**The Foreign Policy of India towards Central Asia  
Enhancing cooperation for mutual progress**

Chitra Rajora, PhD Scholar,

Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, India

# Abstract

One of the key factors determining the dynamics of the present world politics is the entry of rising giant countries, in particular India, into its foreground. Rapid and sustainable economic growth allows India to systematically strengthen its influences in the international arena through an active foriegn policy both at the regional and global levels. India pays special attention to cooperation with various international organizations and associations like: OSCE, SCO, and UNO and the objectives of the article are to study the priorities of India in the development of interaction with these organizations and connections, to identify external and internal factors influencing its interests as well. On the other hand, this article also highlights that after the fall of the Taliban regime, the Indo- Pakistani rivalry for influence in Afghanistan emerged with renewed vigor, stimulating the strengthening of traditionally close ties between India and Afghan Tajiks and interest in developing cooperation with Tajikistan. Security issues have long been prioritized over other issues in Central Asia towards Afghanistan. The main agenda in Central Asia is to address potential threats from the spread of Afghanistan, increased migration flows from Afghanistan, and the root causes of youth radicalization and terroism through several funding instruments.

For India’s side, A significant obstacle faced by India in the development of relations with the countries of Central Asia remains the difficult access to them, for their raw materials and markets of the region. Pakistan has been blocking the land transport links between India and Afghanistan, and China is limiting trade between India and Central Asian countries through Xinjiang. As a result, trade between India and the countries of Central Asia is carried out mainly in a ‘roundabout way’ through the ports and transport network of Iran. Over a decade old trans-Afghan gas pipeline project has not moved off the ground, financing of which is becoming impossible due to instabilization in Afghanistan. This concerns India as well as Central Asian countries, thus forcing them into mutual engagement in multiple domains, for containment of instability in the region.

# Background

Both India and Central Asia are strongholds of different civilizations. Central Asia has Slavic, Turkish, French, Arab, and Indian cultures, which is why it is called the Heartland of Eurasia. Central Asia has been a center of attraction in the world due to its geographical location. A lively example is that Central Asia has been considered as a supplier of energy to world superpowers like; China, USA, Iran and UK, where even India hasn't remained untouched by this. Central Asian countries have been following prudent foreign policy to establish their international legitimacy.

In order to strengthen its position in the region and make its intentions clear, Delhi has put forward the “Connect Central Asia” and “Extended Neighborhood” strategies. Both strategies are based on active political, economic and human interaction with the countries of Central Asia, yet there still is the need for a stable terrestrial connection. Meanwhile, India's willingness to provide grants and loans is a telling example of India's intentions and growing capacity. In particular, a preferential loan in the amount of $1 billion for infrastructure development was offered to Uzbekistan. The countries of Central Asia view India as a fast-growing economy, a potential investor and an increasingly influential actor in the region, as evidenced by the new format of the India-Central Asia Ministerial Dialogue, the first meeting of which was held in Samarkand in January 2019. India's 26th January’s Republic Day Parade, which gives a hint towards the changing direction of India’s foreign policy, was used by it through invitation to all heads of state from the five Central Asian Republics (CARs). But the pandemic intervened, limiting their engagement to the first-ever India-Central Asia Summit, which took place online on 27 January, 2022. All countries agreed on holding the summit once every two years, the next expected in 2024.

Apart from having strong cultural and historical ties, India is also playing an important role by establishing a significant presence in the region, despite the lack of convenient connectivity routes. As a result of this geopolitical reality, there has been a decrease in investment in the energy sector in both countries. India has been investing in two big projects to provide access to gas reserves in the region for better connectivity by INSTC and TAPI Pipeline thereby building new energy trade routes to India. Another important aspect is India’s role in Central Asian centered multilateral forums and organizations such as CICA, SCO, and EEU. The region has become an important partner of the European Union (EU) due to the important geographical location of Central Asia at the crossroads of Europe and Asia. The Central Asian regions, particularly Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, are rich in energy, most of which is still untapped, where even the European Union is interested.

Keeping this global demand in mind further, India is taking care of its national interests by joining the Regional Organizations and by Coordinating with Central Asia using existing synergies through existing forums such as SCO, EEU, and Customs Union, and accelerating multifaceted activities with Central Asia. For this, India has already proposed a comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement, which aims to integrate Indian markets with the Central Asian region. Thus, the greater importance of Central Asia for India also becomes important because of the challenges before both countries, which are a major concern. Militant Islam has shown it's presence in Central Asia and some small terrorist groups exist in this region. Also, Afghanistan’s stability is also a major important issue and area of their cooperation.

India and CARs have a weak link in bilateral relations, due to lack of direct access to the region. Increasing cooperation in areas that do not require a direct land corridor would be mutually beneficial. During the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi to CARs in 2015, he underlined the potential areas of cooperation such as IT, e-Network, Pharmacy, biotechnology, textiles, silk, leather goods, mining and Exploration; hydropower and Renewable energy sources and facilitating medical tourism and visa system etc. These areas have been promoting Indian investments in the CARs is one such option was reflected in bilateral agreements signed during this visit. Before PM Modi’s initiative, the ‘Connect Central Asia policy’ was formulated in 2012.

The purpose of that policy reiterates the commitments of India’s extensive partnership with the countries of Central Asia; there has been significant progress in the relationship between the two regions. The recent activity was held in FICCI at the launch of the India-Central Asia Council on February 06, 2020. Going through this dialogue India’s External Ministry said that “within the framework of the India-Central Asia dialogue, the Government has been committed to a vibrant partnership but to realize this industry must play its role.” On October 29, 2021, a virtual meeting of the Foreign Ministers of India and Central Asian countries took place, during which the participants discussed issues of regional development. In particular, the topic of conversation was the development of transport corridors and the fight against coronavirus, as well as security issues. As the ministers noted, such a diplomatic platform is “a sought-after and effective mechanism for expanding regional cooperation.” Another milestone, January 27, 2022, the first ever India-Central Asia summit took place. It was chaired by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The summit was attended by the leaders of all five Central Asian republics - the presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Due to the pandemic, the forum will be held in the format of a videoconference (MEA 2022). In this regard, Sadyr Japarov, Kyrgyzstan President said that Kyrgyzstan supports the initiative of the Indian side to hold a dialogue “India - Central Asia” at the level of heads of state in the anniversary year. I believe that this event will contribute to the further development of mutual and fruitful regional cooperation” (Kyrgyzstan Foreign Affairs, 2022).

**History**

India and Central Asian countries have fruitfully enjoyed cordial relations during the existence of the Silk route. Both sides have a very long history, culture and economic connection through the silk route which not only connected the people and business but also let the thoughts, culture and beliefs flow freely from one region to the other. Looking at the past relation of India and the central Asian region, one such connection is that the religion of Buddhism, having its origin in India, was appreciated by the people in central Asia, and similarly, many *Sufi silsilahs* popular in India have their connection with that region. If you discuss the bilateral relations of India and Central Asia, then an existing example of remnants of such a relationship is the Turkan Gate, which was built in Delhi in 1650.

Even ancient Indian texts speak of challenges that were represented by people outside the Himalayas or the Hindu Kush as Uttara-kuru (located on the territory of Kyrgyzstan). Thus, numerous descriptions of the region are found in various Hindu- Buddhist texts, which shows that since the time of the Sakas or the Indo-Scythian tribes, the links between India and Central Asia have remained uninterrupted. The texts also mention the great trade route known as Uttarapath, which connected the Indo-Gangetic plain with the southern edge of the Eurasian continent, through ancient Takshashila and Gandhara (Modern Pakistan and Afghanistan).

In addition, Central Asia was perceived in India with military overtones- as a frequent springboard for invasions of India. Ancient texts and treatises have mentioned relentless threats coming from the northwest of India. The great epic of Mahabharat and the ancient Pali texts vividly described the dynamics of threats posed to India from the region. It seems clear that almost every foreigner, including the Greeks, Turks and Mughals, with the exception of the navtive mongols, carried out military campaigns into india through Central asia steppe. In The Middle ages, until the Timurid period (XIV century) the region was the epicenter of world power, the dominance and influence of which extended to India and later Babur founded the Mughal Dynasty in India in the XVI century. During the 18th and 19th centuries the Russian Empire reached the northern Outskirts of India which led to the ‘Great Game’ with the British Empire.

Thakharchistan (Tokharistan) in Central Asia was a state which was dominated by Indian cultural and Buddhist religions. Central Asia scholars used to come to India during the middle-ages. And fourthly, Indian music and cinema have been highly appreciated by the people of the Central Asia region. India was one of the countries who enjoyed relations with the Soviet central Asia region. After the breakup of the Soviet Union, the newly independent nations started to stabilize their nation. Besides, since their independence, the republics have been engaging with the countries in the region and beyond, and India is among the first countries to establish diplomatic relations with them.

