share not only geographical contiguity and wide common borders, but also cultural and linguistic attractions as well as a common heritage. Second, their history shows that there has been political unity among them. Third, there have been close economic interaction between them as well (Kembayev 2009: 186-187).

One of the notable Geographers and Geo-politicians, Sir Halford Mackinder in his Paper on "The Geographical pivot of History" presented in London on January 25, 1904 described Eurasian region of the world as the Heartland. Through Heart land theory, he also established the importance of Central Asia in the world politics. This idea would become the foundation of his contribution to geostrategic discourse. Central Asia's dominant position is at the junctions of Eurasia. For example, earlier US official Zbigniew Brzezinski was adequately impressed by the change in the external links of Central Asian Countries by the autumn 1997 to call for a US strategy to "consolidate and perpetuate the prevailing geopolitical pluralism on the map of Eurasia" in order to

shape a new “cooperative trans-Eurasian Security System” in the future (Jonson and Allison 2001: 3).

The newly independent states of Central Asia have diversified political and economic interests such as favourable geographical position, huge stocks of hydrocarbons and other precious minerals which attract the attention of world powers. Due to these factors, after the emergence of new states in Central Asia following Soviet disintegration in 1991, the entire geopolitical, economic and security landscape of Eurasia has changed. Its importance has been growing as an alternate to West Asian energy and the vast Eurasian landmass is attractive with regards to security, energy and strategy. Such important strategic and geopolitical factors have played a significant role in wide deliberations over developing a regional security mechanism for the Central Asian region, which today has the most significant geopolitical significance in international relations. Territories of the region represent a zone in-between the East and the West. This has resulted in making external powers such as Russia, China and United States, Turkey and Iran attracted towards Central Asian region. In this regard, regional security is a system factor in Central Asian integration. The role of major external powers like Russia, China and the US and their influence need to be evaluated from the perspective of traditional security of Central Asia.

The external powers included in Central Asian states are regarded regional powers insofar as they engage in the region. The policies of Russia, China, Turkey, Iran and the United States in Central Asia are discussed in the geopolitical scenario. The new relations evolving between these states and Central Asian states can be characterised as “resulting from historical and cultural affinities, economic interests, security concerns and strategic interests”. The historical and cultural affinities are reflected for example in Turkey’s role in all Central Asian states except Tajikistan, Iran’s role in Tajikistan, the Russian role in Kazakhstan and are also based on Soviet experience throughout Central Asia. The economic interests, which are based in the form of trade, investments and the exploitation of energy resources (for example Iran’s evolving economic and transit trade cooperation with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan; China’s growing trade with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan; Turkish and US investments in the regional economies overall and the energy interests of all the regional powers). Security concerns, which depend on the degree to which the security of the external powers is

directly linked to the Central Asian region. Russia, China and Iran share borders with Central Asian states, which creates a direct interest in the region strategic interests. These interests also stem from the visions of the regional powers about their role in Central Asia. The strategic interests of external powers may combine goals such as maintaining the status quo, denying the strategic access of other powers or increasing their own influence in Central Asia (Jonson and Allison 2001:14-15).

Russia and regional security in Central Asia

Central Asia has always been of specific significance to Russia by advantage of its strategic geographic situation and its prosperity of natural resources. Only when Moscow had stable situations in the Central Asian region was she able to apply much influence in the development of a favourable balance of powers and securities in Eurasia. It is apparent that the accomplishment of these strategic purposes is directly connected to a drive for multilateral collaboration among Russia and the states of Central Asia in the security sphere. “The central aim of this cooperation would be the formation of an effective security system in the post-Soviet space and its Central Asian sector. Strengthening regional security with the active participation of Moscow is also vitally important for all the countries of Central Asia” (Paramonov and Stolpovski, 2008).

The Central Asian states had no significant degree of enthusiasm for independence. Although, Central Asian countries might have been unhappy about the role of USSR but they had no willingness for independence because of deep economic dependency on Moscow and the enormous problems of managing resources and development. Leaders were more concerned about issues like eruption of nationalism, ethnic conflict and their escalation. There were also concerns about the military/security situation as the Central Asian republics did not have a worthwhile military of their own (Hooman 1998: 27).

Many scholars in the mid-90s thought that Russia was returned to play the role and impact it had lost after the Soviet Union broke up and the Central Asian republics became independent countries. Russia back to the region was during second half of the 1990s after years of rapid though involuntary disengagement by Russia. It was losing influence in the economic, political, cultural and security spheres. While it continued

to be the strongest external power in Central Asia and a key player with regard to security in the region, its position as a 'security guarantor' in Central Asia was diluted as other external actors became more engaged. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Russian experts exaggerated the significance of factors which would induce Central Asia to maintain close cooperation with Russia. Most analysts believed that "the geographic location, common history, mutual production systems, infrastructure and institutions, and old dependences on Russian financial subsidies and on the Russian market would guarantee a continued interest in extensive cooperation with Russia. They also believed that a shared identity and common values, derived from a long history of cohabitation, had continued the break-up of the Soviet Union. These assumptions are said to be overstated" (Jonson and Allison 2001).

Russia observed with concern as countries on its southern border were new independently-minded states and were instigated to cooperate and change their direction away from Russia. Uzbekistan became the most keen to enter into support with USA. Turkmenistan restricts its military collaboration with Russia on the ground of its position, recognised by the UN General Assembly, of 'permanent neutrality'. As Russia saw its importance in Central Asia weakening, it frightened that it would be displaced by the engagement of external powers in the region.

Realising its loosening influence over Central Asian region, which Russia viewed it as its own 'backyard', Russia struggled to find a policy to counter its detachment from the region (Jonson 2001: 95). The major security concerns of Russia from the Central Asian region were also non-military security threats and challenges concerning to terrorism, religious extremist, drug-trafficking, flow of weapons, and refugees from south bound for Europe. Russia was also facing challenges to maintain its own security and territorial integrity as well as protection of Russian minorities in Central Asia which were affecting Russia's stability. The Taliban and Al Qaeda in Afghanistan also based long-term political, security and economic challenges to Russia. Strong linkage among Chechen insurgents and Al Qaeda/Taliban forces, with purposes other than religion to advantage control over oil resources worried Russia. As a result, Russia was more reliable about opposing the Taliban than the Americans.

Russia's interest in Central Asia can also be seen in the strategic and security sphere. The peace and stability of Central Asian countries, which function as a buffer for

Russia, is one main security concern. Russia's first military doctrine released in May 1992, indicated at the threat to Russian security based on local and regional conflicts and wars erupting along Russia's borders. In this regards, a declaration on CIS collective peacekeeping force in Tajikistan was signed September 1993 between Russia and three Central Asian states (Jonson 2001: 99-100).

It would be worth noting that after the outbreak of civil war in Tajikistan in 1992, Russia had made military presence along the Afghan border there. The crisis in Tajikistan was characterized as an external threat emanating from war ridden Afghanistan. Subsequently, Russia has become more conscious of the significance of Central Asia to its own securities. Resultantly, Russia started seeking security related cooperation through bilateral and multilateral arrangements. Multilateral cooperation is understood primarily within the structure of such organisations as the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

Central Asian region remains important to Russia by advantage of its strategic geographical position and its prosperity of natural resources. Russia could exert much impact in the progress of a favourable balance of forces and securities in Eurasia only when it had stable positions in the region. So Russia's main aim has been to cooperate in the evolution and creation of an operative security system in the region. Similarly strengthening regional security with Russia's active involvement is also extremely significant for all the countries of Central Asia region.

Despite regional organizations, bilateral engagements are the basis of Russia's Central Asia policy, both in the security as well as economic spheres. Bilateral agreements linked the Central Asian states to Russia, though some scholar have pointed out that this web of relations has been slowly undermined. Security relationships among Russia and Central Asian countries can also be seen in marked ups and downs which have determined their foreign policy initiations in order to protect their national interests. On the other hand, Russian foreign policy has also been determined by external power diplomacy and alternative engagements by Central Asian states.

It would be appropriate to deliberate upon Russia's bilateral engagement with each country of the Central Asian region. Uzbekistan is the most populous and militarily powerful state in the region. In early 1990s, Uzbekistan appeared to be Russia's closest

military ally. However, military cooperation reduced due to the course of events in Tajik civil war during the period of 1992-1997.

Uzbekistan's denial of renewing its participation in the Tashkent Collective Security Treaty in February 1999 was regarded as disagreement with Russia's military activity in certain states of the CIS'. At the same time Uzbekistan became a member of GUUAM grouping (composed of Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova) (Jonson 2001: 105). This changed policy moves were seen as an evolving anti-Russian military bloc on former Soviet territory by Russian strategic analysts.

Russia was encouraged to seek cooperation with Central Asian countries given that these nations remain a potential sources of power for the future as well as are strategically significant. The framework for cooperation initiated in May 1998 between Russia, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, with the purpose of preventing the spread of aggressive fundamentalism and extremism in the region may be viewed as an effort to find a new basis for cooperation with Uzbekistan as well as Tajikistan (Jonson 2001: 105).

Turkmenistan never joined with the Treaty of Collective Security and there is no Russian military presence on Turkmen territory. Since Turkmenistan has been given "permanent neutrality" status by the United Nations, it limited its military co-operation with Russia. But Turkmenistan received Russian assistance to build up its national army after the break-up of the Soviet Union. Similarly, Russian border guards continued to patrol the Turkmen-Afghan border until the end of 1999. In May 1999, the Turkmen side unilaterally announced its decision to end of Russia-Turkmenistan treaty guarding the on border.

Central Asia appeared as a "pivotal to the renewed interest in the near abroad. When Putin became prime minister in 1999, Russian foreign policy towards Central Asia became more pro-active than at any time previously" (Cummings 2001). As a president, he first went to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in May 2000 as a president, while describing Russian-Uzbek relations for a 'strategic partnership' (Jonson 2001). Tajikistan become even much more reliant on Russia under Putin. In June 2000, Tajikistan's President Rahmanov confirmed that "a Russo-Tajik treaty had been signed, giving Russia the right to establish military bases in Tajikistan. In addition, Putin has placed the Caspian at the heart of Russia's pragmatic interests. In July 2000 a joint

company composed of LUK oil, Gazprom and Yukos was created to develop Caspian Sea resources” (Cummings 2001).

China and regional security in Central Asia

After the end of the Cold War with the return of geo-politics back on the agenda, “Eurasia turned into a competition ground for influence and one of the potential players was China. In order to benefit from the power vacuum in the region, it wisely arranged its steps. Besides bilateral relations with Russia referring to a discourse of multipolarity, China, by turning to Central Asia for the first time since the Mongol dynasty and the Great Silk Road, sought to fulfil its ‘Grand Strategy’ that consists of three main objectives; economic development, security and superpower status”. For these conclusions, it referred to “the ethos of the Five Principles of Peaceful Co-Existence that emphasize sovereignty, the diversity of political systems, non-interference, equality and mutual benefits”(Yahuda 2001:276). Therefore, the relations mainly with the Central Asian Countries and Russia was established and still found a significant portion of China’s international objectives, both in terms of politics and economics.

The significance of Central Asia in the judgments of China generally followed from its new security conceptualizations. During the Cold War, China remained within the ‘zero-sum perception’ of its security relations with the external world. “However, China’s security concept appears more pragmatic and accommodative to the outside world since the end of the Cold War. Indeed, the period of 1982-1991 was an exceptional time with its best security environment for China, due to the détente between the two superpowers and Moscow’s approach to Beijing for reconciliation”. In this period, one can distinguish several implications of revising the inherited security concept of China. Economic and technological issues started to achieve great importance from the perspective of Chinese leadership that necessitated an adaptation to international rules. In addition, “China started to take part in discussions on multiparty security regimes, to cooperate with neighbouring states on transnational security problems (such as negotiations on border disputes with the Soviet Union) suggesting a departure from its isolationist conception due to its understanding of multilateralism”.

Since the disintegration of Soviet Union and independence of new republics of Central Asia, China has played a very constructive role in this region. It was one of the first nations to identify the newly independent states of Central Asia and established very good diplomatic relations with them in early 1990s. Since then China has had many security initiatives with regards to Central Asia such as negotiating territorial questions, the ongoing separatist movement in Xinjiang Province, decrease in the level of military existence in border region, as well as economic issues. With bilateral as well as multilateral cooperation with Central Asian states, China has been able to meet many of these concerns. Regarding border dispute settlement, it would be pertinent to note that China directly shares its borders with three Central Asian countries, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Because of regular consultations on these issues, border problems have been sorted out. However, in recent years China's main concern from this region has been the emergence of separatism, religious extremism, terrorism and their negative influence on its Xinjiang Province.

China has manifold long-term objectives with admiration to the development of its security concept. "Firstly, China desires to help secure its foreign policy environment at a time when Chinese government focused on sustaining economic development and political stability. Secondly, China wishes to promote economic exchange that assists China's economic development. Thirdly, China wants to calm regional fears and reassure Asian neighbours about how China will use its rising power and influence and lastly, China aims to boost its regional and international power and influence. In this context, stability, which also constitutes the basic logic of the Shanghai Five and later the SCO for its members and especially its initiator China, stands at a crucial point. At this point, with respect to the shift in China's strategic thinking and its implementations, its strategic interests, objectives and problems in Central Asia would be beneficial to dwell upon in order to comprehend the role of Central Asia for China's peaceful rise" (Robert 2004).

China measured the Central Asian countries in the context of Eurasia. In the views of China, "they have a linkage role, not only in a geographical sense, but also in the political and cultural sense. Therefore, Central Asia can be considered a bridge between East and West. If there were turbulence around that bridge, the future of political and economic cooperation in the whole Eurasian continent would be seriously affected. Political and economic cooperation with Central Asian states is therefore very important for China" (Xing 2001).

