

Central Asia and India's Security

P. Stobdan

Abstract

The paper attempts to analyse the issues in Central Asia in the context of India's security. The paper poses a question as to what the region of Central Asia means for India today. The author argues that international attention is being focused on redefining the importance of Central Asian in the changing regional and international context. Since its reappearance, many suitors have been seeking affinity, proximity and legitimacy with the region on political, strategic, cultural and economic grounds.

The paper notes that Central Asia still holds importance to those around it and beyond — compelling everyone to think in a zero-sum game of who will control the region next, following Makinder's thesis of "he who controls the heartland controls the world". The paper says that there are already signs of geopolitical actions being applied in this direction, though the stage is not yet getting set for a clash of major power interests. But owing to the persisting rhetoric, probably intended, perhaps its inevitability cannot be just wished away. In this context, the paper deals with the current debate on Central Asia, which involves complex issues and the answers are ambiguous, often linked to events in Russia and elsewhere. The dynamisms evolving in the region would inevitably have implications far beyond what one might have imagined a decade ago.

The author emphasises that Central Asia, in its reordered geopolitical form, has emerged as a field of continuing interest and concern in India, particularly in the context of its strategic relevance to India's security. Not only does the paper analyse the issues in a historical perspective, it also evaluates the current trends and interests that are at stake for India. The conclusion offers some suggestions for India's policy options with regard to Central Asia.

— * —

Introduction

Central Asia, in contemporary times, had scarcely attracted Indian attention — at least not from the stand point of security. Most Indians

traditionally viewed this vast stretch of land under the USSR as a positive historical phenomenon — an ideal experiment in building a multi-national State, transcending the provisional identities. The benign environment sustained by the Soviets in Central Asia was perceived, therefore, as having enduring security implications for India. However, in recent years, Central Asia, in its reordered geopolitical form, has emerged as a field of continuing interest and concern in India, particularly in the context of its strategic relevance to India's security.

If we look back in history, much of India's political history was shaped by events in Central Asia. Two important aspects need to be underlined here. First, Central Asia was a staging ground for invasions into India. The region's description in the military context is amply found in our history textbooks. In fact, Indian strategic thought, propounded in Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, had its genesis in Central Asian dynamics. Secondly, Central Asia was a bridge for promoting Indian commerce and culture across Asia. India was part of the Silk Route dynamics, something that has been grossly ignored in history.

Before we analyse the issues that impinge on India's security, it is necessary to reassess what the region of Central Asia means for us today. It is necessary because international attention is being focused on redefining Central Asian orientation in relation to the changing regional and international context. Since its reappearance, many suitors have been seeking affinity, proximity and legitimacy with the region on political, strategic, cultural and economic grounds. In fact, questions have been raised whether Central Asia is central to Asia or Eurasia. The debate involves complex issues and the answers are ambiguous, often linked to events in Russia and elsewhere. Nevertheless, it would be fair to conclude that Central Asia, perhaps due to prolonged Soviet influence, retains a Eurasian outlook.

In attempting to analyse Central Asia in a security perspective, it is also pertinent to understand the region's significance in its own right. Central Asia, until the Timurid period (14th Century), was the epicenter of power, whose dominance and influence pervaded throughout the Eurasian world. However, with the advent of maritime power, Central Asia's core characteristic as an actor on the world stage diminished and got transformed into a centre only of peripheries, where interests of other centres tended to meet. The region since then remained a backwater of world politics, a pawn of the great powers, where grand games were being played. The region had

been on the periphery of Islam, and it has just come out from the periphery of Russia.

Is Central Asia regaining its strategic importance? Certainly, the region still holds importance to those around it and beyond — compelling everyone to think who will control the region next, following Makinder’s thesis of “he who controls the heartland controls the world”. There are already signs of geopolitical actions being applied in this direction, though the stage is not yet getting set for a clash of major power interests. But owing to the persisting rhetoric, perhaps its inevitability cannot be just wished away.

Notwithstanding the popular nostalgia, there is no case for Central Asia regaining the Timurian dominance of power — the region finds itself in a stage of revivalism both in terms of external interest and internal potential.¹ The dynamism evolving in the region would inevitably have implications far beyond what one might have imagined a decade ago.

This paper does not aim to cover the wider issues concerning the debate around Central Asia. However, for an analytical purpose, it would be necessary to evaluate the current trends and interests that are at stake for India. The conclusion offers some suggestions for India’s policy options with regards to Central Asia.

The Russian Factor in Central Asia

Political and security dynamics in Central Asia continue to remain inextricably linked to developments in Russia. During the Yeltsin era, Central Asian states went through uncertain times — an ambiguous state where Russia was both a guarantor and a threat to their security. Yeltsin’s Russia disengaged from major Central Asian life. The only engagement was through the Russian Army’s involvement in various Central Asian hotspots. It was a period when Russia could neither control nor leave the region. Moreover, these states, through the 1990s, developed serious misgivings about Russia’s ability to support them.² Moscow’s failure to gain control over Chechnya resonated throughout Central Asia.