# Importance of Central Asia

For India, maintaining a long-standing, time-honored partnership with Russia has become essential to its external security and security in general, as it is heavily dependent on arms supplies from Russia for defense purposes. But these ties, too, have changed rapidly with the changing global situation. The spirit and rhythm of the old Indo-Russian ties inevitably weakened. As the economies of both countries have gone through difficult periods of structural change, foreign policy orientations have also undergone a significant transformation. Nevertheless, the geostrategic imperative of India's proximity to the geographic space of Eurasia remains relevant.

One of the greatest things has been attached to this region which is the energy-rich and “heart of Asia”. Geographically, Central Asian countries are endowed with significant hydrocarbon and mineral resources and are close to India territory. Turkmenistan has the fourth-largest gas reserves of the world, and similarly Kazakhstan is the largest producer of uranium and has huge gas and oil reserves as well. The strategic location of these countries makes them a bridge between different regions of Asia and between Europe and Asia. Central Asia countries see mutual benefit with India due to India’s economic and energy security needs, although the lack of direct surface and road connectivity has been affecting economic engagement. India and Central Asia countries have opportunities and challenges that exist in the present bilateral relationship.

India’s diplomatic relationship with Central Asia countries highlights the close ties Kazakhstan has enjoyed with India in the last two decades including the recent high-level visits of 2015-2016. On the other hand, diplomatic relations with Kyrgyzstan have been highlighted by historical and cultural links which makes it a special bond, especially with the introduction of parliamentary democracy in the country. India has been giving humanitarian aid, credit lines and assistance to central Asia countries for nation-building since the 1990s.

Today, Central Asia is undergoing rapid changes due to the fact that the world has begun to pay more attention to this energy-rich region. The influx of capital and the expansion of trade are causing large-scale infrastructure changes in the movement of goods and flow of people through the region, a phenomenon aptly compared to the waves of transformation that occurred earlier in Europe and southeast Asia. As a consequence, great power rivalry has also increased in the context of security and energy availability in the region. The major powers are framing their responses in different ways to capitalize on a short withdrawal from the region (Hindustan Times News 2022).

**India Regional exploration in Central Asia**

The five ‘Stan’ countries truly support India’s membership in the SCO. In 2015 India was an observer state of Shanghai Cooperation Organization SCO. However, the doubts on the “rules and procedures” for expansion of this (SCO) body continued and it is only when SCO finalized procedures for taking in new members that India could submit its “formal application for the full membership of the SCO” in 2014. India signed the SCO MoU on 24 June 2016. In this spirit, India looks forward to the culmination of the more than decade long association with SCO by participating as a full member at the next SCO Summit of Heads of State in Astana in June 2017. India is expected to benefit from SCO membership given SCO objectives are strengthening relations among member states. Second is promoting cooperation in political affairs, economic, transportation, tourism and environmental protection. Thirdly safeguarding regional peace, security and stability and lastly, creating a democratic, equitable international political and economic order.

The most significant step were taken by the SCO summit on 17 September 2021, a regular meeting of the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization was held in the capital of Tajikistan, Dushanbe, in which the President of Kyrgyzstan, Sadyr Japarov, also took part. According to the presidential press service, the topics of the summit were the issues of sustainable development of the participating states, maintaining stability in the space of the organization and in the world, as well as strengthening cultural and humanitarian cooperation. The meeting was chaired by the President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon. As a result of the SCO meeting, 30 documents were signed, including the Dushanbe Declaration on the 20th anniversary of the SCO, the decision to start the procedure for admitting Iran to the SCO, granting Qatar, Egypt and Saudi Arabia the status of dialogue partners, a memorandum of understanding between the SCO Secretariat and the Eurasian Economic commission and others. Speaking at the meeting, Sadyr Japarov said that over 20 years, the SCO has achieved "concrete results and significant success." According to him, a lot of work is being done to maintain security and stability in the SCO space. He urged special attention to the formation of a security belt in the region. Zhaparov also said that Kyrgyzstan stands for the early prevention of a military conflict and the establishment of peace, tranquility and stability in Afghanistan, both in the interests of the most “long-suffering” Afghan people, and the countries of the region and the international community.

Despite this, the total mutual trade between India and Central Asia was USD 2 billion per year in 2019, if we look at the country towards Central Asia like Kazakhstan – India’s combined trade was over USD 1.5 billion and over USD 400 million was Indian investment. Kazakhstan’s was a US $ 68 million investment in India; especially in tea, agricultural and pharmacy etc. India-Kyrgyz has steadily established trade relations that their bilateral trade will exceed US $ 30 million in 2019, with both sides accelerating their investment and market territory to declare a US $ 200 million line of credit.

India's trade with Tajikistan reached US $ 75 million in 2017-18 which was a disappointing performance. To further strengthen its ties, India has expanded Turkmenistan's efforts to increase investment in the economic sector, with petrochemicals exports a core of the national economy, an attractive area for Indian investors. Bilateral trade of around US $ 65 million was recorded in 2019. India's economic relations with Uzbekistan are very promising and new areas of investment; Uranium is also being discovered, resulting in trade relations between the two countries amounting to approximately US $ 300 million (India MEA 2020). It is very symbolic that this Summit is taking place in the year of the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the countries of Central Asia and India.

According to the Kazakh’s President, this opens up great prospects for realizing favorable opportunities for mutually beneficial cooperation, primarily in trade. In particular, the trade turnover between the countries of Central Asia and India in 2020 reached $3 billion. At the same time, the share of Kazakhstan amounted to 80%. He added, “however, current performance still falls short of our overall economic potential. In my opinion, the work of such dialogue platforms as the Central Asia-India summit is of great practical benefit for the progressive development of our countries, as well as the development of effective responses to new challenges and risks. I am sure that this unique format of a productive exchange of views will help bring cooperation between our states to a qualitatively new level, he believes” (Kazakhstan, MFA, 2022).

**India and Central Asia Countries Total Export (**Values in US$ Million**)**

Region: CARs Countries

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S.No.** | **Country** | **2020-2021** | **2021-2022(Apr-Nov)** |
| **1.** | **KAZAKHSTAN** | **225.96** | **125.83** |
| **2.** | **KYRGYZSTAN** | **38.71** | **17.79** |
| **3.** | **TAJIKISTAN** | **53.45** | **20.79** |
| **4.** | **TURKMENISTAN** | **60.34** | **82.15** |
| **5.** | **UZBEKISTAN** | **280.07** | **176.22** |
|  | **Total** | **658.52** | **422.78** |

**India and Central Asia Countries** **Total Import (**Values in US$ Million)

**Region: CARs Countries**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **S.No.** | **Country** | **2020-2021** | **2021-2022(Apr-Nov)** |
| **1.** | **KAZAKHSTAN** | **804.97** | **277.78** |
| **2.** | **KYRGYZSTAN** | **5.16** | **0.91** |
| **3.** | **TAJIKISTAN** | **1.06** | **7.04** |
| **4.** | **TURKMENISTAN** | **0.30** | **2.88** |
| **5.** | **UZBEKISTAN** | **14.94** | **14.58** |
|  | **Total** | **826.43** | **303.20** |

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA**:** Ministry of Commerce & Industry

In this regard, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev supported the initiative of the Indian side to create a trade and economic platform at the level of ministers of trade and industry. and stressed that improving the investment climate is one of the components of our economic policy, which underlies the concept of New Kazakhstan. We are interested in attracting investments in such promising areas as the mining and metallurgical complex, agriculture, green energy, healthcare and the pharmaceutical sector.” So there are two separate Lines of Credit. One was announced for Uzbekistan exclusively in 2018, during the visit of President Mirziyoyev to India. Under this, four projects worth US$ 448 million in the sectors of road, sewerage and IT have been approved for implementation. The second line of credit is the US$1 billion LoC announced in October 2020, during the second India-Central Asia dialogue for all the five Central Asian countries (India, MEA, 2022).

On December 19, 2021 in New Delhi Ruslan Kazakbaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic, held the bilateral meeting with Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of India in the framework of his participation in the Meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of India-Central Asia Dialogue (The Economic Times News 2022). With view to enhancing trade and economic cooperation, the parties agreed to hold a number of Kyrgyz-Indian Business Forums both in Kyrgyzstan and India, accelerate negotiation of terms of the credit line worth of 200 million USD and implement joint projects through the grant assistance from the Government of India, such as educational IT center in Bishkek in one of the universities of the Kyrgyz Republic. Then (Indian Express News 2022). In addition, agreements were reached on the following issues: extension of the project “Telemedicine” to all regions of the Kyrgyz Republic and joint archeological research of Buddhist temples in the Kyrgyz Republic. The Foreign Ministers of Kyrgyzstan and India also discussed in detail issues related to the expansion of military-technical cooperation (Embassy of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, 2021).