Secondly, “China considered its relations with the Central Asian states mainly with respect to the stability and development of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR). To suffice now, Beijing’s economic and geo-political strategy in Central Asia is directed, to a large extent, by its goals in Xinjiang. China clearly perceived and still perceives a growing problem of instability coming from the ethnic disputes within the Central Asian states”. Besides, the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the Central Asian states alarmed the security concerns of the Chinese government. Thus, “security and regional stability were closely linked for China as its national security rests on the concept of mutual security between China’ and its neighbour’s security interests due to the significance of Xinjiang. This was also related with the notion that a stable security environment would enable China in exerting its modernization efforts depended on its territorial integrity and national sovereignty” (Xing 2001).

However, given the 3000 km long borders with three Central Asian countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, it was not unexpected that China and the newly independent states had border disputes. In this respect, as early as 1986, “Mikhail Gorbachev had initiated a gradual rapprochement between China and the Soviet Union. At that time, there were several unsettled issues between the Soviet Union and China and one of them was the border question. An agreement of 1991 resolved the issue of the eastern part of the borders, but the question of the western part of the border was left unresolved”. In the post-Soviet era, “in February 1992, in Minsk, a decision was reached to set up a joint group with representatives from Russia and the three Central Asian countries and parties agreed to negotiate on the border areas in accordance with the general principles of the 1991 agreement”. In April 1994, “China and Kazakhstan had managed to sign an agreement concerning their joint 1700 km-long border. In September 1997 and July 1998 additional agreements were signed which resolved the Chinese-Kazakh border problems. Largely, on July 1996, China and Kyrgyzstan solved the issue of Chinese-Kyrgyz border” (Allison and Jonson 2001:153).

Thirdly, as another point out that “there should be added to the strategic concerns of China, one can easily articulate China’s growing economic momentum, coupled with its energy constraints that led the country to a search and diversification of resources. In this context, there is no doubt about the economic and geo-political importance of

Central Asian resources to China, which gives impetus to its modernization”. In other words, “China’s interest in Central Asia is motivated to a large extent by its need for energy resources (where) China’s economy is booming but its domestic oil and mining industries cannot keep pace with demand”. In this regard, considering its goals, production, investment and pipelines are among China’s priorities. “China would like to be a major operator/co-operator in front-line projects, especially in development activities, pipeline construction and technical services, as well as a major partner in other projects that match its interests.” Therefore, “although China was absent and weakened by internal decline when the Great Game for hegemony over Inner Asia unfolded in the late 19th century, with the socio-economic development of recent decades, it has transformed itself and grown as a major power in the world where a new and revised Great Game unfolds, especially in Central Asia” (Xu 1999:51-52).

China has a border of about 3000 km extended with three Central Asian states i.e. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In this respect, China started bilateral consultations with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan in first half of 1992 (Tajikistan dropped out from the negotiating process since it was facing civil war) with concern to the line of the borders and the disputed regions. According to Patnaik (2000), border disputes are unlikely to create any security crisis in the near future between Central Asian and China. Thus the border question is an important part of the relations between China, Russia and these three states. In 1992, parties decided to negotiate on the border areas in accordance with the general principles of the 1991 Sino-Soviet agreement (Xing 2001: 154).

Other than border security and stability, China's main concern from the Central Asian states was nuclear arsenal of Kazakhstan along its borders in the initial years of their independence. However, by 1995, Kazakhstan announced that it had either handed over all its warheads to Russia or destroyed them (Stobdon 2004: 346).

China's bilateral relationships with Central Asian countries with regards to regional security have been strategically significant. In this respect, Kyrgyzstan and China security relation is one of the most important concerns since Soviet dissolution. Due to sharing of border, they have structural links of instability in the Eurasian continent. That is why the state of relations between Kyrgyzstan and China is mostly defined at the level of stability, security and development. With this respect, the initial period of

the relationship was marked by the visit of Askar Akaev, the President of Kyrgyz Republic, to People's Republic of China in May 1992 and the reciprocal visit of Li Peng to Kyrgyzstan in April 1994. These visits confirmed aspirations of the two states to maintain harmonious relations, non-usage of force in any form against each other (Karabaeva 2004: 361). In 1996, China took initiative to address joint border issues with Central Asia. However, at the same time, China also signed a bilateral agreement with Kyrgyzstan to resolve the border issue in 1996 (Stobdan 2004: 348).

Military cooperation is one of the most important aspects of the Kyrgyz-Chinese cooperation. The 1999 illegal invasion by the terrorist groups into the southern territory of the Kyrgyz Republic was evidence of the danger and instability in the region. Kyrgyz military troops were supported by the CIS countries and China and thus managed to restore order and inviolability of the state border. Realising the threat of rising religious fundamentalism, both nations initiated a negotiation and confirmed their intent to "act against any form of separatism and not allow any separatist activity of any organization directed against the other side on their territory" (Karabaeva 2004: 362-63).

With regards to China and Tajikistan relationship, it is based on the principle of peace and tolerance. Starting with the establishment of diplomatic relations between Tajikistan and PRC on January 4, 1992, all the subsequent inter-state declarations reflect the equality of the two states as well as the compliance of both countries to solve their problems. For Tajikistan and China, fight against religious extremism is common challenge, but for China, Taiwan issue is also a problem. With the result, Tajikistan confirmed that it recognizes the Government of PRC as a single rightful Government of China (Assadoullaev 2004: 370-372). China played a positive role in stabilising the situation in Tajikistan during the critical decade of the 1990s in order to protect itself from becoming a weak formation under the impact of diverse political forces.

Uzbekistan-China relations are historical, dating back to centuries, which can be trace by the Great Silk Route. After collapse of Soviet Union, Uzbekistan has been pronounced as a 'central state' by many experts. Due to economic consideration both countries came closer in initial phase. China became one of the first countries of the world which accepted the independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan in December 27, 1991 and diplomatic relations between both countries were established in 1992. Since

1992, there have been high-level exchange visit of the President of Uzbekistan, I. Karimov, to Beijing during March 1992, October 1992 and in November 1999. Similarly, visits of the Chinese Premier, Li Peng in April 1994 and the Chinese President, in July 1996 to Uzbekistan, were very significant for the development of the political dialogue, which helped in mutual cooperation and establishment of trust between the leaders of two countries. After Uzbekistan joined the SCO in 2001, security issue in Central Asia and problems in the struggle with terrorism and extremism, have been the dominating features of relation between both countries (Kadirov 2004: 380-82).

Similarly, the security relation between Kazakhstan and China has been growing up gradually in the positive direction. The relations were strengthened since Kazakhstan is an emerging regional power because of its economic progress as well as moderate governing policies. A new era of cooperation between Kazakhstan and China began, which progressed from 'Development Cooperation' to 'Diplomatic Relations' to 'Strategic Partnership'. Through the framework of SCO, Kazakhstan is actively engaged with China in combating "three evil forces" of terrorism, separatism and extremism to ensure stability and territorial integrity.

China's relations with Turkmenistan are not as close as with other countries in Central Asia since it adheres to neutrality in foreign relations and abstains from any regional organization. It does not even belong to SCO. Nevertheless, China does have normal, friendly relations with Ashgabat. Turkmenistan has rich reserves of natural gas. It is also the only route from Central Asia to West Asia, the Middle East, and Europe (via Iran), making Turkmenistan very important in terms of energy and transportation links. Hence China seeks to develop good relations with Turkmenistan, especially with regard to trade and energy. The two countries have engaged in some cooperation in the energy field. In 2000, CNPC and the Oil Ministry of Turkmenistan signed a memorandum of understanding to cooperate on oil and natural gas (Zhao 2007: 178-179).

After 9/11 terror attacks, China's security concerns have been focused on mainly global terrorism, Islamic extremism and drug trafficking etc. It is of strategic significance that from 2001 onwards, China's fight against above mentioned that the threats was connected to the US presence in Central Asia and Afghanistan. In 1996, Shanghai five was the one of the most important organizations regarding regional security, in which

China was a leading member. With the membership of Uzbekistan in Shanghai five, it was known as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) since 2001. The SCO also signed an Agreement on Fight against Terrorism, Extremism and Separatism.

USA and regional security in Central Asia

Since the emergence of newly independent Central Asia republics, the United States has been playing a prominent role in improving regional security in this region. The United States has constantly expressed its preference for this area's economic, political and military improvement that could only be helped by a sustained or even highly enhanced American role. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, US policy concentrated on nuclear security, orchestrating the transfer of nuclear material remaining on Kazakh territory. But at that time broader American geo-strategic or security concerns in the region was less clear. Focus was mainly given to energy interest. Until 1994, USA interests were limited to economic and political pursuit. The military securities were not involved (Blank 2001: 127). The United States allowed Russia to deal with instability in Central Asia, which became evident when the US refrained itself from active involvement in negotiating the end of Tajik civil war (1992-1997). The United States did not respond to Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan as well.

In the mid-1990s, as “the intense US effort went into support for energy interests in Kazakhstan's oil and gas sector. However the United States had clear disagreements with Russia over preferred pipeline route” (Collins and Wohlfarth 2004: 44). Over time the USA instigated to take more action in interests of its security goals in the region. The importance shifted towards strengthening stronger and more independent countries in Central Asia. With the active support of the United States, a security arrangement was established known as GUAM (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova). With the membership of Uzbekistan in April 1999 GUAM were known as GUUAM. Security challenges posed by the rise of Taliban, Al Qaeda and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), during the period of 1998-2001, brought new urgency to address it. The United States since 2001 has concentrated on the issues of countering terrorism, preventing Islamic extremism, enhancing border controls, and fighting narcotics trafficking etc. and willing to address these with a regional security mechanism in the region.

After collapse of the Soviet Union, the US policy focused on nuclear security, arranging the transfer of nuclear weapons from Kazakhstan to Russia and safeguarding the nuclear material remaining on Kazakh territory. Once that pressing issue was addressed, “the US broader geo-strategic or security concerns in the region became less clear and policy drifted towards a focus on energy interests and consequently, the Caspian states. The absence of active US participation in negotiating the Tajik of Afghan civil wars in the early 1990s to mid-1990s and the lack of a concrete US response to Taliban's sweep across Afghanistan revealed Washington's willingness to let Russia deal with instability in the non-energy states of Central Asia” (Collins and Wohlforth 2004: 44).

In 1993 the State Department created a provisional structure to deal with Russia and other former Soviet states (a de-facto bureau), thereby consolidating policy formulation toward Central Asia and the rest of the Soviet Union in a single, separate bureaucratic structure. Goldgeier and McFaul, in their book (2003), *Power and Purpose*, pointed out, the passage of the Freedom Support Act in 1992 and the Cooperative Threat Reduction program in 1991 which was known as Nunn-Lugar legislation that provided funding under a common financing mechanism to support the development as well as independence of the former Soviet states in order to help these new states secure and eliminate weapons of mass destruction and components left over from the Soviet Union on their territories (Rumer 2007: 22).

However, during 1994-95, main goal of the United States was to reject the claims of Russia's monopoly over energy resources. US concern was to bring US model of liberal markets and democratic governance (Blank 2001: 130). As a result, in February 1995, the United States decided to support pipeline running through Georgia to Turkey from Azerbaijan. The United States developed interest in depriving Russia of its privileged position in Central Asia in order to eliminate its monopoly over the oil transportation from Central Asia to international markets in Europe and elsewhere. At the same time, United States did not want to create a situation, which might facilitate China's entry in the political space vacated by Russia in Central Asia. On the other hand, Russia also perceived the US as a counter-balance to China's expansionist policies towards Central Asia. China viewed the United States as a counter-balance to Russia's ambitions in Central Asia. Thus they needed to checkmate each other in the interest of the United States.

According to Rumer (2007), the United States promoted reforms which laid heavy emphasis on market institutions and democratic governance. These reforms were the product of two factors: the continuing resonance of James Baker's five principles for recognizing the recently independent countries of the former Soviet Union (containing the prominence of democratic values) and simultaneously, the widespread belief in the U.S. policy community in Fukuyama's "end of history."

The results of United States policy in promoting economic and political reform varied highly across Central Asia, depending on each country's domestic situations. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan embarked on ambitious political and economic reorganise programs, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan delayed it and Tajikistan descended into civil war. In addition to political and economic reform, the United States also implemented a new foreign policy orientation toward this region. This effort too reflected a general American preference for familiar structures and principles. Thus, the United States encouraged Central Asia to start and progress relations with the Euro- Atlantic security organisations such as North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) (Rumer 2007: 26-27).

The United States government issued the single most important official statement on its Central Asia policy in July 1997. The statement referred to the upcoming regional exercise that would bring together Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, the American, Turkish, and Russian troops in a joint exercise to "practice together their skills in minesweeping and distributing humanitarian aid". But that declaration did not contain a single reference to the Taliban at the very time that this new radical regime in Afghanistan was consolidating its power on the southern borders of Central Asia. But when it came to sufficient grounds to anchor America's engagement in Central Asia, security cooperation and assistance programs did not provide a compelling rationale to warrant a sustained, long-term commitment to the region. Central Asia proved to be among the least enthusiastic regional Partnership for Peace (PfP) programme of NATO (Rumer 2007: 28). Kazakhstan signed the NPT as a non-nuclear state in 1994, with all nuclear weapons being withdrawn from its territory by May 1995.

The 9/11 attacks transformed the subtle shifts in US policy into an all-consuming war on terror that drove a seriously extended involvement in Central Asia. Shortly after 9/11, 2001 attacks, US government started discussions with all five Central Asian states

to register their co-operation in the war on terror and specifically its operation against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. On October 7, 2001, both the United States and Uzbekistan signed an agreement following tough negotiations between the Department of Defence (DoD) as well as CENTCOM, and the Uzbek military and security services. The US agreed to a “long- term commitment to advance security and regional stability” in the Central Asia. After 9/11, the United States wanted to have air base in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The president of both nations quickly offered rights to their bases, despite their countries membership in the CIS (Nichol 2005).