The rise of Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin to power marked the end of this elusiveness. A sea change has occurred since then both within Russia and Central Asia. Putin’s ascendancy has reversed Russia’s drifting to isolation and decline of power. From the ideological standpoint, Putin is said to be

operating along the Eurasian paradigm based on Gumilev's concept of Russia's destiny as a Eurasian power, a shift away from pro-Westernism and Atlanticism, followed during Yeltsin's presidency.³ A host of Russian ideologues and geopolitical thinkers are providing support to fulfill Putin's Eurasian agenda. These thinkers, including Aleksandr Sergeevich Panarin and Aleksandr Gel'evich Dugin among many others, strongly advocate Russia's rescue from the 'New Third Force', a secret society and a particular type of fifth column, who in connivance with financial oligarch, were working for the West and the ruin of Russia.⁴ Dugin, who became Russia's powerful ideologue in the post-Yeltsin era, has been pushing for this shift through an evolutionary process. These so-called 'non-ideological pragmatists' believe that any resistance through a revolutionary means would prove fatal for Russia, whereas for maintaining the status quo, Russia will have to make still more concessions to the West.⁵

Therefore, Putin's domestic and external policies reflect a certain amount of dual approach, wherein Russia gradually displays outward support for 'democratic values' but also carries out covert operations to restore its global status and create an alternative to the 'New World Order' dominated by the West. The driving force behind creating Russia's new order according to them will not be ideology or religion but 'the unity of common goal'. Broadly, this order will include the Eastern Europe, Arab World, Iran, Central Asia, the Caucasus, India and China, even though, some suspect China ultimately will become a shore base of Atlanticism. These powerful strategic thinkers advocate 'invisible fights' through which Russia must regain its lost dignity and work for establishing specific Russian values based on community rather than market. In ideological terms, Dugin defines a never-ending struggle between Western globalism and Russian Eurasianism. In essence, Russian thinkers do not perceive that the Cold War was an ideological struggle, but was "only one stage of the 'great war of continents'".⁶ Putin, while exercising executive power, was believed to be following these nuances. Major Russian military commanders, intelligence and strategic communities at large, usually follow such debates. Those who cherish these ideas see Putin as the most effective instrument and the embodiment of the 'Eurasian capitalist' model.⁷

Therefore, what is happening in Central Asia is not outside these debates. Russia is seeking a pragmatic escape from the ideological battle to find tune with its vital interests. Central Asia is one such regional security system where Russia is using tactful and sophisticated approaches. That is why Russia

has made incisive policy responses — like stating that US entry in Central Asia enhances rather than threatens Russian national interests. The gains on security apart, Russians perceive US engagement, especially in the energy sector, bringing dividends in the longer run, so long as Russia controls transportation routes.

This paper does not intend to go into deeper issues of the Russian military response to wider strategic change in Eurasia. Yet it would be important to analyse the subtle methods through which Russia has been responding to developments in Central Asia, more particularly following the 9/11 episode.⁸ Russia's quick decision to join the anti-terrorist coalition, allowing US military bases in Central Asia and the subsequent announcement to abandon bases in Lourdes (Cuba) and Cam Ranh Bay (Vietnam)⁹ enjoyed considerations at many levels, driven mostly for protecting key national security interests than the Russian ego. Many Russian foreign policy analysts, including Alvin Z. Rubinstein wrote: "Putin's Russia is not bent on restoring the Empire, much less seeking domination over the Eurasian heartland. It lacks the capability, the resources, and the ideological impetus."¹⁰ Therefore, the perception of strengthening security rather than the strategic issue of protecting the former Soviet space guided Russia's decision. The following points of security concerns gained consideration:

- Threat to Russia's security and territorial integrity emanated more from internal sources and from its immediate southern borders than from NATO. The conflicts in Chechnya and Dagestan have given a new spin to Russian security policy.
- The security environment within the Caucasus and Central Asia had compelled Russia to focus on non-military security threats relating to terrorism, religious fundamentalism, drug-trafficking, flow of weapons, and refugees from the South bound for Europe.
- The Taliban and Al Qaida in Afghanistan had posed long-term political, security and economic challenges to Russia. Strong linkages between Chechen rebels and Al Qaida/Taliban forces, with motives other than religion to gain control over oil resources alarmed Russia. Terrorist training camps in Afghanistan worried Russia more than America. Russia was more consistent about opposing the Taliban than the Americans.

- Concerns about increasing possibility of nuclear, chemical and biological agents getting leaked from former Soviet research programme sites such as Stepnogorsk (Kazakhstan) and Vozrozhdenie (Rebirth) Island (Uzbekistan) to the hands of undesirable elements. Russia and Central Asian states had no means to stop them.
- Although Russian forces defended the borders of Tajikistan, domestic fragility within the Central Asian states was growing beyond Moscow's capacity to moderate.
- Not only did Russia lack resources to make major investments in Central Asia and the oil and gas industries in the Caucasus but also had less confidence to think economically in the absence of durable peace.