India’s Line of Credit to CIS

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| S. No. | Year of Approval | Region | Country | Borrower | Amount of credit (in USD mn) | Purpose | Date of the singing of LOC by the recipient with Exim Bank |
| 1. | 2008-9 | CIS | Belarus | RUE grodno energo  Belarus | 55.60 | Reconstruction of Grodno-II power plant project (100-130 MW) | 23-10-2010 |
| 2. | 2018-19 | CIS | Uzbekistan | Govt. of Uzbek Republic | 200.00 | Housing and Social infrastructure projects | 18-01-2019 |
| 3. | 2019-20 | CIS | Russia | Govt. of the Russian Federation | 1,000.00 | Infrastructure and other Development projects | Not yet signed |
| 4. | 2019-20 | CIS | Uzbekistan | Govt. of Uzbek Republic | 40.00 | Financing the procurement of defense equipment | Not yet signed |
|  |  |  |  | Total | 1,295.6 |  |  |

Source: Exim Bank.

India today is the world's fastest-growing free-market economy, with annual GDP growth of 7.5 per cent. India’s for full membership of SCO with various geostrategic, security and economic considerations. These considerations include “the evolving security situation in Afghanistan, Prime Minister Modi said that “Terrorism is the “single most significant threat” to peace and stability”, connectivity with the Eurasian region, anti-narcotics counter-terrorism and, capacity building in the central Asian region and energy cooperation.” SCO, as a platform for discussion, can elevate trust and cooperation between India and the other SCO members. Thus this regional organization can help serve India’s geostrategic, security and economic interests in the Eurasian region better.

India is already engaged with several SCO member states in diverse areas and would specifically like to share our experience in economic areas like banking, capital markets and micro-finance. India has since successfully implemented projects and worked on flagship projects such as a pan e-network project to impart tele-education and telemedicine in the region. To enhance connectivity, India is and is actively drawing up, in consultation with other INSTC members, a standard Customs protocol to facilitate seamless movement of products on this corridor. The signing of the Chabahar agreement has further increased our options of connectivity. India has also submitted its instrument of accession to the Ashgabat Agreement.

As the Prime Minister is undertaking Modi’s visit to all republics in July 2015, the new government has already indicated its agenda to engage the region on priority. The economic development in the countries of Central Asia, especially in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, has been driven primarily by the exploitation of hydrocarbon and other mineral resources. This has led to growth in construction, telecom, software and ancillary industries, leading to an increase in the purchasing power and disposable income for the people to spend more both on purchase of goods and undertaking foreign travels.

Further, after achieving a certain level of economic growth, the regional countries want to diversify their oil economies and also integrate them with the global economy. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have joined the WTO and Kazakhstan is poised to become a member. The European Union is the largest economic partner of Central Asia, Kazakhstan is the EU's largest trading partner in the region; About 85% of its oil field is exported to the European Union and is also the largest recipient of EU direct investment. Central Asian countries receive funding from the European Union through its development cooperation tools. This assistance is largely focused on regional security, education, economic development, sustainable management of natural resources, etc. Over the years, assistance to Central Asia has increased. Another important initiative launched by the European Union is the “Central Asia Investment” program, which was established in 2007. The initiative aims to encourage and support small and medium-sized enterprises in the region by promoting policies that facilitate investment, open new markets, and strengthen competition.

India, with its impressive growth rate, is seen by the Central Asian countries as a potential partner for stronger economic development. Recently, the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) has been launched and two Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are its members. Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) came into effect in 2015, which includes Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Russia and Armenia. EEU aims to build 176 million people and a market with 4 trillion GDP. Because EEU has a stock of natural resources like oil, gas, minerals, coal, iron and steel. India was invited by Russia to the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with EEU countries. The viability of the free trade agreement between India and EEU is being considered. This will give India a well-prepared market and it will be very beneficial for India’s economy.

The CIS country can be a great market for India’s pharmaceuticals, which will provide a great opportunity for the Indian pharmacy industry through the FTA. The FTA will also improve connectivity with India's Central Asian and EEU countries, but to promote trade relations between the EEU members as well as joining the Iran-North-South-Transport Corridor, It will be easy to ensure. Many Indian businessmen doing businesses in Central Asian countries often say that the non-presence of Indian banks in the republics has been affecting bilateral trade. Alternatively, the business leaders from India can establish a bank on the PPP model with the governments and private capitals from the region and India. It will greatly boost trade and ease business transactions.

**Developing India -Central Asia Connectivity**

However, India is trying to gain a foothold in the region. India has begun to see Central Asian countries as an essential partner in its efforts to identify potential alternative sources for energy needs. It is not that there was no bilateral trade in the energy sector, the problem is largely due to the limited presence of Indian companies and partners in the region and the inherent contradiction in India's policies towards Central Asia which emphasizes diversification of energy sources On the one hand and on the other hand tries to keep relations with Russia stable. For India, away from Russian sources, the idea of ​​energy diversification has become a major issue. Furthermore, as there is a substantial Russian presence in the Central Asian region, India is trying to maneuver carefully without adversely affecting its relations with Russia.

Connectivity is a major issue for India. Despite several key efforts, the obstacles have been hard to triumph over. Need to improve air and land connectivity between Central Asia and India and observed that Kyrgyzstan is keen on bringing Indian technology and expertise to the country. Central Asian countries appreciated India’s contribution towards the Turkmenistan- Afghanistan- India (TAPI) gas pipeline and International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) projects which will have benefits for the entire region. India should invest in the CASA-1000 project which could be a benefit in the area of hydroelectricity.

Oil and Natural Gas Resources in Central Asia

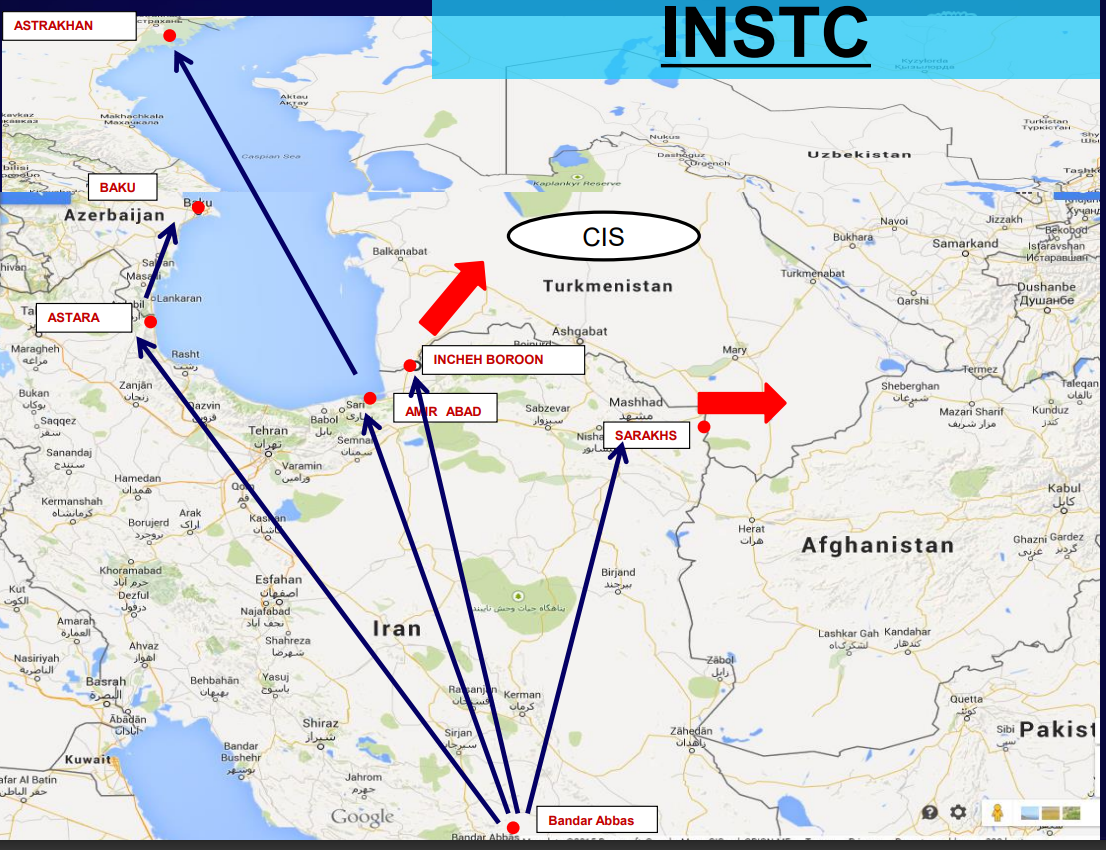
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Country | Oil Resources in Central Asia | | | | | Natural Gas Resources in Central Asia | | | | |
| Production (in million tons) | | Consumption (in thousands of barrels per day) | | Proved Reserve | Production (in billion cubic meters) | | Consumption (in billion cubic meters) | | Proved Reserve (at end 2020) |
|  | 2019 | 2020 | 2019 | 2020 |  | 2019 | 2020 | 2019 | 2020 |  |
| Kazakhstan | 91.0 | 86.1 | 387 | 379 | 1.7% | 34.0 | 31.7 | 17.4 | 16.6 | 1.2% |
| Turkmenistan | 12.2 | 10.3 | 149 | 142 | \* | 63.2 | 59.0 | 31.5 | 31.3 | 19.9% |
| Uzbekistan | 2.8 | 2.1 | 98 | 86 | \* | 57.3 | 47.1 | 44.4 | 43.0 | 7.2 |