However, according to US Congressional Research Service (CRS) report (2005), some experts argue that the creation of U.S. military bases in Central Asia has aggravated the strategic disparity within the region, with the states observing Uzbekistan as gaining military power from its U.S. ties. United States has somewhat addressed such concerns by emphasising its "non-permanent" basing arrangements and by strengthening military ties with most of the regional states. “Nonetheless, concerns about Uzbekistan's power have contributed to Tajikistan's countervailing ties with Russia, Turkmenistan's ties with Iran and Kyrgyzstan's and Kazakhstan's ties with Russia and China. Besides being stymied by tensions among the states, regional cooperation problems are potentially overstated by the formation of extra-regional cooperation groups such as the CSTO (a military secretariat set up in April 2003 in Moscow), PfP, and the SCO. Each group reflects the diverging interests of Russia, the United States, and China, although the fact that each group stresses anti-terrorism would seem to provide motivation for cooperation” (Nichol 2005).

All of the Central Asian countries have been faced with building small military and border forces. They have had difficulties with military financing and training but remain to depend on training and equipment ties with Russia. But after September 11, 2001, the states have profited from enhanced U.S. military training and equipment aid. Some observers noted that “the United States tried to restrict the SCO right after September 11, 2001, but efforts were inactive. China and Russia have looked to move slowly in bolstering the SCO, since some of the reasons for creating it aimed at countering terrorism and limit U.S. existence appeared less salient as the United States moved militarily into the region after September 11, 2001. Though raising concerns about how long the United States will sustain a military presence in the region, some Chinese

officials have even acknowledged that United States' anti-terrorism efforts have enlarged stability along China's borders" (Nichol 2005).

Iran and regional security in Central Asia

Right from the eighteenth century till the present times, Iran's neighbour in the north has been a source of continuous security concern. In this period, Iran witnessed not only the asendance of Russia as a major European power, culminating in its becoming a super power, but also saw the breakdown of the Soviet Union in 1990. Iran, being the weaker side, often played the classical game of power-balancing by relying on anti-Russian European states. Neither the Bolshevik revolution of 1917, nor the Islamic revolution of the 1979 changed the nature of this asymmetry; both relations, in fact, complicated this power relationship by adding an ideological dimension to it (Sayed Kazem 1994: 147). The breakdown of the Soviet Union has brought a new phase in the relationship between the newly independent Central Asian countries and Iran. After a long time the situation has changed in favour of Iran and it now enjoys more power than earlier.

Iran's policies towards the post-Soviet republics of Central Asia is largely determined by two sets of considerations. The first deals with security and political considerations while the second deals with cultural and economic considerations. As regards the security and political considerations, Iran has dealt with a volatile security environment from the north since 1991. Almost overnight, the number of its neighbours has increased from one to three on land and from one to four on the Caspian Sea, a situation experienced by no other country within the former Soviet Union (Kharazi 1992).

Iran is closer to the trouble spots of the intense ethnic conflicts in the Caucasus than any other country. Seen in this continuum, the unstable and fluid political situation in the Central Asian States has brought the security dimension in Iran's relationship with the newly independent Central Asian republic to the forefront. Various issues that are the source of instability in the Central Asian countries are nation building, rapid social and economic transformation, ethnic diversity, strengthening independence border disputes etc. continuing instability may invite foreign intervention in the region as well as an influx of new refugees into Iran, for which the country is by no means prepared (Ruiz 1992).

Iran is also concerned because of military issues. Questions regarding the borders of the new republics, future of CIS army are yet to be answered. Changing geopolitical situation after the end of Cold War in the world has also added new security issues for Iran. As the West searches for a new enemy after the Cold War, there has been much talk of Iran as a major threat to regional stability and the need for its Containment (Morrett 1992).

Iran's policy towards the newly independent countries is also shaped by cultural and economic considerations. There are deep historical ties between Iran and Central Asia. For centuries, Central Asia, as a part of greater Khorasan, was one of the two pillars of the Islamic Civilizations, the other being Baghdad (Frye 1965). Great Iranian philosophers like Farabi, Avicenna and Rudaki were born in the areas which are now part of Central Asia. Islam is a common cultural denominator between Iran, Central Asia and the Caucasus. The latter region served as a training ground for many Iranian advocates of social democracy during the constitutional revolution of 1905-11 (Bayat 1991:36). Economic considerations also influence Iran's policy decisions towards Central Asia. These five countries are an important market for Iranian made consumer goods. Being landlocked republics, the Central Asian countries look to Iran as a natural gateway to the seas. Iran's well developed oil industry can provide technical assistance to these republics.

Iran's policy with respect to the Central Asian countries is based on three pillars: the first is security in the Persian Gulf and cooperation with the northern neighbours (Stephen 1992). The second factor that determines Iran's policy is the changing domestic situation in these republics and the new international events. Thirdly, Iran gives Russia central importance in making its policy towards Central Asia. Iran is fully aware of Russia's actual and potential power in the CIS, and is careful not to pursue policies that could jeopardize its relationship with Moscow (Garsoian 1983).

Iran, however has certain limitations because of which the Central Asian Countries do not look to Iran with complete confidence. Iran is not capable to undertake large scale investments in mega energy projects to meet the energy needs of Central Asia. Iran and Turkey are strong competitors on the basis of historical and cultural ties with Central Asia. Moreover they have different views on economic integration with Central Asia. Both Iran and Tehran are suspicious of each other's activities (Ertan and LeonardIran

2001). Iran accuses Turkey of spreading its influence under the garb of "Pan- Turkism." Turkey also views Tehran's linkage with radical Islamic groups with suspicion. Turkey has formed the Black Sea Common market whereas Iran is promoting the Caspian Sea Council. Iran's problems are compounded because it is isolated from the international community. United States and its non-regional allies are hostile to Iran. Russia also gets perturbed by Iran's moves to compete with Russia in the affairs related with Central Asia (Bigdeli, 1999). Iran does so in spite of the fact that Russia is one of the main trading partners and military suppliers of Iran. Under these circumstances, it would be prudent on the part of Iran not to disturb such a relationship.

A significant strategic rationale also occurs for Iran to develop diplomatic relations with the region. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, the United States improved its military existence in the region dramatically. "With bases in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and significant numbers of U.S. troops in Iraq, Iran found itself diplomatically isolated and nearly surrounded by U.S. armed forces. Antagonistic relations between the United States and Iran created a motivation for Tehran to foster close ties with its neighbours in Central Asia in order to guarantee its security and economic interests" (IRNA 2005). Because stability in Afghanistan is serious for the security of the region, Iran's leadership has stressed that a continued international presence in Afghanistan is necessary under United Nations (UN) supervision. The states of Central Asia view that Iran as a central actor in Afghanistan and key to economic growth and trade in the region, but have deep concerns regarding Iran's developing nuclear capacity and regional ambitions.

Stability in Afghanistan is a key interest for Iran and it informs Iran's policy toward Central Asia. "During the early 1990s, Iran and the Central Asian states shared a common interest in fighting Pashtun fundamentalist domination of Afghanistan. The fundamentalist Sunni Pashtuns were known for their harassment of the Shia minorities of Afghanistan, leading Iran to lend its support to the Shia Hazara faction and the Persian-speaking Tajiks" (Rashid 2000:200).

After the overthrow of Kabul by the Taliban, the regional security condition quickly worsened. The 1998 murder of nine Iranian diplomats by the Taliban created a disturbance in Iran, bringing Iran and Afghanistan close to war. Anger at the militant group led Iran to place 270,000 troops on the border with Afghanistan in a threat to

attack. “Although tensions did not intensify into conflict, relations between the Taliban and Iran remain extremely hostile. In an effort to challenge the Taliban, Iran sent weapons through Tajikistan to the Northern Alliance forces in Afghanistan beginning in the mid-1990s. Iran, Tajikistan, India, and Russia shared a similar goal of assisting Ahmad Shah Massoud during that time and they played complementary roles in combating the Taliban. However, Pakistan also became the focus of Iranian ire: The Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) was well known to have been supporting the Taliban and Pakistani militants had been involved in the murder of the Iranian diplomats in 1998” (Deutsche Presse-Agentur, 1999).

Turkey and regional security in Central Asia

In the initial years, the Central Asian countries were looking to the neighbouring states having historical, cultural, religious and ethnic affinity with them so that they could break free from total dependence on Russia. These states in turn hoped to take advantage of the geopolitical vacuum and spread their influence in the region. These countries include Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Afghanistan. Islam being the common denominator, the Muslim states were considered to be the natural partners of Central Asia (Anderson 1997).

The emergence of independent states in Central Asia after the disintegration of the USSR gave Turkey a golden opportunity to influence these countries in political, economic and other issues. When President Gorbachev of USSR launched his radical and far reaching reforms in 1985, none expected that the political conditions in Central Asia would change so drastically so as to enable Turkey to emerge as a potential key player in the region. Within 6-7 years of Gorbachev's historic far reaching policies the USSR disintegrated and Turkey found itself in a new set of circumstances that gave it an opportunity to reassert its significance for the West in the Post-Cold War period.

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, Turkey suddenly became involved in the Central Asian region. Turkish officials have tended to recognise Central Asia as “encompassing Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Uzbek populated territory in northern Afghanistan and Xinjiang in western China

which is inhabited by large numbers of Turkic Uighurs. Emphasizing the prominence of so-called common ethnic, linguistic, cultural and religious ties, policy makers in Ankara have concentrated on the four mainly Turkic states in Central Asia and less attention to largely Farsi-speaking Tajikistan, in spite of the substantial Uzbek minority there” (Jonson and Allison 2001).

Turkey's potential as “an important player in Central Asia stemmed mainly from the common ethnic, linguistic and religious ties between the Turks in Turkey and nearly 50 million Turkic people who lived in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan and constituted 85 per cent of former Soviet Union's Muslim Population” (Akiner 1987). However, the collapse of Soviet Union marked a major shift in Turkey's policy towards the former Soviet Muslim republics. It now began to establish links with the Turkish republics. Thus, for example when he went to Moscow in March 1991 to sign a Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation with Gorbachev, Turkish President Turgut Ozal visited Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Ukraine (Winrow 1992).

Turkey is interested in Central Asian Countries because of regional security issues. Turkey is apprehensive about the violent conflicts and instability near its southern and western border in the conditions of the new international disorder that has replaced the relatively stable and predictable condition of the Cold War. Currently, Turkey faces many crisis situations close to its borders. In the south, it is confronted with an unstable situation in Iraq, where although Saddam Hussein has been deposed stability has not been arrived at. The Kurds are always in a rebellious mood. Turkey's association with North Atlantic Treaty Organization is also a concern for Moscow (Ahrari 1994).

Turkish policy towards Central Asia has an emphasis on Turkey's security interests. Turkey's security means economic and energy aspects as well as military and defence perspectives. The impact of developments in Central Asia on Turkey's ties with this region will be crucial from a broader perspective, taking into account the interests of other states like China, Iran, Russia and the USA. The significance of Turkey's membership of NATO is also playing very vital role in the perspective of regional peace and security.

Turkey is not in a position to address many of the security concerns of the Central Asian states. Their leaders are primarily concerned with internal security issues, particularly the threats posed by religious radicalism and tribalism or separatism. The Central Asian

states were at first sensitive to Russian concerns. In August 1994 the Kazakh Defence Minister Sagadat Nurmagambetov stated that the agreement he had just signed with Turkey was only a preliminary one dealing primarily with cooperation in arms production. He added that it did not conflict with similar agreements Kazakhstan had concluded with Russia. Developing links with NATO through the partnership for peace (pfp) programme, the Kazakhs by 1996 were eager to promote military ties with NATO members and were less inclined to take Russian anxieties into account (Jonson and Allison 2001).

Turkey has concluded agreements with the Central Asian Turkic states to cooperate against organised crime, arms smuggling, terrorism and separatism. Turkish officials are especially keen for the Central Asian states to clamp down on the activities of elements sympathetic to the Kurdish guerrilla group, the PKK (Kurdish Workers Party). Visiting Bishkek in April 1998 to sign a joint Declaration on security issues with Kyrgyz authorities, then the Turkish Prime Minister Yilmaz said that he had discussed the Kyrgyz Government's 'soft stance' on the PKK. Turkey has not signed military and security agreements with 'non-Turkic' Tajikistan. Then the President Demirel only paid his first visit to Tajikistan in September 1995. Turkey played no role in attempting to resolve the civil war in Tajikistan (Jonson and Allison 2001).

Chapter-4

India and regional security issues in Central Asia

Introduction

India's sphere of geo-political and strategic interests widened considerably when the five states of Central Asia unexpectedly gained independence in 1991. Located in the centre of Eurasia, flanking major and regional powers, and possessing enormous wealth of raw materials including energy sources, the Central Asian region has witnessed intense rivalry for control and influence. The geographical contiguity of Central Asia to India has led the latter to consider the region as part of its extended neighbourhood. It implies that the developments in the Central Asian region have a crucial bearing on India's national interests. Earlier, Indian concerns emanating from Central Asia were taken care of by close and friendly ties with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union ensured that the Central Asian region was stable and secure and that India did not face any challenge from there. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, the earlier arrangement disappeared. Central Asia lay exposed to penetration from all sides, complicating India's interests. Active engagement of the Central Asian Republic (CARs) consequently became an essential component of India's security policy after 1991 (Joshi, 2005).

Peace and stability in Central Asia is crucial for India's security concern. For these causes dictated by geography, India's strategic apprehensions are tied up with the security and political stability in the Central Asian region. Any geopolitical change in the region has its effect on several countries in the neighbourhood, including India. As an emerging power, India is obviously interested in any changes in and around the Central Asian region, which could have implications for its own security. Central Asia security is interconnected to peace in Afghanistan and Indian subcontinent. India's role in regional security issues in Central Asia are anti-Taliban movement, cooperation with SCO, dynamics of internal and external conditioning, tackling the spreading of Islamic extremist and stabilising Afghanistan. India with all her seriousness peeps into the changes happening in Central Asia and tries to deal with all the states in friendly and cooperative manner (Patnaik, 2005).

Victory of the Taliban in almost the whole of Afghanistan in the mid-1990s brought Central Asia under pressure from internal and external fundamentalist forces. The common threat of terrorism made India realise that Central Asia detained the key to its own security and chose to co-operate closely with Central Asian States. It supported financial assistance to the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance led by Ahmad Shah Masood. India apparently supplied the United Front with high attitude warfare equipment, worth about US 8-10 million Dollars between 1999 and 2001, and sent defence advisers as well as helicopter technicians. India has recently shown a positive attitude towards joining Eurasian integration mechanisms like the Customs Union. It is willing to participant in Conference on Interaction & Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA). It has focused in non-traditional security challenges which would create sufficient goodwill among the member states (Patnaik, 2013).