Against the backdrop of these concerns, Russia understandably adopted a good deal of disquiet about America's enhanced military presence in Central Asia. Since Russia alone was unable to meet the above-mentioned challenges, American reinforcement for stability in the region was perceived as a net gain and in the long-term interest of the former. What really the Russians lost was their ego — but many Russians are today willing to live with a lesser ego. What was astonishing to see, however, was the way the Central Asian states offered bases for the US military one after another. Some, however, may argue that Russia anyway could not have prevented US entry, as Uzbekistan was already determined to go along with Washington. Nonetheless, no prior consultations had, in fact, taken place between Russia and the Central Asian states, neither under the Collective Security Treaty (CIS) nor under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) framework, regarding the offering of military bases to the US.

What really matters is whether the US actions have brought about a degree of stability in Central Asia and Russia's paramount security concerns been reduced. Certainly, Moscow, by linking itself to the war against terrorism, had partially been able to pacify the Chechen rebels through both military actions and by extracting a shift in the American and Western position over this vexed issue. Similarly, threats associated with Afghanistan have diminished considerably. It is estimated that 70 per cent of the strength of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) has been destroyed. Moreover, Central Asian states have reaped enormous benefits by cooperating with the US in its war on terrorism. Not only has US aid to them doubled, military cooperation is helping them to revitalise their key military segments.

Regional Response

The Central Asian states believe that the events of 9/11 have given them an entirely new twist to their policy thinking. Their responses helped them to extract maximum benefit out of the situation. The Central Asian, particularly the Uzbeks, argued that existing security mechanisms, including the Collective Security Treaty (CST) and the Shanghai-5 had failed to address impending regional security issues. For the Central Asian states, the entry of the US military did not come as a surprise, even psychologically, as the groundwork for this was laid throughout the 1990s. The US was engaged in a host of activities in each country with a clear-cut goal of gaining influence.¹¹ An entire range of economic, educational and military programmes were successfully operated which facilitated US military presence in the region. There were no worthwhile public protests against US entry in any of the capitals.

Even prior to 9/11, Central Asian states, except Tajikistan, somehow had been managing their security affairs with varying degrees of success. Though there were enormous problems among the states arising out of territorial and water disputes, major conflicts were avoided and problems were locally contained. This is not to suggest that these problems have been resolved after US military's entry into the region. In fact, US presence aggravated the inter-state rivalry and competition. Nonetheless, inter-state consultations have increased and leaders have started to talk to each other more after 9/11. The event led four Central Asian states — Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan to form a new body, the Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO) in Tashkent in December 2001 on the basis of the Central Asian Economic Community.¹² The leaders have been meeting frequently under the CACO and they have talked about forming a consortia to deal with the economic, water, communication and other inter-state issues.

What has actually driven these states to seek Western and NATO's support was the logic "if you need peace, prepare for war". They have recognised that security is a necessary precondition for foreign investment, desperately needed for domestic peace and economic growth. There is clear-cut recognition both within Central Asia and outside, that transportation barriers are the biggest impediments for major change in the region. Western experts have been deliberating on this issue since the time of the Iranian Revolution and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Various Western projects, including EU's Technical Assistance to the CIS (TACIS), Food Security Programme

(FSP), International Oil and Gas Transport to Europe (INOGATE), Transport Corridor between Europe, Caucasus and Asia (TRACECA) and others were eventually aimed at achieving military integration of Central Asia with the West. In the aftermath of 9/11, economic issues have taken the backseat and the focus is now being shifted to terrorism and Islamic issues. The projects for developing transportation lines in Central Asia preceded 9/11 and were well meshed with US policies. They are being implemented without taking a confrontational line with Russia.

Russia's Reassertion

There are no signs as yet of an open competition between Russia and the US in Central Asia. But Russia now sees the situation in its 'near abroad' changed fundamentally. Russians seemingly do not see disputes with West vanishing completely, but the nature of differences and Western compliance to concede Russia's viewpoints have altered considerably.¹³ Russia now finds more reasons to return to Central Asia. Putin is skillfully using the American rhetoric with its emphasis on the anti-terrorism campaign and the right of preemptive action. As noted earlier, Russia since Putin's ascendancy in 2002 has increasingly pushed both military and economy as key leverages to promote its interest in Central Asia. Many ambitious economic and security policies are being pursued in the name of cooperation in fighting international terrorism. In the last two years, Russia has mutely regained control over Central Asian key sectors including oil, space, minerals and the defence industry. More precisely, from the beginning of this year, Russia has shown renewed interest for regaining its lost ground by expanding on a large-scale economic and military presence. Many security analysts have observed that Russia is returning to the region with a vengeance and with an ambitious strategic agenda. Putin himself said in November 2002 to *Ekho Moscow* Radio, "The era of Russian political concessions — which began with 1991 and continued through the post-September 11 appearance of US military bases in Central Asia — was coming to an end."