Source: Statistical Review of World Energy 2021, 70th edition

**INSTC:**  The international North-South Transport Corridor is a multi-modal transport system. The agreement was signed in 2000 in St. Petersburg to promote transportation. It was initiated by Iran, Russia and India. Later 12 other countries joined it. It is expected that INSTC will transport CIS and Europe from Indian ports via sea route to Bandar Abbas in Iran. Followed by road from Iran and finally by sea route to Russia’s Astrakhan port. The International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) could play a pivotal role in developing practical policy options to improve connectivity in the region. Countries of the region must aim to attain the full potential of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) which will connect India with Europe and Central Asia. Iran creates a transit system for geographical status and reconciliation with India and the regions of Central Asia. INSTC will reduce the time and expenditure for the goods from Iran to the countries of Central Asia and India. The reason for low trade between India and Central Asia directly or lacking in the economy. In light of its consistent economic growth and increased regional and global profile, India now has the opportunity to engage more deeply with Central Asia.

The INSTC is a functional route through the Bandar Abbas port of Iran that further passes through Azerbaijan or alternatively through the Caspian Sea to Russia. Usage of this route can reduce the time taken from 40 to 45 days to 20 to 25 days between India and Russia as well as reduce cost by 30% to 40%. Given the landlocked nature of Central Asian countries, and the lack of overland connectivity with India, there has been understandably a considerable emphasis on the need for promoting mutual connectivity to enhance trade and commerce between India and the Central Asian countries. Both Russia and Iran are key stakeholders and participants of the INSTC. It is in the interest of all member countries of the INSTC that there is greater utilization of this route. In addition, India is also a member of the Ashgabat agreement that we joined in 2018 and which enables connectivity between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. This also synchronizes with other transport corridors in the region, including the INSTC. India stands ready to plan, build, invest, and participate in connectivity projects based on the priorities of transparency, broad participation, local priorities, financial sustainability and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. As regards the query on Pakistan, this is better addressed to the Central Asian countries.

China is a very important country in South Asia, during Xi Jinping in a speech in Kazakhstan in 2015 outlined his perspectives of the Silk Road economic belt. Initially, the idea was to finance transport infrastructure in Central Asia. Within months, China added ports and other things. It has been decided that the global GDP will be 44 billion for the population of 65 countries. Thus China is investing heavily in Myanmar and Sri Lanka, especially in building ports. China is also trying to make deep inroads in Nepal and Bangladesh. Recently Nepal has proposed to make the Kerung Kathmandu Pokhara Lumbini Rail Project part of China’s “One Belt and Road.”



China and Pakistan are engaged in projecting the project only for an economic purpose but it does not seem to be because it is only economic. China wants to establish its rule from Africa to Southeast Asia Via One Belt one Road. China is preparing to improve trade routes through land-sea routes. This route will pass through many ports in Asia and Africa and many free trade zones will come in its way. Nearly 65 countries will bring to a close the other and will two-third of the world’s population directly add to the economy. The name of the Silk Road was used by German geography in the 19th century, then it included only the road from Xinjiang in China to Central Asia, but as a result of its expansion gradually. This route reached West Asia, Africa and Europe. It may be noted that the present New Silk Road included not only the road but also the sea route. China is laying a network of ground and sea transport through these economic corridors

1. China- Pakistan Economic Corridor
2. New Eurasian Land Bridge
3. China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor
4. China-Mongol-Russia Economic Corridor
5. Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor
6. and China-Indochina-Peninsula Economic Corridor.

There are plans to construct Six Corridors under this project. This includes the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor passing through Pakistan occupied Kashmir, which India is strongly opposed to. India says that any construction in PoK without its permission is a violation of sovereignty. The chain also agreed to change the name China-Pakistan Economic Corridor to include India, but lately, it was overturned. the major corridors being built under the One belt One Road project known as New Silk Road. If China succeeds in implementing the One Belt Road Project, the balance of power in South Asia will be uncertain. This will be a very serious situation for India; India will strengthen the INSTC initiative. All these factors together, whatever OBOR’s conclusion, but China will face lots of problems in implementing these projects. Chinese strategists feel that they will be able to “encirclement” India through One Belt One Road. But the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) or other economic corridors may become a source of tension for China in Future.

After Modi’s visit to China in 2015 some query has come out like; India’ MEA spokesperson has a response to India participating in OBOR forum, he asserts that “Expansion and strengthening of connectivity is an integral part of India’s economic and diplomatic initiatives. Under the ‘Act East’ policy, we are pursuing the Trilateral Highway project; under our ‘Neighbourhood First’ policy we are developing multimodal linkages with Myanmar and Bangladesh; under our ‘Go West’ strategy, we are engaged with Iran on Chabahar Port and with Iran and other partners in Central Asia on International North-South Transport Corridor. The BBIN initiative is aimed at enhancing logistics efficiencies in the South Asian region. We are also actively considering acceding to the TIR Convention (MEA, India 2017).

On the same opinion given by Patil he said that “India’s concerns about the CPEC and China-Pakistan ties are combined with Beijing’s growing presence and influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region. In the last decade, China has systematically engaged with countries in India’s neighborhood—such as Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and the Maldives—through economic and military aid.  Although India’s poorly-executed neighborhood policy may be partially responsible, India sees China’s growing profile in the region as an “encirclement”.  OBOR, with its network of China-sponsored infrastructure projects in and around India’s neighborhood, amplifies India’s anxiety about China’s real intentions” (Patil 2015).

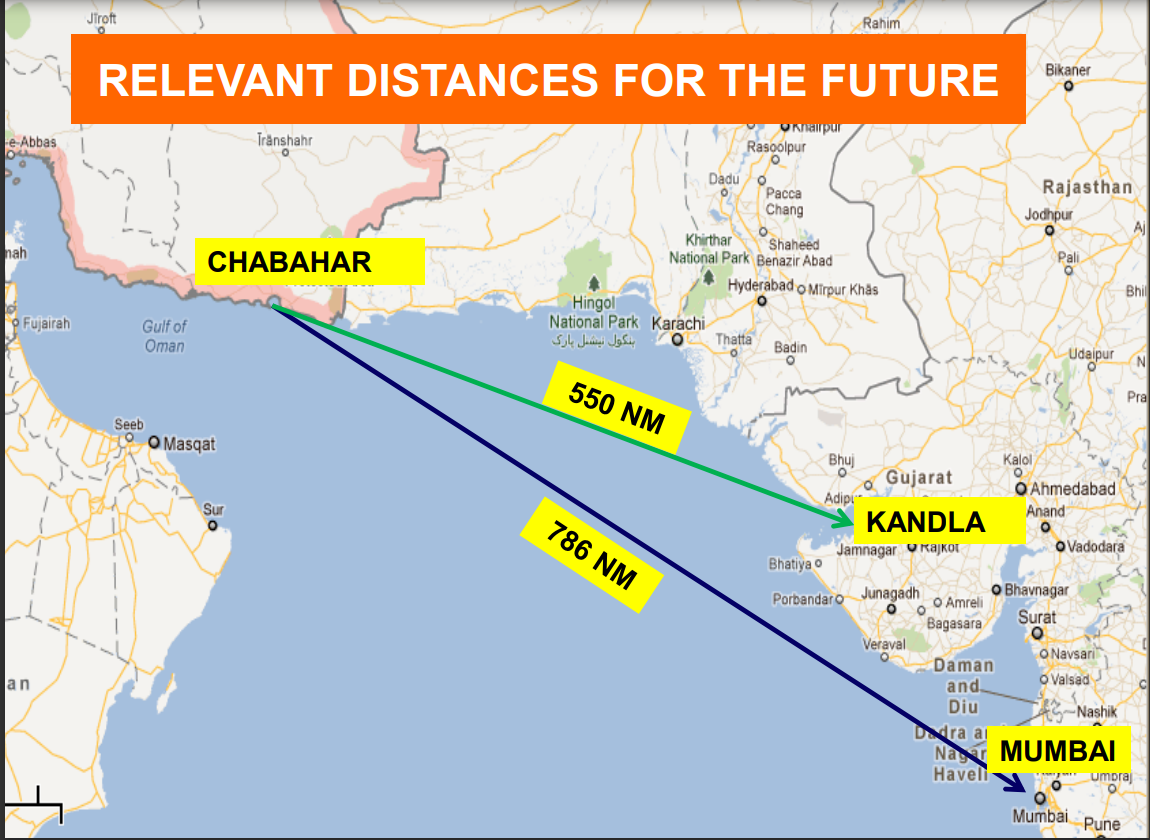
During the India- Central Asia Summit 2022, both sides have supported the proposal to include Chabahar within the INSTC framework. Both sides have a trilateral mechanism of India, Iran, Uzbekistan, on the Chabahar port. Other Central Asian countries have also expressed interest in joining this initiative. The INSTC is a functional route through the Bandar Abbas port of Iran that further passes through Azerbaijan or alternatively through the Caspian Sea to Russia. Usage of this route can reduce the time taken from 40 to 45 days to 20 to 25 days between India and Russia as well as reduce cost by 30% to 40%. Given the landlocked nature of Central Asian countries, and the lack of overland connectivity with India, there has been understandably a considerable emphasis on the need for promoting mutual connectivity to enhance trade and commerce between India and the Central Asian countries. Both Russia and Iran are key stakeholders and participants of the INSTC. It is in the interest of all member countries of the INSTC that there is greater utilization of this route. In addition, India is also a member of the Ashgabat agreement that we joined in 2018 and which enables connectivity between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. This also synchronizes with other transport corridors in the region, including the INSTC. India stands ready to plan, build, invest, and participate in connectivity projects based on the priorities of transparency, broad participation, local priorities, financial sustainability and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries. As regards the query on Pakistan, this is better addressed to the Central Asian countries. (MEA, India, 2022).