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is one of the most significant regional organisations related to Central Asia. It is evolving into a strong security and co-operation organisation and participation of India could fill the gaps in the regional security complex. SCO charter article one says about the main goals and tasks of regional security which are to “consolidate multidisciplinary cooperation in the maintenance and strengthening of peace, security and stability in the region and to jointly counteract terrorism, separatism and extremism in all their manifestations, to fight against illicit narcotics and arms trafficking and other types of criminal activity of a transnational character, and also illegal migration” (SCO charter, 2006). Fifth SCO Summit in Astana July 5, 2005 the leaders agreed to grant SCO observer status to India. At this summit, SCO member countries signed agreements on fighting the three “evil forces” of terrorism, separatism and extremism. Now it is going to be a full member from 2016. India can check the influence China factor in Central Asia and play an active role in SCO’s Regional Anti-Terrorist Structures (RATS) for fight against the extremist and terrorist groups in the region. “India’s imperatives are looming security concerns such as the spread of terrorism, the Afghan fallout and the growing footprint of ISIS in Central Asia” (Patnaik, 2012).

Regional security issues are very important for the Central Asia and Indian perspective to peace and stability for their region. Therefore, the Indian leaders, scholars, intellectuals have given their perspectives through bilateral treaties, dialogues, conferences etc. “Opening remarks of the Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee at

the press conference in Almaty June 05, 2002 had said that Kazakhstan had set up a Joint Working Group against international terrorism. A Memorandum of Understanding on Military and Technical Cooperation was also signed on 4th June. He participated in the 'Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA)'. This conference was aimed at spreading the message of peace, security and regional cooperation" (MEA, India, 2002). "Foreign Secretary's presentation at IFRI (French Institute for International Relations), Paris 17 December, 2002 had talked about menace of international terrorism and stabilisation of Afghanistan" (MEA, India, 2002). "External Affairs Minister Shri Yashwant Sinha's keynote address at the Third India-Central Asia Conference in Tashkent on November 06, 2003 had also focused on international peace and security" (MEA, India, 2003). "Address by Shri E Ahmed, Hon'ble Minister of State at the Release of the Book "India-Tajikistan Cooperation: Perspectives and Prospects" January 17, 2007 highlighted areas of mutual cooperation that include combating international terrorism and drug trafficking" (MEA, India, 2007).

Indian Prime minister Modi's visit to the Central Asian states in 2015 proved a smart strategic and diplomatic achievement by paving the way to overwhelmed predicaments that have so far stymied India's role in the region. During PM Modi's visits in Central Asia, many security treaties were signed like cooperation on cyber-security, defence security and counter-terrorism with Uzbekistan and wide-ranging defence cooperation pact with Kazakhstan. "India signed treaties with Turkmenistan for defence cooperation, cross-border threats of terrorism, organised crime, illegal drug-trafficking, reaffirmed commitment for a stable Afghanistan. India also signed agreements with Kyrgyzstan on defence, security, military, education and training, conduct of joint military exercises, exchange of experience and information, exchange of military instructors. Lastly, defence and security cooperation treaties were signed by PM Modi with Tajikistan" (Stobdan, 2015).

India's Evolving Security Interests in Central Asia

The emergence of the CARs as independent and sovereign entities and their strategic and significance presented India with new challenges and fresh opportunities to renew old-age linkage with Central Asian region. Over a decade of interaction with the region,

India has developed deep and long lasting security interests. One of the biggest challenges that arose at the end Cold War and ideological schism was the rise of forces of religious extremism, terrorism, separatism and aggressive nationalism. These are powerful forces and have the capacity to tear nations apart, as happened peacefully in the Soviet social bloc and violently in Yugoslavia. States which are multi-ethnic and pluralist in nature are vulnerable to these forces. One of the present day challenges faced by India is growing threat of religious extremism and terrorism to its territorial integrity. For more than a decade, India has been combating this danger in its state of Jammu and Kashmir. The militants who receive support, safe sanctuaries and training from across the border have declared jihad against the Indian state. The activities of militants pose a danger to Indian integrity (Joshi, 2005).

The religious extremism and terrorism in Central Asian Republics which created an environment for 'new power game' and resultant major powers engagement in this region after the September 11, terrorist attack on United States of America. Security and stability in Central Asia has enormous significance for India. The security threats for India in Central Asia which comes from Afghanistan and Central Asian based militant groups engaging India in this strategically important region.

India's engagement and role in Central Asia cannot be de-linked from its larger role in Asia. While Central Asia continues to be of great strategic significance to India, its engagement with the region has been more reactive than proactive. While Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan stand out to be of security interest for India's Afghanistan-Pakistan policy, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are important for India's relations with China. Tajikistan significance for India lies in its geostrategic location as it shares a border with Afghanistan and China and is located in proximity to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK).

Tajikistan is part of an established drug route for Afghan opium to the West. In the past, it was important for India's support to the Northern Alliance; in the future, it can play an important role in maintaining peace along Afghanistan's northern border, as well as to fight jihadis and drug traffickers and to stop the flow of illegal weapons (Bedi, *Janes Intelligence Review*, June 2002: 19). India needs to carefully monitor the activities of jihadi forces from Pakistan operating in Tajikistan, given its proximity to POK and the likely proliferation of this problem into the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

Uzbekistan is the only republic which has a common border with all the Central Asian states and Afghanistan. It has been a reliable partner of India. While Kazakhstan cannot be ignored because of its economic potential, especially resources. Kyrgyzstan is significant because of its proximity to the Xinjiang province of China and the Wakhan corridor, which is on the tri-junction of China, Tajikistan and POK. This is underscored by mounting evidence that the Central Asian militant group, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, remains active in tribal areas near the Pakistan-Afghanistan. Activities of this groups and Chechen rebels have been reported in POK which provides them sanctuaries. Further radicalisation and militarisation of Islamist movements within CARs would only deepen the 'strategic conundrum' that India already confronts in Jammu and Kashmir (Roy, 2008: 302).

A significant development was the meeting of the 'Joint Working Group' (JWG) on Counter Terrorism between India and Tajikistan, held in January 2006 in Dushanbe and a Second in August 2006 in Delhi. During the January meeting, a protocol was signed on mutual assistance to combat criminal activities (Mutu, Paper Presented in ICWA, Aug 8, 2006). In this respect, India is viewed in the Central Asian region as a reliable partner and a benign power to tackle the major issue of terrorism, while Central Asians view India as a route to develop in what they observe as their "southern arc of instability" involving Afghanistan and Pakistan (Stobdan and Santhanam, *Indian Express*, Nov 28, 2003: 10).

Other than Pakistan, which always has tried to gain 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan and Central Asia, India enjoys good relationship with other regional key players like Iran and Turkey. "Today the major concern for India is the security situation in Afghanistan. So far, the US and NATO forces have not been able to provide stability in Afghanistan. Moreover, Pakistan's ethnic linkages provide ample opportunity for Pakistan's Directorate of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) to counter any Indian plans in Afghanistan. While Pakistan is in no position to neutralise India's influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia, it can impede India's infrastructure projects in Afghanistan" (Roy, 2008: 304).

A key point is that in India and Pakistan relations has been the extended dispute over Kashmir. Given the intensity and sensitivity of the issue for these states, it is not surprising that both would try to use their growing links with Central Asia to further

their interests in the Kashmir cause. As Stephen Blank from the US Army War College argues "New Delhi realizes now that its lack of initiative in Central Asia during 1990s left the field open for Islamabad to mobilize Central Asian support for the Pakistani position on Kashmir. India cannot afford, therefore, not to develop a strategy for Central Asia" (Blua, 2002: 226 - 227).

Interestingly, "each of the Central Asian states finds itself in a convoluted geostrategic location. Each state shares boundaries with 4 to 6 other states. The most strategically located country from India's security point of view is Tajikistan that shares borders with Afghanistan and China. It is also located in close proximity to Pakistan occupied Kashmir" (Woodward, 2003: 226-27). In the past, extremist elements from the Central Asia region have reportedly been found fighting along with jihadis in Kashmir. Although, officially the regimes in Central Asia maintain a balanced position on the India- Pakistan dispute over Kashmir, a tendency to refer to the Kashmir issue both by officials and people remains a common practice. Privately, people in general maintain a nuance for expressing more sympathy to the 'fate and cause of Kashmir people'. "References about Kashmir are made not only in religious places but also in academic institutions and universities. The Central Asian media, particularly in countries where media enjoys freedom, often put up features on Kashmir in their daily bulletins. Components of JKLF and other elements fighting for the Kashmir cause happen without the support they receive from local elements. The Kashmir solidarity days are also marked by sufficient media coverage. In the longer run, especially when Central Asians too will have surplus petrodollars, India's concerns on terrorism emanating from the region would become critical" (Woodward, 2003: 226-27).

As India's existence in Central Asia continues to grow after September 11, it comes into much closer contact with its traditional friend Russia, and its traditional foe, China. Besides India's complex interactions and its growing involvement in Central Asia does not seem to bother Moscow. If anything, Moscow welcomes India: first- as a "subtle means of building a united regional front against further American entrenchment in the region, and, second, as a reliable partner in the fight against Islamic militancy and terrorism which has affected both countries, i.e. Jammu and Kashmir and Chechnya. Moscow is also not going to allow Central Asia to become a hotbed of Islamic militancy, but at the same time is unlikely to tolerate long-term American presence in Central Asian region. For India, American domination of the region's security

alignment is simply unthinkable” (Ivanov, BBC News, 13 February 2002). It is against this circumstantial that New Delhi is now getting positive signal from Moscow.

Even though India has recognised the American actions in the region in the wake of post 9/11 events, New Delhi has preferred the path of going alone in safeguarding interests both in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Obviously, India's overriding concerns in the region also remain security and not strategic ones. Apart from economic and political engagements in Afghanistan, India has quickly signed Joint Working Group (JWG) for countering terrorism with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

India, like other states in the region, would be faced with contradictory situations and dilemma in the medium term. At one level, “the American withdrawal from Afghanistan and Central Asia will risk a revival of the Taliban type regimes with enormous consequences to India's security. On the other hand, fear would remain about strategic consequences of American long-term presence in the region, especially when US troops have reached the doorstep of both China and India. In fact there are visible signs of the Uyghur movement gaining a new twist, even though the US authorities have designated the East Turkmenistan Islamic Movement (ETIM) a terrorist groups” (Stobdan, 2004: 68-69).

While relating with Central Asia, there is also the aspect of interplay between its external and internal factors. Political divisions between and among the states have hardened due to a variety of reasons (Roy and Johnson, 2001) which has indirect security implications on India and Russia. This is primarily driven by the big nation-small nation syndrome, which makes the regional security far more complex. The security concern of each state is linked to another in such a way that the action of one has consequences for others. The fear of Uzbekistan becoming a regional bully has forced other states, particularly Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, to look for support from outside, including China. Similarly, an Islamic threat fostered by Pakistan through the Taliban, prompted China getting well entrenched in Central Asian security affairs, thereby impinging on India's interests indirectly (Roy and Johnson, 2001).

Even after the removal of the Taliban from power in Afghanistan, India neither feels completely secure nor comfortable about the reports of renewed attempts to destabilize Afghanistan despite US presence in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. The reported agreement by the Pakistan government with warlords in North Waziristan to spare the

area from military activities against Al-Qaeda, was subsequently and unilaterally scrapped by the local warlords in Waziristan, when the Musharraf government mounted its search for Taliban hideouts. The Taliban has created a safe heaven for the terrorist in and around Waziristan, clearly connivance with the Musharraf regime that had allowed them to consolidate (Patnaik: 2008:147). Such a complex situation demands even greater Indian engagement in the Central Asian region. On 1st April 2007 president Karzai of Afghanistan alleged in an interview to *the New York Times* that the Pakistan wants the Afghan government to fail so that it can use that Taliban to turn Afghanistan into a colony of Pakistan. He squarely blamed Islamabad for the resurgence of the Taliban especially in southern Afghanistan (The Times of India, April 3, 2007: 22).

Finally, India visualized a far more serious problem. Pakistan, India's immediate neighbour and initiator of four wars during the last four decades, was posing itself as the trustworthy friend of the newly independent Central Asian countries only on the basis of commonality of religion. Pakistan had been an active member of USA-Sponsored Defence Pacts and Military Blocs (DPMB). These military alliances, directed against the Soviets had been then denounced by the Soviet Union. The Central Asians, then a part of the Soviet Union, had more or less, shunned Pakistan. Pakistan thought that the demise of the Soviet Union gave it a new opportunity to draw them within its own sphere of influence. India had to prevent such a development because of its continuing adversarial relationship with Pakistan which seldom lost any chance to show its hostility (Gopal, 2005: 157-158).

India's Geostrategic Interests in Central Asia

The emergence of predominantly Muslim but, in fact, multi-ethnic and multi-religious CARs has added a new strategic dimension to the geopolitics of the whole of Asia and more so, for the countries located in its immediate neighbourhood. "Central Asia lies at the strategic junction between two nuclear powers, Russia and China, and at the interface between Russia and the Islamic world. It shares borders with Afghanistan, which is a major source of spreading religious extremism in the region. India has a vital interest in the security and political stability of this region". Obviously given the Kashmir angle, India cannot be walled off from the political developments which take

place in the Central Asian region. “Any advance by Islamic extremist groups in the CARs could invigorate similar elements active in Kashmir. For reasons dictated by geography, India's strategic concerns are tied up with the regions bordering its north and northwest. Pakistan in its northwest continues to be antagonistic towards India. Pakistan is already sponsoring cross-border terrorism in Kashmir. For India, the Kashmir issue pertains not to four million Muslims living in Kashmir Valley alone, but to the peace and security of 130 million Muslims elsewhere in India. Therefore, for India the geostrategic importance of CARs is immense. Under no circumstance can India ignore this region” (Roy, 2001).