Restoring Military Profile

On the security front, Russia boosted the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). In April 2003, the CSTO was transformed into a regional military alliance with commitment to repulse aggression. The strengthening of the CSTO even attracted Iranian interest for cooperation

with the organisation. The Iranian Ambassador to Russia, Gholam Raza Shafei met the Secretary-General of the CSTO, General Nikolay Bordyuzha discussed about the cooperation.¹⁴ The CSTO has started holding a series of military exercises, dubbed as 'Commonwealth Southern Shield' beginning in July 2003.

In July 2003, Russia signed a draft agreement with Kyrgyzstan for opening a Russian military air base in Kant (20 km east of Bishkek), which was made operational by October 2003. The agreement was signed for 15 years, extendible for another five years.¹⁵ Russia is reportedly spending over US\$ 2 million for the airport's upgradation that will house over 20 Russian aircraft and roughly 700 troops. According to reports, Russia will deploy 5 Su-25 attack jets, 5 Su-27 fighters, 2 AN-26 transports, 2 IL-76 transports, 5 L-39 training jets and 2 Mi-8 helicopters.¹⁶ Besides the air unit, Russian troops will form part of the rapid-deployment force, comprising 5,000 troops from Russia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, to be stationed in Kyrgyzstan under the CSTO. Reports also indicate that Kyrgyz pilots will find contract jobs in the Russian air base.¹⁷

In addition, Russia has announced transformation of the 201 Motor Rifle Division into the fourth military base. A draft agreement signed between Tajikistan and Russia indicates that the new military base will function initially for five years.¹⁸ In April 2003, Putin during the CSTO Summit meeting that the new military base necessary considering the continuity of the uncertain security situation in Afghanistan.¹⁹ The Russian Ambassador in Dushanbe justified the decision by saying, "Though the first component of extremists was eliminated in the anti-terrorist operation, but it does not mean that the Taliban ideology and all guerrillas have been wiped out." He was expecting a new spiral, if not a new war, and then a tide of terrorist attacks. Russians claim that up to 60 per cent of drugs seized in Tajikistan was due to their 201 Rifle Division.²⁰ Russia also has an early warning radar stationed in Tajikistan.

With Kazakhstan, Russia has a much deeper military relationship. The two countries are working towards forming a combined military planning and strategy, and joint use of armed forces. The two countries also extended the lease of the Baikonur space centre and ballistic missile test range in Kazakhstan to Russia for another 50 years.²¹

Russia is also strengthening hold in the Caspian Sea region by introducing a range of new warships in its Caspian Flotilla. In August 2002, Russia

conducted the biggest ever military exercise involving over 10,000 people, 60 ships of various classes and over 30 aircraft. In addition, the Azerbaijani and Kazakh armed forces also took part in the Caspian Sea war exercise. Thus, in a short span, Russia has restored its military facilities in Central Asia, within the framework of developing theatre war-fighting capabilities in its periphery.

Russia is also beginning to formulate a broader policy posture towards its ex-members. President Putin has talked about opening opportunities for the CIS citizens to serve in the Russian Armed Forces. This announcement has been welcomed by the Central Asian states, particularly by Tajikistan. Thousands of unemployed youth from Central Asia who leave their country to earn a living in Russia are expected to find jobs.²²

In addition to the above, Russia has helped revive the Chinese-driven Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) whose importance got reduced after 9/11. Creating a secretariat in Beijing and a counter-terrorism centre in Bishkek known as the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS), the SCO has now been given a permanent 'license' to deal with regional security issues in Central Asia. Chinese troops for the first time joined other forces of the SCO members (Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan) in two military exercises in southern Kazakhstan and Xinjiang, held from 6-11 August 2003.²³

Enhancing Economic Profile

On the economic front, Russia has ultimately stolen the show by clinching major and long-term deals in energy cooperation with every Central Asian country, including Uzbekistan, Iran and China.

In April 2003, Russia in a dramatic move signed a strategic deal with Turkmenistan in the gas sector for a period of 25 years. Russia is planning to buy 10 billion cubic metres of gas by 2005 and 100 billion cubic metres by 2010 and that will bring about US\$ 200 billion to Turkmenistan and US\$ 300 billion to Russia.²⁴

A month later, in May 2003, Russia's Gazprom signed a 25-year gas sector strategic cooperation deal with Tajikistan to explore and develop gas fields in central and southern Tajikistan. Again, in May this year, Gazprom finalised a 25-year agreement with Kyrgyzstan for energy partnership. On August 6, 2003, during President Putin's visit to Uzbekistan, Gazprom signed

a major deal with Uzbek Gas Company for strategic partnership in the gas sector.²⁵