**Chabahar Port**

Chabahar port has an important role in the international transportation corridor being built by India, Russia and Iran. Geographically, Iran's border seems to be from Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, it will be able to connect Central Asia bypassing Pakistan. During the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Iran in 2016, this project emphasized the creation of the Wahhabar-Zahedan rail line, which will be able to pave the way for the Chabahar Port. To give this project an executive, India has to construct a 500 km rail line from Chabahar port for $ 1.6 billion as part of the transit corridor for Afghanistan on the southern coast of Iran.

During Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Iran in 2016, he said, “the availability of about 500 million dollars from India for this purpose is a significant milestone in our relations. This major effort will lead to economic development. Agreement on trilateral transport and transit with Afghanistan on the Chabahar port was signed which will open new routes for connecting India, Iran and Afghanistan among themselves. Iran plans to develop Chabahar Port as a transit hub to facilitate the movement of markets in Central Asia and the northern part of the Indian Ocean, through which India will have an opportunity to increase trade between Afghanistan and Iran by sea route. Employment opportunities will be provided to the youth.

The project of Chabahar has suddenly come to life with a visit of PM Modi to Iran in 2016 and signing of a trilateral agreement with Rouhani of Iran and Ghani of Afghanistan for up-gradation of Chabahar sea-port and constructions of related rail network at cost of USD 500 million for which allocation has been made by India. These Initiatives which are closely linked can prove to be a game-changer in dramatically improving India's connectivity with Central Asia, Afghanistan and Russia. During the First Joint summit 27 January 2022, India and the countries of Central Asia spoke in Favor of Connecting the Iranian Port of Chabahar to the Structure of the international North- South Transport.India and the Central Asian member countries of the International North-South Transport Corridor, as well as the “Ashgabat Agreement on the International Transport and Transit Corridor” called on other Central Asian countries to consider joining these initiatives The parties supported India's proposal to include the port of Chabahar and noted the proposal of Turkmenistan to include the port of Turkmenbashi within the North-South international transport corridor (India, MEA, 2022).



The countries of Central Asia welcomed India's proposal to establish a joint working group on the Chabahar port to address issues of free movement of goods and services between India and the countries of Central Asia. The construction of the Chabahar port is one of the largest projects of bilateral economic cooperation between Iran and India. It is expected that its implementation will open a new, more efficient route for cargo transportation from Asia to Europe. An agreement on the joint development of the port was reached 18 years ago, but the implementation of the project was constantly delayed due to international restrictions against Tehran.

The importance of Chabahar port was equally emphasized by all. As you know Chabahar port has provided much needed sea access to the landlocked countries including Afghanistan and Central Asia. Recently, it facilitated the delivery of humanitarian assistance, especially during COVID 19 pandemic. The leaders agreed to work together to use Chabahar port for connecting Central Asia with India and further South Asia, including setting up a working group on Chabahar. They have supported our proposal to include Chabahar within the INSTC framework. We already have a trilateral mechanism of India, Iran, Uzbekistan, on the Chabahar port. Other Central Asian countries have also expressed interest in joining this initiative.

**TAPI**

A strong link between India and Central Asian relations between the two countries is considered to be a strong project of 1814 km and 10 billion Tapti project. In this plan, 33 billion cubic meters of gas annually is being used in Afghanistan and Kandahar cities, because in Pakistan, the border town of Fijlika, Panjab. Russia has shown interest in the project because it wants to transform Turkmenistan’s energy market into South Asia so that it can protect its economic interest in purchasing Turkmen gas. If the pipeline is connected to Europe it will affect Russian interest.

So far, the creation of a wide variety of areas of the Tapi gas pipeline route of Turkmenistan has been completed. In 2017, there is a short start to the pipeline route of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The construction of the TAPI gas pipeline was mainly delayed due to legal issues, particularly in Afghanistan and in Turkmenistan. It was expected to start in 2019 but it passed through countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan due to which no one was interested to invest in it and Turkmenistan refused to accept the condition of gas field stake. Therefore, it was difficult to operationalize the pipeline by 2019.

India will benefit from the execution of this project by becoming a part of a prosperous transit route between India and four other states. With 38 mmscmd shareholdings to India through TAPI, the project can meet 15% of India gas demand. If the TAPI project is successful, a strong alternative will be available to India and increase its economic status in central Asia. India can start purchasing natural gas; this will help in maintaining balance in the future. The Tapi project is an important aspect of India’s energy security, if the thermal project succeeds, it will be a result of peace, prosperity and prosperity. It will open up the new business of economic activity from where it will operate.

Thus, it can be said that the TAPI pipeline can be a classic example of regional cooperation and energy integration between Central Asia and South Asia. The project unites the resource-rich Central Asian region with low-energy countries of South Asia, especially India and Pakistan. In addition to providing clean energy, it will provide huge revenue and employment opportunities for the people of the region. The interdependence and benefits of cooperation can act as a catalyst for peace between India and Pakistan. Afghanistan will greatly benefit from the project pipeline accelerating economic development and giving will help in generating revenue and providing employment opportunities. Thus the TAPI pipeline project has major geopolitical importance. The region has suffered from political and economic tensions. This pipeline provides opportunities to improve relations between the participating states. All four participating countries will benefit from this project. For India and Pakistan in particular, the TAPI pipeline is among their important energy supply lines that will increase and diversify and open markets. However, significant concerns are regarding the long-term security of the pipeline, particularly along the Trans- Afghanistan route.

In the current circumstances, especially given the uncertainties surrounding the security situation in Afghanistan, TAPI is a difficult position. Turkmenistan is under siege today by many countries and has to opt for accessible markets. For example, China has emerged as a major opportunity for Turkmenistan. There is a proposal to build a new pipeline for Turkmen gas passing through northern Afghanistan to China, which is relatively safer than the TAPI route, further indicating that there is deep competition in the region.

TAPI as an example of regional economic cooperation against the backdrop of External Affairs Minister's talks with his Turkmen counterpart mentioned at the third Foreign Minister level India-Central Asia dialogue last December and reported in the discussions between Taliban and Turkmen envoy in Kabul on September 30th. Huma from Financial Express also wants to know whether TAPI was discussed with Turkmenistan and this pipeline has been pushed again by Taliban during talks. The Leaders noted the need for continued large-scale and long-term economic cooperation between Central Asian countries and India in order to strengthen and expand inter-connectivity. In this context, the President of Turkmenistan stressed on the importance of the TAPI gas pipeline project (MEA, 2022).