After the disintegration of Soviet Union, the Central Asian states were emerged which known as very significant for natural resources like oil and gas in the international scenario. India was not very much interested to the Central Asian states during the initial period. But the common threat resulted in a growing convergence of perspective of need convergence to devise ways to combat this menace. “India, realising that Central Asia held the key to the two major worries-Pakistan’s expanding influence over Afghanistan and beyond, and, the threat of a growing belt of fundamentalism sponsoring cross-border terrorism-chose to cooperate closely with the Central Asian states. It provided financial assistance to the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance led by Ahmad Masood that enabled the Alliance to acquire weapons and ammunitions. The diplomatic support was not confined to just maintaining the Embassy of Afghanistan in New Delhi, representing the Rabbani leadership (ousted by Taliban). In all diplomatic forums, India condemned the Taliban and played a crucial role in the campaign against international recognition to the Taliban, which was recognised by only three states till the end. India played host to the families of the anti-Taliban leadership” (Patnaik, 2005).

On the other hand, instability in Afghanistan has also adversely influenced peace and security in the region. Most countries in the neighbourhood are convinced that extremists consolidating in Afghanistan under the Taliban will destabilise Central and South Asia. “India apprehends that the Taliban's expansion will increase the pressure on Kashmir and extend Pakistan's strategic reach to the gates of Central Asia. Afghanistan and Pakistan continue to be the key actors creating destabilisation in the CARs as well as in India. Should the destabilising pattern of local conflicts as manifested in Afghanistan and some of the Central Asian states, especially Tajikistan

continue unabated, the security environment of Southern Asia, already under severe stress, is likely to become more explosive. In the light of the aforementioned, India's long-term strategic interests in forging closer cooperation with the Central Asian states should be obvious” (Roy, 2001).

Another point that the Central Asian region has become an area of immense importance to Europe, US, China, and Iran. “The US is trying to undermine Russian and Iranian gains, China has committed billions of dollars for the development of Central Asian oilfields to fulfil its future energy demands. Europe wants to extend its influence by means of NATO expansion eastwards and through the Partnership for Peace (PFP) programme. All this is likely to bring in high-stakes power politics in Central Asia. This obviously has implications and India must consider whether these developments are desirable or not. The question that concerns India is that any external influence in CARs will have serious implications, direct or indirect for the countries of the region. Related to the geostrategic significance CARs is the problem of religious extremism/terrorism or what Central Asian states call political Islam and problem of drugs and arms trafficking” (Roy, 2001).

India’s role to Counter Taliban in Afghanistan

Before the American invasion of Afghanistan, India predicted that the country's Taliban regime and Al Qaeda access to Central Asian states, as well as into the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir (backed by Pakistan), was a clear threat to her security. It was worried about the fall out of a Taliban success in Jammu and Kashmir where there had been a marked increase in the number of Afghan War veterans from different parts of the world. These mercenaries many of whom were settled in Pakistan occupied Kashmir had joined various Kashmiri militant outfits, creating havoc in the valley.

Secondly, the traditional Indo-Afghan friendship and the people to people interaction among the two countries, have always impacted Pakistan's policy towards Afghanistan where Islamabad aims at opposing Indian influence. Pakistan's quest for 'strategic depth' as well as the desire to reject India an entrepot into Central Asia via Afghanistan was a major issue in India's strategic thinking (Chopra, 2002: 21-25).

Thirdly, India was concerned about the spread of Kalashnikov culture emanating as fall out of the civil war in Afghanistan which had already afflicted Pakistani society to a great extent. Sophisticated weapons like the dreaded AK-47, light machine guns, rocket propelled grenades, plastic bombs, rocket launchers, antitank grenades, etc., were available in an easy price. Cross -border links between arms smugglers in India and Pakistan had also constituted a serious threat to law and order in the country.

In order to check this destabilising Islamic extremism and terrorism in the whole region, New Delhi continued its support to the Northern Alliance to counter the Taliban threat. The British based Jane International Security reported on March 15, 2001 that “India was supplying the Northern Alliance with military equipments, advisors and helicopters technicians, and both India and Russia were using military bases in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for their operation. There was also speculation about some kind of military action well before September 11, 2001. India and Iran will facilitate US and Russian plans for limited military action against the Taliban if the contemplated tough new economic sanctions don't bend Afghanistan's fundamentalist regime” (Blank, Marc 24, 2004). These anguish and complain about the Taliban regime provided just fillip to attack Afghanistan after the terrorist strikes in the United States.

India had several reasons for supporting the United Front in Afghanistan. It has always been concerned about security in its northern and north-western border areas. Historically, India has enjoyed warm relations with Afghanistan. Kabul was home to a significant population of Hindus and a smaller community of Sikhs and a country was also situated on the western trade routes from India and frequently hosted Indian traders, merchants and travelers. New Delhi begins to re-engage Afghanistan in its foreign policy with the February 1989 Soviet withdrawal and the fall of Nazibullah neo-communist regime in 1992 with whom India had enjoyed good relationships.

New Delhi was also greatly concerned that the Taliban brand of highly radicalized Islam would inflame communal tensions at home. One of India's overriding concerns however has been the repercussion that the Taliban appearance has had on the Kashmir imbroglio (Ganguly, 2001: 412-13). Although the militant activity against the Indian rule in Kashmir had always retained more of a moral dimension that is, a struggle for self-determination - as opposed to being a religion-political campaign, this began to change as the Taliban consolidated their hold over Afghanistan.

Taliban ruled Afghanistan began to accommodate many insurgents groups operating in Central and South Asia, the Middle East, and beyond. In addition to Osama bin Laden in famous Al Qaeda network, the Mujahideen-e-Khalq of Iran, the Xinjiang Liberation Front of China, the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, and the Hizbul Mujahuddin operating in Jammu and Kashmir all took advantage of Taliban hospitality and the military training they could receive inside Afghanistan. According to Indian sources, “since the summer of 1992 the infiltration of Afghans-foreign nationals from countries including Afghanistan, Pakistan, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan and Tunisia- peaked at around 2000. In May 2000, the United Front Foreign Minister Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, claimed that 5,000 Pakistanis were training in Taliban run camps for guerrilla war and terrorism in India-held Kashmir” (Afghanistan Country Report, Feb, 2002). The United Front has insisted that it will close all training camps once it defeats the Taliban.

Since the September 11 attack on Washington and New York, India has insisted that Kashmiri militant group such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) are intrinsically linked to the Taliban and al Qaeda. According to Indian journalist Raul Bedi, the United States provided firm evidence of the existence of around 120 training camps run by the ISI across Pakistan and Afghanistan. Some groups like the LeT are also funded by Bin Laden's al Qaeda foundation (Bedi, 2002: 60-61). Bedi also reported that Jaswant Singh, then India's Defense and Foreign Minister, had stated that radio messages from Afghanistan had been intercepted in which Mullah Muhammad Omar, the Taliban's spiritual leader, had ordered all LeT members to return from Pakistan and Kashmir to defend Afghanistan against any ground invasion by the United States and Allied forces, following the commencement of military operations on October 7, 2001. It is unclear how many LeT members obeyed the call (Bedi, 2002: 62).

India has also been concerned that the same militants groups seek to export the jihad they were waging inside Indian territory of Kashmir to other parts of the country. Kashmiri militants groups such as Markhaz- Dawa al-Irshad, Harakat-ul-Mujaddin, and al-Bader insist that 'the liberation of Kashmir is but one item on the agenda. The liberation of Hyderabad and Junagadh both significant Indian Muslim cities, should then follow, along with the establishment of two independent Muslim states within India's territorial borders in the north and south (Withington, 2002: 40-41).

Openly linked to India's concern over the Taliban-Kashmir militant alliance is, of course, Pakistan's previous support for the Taliban. This would provide Pakistan's military with its much-desired "strategic depth" (Withington, 2002: 40). For Islamabad, 'this strategic depth meant that Pakistan would have been able to call on the Taliban's military assistance in times of crisis or conflict with India'. At the same time, the Taliban represented a useful avenue by which the ISI could outsource its arming and training of pro-Pakistan insurgents for infiltration into Kashmir. India's warm links with Rabbani's government and the Front's promise to close all Kashmiri militant training camps have provided India with ample motives for support. The United Front's anger at Pakistan's funding and support of the Taliban also provided a useful justification for India's assistance. India's warm relations with Iran would then effectively leave Pakistan surrounded on all fronts by governments that are allies of India. This seems the terrorism and militant activities in Afghanistan and Central Asian region has greater security implication for India (The Hindu, July 9, 2000: 14).

India's role for Stability and Reconstruction in Afghanistan

The defeat and removal the Taliban has put on hold Pakistan's hopes of achieving some strategic advantage over India. The positive development has been the weakening of the destabilising forces that were unleashed since the Taliban takeover, threatening countries such as India, China, Russia and the Central Asian countries. The informal alliance of India and Central Asian countries that had developed in the course of sustaining the United Front (Northern Alliance) contributed substantially to the campaign against international terrorism. "Still unstable situation in Afghanistan, the need for continued cooperation between India and Central Asia is very critical. Even after the ouster of the Taliban from Afghanistan, India neither feels totally secure or comfortable about the reports of continuing attempts to destabilising Afghanistan, despite US presence in both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Indian policy makers believe that Pakistan still continues with its policy of what India's former secretary described as 'sustainable terrorism' and the international community has been unable to address to India's concerns. To insure its own security, India would need to focus on greater involvement in the Central Asian region" (Patnaik, 2005).

India's national interests lie in a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. Therefore, "India should support all efforts towards improving the security situation and providing good governance. It is only through sustained reconstruction and concerted socio-economic development that future stability can be assured. India will continue to provide aid and assistance to the government and the people of Afghanistan as it has been consistently doing over the past ten years. India seeks a peaceful and stable Afghanistan with a broad-based government that is genuinely independent in formulating its foreign and national security policies, as well as in governing the country in consonance with Afghan customs and traditions". The imposition of the Western model of democracy will not be appropriate as it will not work in Afghanistan's socio-political milieu. "India would like to see the elimination of terrorism from Afghanistan and the destruction of all sanctuaries of the Taliban and the Al Qaeda. India supports the integration and strengthening of military and police forces at the national level, rather than their domination by one or more ethnic communities. India would like to encourage Afghanistan's regional neighbours and the international community to further enhance their efforts towards reconstruction and economic development" (Kanwal, 2013).

Both Central Asian states and India have a big stake in safeguarding economic reconstruction, inter-ethnic harmony, and stability in Afghanistan. As a sign of significance that India attributes to Afghanistan, New Delhi has converted to grant \$100 million loan it had earlier extended to Karzai government. Ultimately, the stability of the post-Taliban set-up in Afghanistan can improve the security scenario in Central Asia as well as India. India has reportedly renegotiated the use of Farkhor in Tajikistan as a base for assistance to Afghanistan. Earlier it had built a military hospital and an airstrip there to help the Northern Alliance. The hospital was shifted to Kabul after the fall of Taliban. India signed a bilateral agreement during Indian defence minister's visit to Dushanbe in April 2002. According to the agreement, "India will train Tajik defence personnel, service and retrofit Soviet and Russian military equipment and teach English to army and airforce personnel. There are suggestions that the base in Farkhor is a sign of India joining the 'new game' of scramble for Central Asia's oil and gas reserves and India's intention to have a ring of base around Pakistan". However, it is difficult to imagine that India has the financial ability and military strength to think in terms of joining the 'great game' (Patnaik, 2005).

To confront the geographical reality, India has made moves to create infrastructure in Afghanistan which can effectively be utilised as a 'bridge' to Central Asia. India has been a firm supporter of the American 'New Silk Road Initiative', viewing it as a “building block” of India's vision for “Afghanistan as a hub linking Central and South Asia through pipelines, trade and transit routes for the common good of the people of our region and the world”. This, India believes, could encourage the neighbouring countries to view Afghanistan as an avenue for cooperation and not rivalry. India has in fact invested substantially in an attempt to realise the transit potential of Afghanistan. For instance, India has funded the Zaranj-Delaram Highway, which connects Zaranj on the Iranian border in western Afghanistan to Delaram, which is connected to Afghanistan's main highway linking Kandahar and Herat. In May 2013, India pledged \$100 million towards the development of the Chabahar Port in Iran and has also announced its plan to construct a rail link from the Hajigak iron-ore mines in central Afghanistan to Zahedan, which would then be linked to Chabahar. The development of a trans-Afghan transport corridor has been emphasised as a potential means to overcome the lack of connectivity during high-level exchanges that India has had with Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (Bhatnagar, 2014).

Pakistan's Search for “Strategic Depth”

Central Asia has been historically and culturally close to South Asia. The collapse of Soviet Union created great opportunities for both India and Pakistan to be strong influences in the perspective of natural resources for this region. However, Indo-Pak rivalry and strategic games limited their ability to orient Central Asia towards trade and economic integration with South Asia. The antagonism that stems primarily from their dispute over Kashmiri continues to prevent them from presenting a joint front in accessing Central Asia's resources. Both India and Pakistan have been too occupied with Kashmir and allowed this issue to influence their Central Asia and Afghan policy. Pakistan, obsessed with the notion of ‘Strategic Depth’ vis-à-vis India, backed the fundamentalist Taliban introduced greater instability into Central Asia. The Taliban trained and founded terrorist groups took in insurgency in Kashmir to new heights. Cross-border terrorism against India peaked with Kargil incursion in 1999. Two years later relation between the two South Asian states reached boiling point. Afghanistan

remained in a civil war situation despite Taliban control over most of the country. India does not have direct land access to Central Asia and has to use sea route to Iran and then enter Central Asian markets through rail and road. Its diplomatic and financial efforts were more focused on strengthening the anti-Taliban forces in order to deny Pakistan any strategic advantage in this region (Patnaik, 2003).