In May 2003, Russian oil giant Yukos, signed the biggest ever deal with China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) to supply 5.13 billion barrels of Russian oil, worth US\$150 billion for 25 years.²⁶ The deal covered construction of a 2,400-kilometre pipeline from Siberia to the Chinese city of Daqing. Recently, China has announced readiness to help finance the construction of the pipeline.²⁷ Similarly, Russia is also planning to construct a 4,000-kilometre pipeline from Eastern Siberia along the Pacific coast to Nakhodka, on the Sea of Japan. South Korea is also looking for a deal with Russian firms to import gas from Siberia.²⁸ Russia has also offered Iran a \$1 billion investment project to develop offshore oil and gas fields in an area of the Caspian Sea claimed by both Iran and Turkmenistan.²⁹

The above-mentioned trend of development suggests that in spite of all odds Russia is confronted with, it remains indispensable to Central Asian states in terms of economic dependency. As Russia takes up energy development as a major plank to boost its immediate economic needs and long-term national objectives, cooperation with Central Asia is becoming the focal point. In the past, Russia's priority was to minimise the energy development here, essentially to block the flow of oil towards Western markets without transiting Russia and instead sought to direct foreign investment towards Siberia and other parts of Russia. This strategy seemed to have changed now. Russia's oil giants like Lukoil and Gazprom are now concentrating in the Caspian Sea region and Central Asia by taking up major ventures. Russia has been making intense efforts to resolve the legal issues in the Caspian Sea region while engaging other members in a dialogue. Undoubtedly, over the last few years, Russia has emerged as a key player in the world's oil market. Since 1999, Russia's oil production has increased by 34 per cent. New estimates indicate Russia having 10 to 13.5 billion tons of oil or 10 per cent of world reserves.³⁰

Since gas is not as mobile and versatile as oil, Russia enjoys the advantage over others in developing and exporting Central Asian resources to European and Asian markets.³¹ This makes the West accept Russia's legitimate and prominent role, particularly in the economic area, should it want to prevent Central Asia from going the Afghanistan way. Similarly, without the participation of Russia, no meaningful transportation and communication links could be worked out. Russia is reviving several key projects to find

communication links with other regions including the North-South Corridor from Astarkhan, the Caspian Sea, Iran, to India.

Cooperation or Competition

It was clear that the US and Russia have evolved an understanding through a proper legal framework to cooperate on a number of issues, including Central Asia. The May 2002 summit between Presidents Bush and Putin in Moscow and subsequent meetings enhanced this cooperation. Important US official statements gave reasons to believe that Washington was according a significant place to Russia in Central Asia on the basis of mutual recognition of each other's interests.³² Secretary of State Colin Powell told Congress in early 2002: "Russia has been a key member of the anti-terrorist coalition. It has played a crucial role in our success in Afghanistan, by providing intelligence, bolstering the Northern Alliance, and assisting our entry into Central Asia. In fact, the way we are approaching Central Asia is symbolic of the way we are approaching the relationship as a whole and of the growing trust between our two countries."³³

However, there is already a growing skepticism about the US ability to sustain its interest in Central Asia in the face of Russia's dramatic successes. There are obviously no signs as yet of a rollback in US influence in the region — Russian military advances have decreased Central Asian appeal for intensive cooperation with NATO. While favouring the deployment of the CSTO airbase at Kant, the former Kyrgyz Defence Minister and current foreign policy adviser to the President, Muratbaek Imanaliyev said, "Kyrgyzstan's cooperation with NATO is of provisional nature. The deployment has never been meant for strategic [purposes] in terms of expanding NATO's influence in Kyrgyzstan and in the region."³⁴ Similarly, other Kyrgyz officials also made statements that the US military base at Manas was only meant for the anti-terrorist campaign in Afghanistan. They pointed out that forthcoming Russian Air force deployment at Kant would be for strategic purpose of defending the region. Nikolai Bailo, Chairman of the Committee on CIS Affairs in the Kyrgyz Parliament said, "For as long as a Russian border contingent was deployed in the country, until 1999, guerillas did not try to invade Kyrgyzstan". In another statement, Kyrgyz Defence Minister Esen Topoyev said, "Cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and NATO can be called constructive. However, it should not be viewed in the light of NATO's eastward enlargement. From the point of view of today's international

context, this term has become morally outdated. Kyrgyzstan's priorities in its bilateral and multilateral cooperation are intended to ensure national and regional security. That is why the country attaches great importance to stronger ties between the member-nations of the CSTO and SCO."³⁵

Washington's muted response to Russia's announcement of its opening of the airbase in Bishkek indicated that the US no longer views Russian military deployment in Central Asia as a zero-sum game. Experts opine that Moscow and Washington are emerging as twin alternatives and not competitors, at least in collectively fighting the stateless foes such as Al Qaida. Both Russian and Kyrgyz diplomats have been downplaying the issue of US-Russia rivalry growing in Central Asia. The Kyrgyz Defence Minister rejected the notion that Kant is a Russian base and Manas is American. Kant airport, he said, will form the CSTO's air-base and as for Manas, international anti-terrorist coalition forces, of which Russia is a part, are deployed there and not a purely US or NATO force.³⁶

Putin is doing what Yeltsin failed to do in Central Asia. As Russia's economy is beginning to look up, Moscow, obviously, is aggressively implementing policies to safeguard its interests. Central Asian states are recognising the fact that Russia has gained a bigger leadership role after 9/11. President Karimov also acknowledged this last year by saying that, "Present-day Russia is not the Russia of the 1990s". In fact, in the recent months, Karimov has been trying to mend fences with Putin — relations which were damaged after Tashkent openly supported the US policies, including the war against Iraq. Interestingly, realignment of forces in Central Asia is taking place when the US is grappling with peacekeeping in West Asia.