**CASA-1000/TUTA project**

TUTAP is one of the most important regional economic projects financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and agreed among Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan and Pakistan with a transmission capacity of 500 MW from Turkmenistan to Pakistan, via Afghanistan. 2 The project aims to promote trade in electricity between energy-rich Central Asian countries, and Afghanistan and Pakistan that face severe power deficits. From Afghanistan’s point of view, this project is very important in providing people with reliable electricity supply throughout the year. The project can also support Afghanistan in realizing the promise of CASA-1000, as without TUTAP Afghanistan cannot serve as a transit system for transmitting electricity from Central Asian countries to South Asia. The two projects have different purposes: whereas CASA links Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan to Pakistan, the TUTAP addresses Afghanistan power needs with regional trade as a benefit. Currently, Afghanistan heavily relies on imported electricity as the persistent internal conflict has derailed the building of dams and kept internal energy production to a minimum. Access to energy has become a high priority in Afghanistan, as energy demand has grown by almost twice the economic growth rate during 2005-2012. But India is not a partner country of this project. If India joins this project then India will get Hydro Electricity. The Ministry of Energy and Water of Afghanistan announced in May 2017 that an Indian company has shown interest in investing in the CASA-1000 power project in Afghanistan, which will start soon.

**APTTA**

In 2010, the Bilateral Trade Agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan (Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement, APTTA) was made, which aims to make the exchange of commodities more and more convenient between the two countries. Through the APTTA agreement, the two countries can use ports for transit trade with each other's airports, railways, roads, and designated transit corridors. Through this agreement, Afghanistan is allowed to export India from Afghanistan by truck to Wagah border through Pakistan. But Afghanistan is barred from importing Indian goods in Pakistan's territory. On the expansion of APTTA in 2012, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to include Tajikistan and an agreement on Pakistan-Afghanistan and Tajikistan Trilateral Transit Trade Agreement (PATTTTA). Through which Tajikistan will be able to import-export of goods on the port and Wagah border of Pakistan. And it will be convenient for Pakistan to transport goods in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan via Tajikistan. Tajikistan decided to further consult on incorporating India in PATTTTA. By joining this agreement, India will expand the scope of its trade between the countries of Tajikistan and the Central Asian region. Through the new rail, the road network in Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia, the development of existing ports and transportation infrastructure is possible to increase regional economic cooperation.

**Afghanistan: India and Central Asia’s Response**

The importance of the region increased after the capture of Afghanistan by the Taliban (an organization whose activities are banned in the Russian Federation), which entails the threat of the spread of religious extremism, fundamentalism to Central Asia, as well as to Russia and China. Afghanistan captured by Islamists can become a source of refugees and drug trafficking. Three republics - Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan - have common borders with Afghanistan. From a security standpoint, this region potentially acts as a buffer.

After Taliban forces entered Kabul on August 15, 2021, and the United States completed its withdrawal from Afghanistan on August 31, 2021, the world was on the brink of new geopolitical instability. This wave has opened the door to many options, ranging from opportunities for regional cooperation to the potential for escalating conflicts. Given the possibility of escalating conflicts, the first scenario that comes to mind is that terrorist groups that are already in the region and may appear in the future, create an atmosphere of instability, starting from Afghanistan itself and covering the countries of Central Asia, Russia, Iran, India and China, and damaging the economic, social and political structure of the region. Along with this, it can be stated that the migration problem as a result of insecurity will also harm Turkey and European countries. Contrary to the thesis that the South Asia-Central Asia axis, in particular Afghanistan, will gradually turn into a zone of instability and into a field of activity for terrorist groups, there are opinions that the cooperation that will be established in the region will lay the foundation for a new geopolitical and geo-economic process. Undoubtedly, the feasibility of both options is linked to the steps to be taken and the policies to be followed.

At the moment, states close to Afghanistan are at the forefront of states seeking to clear the region of terrorist groups and conflicts and achieve peace and stability. The remoteness of the states of the region from the United States creates the basis for some kind of indefinite union. Actors such as China, Russia, Pakistan and Iran are trying to show more initiative in order to maintain order in the region after Washington's decision to withdraw from Afghanistan. However, observing the development of events, it becomes obvious that the diplomatic contacts of countries striving for peace do not affect India, which is an important player in the region and is able to contribute to the solution of the issue.

Predictably, with the Taliban dominating Afghanistan, its relationship with India entered a new phase. Over the past two decades, India has developed good ties with Afghan governments. During this process, New Delhi invested in infrastructure and construction in Afghanistan, and sought to maintain Afghanistan's weak economy. There is no doubt that the most visible support for India during this period was the Afghan parliament, which was formed in 2015 and was fully funded by India. Against the backdrop of the support provided, trade ties rose sharply. In 2019-2020, the trade turnover between the two countries reached its peak, amounting to about $ 1.5 billion. Observing the latest events, it becomes clear that the Taliban is one of the most important centers of power in Afghanistan, and it would be wrong to ignore it. Likewise, it cannot be denied that India is one of the most influential players in the region. In this sense, India can make a positive contribution to the region and the new reality in Afghanistan (The Indian Express News, 2022).

India’s geographical position opens up great opportunities for the countries of the region, especially for Central Asia. It is known that the countries of Central Asia and Afghanistan are inland countries, that is, they are landlocked. For this reason, these countries are looking for access to the sea in order to increase and diversify their trade, and secure access to various regions. In this regard, the extension to India of a part of transnational economic projects aimed at establishing peace in the region in the post-American period can be considered the most acceptable of the possible scenarios.

For this reason, India's withdrawal from the region also means that it is impossible to come up with a rational solution. If we recall the telephone conversation between Vladimir Putin and Narendra Modi on August 24, 2021, then we can say that some players, in particular Russia, have realized the importance of New Delhi, but if we look at the general trend of states in the region, we will see that the role of India relegated to the background. The Taliban, which will form the new Afghan government, have also taken positive steps in this direction. So, on August 31, 2021, the Indian Ambassador to Qatar met with a representative of the Taliban's political office in Doha. In this regard, the assurances of the Taliban to the official representative of India, who expressed concern that the territory of Afghanistan should in no way be used for anti-Indian activities and terrorism, are of paramount importance. The meeting in question is the clearest evidence that both players are keeping the channels of diplomacy open. As a result, India's participation in the process and open diplomatic channels with the Taliban will not be a “win-win” scenario only for both sides; all countries in the region will benefit from such geopolitics.

On 17 September 2021, Dushanbe hosted a summit of the heads of state of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The aggravated situation in Afghanistan has become a key topic that has been worrying the authorities of many countries for a long time. Russian President Vladimir Putin proposed starting with the resumption of the work of the SCO-Afghanistan contact group. He noted that “the new Afghan authorities should be encouraged to fulfill their own promises to establish peace, normalize public life, and ensure security for all. In this regard, it would be possible to work out the issue of resuming the activities of the SCO-Afghanistan contact group, which was just created at the time to work with Afghan partners.”

**Unrest in Kazakhstan 2022**

New Year's Protests and State of Emergency in Kazakhstan on January 2, protests broke out over the doubling of gas prices in Kazakhstan. The first rallies were held in the west of the country, in the Mangistau region, in the cities of Zhanozhen and Aktou, with the rallies clashing with the police. By 4 January, protests had begun in other cities, including Alma-Ata, located in the south of the country. A state of emergency was introduced in Kazakhstan, first in some regions, then throughout the country. Alma-Ata became a city that saw protests as well as violence and clashes with security forces. The “heated” phase of the protest began on 5 January, when the street was occupied by protesters and the city’s administration building was set on fire. The Prosecutor General's Office, the Police Department and the National Security Committee building were attacked. By evening, authorities lost control of the city’s airport, pogroms broke out in the city, bank branches looted and pogroms were reported. The country’s government, led by Askar Mamin, resigned due to the protests. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev also announced that he was accepting the post of chairman of the country's Security Council, which was held by former President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Nazarbayev himself did not appear on TV channels since the start of the unrest, with his press secretary later announcing that Nazarbayev himself had decided to transfer this post to Tokayev.

On the evening of January 5, Tokayev sought support from his allies in the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which, in addition to Kazakhstan, includes Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. He then announced that Kazakhstan had been attacked by organized terrorist forces who had received special training abroad. The CSTO agreed to Tokayev's request, Russian, Kyrgyz, Belarusian, Armenian troops went to the country, and Tajikistan also approved the dispatch of peacekeepers. The CSTO forces were led by Colonel General Andrei Serdyukov, the commander of the Russian Airborne Forces. Already on January 7, Tokayev announced the restoration of order throughout Kazakhstan. Russian peacekeepers have acquired major infrastructure facilities in the country.