“Strategic depth is a term in military literature that broadly refers to the distances between the front lines or battle sectors and the combatants' industrial core areas, capital cities, heartlands, and other key centers of population or military production. The key principles any military commander must consider when dealing with strategic depth are how vulnerable these assets are to a quick, pre-emptive attack or to a methodical offensive and whether a country can withdraw into its own territory, absorb an initial thrust, and allow the subsequent offensive to culminate short of its goal and far from its source of power”. In other words, “Strategic Depth” refers to a space (region or country) that proves safety to a country or its army and command structure. Such depth is to be required against an opponent and underlines the need for a territorial base that can be an advantage in a conflict with the enemy. In the context of Pakistan, search for depth, according to Indian strategic expert Raghavan, was to be a ‘hedge against of India’ (Patnaik, 2003).

The gaining of ‘Strategic Depth’ in Afghanistan has been a major objective of Pakistan's policy. “Islamabad's anxieties about its northern neighbour commenced almost immediately after Independence. The combination of Pashtun ambitions in Pakistan, the uncertain status of the Durand Line, memories of long military campaigns in the North West Frontier Agency and the fierce independence of Afghanistan under King Zahir Shah had made Pakistan anxious. A strong military sense of geo-politics among its largely military rulers also led to the need to gain control over Afghanistan. The notion of strategic depth emerged even stronger after the socialist revolution in Afghanistan and became an obsession after the Soviet intervention in the country”. In the early years of its history, Field Marshal Ayub Khan was credited for having said that “the defence of East Pakistan was best obtained in the west. This was attempted to be done by forcing India to concentrate its military deployment against West Pakistan. In later decades, the militancy in Punjab was seen as providing depth to Pakistan from an Indian military offensive through the State. This also applies to forcing a large Indian military presence in Jammu & Kashmir. On the Siachen dispute, arguments were

advanced in Pakistan that the Indian occupation of the Saltoro mountain range was part of a Soviet- Indian pincer against Pakistan” (Raghvan, The Hindu, 2001).

In Pakistan, the idea of strategic depth was perceived in 1980s by the NDU professor General Mirza Aslam Beg (later Chief of Army Staff working under Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto in 1980s). “Since then, the Pakistan military establishment has been repeatedly accused of forming a policy that seeks to control Afghanistan, a policy often referred to by the media as ‘strategic depth’. This is given as the reason why Pakistan has supported certain factions of the Taliban in Afghanistan. In the years 2014-2015, with Pakistan's domestic operation against militants in full swing, Pakistani military leaders said that they adhered to no such policy” (Brown, 2015). According to Richard Olson, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, “Pakistan military's doctrine of ‘strategic depth’ is a concept in which Pakistan uses Afghanistan as an instrument of strategic security in ongoing tensions with India by attempting to control Afghanistan as a pawn for its own political purposes” (Gul, 2015).

It has been speculated that “the Pakistan military's ‘strategic depth’ policy is both military and non-military in nature. The military version would state that the Pakistan military wishes to use Afghan territory as a "strategic rallying point" where they can, in the event of a successful Indian attack, retreat to and re-group for a counter-attack. The non-military version would be based on the idea that Pakistan can improve relations with other Islamic countries and former Soviet states such as Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, developing improved economic and cultural ties with them and thus making them into strong allies against India” (Aziz, 2010).

According to Raghvan, “the explanation for Pakistan's dilemmas on Afghanistan is to be found in the military leadership's convictions. Strategic depth is a relational concept. Such depth is to be sought as protection against an adversary. Pakistan's search for strategic depth was to be a hedge against India. Neither Afghanistan nor the Central Asian states, nor for that matter Iran, posed a threat to Pakistan. The notion of strategic depth for Pakistan, combined in it a territorial base for terrorism and a proxy war against India, with the alibi of Pakistan not being directly involved. The failure of its policy lay in its inability to see the link between its needs of terrorism against India, and the price to be paid for its strategic depth spawning global terrorism” (The Hindu, 2001).

According to Ahmed Rashid, Pakistan establishment played an important role in recruiting radical Islamic elements to further its goal of attaining strategic depth. During Benazir Bhutto's leadership in 1993, for the first time the largest group in Pakistan, Jamiat-ul-Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) got formally integrated with state institutions through close link to the army, the Inter -Services Intelligence Agency and the Interior ministry. The JUI was not only handed over the training camps in Afghanistan, its many breakaway factions became the main recruiters of Pakistani and other nationals to fight for the Taliban. Between 1994-99, an estimated 80,000-1, 00,000 Pakistanis trained and fought in Afghanistan. "The joint venture between the Taliban and JUI, funded by Saudi Wahhabis and supported by Pakistan's ISI, became an ever expanding enterprise, seeking new markets in Central Asia and beyond" he added (Patnaik, 2003).

The Futility of the Search for Depth

The result of Pakistan's Afghan policy, Rashid concluded, was increasing Islamisation that undermined the movement for "self-determination" in Kashmir and so also Pakistan's bid to invoke international mediation. The longer the jihad in Kashmir goes less could be the chance to settle the dispute peacefully, he had warned. Running after what has so far proved to be a "mirage" only result in Pakistan becoming the "Strategic Depth" of the Islamic fundamentalists. According to critiques of this policy, like Eqbal Ahmed and Ahmed Rashid, to expect that a devastated, isolated and poor country like Afghanistan would provide depth to Pakistan was mistaken thinking, fought with dangerous consequences for Pakistan itself. Pakistan was a beneficiary of "true strategic depth" during the 1965 war, when Iran allowed Pakistan's warplanes and ships to use to its ports and air bases. Pakistan's support to Taliban alienated even the traditional ally like Iran. Central Asians were extraditing Pakistanis, accusing them of promoting radical Islam and unrest. One could add that India gained out of the fail strategy by endearing itself to former Pakistan allies in the Afghan Mujaheddin, who are today power in Kabul. Pakistan's search for depth in Afghanistan had its ramifications in Central Asia. The continuation of Taliban in power held the key to Pakistan's objective of projecting itself as a major influence in energy rich Central Asia. When most of Central Asia failed to be influenced by the radical ferment sweeping Afghanistan, militants from across the border became active to destabilize the region (patnaik, 2003).

The SCO and its role in Central Asia's Security:

The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), a regional grouping of Russia, China and four Central Asian Republics – Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan has emerged as an influential regional organisation in the Eurasian space. Established in 2001, “the SCO has made considerable progress in terms of coordinating regional efforts to address security challenges in the region. In the arena of regional economic cooperation the achievements may not have been very impressive but, there is considerable desire and attempt on the part of member-states towards greater economic engagement”. India, “in 2005, acquired the observer status in the SCO. Since then it has constructively participated in all SCO summit meetings thus showing its strong willingness to be meaningfully associated with this regional grouping. However, it was only recently that New Delhi expressed its desire to join the SCO as a full member. Russia and Central Asian states have always been very supportive of India's entry into the SCO as a full member for a long time” (Roy, 2014).

Established in 2001, the SCO has come a long way. Though it was set up in 1996, not until 2004, did its two permanent institutions— “the Secretariat and the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure begin to operate. After 2005, the SCO seems to have acquired a new geopolitical role in Eurasia and beyond. The inclusion of India, Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan as observer states and Sri Lanka, Belarus and Turkey as dialogue partners, clearly indicates its expanded engagement well beyond Central Asia into wider Southern and West Asian region”. Importantly, during 2005-08, “the grouping established its cooperation by signing the Memorandum of Mutual Understanding (MoU) with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurasEC). It also acquired an observer status in the UN General Assembly, and maintains regular contacts with the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP). These local, regional and international engagements characterise the SCO's increasing significance as a regional organisation” (Roy, 2014).

The three SCO observer countries – India, Pakistan and Iran – have already articulated the importance of the SCO and are interested in acquiring full membership. The Indian viewpoint was articulated by its External Affairs Minister during the last Summit

meeting in Beijing, where he said: “India admires the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and values its contribution over the past decade, to peace, stability and prosperity in the region. As the SCO prepares for the next decade of its journey, we see a welcome process of introspection among members, on the challenges of the next decade and the role of the body in a fast-evolving world, strewn with multiple multilateral bodies, with intersecting agendas” (MEA, India, 2012).

From the regional perspective, “since 2006 there has been greater acknowledgement of the SCO’s role in providing peace, security and stability in the region by the Central Asian regimes. In the current context, the SCO is viewed as a “Window of Opportunity” and as an organisation which brings two great powers –Russia and China –together and sets a situation for close cooperation in the areas of security and culture in the region” (Djusupov, 2011). The Kazakh Prime Minister Serik Akmetov pointed out during “the SCO Prime Ministers’ meeting that the group has become an important stabilizing factor in maintaining security in the region and therefore in future would promote economic cooperation” (The SCO, PMs Meeting, 2012).

SCO and its Security Challenges:

Security issues in Eurasia and means to address these challenges have been the focus of all the SCO summit meetings. “The threat of terrorism, drugs, instability in Afghanistan, ethnic conflicts in the region, money laundering and social problems are identified as the major security challenges in the SCO region. The terrorist organisations based in Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Chechnya are of major concern to all the SCO member-states. An over-active Taliban because of its links with Al-Qaeda and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) poses a serious challenge to the entire region”. The ideology of extremism is growing and has destabilised the Osh region in Kyrgyzstan and is spreading in Tajikistan and Xingjian in China. “The member-states are of the view that terrorism still remains the serious menace in the region and is becoming more international in nature. In addition, terrorism is also used as a tool of interference in the internal affairs of another country” (Roy, 2014).

India and the SCO's role in Central Asian Regional Security

India remains an observer state in the SCO since 2005 and thus does not exercise the same impact as Russia and China. However, the Afghan issue remains a basic concern for all the members and observer countries. The SCO method on stabilisation of Afghanistan would help India's interests since it provides a useful forum to involve China and Pakistan on the issue of regional security. In last few year one would see a change in India's approach to the SCO (Patnaik, 2013). India's joining the SCO as an observer helped broaden the cooperation beyond Afghanistan and created multilateral cooperation against terrorism, drugs, human and arms trafficking in Central Asia and other member states. Speaking at the Dushambe Heads of the Council Meeting of the SCO ON 28 August, then India's Petroleum Minister, Murali Deora, said, "Terrorism is the a major challenging confronting the global community which requires effective, collective measures. The SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) based in Tashkent has an important to play check the growth of extremist and terrorist influences in the region. As a country which has been time and again targeted by these radical forces, India believes that its association with RATS would be mutually beneficial" (Patnaik, 2013)

India has been consistently articulating its desire to play much more meaningful and constructive role in the SCO. "Its current focus on building stronger partnerships with this region indicates India's increasing interest in the region and the role which it is seeking to play in it. India's inclusion as a full member of the SCO is backed by Russia and the Central Asian countries". In June 2010, Alexander M. Kadakin, the Russian diplomat, stated: "Our position has all along been that we want India as a full-fledged member of the SCO" (Kashani, 2012). "India is ready to find a viable solution to build bridges between Central and South Asia. India is willing to play a constructive role in SCO. The SCO as a forum provides a unique opportunity to discuss new areas of economic, security and developmental cooperation" (Bisaria, 2012).

India views the SCO as an Asian body and not as a military bloc or a body to counter the West. It considers the SCO a useful organisation and a dialogue platform for the regional countries to discuss economic and security issues. It is argued that "this organisation brings all the Central Asian countries and its neighbours on the same platform where India can interact with all Central Asian countries at the same time.

Russia is trying to persuade India to become a full member and sees India as a balancer. India's entry into the SCO will change the dynamics of this organisation" (Roy, 2014).

However, the flip side of the organisation is that it remains a China dominated body. Despite various challenges, India considers the SCO as a 'diplomatic opportunity' (Besaria, 2013). "From India's point of view the SCO is relevant for discussion on and solution to security and counterterrorism issues. The SCO provides India an alternative regional platform to discuss the rapidly changing situation in Afghanistan. During the Tashkent Summit India's External Affairs Minister acknowledged the SCO's positive contribution". He said, "We... believe that the SCO is uniquely fitted to provide positive contribution to the global discourse on Afghanistan" (MEA, India, June 11, 2010).

As India is set to play a more active role in the region it has three options likes Continue as "an observer state, secondly, go slow on its full membership till the technicalities are studied and analysed and then formally apply for such a status. Thirdly, Intensify its engagement with the SCO member-states vigorously in three sectors – energy, building transportation and infrastructure linkages with the region, and boosting cooperation in traditional and non-traditional security". Given India's acceptability by "Russia and the CARs and its potential to contribute in both economic and security arenas in the Eurasian region, it is possible to join the SCO as full member sooner. In this context, it is equally important to examine the benefits which India could derive and also contribute towards stabilising the region by joining the SCO" (Roy, 2012).

The 15th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit was held in Ufa, Russia on 9-10 July 2015. The summit was unique in many ways. Firstly, for the first time in the 15 years of the SCO, it was decided to increase the number of its members. The summit marked the commencement of the official process for Pakistan and India's inclusion in the SCO as a full member. Entry of Pakistan and India in the SCO as full members would be a watershed move for the SCO. Secondly the summit was held along with BRICS summit under one roof where leaders of 15 countries assembled from various continents. Thirdly, in addition to the expansion of SCO, some other very important decisions were taken at the summit. Some important decisions included: passing of SCO Development Strategy 2025, approval of three years (2016-2018) programme of cooperation to fight against terrorism, separatism and extremism. According to Ufa Declaration, "SCO had an in-depth discussion of the situation in

Afghanistan. It was noted that Islamic State (IS) had stepped up its activities and spread its tentacles to that country, which elevates the security threats on the southern borders of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. It was decided to immediately work out anti-terrorism plan on Afghan borders. The summit noted that drug money was a major source of funding for radical terrorist groups; therefore, the SCO members had outlined plans to counter the drug threat” (Munir, 2015).

India Dealing with Regional Security Threats

Terrorism still remains a serious menace in the South and Central Asian region. It is expanding and becoming more international in nature. The current developments in West Asia and Afghanistan and Pakistan continue to pose new set of challenges for all the countries in the region. The main objective of the SCO is to counter these threats and challenges in the region. Given the size and nature of these challenges multilateral cooperation is the only way to address these threats. An integrated approach is required to deal with these challenges. In this respect, “the SCO can provide an effective mechanism for all the regional countries to counter this menace through collective efforts. While fighting terrorism, India, CARs, China and Russia have much to offer to each other. China wants to address the problem of the Eastern Turkistan terror groups, and Russia wants to control the Chechen terror activities within Russia. India wants to control the activities of the extremist groups operating in Jammu and Kashmir region and from the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. The Central Asian states want to contain the extremist groups operating in the region. The Anti-terrorist centre in Tashkent can be an effective mechanism to address these concerns” (Roy, 2014).