Apart from Russian advances, the US is likely to be confronted with a number of challenges within Central Asia. The US advocacy for democratic change and better human rights record is not accepted kindly by the ruling regimes. Russia, in comparison has abstained from interfering on this account. In fact, the opposition forces, except Kazakhstan's dissident leader, Kazhegeldin, look towards Moscow for guidance. Therefore, it remains to be seen how far the US would avoid criticism over human rights and political abuses in the interest of fighting against terrorism. In Kyrgyzstan, US military presence has caused serious domestic concerns and instability.

There is no doubt that Uzbekistan has now become the linchpin of US policies in Central Asia. Tashkent is seeking a longer-term commitment from the US to remain engaged in the region even after the problems in Afghanistan get sorted out. This may, however, create difficulties as experts feel that Uzbekistan's expediency of cooperation with the US will be questioned by regional states once the Afghan factor and threat of terrorism is contained.³⁷ Secondly, the US will face the difficult challenge of balancing its position with Pakistan, Uzbekistan and Russia over issues involving the future of Afghanistan. Ultimately, the US policy will have to reconcile with the interests of Islamabad, as can be seen from Washington's ardent wish to seek new relationships with Pakistan. In such a case, Uzbekistan may slip out and revert back to Moscow's orbit. Most Central Asian analysts also tend to accept that the US-Pakistan relationship is much deeper to be compromised for interest in Central Asia. However well disposed Washington might be towards Uzbekistan, the US will remain a distant partner. On the other, Russia, due to sheer geography and history, will inevitably remain crucial for Central Asia.

Water: Russia's Trump Card

Water is the most dominant factor in the political dynamics in Central Asia. Inevitably, like in the case of gas supply, Russia will have control over the region's water resources. Not only can Russia make Uzbekistan's development difficult through Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan but also by using water as a strategic and political weapon for retaining influence in the region. The region is facing acute ecological crises as a result of depleting water resources. According to some experts, the existing water resources would be sufficient only until 2025. The per capita consumption of water in Central Asia is twice that of developed nations. The Amu and Syr Darya are shrinking every year against the background of population growth. Since 1980 the region's population has grown from 27 to 55 million and it is expected to grow to 100 million by 2050. Moreover, China has been diverting rivers that fed Central Asia to its own water deficient areas in Xinjiang.³⁸ Uzbekistan may face further water shortage if the reconstruction programme in Afghanistan speeds up.

Interestingly, the 32 year-old idea of diverting a part of the Ob River in Siberia to Central Asia has been talked about again. A conference entitled "Russia and Central Asia: Water Problem and Strategy for Cooperation",

held in Moscow in April 2003 has steered new discussion that will increase Russia's leverages in Central Asia. The Conference organised by influential Russian politicians like Yuri Luzhkov suggested diverting of 5-7 per cent of Ob River water flow to Central Asia by building 2,550-kilometre long canal. Luzhkov underlined that water is a renewable resource in contrast to oil.³⁹ He said, "Now we are talking about water as a good, which Russia has in plenty". Many experts commented that Uzbekistan is miscalculating by forging closer ties with the US. Russians are talking about use of water as a political tool that can be used for keeping Central Asia under its influence forever.

Implications and Challenges for India's Security

Central Asia now poses a different set of challenges to Indian security. First, we it is to be identified whether these reconfigurations would have important consequences for Indian policy. Are the Americans going to stay in the region permanently? Will their interest be confined to containing terrorism or will their aim enlarge to pose a bulwark against China, Iran, India and Russia?

Has India's security environment improved after the war against terrorism led by the US? Even though India has endorsed the American actions in the region in the wake of post-9/11 events, New Delhi has chosen the path of going-alone in securing 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 engagement in Afghanistan, India has quickly signed JWG for countering terrorism with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. India has defence relationships with these countries — a subject I will discuss a little later.

Indeed, it would be naïve to assume that the US will leave the region easily after building a network of colossal political and military assets and contacts in the region. 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 it, the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), a terrorist group. American troops, numbering a few hundred, stationed in Bishkek, are believed to be learning the Uyghur language and actively socialising with ethnic Uyghurs.⁴⁰ Is there any noticeable change in the US policy towards Kashmir after 9/11? This is, of course, a separate subject of discussion.