Due to protests in Kazakhstan, the former head of the National Security Committee of Kazakhstan and the country's former premier, Karim Massimov, was detained on a count of treason and sent to a temporary detention center, and criminal cases were initiated. Articles on mass riots. As of 10 January, 7,939 people were detained across the country due to the protests. Tokayev also announced a change in personnel. On the morning of January 10, the mayor of the city Bakitzan Sagintayev announced the normalization of the situation in Alma-Ata.

In addition, the Internet has appeared in Alma-Ata, Pavlodar, Kyzylorda, Taldykorgan and Atrau. The day was also declared as a day of mourning in the Republic for the victims of the riots. On the morning of January 10, the mayor of the city Bakitzan Sagintayev announced the normalization of the situation in Alma-Ata. In addition, the Internet has appeared in Alma-Ata, Pavlodar, Kyzylorda, Taldykorgan and Atrau. The day was also declared as a day of mourning in the Republic for the victims of the riots. The exact number of people killed during the protests is not yet known. Kazakhstan's health ministry reported 164 deaths during the protests, but later called the publication a “technical error”.

India and other countries reacted to the incident in Kazakhstan. During the talks between India- Central Asia summit 2022, Indian Prime Minister Modi expressed his gratitude to the people killed in the Protest (MEA India, 2022). This could have an impact on the relations between India and Central Asia. If stability is not established in Kazakhstan, the situation in Kazakhstan may worsen, leading to an increase in terrorism and violent incidents in the world or a situation similar to that of Afghanistan. It can also make Kazakhstan a hub of oil and gas diplomacy. There is China and Russia on one side and America on the other. Who keeps showing his presence from time to time. Keeping all these in mind, along with India's loss in its economic sphere, national security (Pakistan and Afghanistan countries) may also increase.

**Conclusion**

This year marks the 30th anniversary of India's diplomatic recognition of the five Central Asian republics, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. India was one of the first countries to recognize the CAR, and Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao made two consecutive visits to the region in 1993 and 1995. Since then, India has developed disparate partnerships with these countries across a range of sectors such as security, culture, education, pharmaceuticals, tourism, hydrocarbons and fissile materials such as uranium, as well as information, cyber and space technology, etc. However, for much of this time, India's physical access to the landlocked CARs was limited. Continued tensions in Afghanistan and India's growing proximity to the United States, as well as Washington's fears and the threat of sanctions on India's investment in the Iranian port of Chabahar, have undermined India's ties to the CAR. India also has a military base in the region, and agreements have been signed for large-scale infrastructure projects. However, these successes are difficult to compare with the successes of China, which has overtaken both India and Russia.

Historical links have been between India and central Asian countries. These civilizations have been close to each other since the time of the silk route. There has been no problem in their diplomatic relations since the last 30 years. There has been no problem in their diplomatic relations since the last 30 years. But keeping in mind the rising demand of India's energy, economic relations with Central Asia countries should be increased and they should be strengthened. India needs to work more actively and abandon its separatist approach towards Central Asia in the context of a holistic and long- term approach. The two countries should discuss and establish projects of mutual interest to establish an India- Central Asia forum to expand the relationship from time to time. The Central Asia fund can also be set up to finance various projects. In addition to making the INSTC effective, Chabahar port needs to be developed on a priority basis as well as linking it to other connectivity-related initiatives in the region.

However, Turkmenistan has been a supporter of permanent membership in India’s Security Council (UNSC) of the United Nations. India should consider new ways to increase its presence in Central Asia. After the ban on Iran, it may be easier for India to find out the possibility of a land-sea pipeline route through Iran, which will make the option of Turkmenistan-Iran-India (TII) pipeline stronger. India is interested in joining the Ashgabhg agreement, which connects central Asia with western Asia and the Indian Ocean. India and central Asia should look for new options to strengthen the bilateral relations of both sides, such as the emphasis on non-conventional energy, solar energy, biogas etc. To facilitate the relation of people to people, the services should be promoted through which the culture, economic, business relations between central Asia and India will be easy to increase and medical tourism. According to India's Medical Tourism Business, India's medical tourism had increased to $ 2 billion in 2015, in which more than 1.5 billion patients come to India every year to treat a large number of Central Asia and the Middle East. From Tajikistan and Central Asia in general, medical tourism in India is increasing due to cost-effective treatment and quality treatment. According to the Medical Value Travel Report of KPMG and FICCI, India is ranked among the top three medical tourists in Asia. Historically, central Asia is linked to India’s extended neighborhood policy through history, culture and spiritual relations. Both can create a new Silk Route Initiative by providing a multi-dimensional character from their strong relationship, which will create new Silk route friendship and collaboration between the two countries. The prospects for this policy are immense. However, the biggest challenge is to ensure the proper implementation of suggested projects and proposals. Most of the proposals are still in the pipeline and many of them will demand consistent follow up at the highest political level. The effective implementation of various proposals presupposes equal attention and cooperation from India’s Central Asian partners as well to make the ‘Connect Central Asia’ policy a success.

**Bibliography**

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, <http://www.mfa.gov.tm/en/articles/4>

Attri, A (2010), "India and Central Asia Republics", Regal Publications: New Delhi.

## Ministry of External Affairs of India, Media Statement by Prime Minister during his visit to Turkmenistan, July 11, 2015, <http://www.mea.gov.in/SpeechesStatements.htm?dtl/25458/media+statement+by+prime+minister+during+his+visit+to+turkmenistan>

Firdous, T & Dar, F (2014), "The New Silk Road Strategic Revisited", The Journal of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir, vol. XXI.

Fact Sheet from Indian Embassy official in Turkmenistan, <http://www.eoi.gov.in/ashgabat/?0794?000>

Bhatia, R K [et all]( 2014) ***India and Central Asia*** *: exploring new horizons for cooperation,* Delhi : Shipra Publications.

Dash, P L (2012), *India and Central Asia: two decades of transition,* New Delhi : Oxford University Press.

Liu. X (2012), *India and Central Asia : A Reader,* Ranikhet : Permanent Black ; Bangalore : Distributed by Orient Blackswan.

Santhanam, K & Dwivedi R. (2004), India and Central Asia : advancing the common interest, New Delhi : Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses : Anamaya Publishers.

Gopal, S. (2001), *India and Central Asia: cultural, economic and political links*, Delhi: Shipra Publications.

Bagchi, P C. (1955), *India and Central Asia*, Calcutta: National Council of Education, Bengal, Jadavpur University.

Chabahar port: India to build 500 km rail line on southern coast of Iran as part of transit corridor to Afghanistan, 23 May 2016, DNA, Daily News analysis [Online: Web], accessed on 21 May 2017, <http://www.dnaindia.com/money/report-chabahar-port-india-to-build-500-km-rail-line-on-southern-coast-of-iran-as-part-of-transit-corridor-to-afghanistan-2215791>

## [India offers $1bn in fresh aid to Afghanistan](https://www.dawn.com/news/1283902/india-offers-1bn-in-fresh-aid-to-afghanistan), September 14, 2016, [Online: Web], accessed on 21 May 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1283902>.

Official Spokesperson's response to a query on participation of India in OBOR/BRI Forum, May 13, 2017 Responding to a query on participation of India in OBOR/BRI Forum, Unstarred Question’ Q.675 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Lok Sabha, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, July 28, 2010, at http://www.mea.gov.in/lok-sabha.htm?dtl/16486/Q675+Shanghai+Cooperation+Organisation (accessed on 20 June 2016).

SCO Summit, Bishkek (September 13, 2013), September 09, 2013, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, at http://www.mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?22172/SCO+Summit+Bishkek+September+13+2013 (accessed on 17 June 2017).

Unstarred Question’ Q.675 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, Lok Sabha, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, July 28, 2010, at http://www.mea.gov.in/lok-sabha.htm?dtl/16486/Q675+Shanghai+Cooperation+Organisation (accessed on 20 June 2017).

Shannon Tiezzi, “The New, Improved Shanghai Cooperation Organization” *The Diplomat,* September 13, 2014, at http://thediplomat.com/2014/09/the-new-improved-shanghai-cooperation-organization/ (accessed on 15 June 2017).

“Statement by External Affairs Minister at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Heads of State Summit 2014 in Dushanbe”, Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, September 12, 2014, at <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches>

Pradhan, R (2011), Dynamic of India- Central Asia Relations: Energy as Strategic Factor, in *Journal of Central Asia, UNIVERSITY OF KASHMIR*: SRINAGAR, vol *1(20).*

Sengupta, A (2011), perceptions and strategies: India Relation with the Central Asia Region, in *Mapping Central Asia: Indian Perceptions and Strategies*, Laruelle, M & Peyrouse, S. (eds.) England: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

Replacing the TAPI Pipeline with TII? [January 4, [Online: Web], accessed on 21 May 2017, 2016](https://therearenosunglasses.wordpress.com/2016/01/04/replacing-the-tapi-pipeline-with-tii/) <https://therearenosunglasses.wordpress.com/2016/01/04/replacing-the-tapi-pipeline-with-tii/>

# Ali M. Latifi, “An ethnically charged dispute over electricity brings protesters into Kabul's streets”, Los Angeles Times, 16 July 2016. URL: http://www.latimes.com/world/middleeast/la-fg-afghanistan-protests-20160516-snap-story.html Accessed on 18 May 2017.