India at the bilateral level has been addressing this issue with CARs and Russia. It has expressed its “desire to deepen security related cooperation with the SCO in general and with the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure, in particular. New Delhi is also looking forward to the signing of the Model Protocol of Intent in the near future as demonstration of its commitment and willingness” (MEA, India, 2013). The threat originating from the Af-Pak region and growing violence in Afghanistan is an area of concern for India and all the SCO member-states.

The SCO seems to be giving greater attention to the Afghanistan issue. After the US-NATO forces exit, the SCO may have to take more responsibility. In such a situation

India as a full member will be able to address its concerns in Afghanistan. India's former External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna, acknowledged the SCO's role in Afghanistan. He stated that, "the SCO is uniquely fitted to provide positive contributions to the global discourse on Afghanistan. SCO can certainly add a critical regional perspective and play a constructive role in ensuring a peaceful and stable Afghanistan. India is also ready to cooperate fully with the Regional Anti- Terrorism Structure (RATS) of the SCO for exchanging information and working out a common strategy for combating terrorism ((MEA, India, 2010).

Drug trafficking and small arms proliferation are two serious threats to be addressed by the regional countries. India, Russia, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran have a common interest to work together to fight this menace. "The Astana Summit has approved the counter narcotics strategy and action plan of the SCO member-states for 2011- 2016 aimed at strengthening pragmatic interaction and countering the negative impacts of the narcotic threat in the SCO region, thereby ensuring steady regional development" (SCO Meeting, Astana, 2011). The success of the SCO in dealing with drug trafficking has been acknowledged by all member states. There is a general understanding that the SCO can be much more effective in controlling drug trafficking. In its recent remarks the deputy secretary general of the SCO reiterated the commitment of the organisation in countering drug trafficking from Afghanistan. He said, "Countering drug trafficking from Afghanistan will remain the SCO's top priority in the short and medium term including the period after full withdrawal of foreign troops from that country" (Kanarovskiy, Deputy Secretary General, SCO Conference, Vienna, 2012).

Given India's experience to deal with these problems its active involvement under the SCO mechanism has much to contribute. As a "full member India will be able to address these issues in more effective ways under the regional framework. Irrespective of the might and capacity of the country, it is not possible for a single country to address the security challenges on its own" (Roy, 2014).

India's Proactive Security Policy in the Future Perspective

In the post-Cold War period, the Central Asian countries have engaged themselves in nation building and consolidation of their statehoods. The pessimistic scenarios feared

in the early 1990s of Central Asia disintegrating have not fortunately been realized. No state has become a failing state. On the contrary, countries like Kazakhstan have made great strides. At the same time, the Central Asian countries continue to face daunting socio-economic and security problems. The relations among themselves are far from smooth. “Issues like water security, borders, environmental degradation and migration have become acute. Religious extremism, fundamentalism and terrorism continue to pose challenges to Central Asian societies as well as regional stability. The Fergana Valley remains a hot spot of fundamentalism. Central Asian republics face serious threat from illegal drug trade emanating from Afghanistan. Instability in Central Asia can spill over into sensitive regions like Xinjiang” (Gupta, 2013).

India’s proactive security policy towards the Central Asia in the future perspective is very vibrant in recent political scenario. Therefore, India is actively engagement and formulated their foreign policy to the Central Asian region through Eurasian integration like Custom Union, TAPI projects, links with INSTC, new silk route etc.

Eurasian integration and India:

Eurasia, especially its Central Asia region, has been commonly referred to as India’s ‘Extended Neighbourhood’ in present years. India’s appearance as a global economic and nuclear power has permitted it to play an active role beyond its immediate neighbourhood, especially in Central Asia and Afghanistan in the last one decade. India has strategic partnership with Russia and Kazakhstan. It had been active in Russian energy sector, including investment in Sakhalin-1 and acquiring Imperial energy. “New Delhi now plans to establish 14 flight connections with the five countries to promote regional development hoping that its ‘Connect’ policy will boost trade with Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. This policy adds structure to Delhi’s overall strategy for the region, focusing on development of information technology, energy, banking and pharmaceutical industries and security cooperation to address the issues of terrorism and extremism” (Patnaik, 2013).

India has traditionally attached great importance to its relations with Central Asia. But, unfortunately, “the relationship despite close historical & cultural contacts has not progressed to the desired extent. The key constraint India faces is the lack of direct access to Central Asia. The unstable situation in Afghanistan and a highly problematic

India-Pakistan relations have deprived India from the benefit of relations with Central Asia. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI) would be a game-changer if it materializes. However, despite some positive developments like the signing of an inter-governmental agreement, realization of TAPI is still some distance away” (Gupta, 2013).

The May, 2016 signing of the trilateral agreement between India, Iran and Afghanistan has been described as a “game changer”, improving manifold the way India can deal with both countries in its “extended neighbourhood” without having to deal with its most intractable neighbour, Pakistan. “Once the Chabahar port is developed, goods from India will not only travel up to Afghanistan, but beyond, along the yet-to-be developed International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) to Central Asia” (Haider, 25 May 2016, The Hindu).

Iran which provides alternative access to Central Asia, is an important but unspoken factor in India-Central Asia relations. However, India-Iran relationship for the last decade or so has not progressed well. Mutual suspicion mars this relationship. “The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) which would pass through Iran, is still underdeveloped and requires huge investment. India has also been slow in realizing the potential of the strategic Chabahar Port in Iran. India will require making substantial investments in Iran to make the INSTC as well as Chabahar Port to provide short and effective access to Central Asia”. This must be top priority in India’s foreign policy. India has proposed to invest US\$100 million in free trade zone in Chabahar. The Chinese are also getting interested in Chabahar and have announced Euro 60 million credit to Iran to upgrade the Port. The significance of Chabahar Port is that “it will facilitate a transit route to land-locked Afghanistan. Despite direct road links, Pakistan does not allow transit facility from India to Afghanistan. Therefore, connectivity through the Chabahar Port could become an important route linking India to Afghanistan and Central Asia” (Gupta, 2013).

The new Silk Road

The Silk Road itself has been a network of routes, traversing the region from India to Afghanistan to Central Asia and China. It has carried not only trade, but also ideas. Buddhism, for example, was propagated during Emperor Ashoka’s time along the Silk

Road through Kashmir to Afghanistan, and Central Asia, ultimately taking root in China. Reference to the new Silk Road as a metaphor, combining the use of the old land route networks and new networks created by 21st century technologies, enables us to take stock of the challenges and opportunities we face in connecting India with Central Asia.

The major conceptual and physical challenges revolve around the revival of the ancient north-south land routes of the Silk Road. “Overcoming these challenges require a stable geo-political environment, and considerable investments. Afghanistan plays a central role in this context. The main opportunities of the new Silk Road lie in creating new networks independent of the traditional land routes. Two sectors identified by India for more intensified cooperation with Central Asia are health-care and education. India’s proposal involves the use of new technologies to create an electronic network connecting Central Asia and India, to deliver telemedicine and tele-education services, on the lines of India’s pan-African e-network project which currently connects India to 47 countries in Africa. These would supplement the already functioning satellite and internet based links connecting Central Asia with India” (MEA, India, 10 July, 2010).

India and the Custom Union

On January 1, 2010 Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan launched the Custom Union, which finally came into existence by 2012 after the three members fine-tuned their respective national legislations in accordance with the agreement document. The creation of the Custom Union has changed the situation in Eurasia, since the need goods from non-member states will face tariff and non-tariff barriers. As much as 92 percent of the Custom duties have been taken from Russian roster, which is the highest among the three members and the most extensive in nature. Even Chinese goods that passed through the low tariff states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to the member states of the Custom Unions are going to be affected. India and Russia have decided to jointly study the possibility of India joining the grouping. With the two key transportation links, India has positioned itself well to take advantages of the Eurasian integration process. “The other important effort that India has initiated is to work out a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), an omnibus free trade agreement with the Custom Union. During Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s visit to Russia in December 2011,

talks on this were taken forward. According to press report in India, government sources have indicated that most of the issues relating to CEPA have been sorted out to Russia". For India, according to Sandeep Diskhit, tailoring the CEPA to fit in its Russian's Custom Union with Kazakhstan, by far the largest Central Asian countries, and Belarus will help enlarge the market for India entrepreneurs (Patnaik, 2013).

Finally, India has come up with a "Connect Central Asia policy" (2012), "which includes elements such high level visits, strategic partnerships, comprehensive economic engagement, partnership in the development of energy and natural resources. Development of potential in medical field, education, e-networks, land connectivity etc. This policy was declared in 2012. The implementation of the policy needs to be speeded up. This will require allocation of definite resource for the implementation of the policy" (MEA, 2012, India).

Chapter-5

Conclusion

To conclude this study, the concept of 'security' is very significant for the nation-states to pursue its national interests in the contemporary period. "Redefining 'security' has recently become something of a cottage industry. Most such efforts, however, are more concerned with redefining the policy agendas of nation-states than with the concept of security itself". Security can be categorised into two types - traditional and non-traditional security. The traditional concept of security is about the military security with the state as the main referent object. The primary function of the state is to defend the territorial integrity as well as promoting welfare of its subject. But on the other hand, non-traditional security is purely non-military security and comes from within the state where individual is the main referent objects. Securitisation of the nation state is very crucial for every state from these traditional and non-traditional threats.

It may be argued that the question of regional security as well as peace and stability in Central Asia is directly related to nation state formation in the region. The process of developing a regional security mechanism in Central Asia is still continuing, In fact, the Central Asian states forge a coherent system in geographical and cultural terms. In security policy terms each nation has its own specific state policy as determined by its own interests, however, their security policies are interrelated. But certainly, there have been several challenges in this endeavour. Away from the centralized system of Soviet era, dynamics of civil society and political statehood in Central Asia are much more flexible and based on mutual interdependence.

The quest for developing a regional security mechanism for the Central Asian region had begun after the disintegration of Soviet Union and emergence of independent Central Asian states. But Central Asian States were faced with the scarcity of resources to develop their regional security mechanism. This situation provided a space for Russia, China and the United States, Iran and Turkey to enhance their influence by providing proactive assistance in the process of developing regional security architecture. However, competition between these five major external powers on the issue of regional security in Central Asian can also be observed.

At theoretical level, with the beginning of cooperative and comprehensive security principles of national military doctrines, debate on rethinking of the concept of security has been initiated. There are several changes that have taken place in the practice of security cooperation in present global system. In this process, decreasing importance of military alliances and rising position of composite security frameworks at the regional level are the most vital ones. This study employed the concepts of 'regional security complex' and 'security dynamics' aimed at analysing the new scenarios of cooperation with regards to Central Asian regional security. It also analysed the effects of the interaction between external powers on developing a regional security mechanism for the Central Asian region.

The Central Asian states have a shared common legacy which gives them the basis and potential for the appearance of cooperative dynamics in the region as they share common history and substantial cultural commonality. The Central Asian states also share common problems in seeking to distinguished themselves from the legacy of the Soviet economic and political system. However, their reform process differs in pace and content.

But Central Asian states do have conflictual dynamics as well which appears more deeply entrenched. It is reflected in an increasing diversification and incompatibility of the economic, political and strategic interests; distinct levels of economic development of these states, raw materials supply chain; geopolitical factors such as historically disputed territories, limitation of communication, struggle among Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan for the leadership in the region etc. Central Asian states also confront the problems of unequal availability as well as distribution of water resources, existence of numerous zones of environmental disaster, demographic imbalance, and migration problems etc. The potential role of radical Islam is also significant with regards to the study of cooperative as well conflictual dynamics within the region.

Emergence of Central Asian states after the collapse of Soviet Union in 1991 made this region strategically significant with regards to regional security. Central Asian states not only suffered low economic development, absence of faith and high potentiality of intra-and inter-state conflicts, but also faced challenges such as terrorism, extremism, separatism, presence of extremely unstable regional environment (Afghanistan, Kashmir northern Caucasus); porous border, expansion of drug trade, religious

extremism, conflicting interests of leading powers and interstate contradictions. However, the terror and drug trafficking activities emanating from Afghanistan appeared as the most potential threat to regional stability.

This study observed that in such challenging situation in the region, rivalry among major powers such as Russia, China and the United States appeared in the region for gaining access to petroleum resources, which have been viewed by these powers as alternative to the volatile West Asian and Persian Gulf regions. These actors do not only consolidate their position but also tend to increase their presence in the region through complex modes of relationships. These acts do not only promote cooperation but also triggers competition among them as is evident from polarisation of relations among Russia, China and US which has been accelerating in the region. This strategic rivalry is compounded by the worsening security situation in Afghanistan.

Apart from these issues, Central Asian states face several other challenges such as territorial and border disputes, domestic policy and economic challenges to regional security, aggravation of inter-ethnic relations in Central Asia, rising Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism, shortage of water and emergence of conflicting ideologies etc.

Islam has been viewed by the new state governments as a similar power structure contradicting their authority. Thus the power of radical Islam remains an important regional concern. The problem of water supply and joint utilisation of trans-border water resources has been another major potential factor of conflict which seriously challenges the security of the Central Asian Countries. In this context water distribution system could entail a serious destabilising potential to regional security. This study found that water related conflict could lead to open conflict between CA states. Similarly it may weaken these states internally as well. Weakness of political structures in Central Asia is one of the main obstacles to the regional stability in Central Asia as drug traders desire to conduct their business in or through frail states and if possible takeover crucial components of the state device. The drug trade has adversely affected the regional stability in Central Asia, which is a heterogeneous region in terms of ethnicity and language. The main ethnic and linguistic groups in the region are Turks, Iranian, and Russian, as well as small communities of Ukrainians, Germans, and Jews

etc. This also poses challenges in terms of evolving social cohesion among the Central Asian states.