Terrorism, NATO and India

NATO took command of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan on August 11, 2003, marking its presence in Asia for the first time. The organisation said recently that its commitment to the ISAF mission is a reflection of their transformation agenda and the alliance's resolve to address the new security challenges of the 21st century.⁴¹ Not only has NATO talked about expanded security operations in Afghanistan but also about its 'indefinite' presence in the region.⁴² The US and NATO troops are now located in close proximity to Jammu & Kashmir, within 1,000 kilometres from Siachen Glacier and Nubra Valley. In this context, it would be important to analyse the likely influence of NATO's presence on India's security. It needs to be seen first, how NATO will respond in the scenario of a direct military conflict between India and Pakistan. Secondly, it would be important to watch how the Pakistan Army develops its relationship with NATO forces while they are stationed as ISAF in Afghanistan. Thirdly and equally important, is to analyse the way China responds to NATO's presence in Central Asia. Beijing, of course, has been downplaying the issue, saying it is an insignificant security concern considering the larger threat China faces in the Asia-Pacific region. Apparently, China has already engaged NATO in a dialogue. China's Ambassador to the EU is said to be in touch with NATO officials in Brussels. Moreover, the Chinese do not believe that the US forces will remain in the region for a long period. Therefore, India would be faced with the difficult task of either neutralising or collaborating with NATO, both in the context of restoring peace in Afghanistan, as well as, in terms of India's own security calculus.

The SCO and India

China's growing influence in Central Asia is a matter of concern to India. Through the SCO, China has created a large profile for itself in the region. During the last decade, China's diplomacy in Central Asia has been a success

story. China has been trying to replicate its Pakistan and Myanmar policies with regard to Central Asia. The future of SCO will definitely have implications for India's policy. This issue has been dealt extensively in this author's paper, "*Central Asia and China Relations: Implications for India*" presented at the 5th Asian Security Conference, held in New Delhi in January 2003.

Central Asian Internal Dynamics and India

While dealing with Central Asia, there is also the aspect of interplay between its internal and external factors. Political divisions between and among the states have hardened due to a variety of reasons.⁴³ This is primarily driven by the big-nation-small-nation syndrome, which makes the regional security far more complex. The security concerns of each state are 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, promoted China getting well entrenched in Central Asian security affairs, thereby impinging on India's interests indirectly.

Interestingly, each of the Central Asian states finds itself in a convoluted geo-strategic 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 PoK.

Another concern is linked to the Central Asian states pursuing divergent and difficult foreign and security policies. None of these states has any explicit foreign policy goals. Turkmenistan's 'positive neutrality' bewilders everyone. Kazakhstan follows a somewhat open-ended foreign policy, avoiding one-sidedness and promoting its interests in many directions, dubbed as 'multi-vector' policy. It essentially aims at counter-balancing the interests of each power, while at the same time engaging each of them politically and economically to advance its goals. Kyrgyzstan's policies are somewhat akin to the ones followed by Kazakhstan. However, unlike the latter, Kyrgyzstan is unable to sustain such a policy due to inherent economic and political weaknesses. Uzbekistan conducts its foreign policy as trial balloons from year to year. Tashkent has been the most fervent in asserting its independent position. Tajikistan is being seen as the first 'failed state'. It continues to

exist as a Russian protectorate. In essence, the Central Asian states tend to play on the contradictions among themselves. An analysis of the CICA process initiated by Kazakhstan is given in the Annexure as a case study to give an idea of the nature of foreign policy pursued by the Central Asian states.

India, therefore, cannot count on Central Asia totally on key political and security issues. Even in the case of Afghanistan, the positions of Central Asian states vacillated several times in the past. Even Uzbekistan, at one point of time, took a U-turn in support of dealing with the Taliban. Similarly, on several occasions, Kazakhstan too favoured engaging the Taliban in a dialogue and even established a *modus vivendi* with the Afghan militia. Turkmenistan's position always remained favourable to the Taliban. In future too, though India's security interests may find convergence with those of the Central Asian states, the methods and nature of approaching those problems may differ.

Central Asian states have also followed an even-handed approach to the India-Pakistan conflict. They used harsh words about India and Pakistan going nuclear. The perception about the threat of nuclear conflict in South Asia and its fallout on Central Asia finds articulations in influential Central Asian circles. Although, in the aftermath of 9/11, Central Asia's relations with Pakistan have somewhat weakened Pakistan's importance to it has been dramatically underscored.

Islamic Central Asia and India

What are the issues relating to Islam in Central Asia vis-à-vis India? An Islamic model for Central Asia remains unfounded due to multiple polarisations built upon historical points of conflict among ethnic and tribal groups that persist in a muted form in the region. However, in recent years, Central Asia has been projected as fertile ground for the growth of Islamic extremism. Instability in Afghanistan and the emergence of the IMU in Uzbekistan has reinforced this idea. There is no doubt that the people are reviving Islamic values. But none of the features essential for an Islamic upsurge have any suitable foundation in Central Asia, not at least in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. At best, Islam in Central Asia is a cultural manifestation. However, in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, Islam remains a strong factor. Islamic fundamentalism in these countries has grown as a byproduct of events in Afghanistan.