# Emily Winterbotham, “The “TUTAP” transmission line could fracture Afghanistan yet further”, *Prospect*, 20 May 2016. URL: http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/science-and-technology/tutap-transmission-line-afghanistan Accessed on 22 July 2017.

Kavaki, E. (2010), *India and Central Asia: The Mythmaking and International Relations of a Rising Power*, New York: Tauris Academic Studies, pp.83

Embassy of India Tashkent, Uzbekistan, "India-Uzbekistan Relations", [Online: Web], Accessed on 28 February 2017, [http://eoi|gov|in/tashkent/?2615?000](http://eoi.gov.in/tashkent/?2615?000)

Patil, S. (2015), “OBOR and India/s security concerns”, published in Gateway House on 14 May 2015, accessed on 1april 2020, URL: <https://www.gatewayhouse.in/security-implications-of-chinas-transnational-corridors/#_edn2>

Khan, N. (2014), “India Uzbekistan Relation: Past History And Present Relation”, International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Development, Studies Jamia Millia Islamia (Central University) New Delhi-110025 1(1): 56-59.

Embassy of Uzbekistan in New Delhi, “Demographic Details”, [Online: Web], 26 February 2017 URL: <http://www.uzbekembassy.in/about-uzbekistan/demographic-details/>

The Government portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan, “History of Uzbekistan”, Online: Web], 28 February 2017, <https://www.gov.uz/en/pages/historical_heritage>

Asian Development Bank , Uzbekistan economy , [Online web ], accessed on 28 February 2017, URL: <https://www.adb.org/countries/uzbekistan/economy>

MEA of India, “address by external affairs Minister on the occasion of the launch of the India- Central Asia Business Council, FICCI” on February 06 2020, accessed on 28 February 2020 URL:<https://mea.gov.in/SpeechesStatements.htm?dtl/32365/address+by+external+affairs+minister+on+the+occasion+of+the+launch+of+the+indiacentral+asia+business+council+ficci+february+06+2020>.

Safranchuk, I (2016), " Challenges for Uzbekistan's New president: Border conflicts and the Islam's underground", Valadai: discussion club, Uzbekistan, [Online: Web], 28 February 2017, [http://valdaiclub|com/a/highlights/challenges-for-uzbekistan-s-new-president/](http://valdaiclub.com/a/highlights/challenges-for-uzbekistan-s-new-president/)

Ministry of External Affairs Government of India, **"**[Remarks by Prime Minister Dr| Manmohan Singh at the inauguration of Jawaharlal Nehru India-Uzbekistan Centre for Information Technology](https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/2177/remarks+by+prime+minister+dr+manmohan+singh+at+the+inauguration+of+jawaharlal+nehru+indiauzbekistan+centre+for+information+technology)**,** April 26, 2006**",** [online: web], accessed on 2 February 2017, [https://www|mea|gov|in/SpeechesStatements|htm?dtl/2177/remarks+by+prime+minister+dr+manmohan+singh+at+the+inauguration+of+jawaharlal+nehru+indiauzbekistan+centre+for+information+technology](about:blank)

Embassy of India, Tashkent, “Visit of Uzbek President H.E. Mr. Islam Karimov to India May 2011”, [Online: Web], accessed on 3 March 2017, <http://eoi.gov.in/tashkent/?2385?001>

Richa Mishra, “GAIL to set up LPG plants in Uzbekistan”, [Business Lin](http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/)e May 2, 2006, , [Online: Web], accessed on 8 March 2017, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/todays-paper/tp-corporate/gail-to-set-up-lpg-plants-in-uzbekistan/article1732491.ece>

## Inagmov, S. (2012)," Uzbekistan-India: 20 Yrs of Diplomatic Relations", March 12, 2012, New Delhi, [Online: Web], accessed on 8 March 2017, <http://www.thesundayindian.com/en/story/uzbekistan-india-20-yrs-of-diplomatic-relations/117/31427/>

Kuchins, A & al. (2015), "*Central Asia in a Reconnecting Eurasia: Uzbekistan's Evolving Foreign Economic and Security Interest*", CSIS, Rowman & Littlefield, New York: Landon.

Siddiqui, O. (2014), "[Fostering stronger ties with Uzbekistan through medical tourism India](http://medicureassist.com/fostering-stronger-ties-uzbekistan-medical-tourism-india/)", [Online: web] accessed on 27 March 2017 <http://medicureassist.com/fostering-stronger-ties-uzbekistan-medical-tourism-india/>

# Roy, M. (2010), Afghanistan and Regional Strategy: the India Factor, in book of Larlene, M & al, (eds.) (2010) China and India In central Asia: Anew Great Game, Palgrave Macmillan: US.

Roy, M (2012), North-South Corridor:Prospects And Challenges For India, in the book Warikoo (ed.), Central Asia and South Asia: Energy Cooperation and Transport Linkages, Pentagon Press: New Delhi.

Patnaik, A (2011), "Framing Indo- Central Asian Relations, 1990s-2000s", in *Mapping Central Asia: Indian Perceptions and Strategies*, Laruelle, M & Peyrouse, S. (eds.) England: Ashgate Publishing Limited.

## Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology, Government of India, [Online: Web], 26 February 2017 URL <http://meity.gov.in/content/country-wise-status>

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of the Uzbekistan, "Cooperation of Uzbekistan with the UN",[Online: Web], Accessed on 14 March 2017, <http://www.mfa.uz/en/cooperation/international/1170/>

Joshi, N. (2010), *Reconnecting India and Central Asia: Emerging Security and Economic Dimensions*, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute & Silk Road Studies Program: Singapore.

Ministry of Foriegn Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic (2021), “Ruslan Kazakbaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic met with Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of India”, 20 december 2021[Online: Web] Accessed on 2 January 2022 URL:[Ruslan Kazakbaev, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic met with Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Minister of Foreign Affairs of India - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kyrgyz Republic (mfa.gov.kg)](https://mfa.gov.kg/en/Main-menu/Press-service/novosti/-61c025cd1a0ef)

Embassy of Republic of Kazakhstan (2022), “President K.Tokayev took part in the summit of the heads of state “Central Asia - India”, on 27 January 2020 [Online: Web] Accessed on 1 January 2022 URL:[President K.Tokayev took part in the summit of the heads of state "Central Asia - India" (](https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa-delhi/press/news/details/318694?lang=en)[www.gov.kz](http://www.gov.kz)[)](https://www.gov.kz/memleket/entities/mfa-delhi/press/news/details/318694?lang=en)

Ministry of External Affairs (2022), “English translation of Prime Minister’s opening Remarks at the first meeting of India Central Asia”, January 27, 2022 [Online: Web] Accessed on 2 January 2022 URL:[English translation of Prime Minister's Opening Remarks at the first meeting of India Central Asia Summit (mea.gov.in)](https://mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/34772/English_translation_of_Prime_Ministers_Opening_Remarks_at_the_first_meeting_of_India_Central_Asia_Summit)

The Hindustan Times News, (2022), “ PM Modi hosts first India- Central Asia Summit, outlines 3 goals”, 27 January 2022, [Online: Web] Accessed on 4 January 2022 URL: [PM Modi hosts first India-Central Asia Summit, outlines 3 goals | Latest News India - Hindustan Times](https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pm-modi-hosts-first-india-central-asia-summit-outlines-3-goals-101643282671425.html)

The Indian Express News (2022), “ PM Summit with 5 Central Asian Heads Calls for joint group on Afghanistan, stronger ties”, 28 January 2022, [Online: Web] 4 January 2022 URL: [PM summit with 5 Central Asian heads calls for joint group on Afghanistan, stronger ties | India News,The Indian Express](https://indianexpress.com/article/india/days-after-china-pm-modi-holds-summit-with-five-central-asian-countries-7744679/)

The Economic Times News, (2022), “ India- Central Asia on January 27”, 20 January 2022, [Online: Web] Accessed on 3 January 2022 URL: [India Central Asia Summit date: India-Central Asia Summit on January 27 - The Economic Times (indiatimes.com)](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/india-central-asia-summit-on-january-27/articleshow/89003752.cms?from=mdr)

Statistical Review of World Energy 2021 70th edition URL: <https://www.bp.com/content/dam/bp/business-sites/en/global/corporate/pdfs/energy-economics/statistical-review/bp-stats-review-2021-full-report.pdf>