In this background of the state of affairs in the Central Asian region, this study analysed the role of Russia, China and the United States. With regards to Russian role, in the initial phase after the Soviet disintegration, Central Asia considered Russia as a 'Security Guarantor', since this region was a part of Soviet security system. For Russia, Central Asian region remained significant because of its strategic geographical position and its wealth of natural resources. The Taliban and AI Qaeda in Afghanistan also stood long-term political, security and economic challenges to Russia. Strong linkage among Chechen rebels and AI Qaeda/ Taliban forces alarmed Russia. Russia also feared that instability in Central Asia might spread into Muslim regions of Russia. So Russia cooperated with Central Asia with the aim of forming and evolving an effective security system in the region. Similarly Russia's participation in evolution of effective regional security architecture is also vitally important for countries of Central Asia region.

China's role has been very significant in the Central Asian region as it has played a very constructive role since the disintegration of Soviet Union and independence of new republics of Central Asia. China was one of the first and foremost nations to recognise the newly independent states of Central Asia and established very good diplomatic relations with them in early 1992. The emergence of separatism, religious extremism, terrorism and their negative influence on its Xinjiang Province have been China's main concern from this region. It would be worth noting that through the framework of SCO, China is actively engaged with Central Asia in combating "three evil forces" of 'terrorism, separatism and extremism' to ensure stability and territorial integrity.

In 1996, Shanghai five was the one of the most important organization regarding regional security mechanism, in which China was a leading member. With the membership of Uzbekistan in Shanghai five, it came to be known as Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) since 2001. The SCO also signed an 'Agreement on Fight against Terrorism, Extremism and Separatism'. However, since 9/11 terror attacks, China's security concerns have been mainly focused on International terrorism, Islamic extremism and drug trafficking etc.

The United States has been playing a prominent role in improving regional security in this region since the emergence of newly independent Central Asian republics. The

United States has constantly stressed upon greatly enhanced American role for this region's economic, political and military progress. However, the United States allowed Russia to deal with instability in Central Asia which became evident when the US refrained itself from active involvement in negotiating the end of Tajik civil war (1992-1997). The United States did not respond to Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan as well. "China and Russia have appeared to move slowly in bolstering the SCO, since some of the reasons for forming it aimed at countering terrorism and limit U.S. presence". This move became slower and less relevant when the United States stimulated militarily into the region after September 11, 2001. It has been observed that due to the global dominance by the US and its regional presence, scepticism has been shown in accepting its regional role in Central Asian region.

For Iran relation with the only Central Asian country with which "it shares a border, Turkmenistan, have had direct security relevance. Iran's cultural links with Tajikistan account for its interest in helping broker a peace agreement to the conflict in that country. Iran shared the security concern of the most Central Asian states about the destabilizing nature of Afghanistan under the domination of the Taliban leadership". Iran has refined the trade, economic and energy relations with its northern neighbours and has projected the image of itself as an influential Caspian state. As the same time, it has been cautious not disclose any threatening political ambitions in the region.

The importance of the Turkey's relations with central Asian should not be exaggerated. Turkey have more regionally and culturally demarcated interests in post-Soviet Central Asia. In the early 1990s Turkish politicians were attracted to the romantic image of a pan-Turkic commonwealth of nations, an embracing of the 'Turkic' people of Central Asia. But in practice, and despite continued meetings of the Turkic Union, Turkey lacked the economic resources to prove a pole of attraction for the Central Asian leaders. Its links have been closer with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in the western part of the region, driven by economic and energy links, and have been less engaged with Uzbekistan, which has resisted Turkish patronage.

This study demonstrates that emergence of regional security architecture in Central Asian region is an expanding phenomenon and is likely continue in the twenty first century. In this process, apart from socio-economic and political situation within the

region, the role played by the Russia, China and the United States may be of critical significance which will determine the success or the failure of such initiatives.

After the fragmentation of the Soviet Union, in the vast region stretching from the Caucasus to Central Asia, 'Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe' (OSCE) has been very active. Its role and responsibility on territory covering Euro Asian Russia, Trans-Caucasian states and Central Asia (by geographical proximity one could describe this as the Euro-Central Asian region) has been active. The leaders of the Central Asian states believe that Euro-Central Asian system of security may benefit from OSCE involvement and follow like Europe the common principles of inviolability of frontiers and territorial integrity. In this regards, the role of regional organisation such as Shanghai Five, CSTO, OSCE, SCO and NATO could be critically very significant. This study demonstrated that Russia, China and the US have been performing their role of proactively engaging with Central Asia countries using these regional organisations. It would be worth mentioning here that "Shanghai Five's resolve to combat international terrorism, drug-trafficking, separatism and religious extremism reconfirm that faced with an anarchical situation, states are likely to opt for common foreign policy arrangements if that helps to maintain national security".

There are several challenges confronted by Central Asian states for regional cooperation efforts but similarly opportunities also exist which could be harnessed by these CA countries. It would be natural for the Central Asian organisations such as Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to seek mechanisms for providing credible security solutions. But in this process, geo-political realities need to be taken into consideration.

In this regard, the interests of Russia, China and the US in the region should be taken into consideration and properly evaluated. Great powers are always competitive as they seek more influence over international affairs. This generalisation undoubtedly applies to the key power's interests in Central Asia. The US, Russian, and Chinese decision makers would clearly prefer to have more say over military and economic developments in the region, rather than less. Russia seek to stave off the further decline of its influence in the region, and with a booming economy and robust governmental finances, many see opportunities to make up for ground lost to China and the US over recent years. The Chinese policy-makers see their state as a rising power globally and

regionally, with an expanding menu of interests in Central Asia that demand an enhanced presence. Officials and analysts in both capitals have voiced an interest in limiting or reducing the US role both regionally and globally, advocating a "multipolar" strategy. For their part, "US officials have routinely expressed preferences for the region's economic, political and military development that could only be served by a continued or even greatly enhanced American role".

In essence, the great power's interests in the region are competitive when viewed in their most expansive terms. For each of the main external power, the most pressing security interests in the region are not ones that can be achieved only at another major power's expense. On the contrary, officials at the highest levels of all the governments concerned place the greatest emphasis on security interests that demand cooperation from the other powers. Notwithstanding the defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan, trans-national terrorism continues to be the major concern for all. Russia remains bogged down in an increasingly radicalised Chechnya, which imposes hefty financial costs on the government, and drains its military while hampering reforms and generating terror attacks in Moscow and other cities. China is particularly worried about Xinjiang's Uighur separatist movement, which in recent years has taken on Islamic overtones. Russian and Chinese officials claim that the Chechen and Uighur movements belong to a trans-national terrorist network with ties to the Taliban and Al Qaeda. The US has classified both movements as terrorist organizations, and has endorsed the thrust of the Russian and Chinese portrayal of their links to wider terror networks.

The Central Asian states have a vital strategic interest in their own as well as regional stability. These states have the most direct interest in the sustained economic development, prosperity and social stability of all their neighbours. There have been many cooperation attempts in the region since the end of the Cold War, both among the regional countries and outsiders such as Russia, China and US. However, these efforts have already given rise to a number of issues that need to be discussed more deeply.

The 9/11 and the following military operation led by the United States in Afghanistan brought the extra-regional power US to the Central Asian region more prominently. "This brought in a wider geopolitical game in the resource rich region of Central Asia. Thereafter one witnessed a competition among the major powers "Russia, China and US" guided by their own long term and short term interests to enhance their influence

in the Eurasian region and gain greater control of its energy resources. This brought in geopolitical pressures on the smaller Central Asian States who then tried manoeuvring between the interests of major powers through their "multi-vector" foreign policy. The Central Asian states continue to depend on these powers for security and much needed economic aid".

This study demonstrates the concept of regional security in Central Asia which has evolved with the emergence of challenges before these countries of the region after Soviet disintegration. Major Powers such as Russia, China and United States have been active role in the Central Asian region but have not been able to see successful evolution of regional security architecture because of their competing as well as conflicting interests. Due to different interests and world view of Russia, China and the United States as well as their diverse long term goals and practices, the evolution process of regional security architecture has not gained pace and momentum. However, these major powers have taken various initiatives to make it possible.

It is also evident from this study that a major hurdle to regional security architecture has been the lack of cooperation among Central Asian states at the regional level. Ethnic differences, border disputes, domestic socio economic disparities and challenges as well as competition to have leadership and dominance have led to prevalence of these differences among these regional countries. In this process, external influences of major powers have also contributed in slowing down the pace of evolution of regional security architecture. However, this study demonstrates that attempts have been made to evolve Central Asian Security architecture by not only countries of the region but also by major powers i.e. Russia, China and the United States. It may be expected that despite their complexities, differences and challenges, regional security architecture will evolve in upcoming future which will play a significant role in regional security, stability and progress of the Central Asian region.

In Indian perspective, the regional security is very vital for India to pursue the national security from the Central Asian states. Therefore, India is actively engaging with the Central Asian countries to fight the security threats and challenges. We have observed that India's strategic worries are tied up with the security and political stability in the Central Asia. Any geopolitical change in the region has its effect on several states in the neighbourhood, including India. As an evolving power, India is obviously interested

in any changes in and around the Central Asian region, which could have implications for its own security. Central Asia security is linked to peace in Afghanistan and Indian subcontinent. India's role in regional security issues in Central Asia are anti-Taliban movement, cooperation with SCO, dynamics of internal and external conditioning, tackling the spreading of Islamic extremist and stabilising Afghanistan. India with all her seriousness peeps into the changes happening in Central Asia and tries to deal with all the states in friendly and cooperative manner.

India's in the Central Asia region in the early 1990s lacked much conviction in the perspective of regional security arrangement. However, the security related approach that later followed resulted from the victory of the Taliban in Afghanistan and Pakistan's search for 'strategic depth' in Afghanistan and beyond. Though support to the Northern Alliance was covert, India linked its own security to that of the Central Asia region.

In this study focussed that "India's Central Asia policy should have strategic vision to- firstly, ensuring its access to energy resources, secondly, containing and eliminating international terrorism emanating from the region. Thirdly, it is deepening India's involvement in Central Asia and Afghanistan and denying strategic depth to any potential adversary". To achieve these goal and objective, there have to be strategies and choices that will advance India's interest in the region, without harbouring any ambition to project its power, or involving in a game of hold of any other neighbour. India should simultaneously concentrate on enlarging its economic profile in the region. It needs to increase its investments in Central Asia to create a viable infrastructure to access the resource in the region. Without strong trade and economic relation, it may be difficult to sustain India's strategic and security objective in the region.

One can deduce that "Central Asia's security and stability is in the common strategic interests of both India and Central Asian states. This demands that India remain strongly engaged in this region in a mutually complimentary framework with CARs countries". The threat from international terrorism and fundamentalism can become significant, even difficult to manage, if Central Asia falls under the sway of such destabilizing forces. The geopolitical stability in Central Asia has not only a direct impact on India economic interests in the region, but also has greater implications for the ongoing separatist movements in Jammu and Kashmir. The containment of international

terrorism, therefore, critically depends on closer collaboration between Russia, India, and the Central Asian States. They cannot leave this task to the US alone, which is physically far away from this region, is obsessed with Al Qaeda and treats Pakistan as a reliable partner. As during the years of Taliban rule, these regional states should keep their cooperation mechanism active to deal with terrorism and safeguard their national interests. Finally the idea of the Greater Central Asia, which is dominantly Sunni Islamic and integrates Central Asia with parts of China and India, apart from Afghanistan and Pakistan, is detrimental to the quadrilateral cooperation between India-China-Iran and Eurasia. India have to focus on their cooperative engagement with Central Asia to deny any negative integration of the region at the cost of their own national interest as well as that of regional peace and stability.

Based on the abovementioned and analysis on India's opportunities and challenges as a full member, "it can be argued that India's keen interest to active participation in the SCO is justified. Given the complexities of the relations among the SCO member-states and other geopolitical realities, it is still premature to write off the effectiveness of this regional grouping. So far, its success has been somewhat mixed in various areas but in the long run, its relevance for the region will not wane". Therefore, in the long run, "it will be in India's interest to watch the developments closely from within as a full member rather than sit on the side-lines. China have vast influence in the SCO and India's entry can check its monopoly in the Central Asian region. It is believed that China would try and delay India's entry as full member in this regional organisation, whereas Russia along with the Central Asian countries have continued to support India's full membership in the SCO. Finally, India is the permanent membership of the SCO from 2016 will facilitate its active engagement in perspective of regional security in Central Asian region".

Within the structure and functioning of the SCO, "India needs to utilise the observer plus status during 2005, whereby it can contribute in a more effective manner in areas of trade and transportation and enhancing cooperation within the security arena like created multilateral cooperation against terrorism, drugs, human and arms trafficking in Central Asia. At this stage it could build new models of security cooperation with SCO member-states to deal with new security challenges in Afghanistan, Central and West Asia".

India's increasing role in the Eurasian region is viewed positively by Russia, CARs and the US. This sets a perfect stage for India to play an active role in the region both at the bilateral level and within the regional groupings in the region. "Despite India's current enthusiasm for full membership of the SCO, it should not compromise on other core strategic issues of national interest. For any meaningful cooperation with the Eurasian region, India will have to carve out a medium to long-term strategy of bilateral engagement supported by enhanced cooperation with the regional Central Asian organisations".

In the future perspective, India needs to work out an arrangement to overcome barriers to trade in Eurasia. At the same time, Eurasian Union is an opportunity for expanding trade with a much larger region. The first step to access the member states has been taken with the transportation links being created through North-South Transport Corridor and the Chabahar port. Therefore, India is hoping to secure its political and security from the Central Asian states through Eurasian integration like joining Custom Union, sign Chabahar treaty, participation new silk route, improvement of TAPI project, links with INSTC and improving infrastructure in Afghanistan. India is actively participate in the Central Asian region in the context security in the present scenario. Due to the connect Central Asia policy in 2012, there is good relationship between the both sides like people-people ties which was boosted by present Prime Minister Modi's visits to Central Asia 2015 and signed many treaties with Central Asian counties.

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