The states in Central Asia cannot be called Islamic. Both at the levels of state and civic society, religion has little or no role to play. Due to the Soviet background, the elite and the mainstream population continues to adopt a more Western orientated lifestyle and policy goals; therefore the dynamics here cannot be compared with situations existing in the Middle East or in South-East Asia. The number of people having theological interests, including those within the academic circles, is extremely limited and they are on the fringes of mainstream society. The religious affairs are under state control and even the *Muftis*, who are generally modern scholars or diplomats, are appointed by the state. People at large, including Muslims do not visit religious places. In recent years, a few religious centres have emerged with financial support received from outside. But their activities are highly controlled and restricted. At the mass level, there is a general interest for cultural revival which remains confined to practicing traditional customs, folk rituals and ethos rooted in Central Asian civilisation.

Will Islam in Central Asia become a threat to India's security? In the past, extremist elements from the region have reportedly been found fighting along with Jihadis in Kashmir. Although, officially the regimes in Central Asia maintain a balanced position on the Indo-Pak 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 Kashmiri 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 do have a presence in Central Asia. Such a thing obviously cannot 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 emanating from the region would become critical.

Where does India stand vis-à-vis the fundamentalist forces in Central Asia? In Tajikistan, Islamic parties are already sharing power in the government. It is only a matter of time when Uzbekistan will also find itself in such a situation. However, it needs to be underlined that Islam in Central Asia is only a source for political mobilisation and is not used for political gain as is propagated by other Islamic states. It is generally viewed that Islamic

parties in Central Asia hold no negative outlook for India and Indian policies.⁴⁴ The majority groups, especially the moderate ones, hold respect and admiration for India. However, this may be lost sooner or later, if India does not move in the region with an open and flexible mind.

The Uyghur Problem and India

After a lull of decades the Uyghur issue is regaining strength, drawing significant attention from the world outside. The attention is widened in the wake of the 9/11 episodes and the subsequent war against terror. The listing of the ETIM as a terrorist organisation has further sharpened the focus on Xinjiang.⁴⁵ China's State Council after concealing for decades came out last year with details on terrorist activities in Xinjiang and the region in India's proximity is restive like never before in recent times. Groups of varying influence and potential are active with separatist objectives. World powers with perceived interests in the region are preparing to stroke fire. It is difficult to predict, though, what the future portends for Xinjiang and the countries in the neighbourhood; the regional balance of interests on the Central Asia-China frontier is under rapid transformation.⁴⁶

Major powers are active in getting a foothold. Member-states of the European Union have major economic and cultural linkage and so has Turkey. The United States has moved into the region in a big way, acquiring major interests in oilfields in the Caspian Sea region and Kazakhstan, presumably the major world source for hydrocarbon supplies in the next few centuries. Xinjiang too offers similar temptations. The US forces are now at the doorsteps of Xinjiang.

Pakistan had an ambitious programme for the region, which lost steam due to its inherent shortcomings. Still it acts as a vehicle of Saudi Wahabism, promoting fundamentalist groups, and in Xinjiang, providing a fundamentalist safety valve on behalf of communist China. These activities favourably mesh with Pakistan's design of encircling India with a pan-Islamic arc. Xinjiang has the potential to become yet another area where Islamic forces will try to pin India down.

These inimical portents have to be countered with strategic foresight. The interests of major powers may converge with Indian interests. Of the eight countries that share borders with Xinjiang, the northern group — Mongolia, Russia, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan — would be loath to be

assertive for quite some time. Among the southern group, Tajikistan and Afghanistan have their own internal instabilities that limit their action. Only Pakistan has the will, driven by its sense of cross-purposes with India, to shape the course of future events in Xinjiang.

Central Asia-China Relations and India

In the context of Central Asia-China relations, the scenarios of both confrontation and cooperation will have consequences for India. Three out of five states share commonality of having large borders with India and China. Unlike India, the present regimes in those states have signed controversial border agreements with China. In Kyrgyzstan, border concession to China has become the cause for internal instability. Similarly, in Kazakhstan, opposition parties are reluctant to approve border settlement in favour of China.⁴⁷ This is also true for water disputes. China has extracted maximum benefit from weak Central Asian states while dealing with disputes over water resources. China has been diverting several sources of Central Asian water to Xinjiang — required for settling the Han population migrating from other provinces and for implementing the ‘Development of Western China’ campaign. As the Central Asian domestic political situation alters fundamentally and the US interest in the region grows in future, Sino-Central Asian relations would turn into confrontation. Any increase or reduction in tension along the Sino-Central Asian frontiers will inevitably have military implications for India.

In a scenario where Central Asia and China continue to cooperate in economic and military fields, the security complexion in the region lying north of India would alter significantly. In fact, if speculations are to be taken seriously, the US’ increasing interest in Xinjiang is driven not by the issue of independence for the Uyghurs but by the hydrocarbon deposits in the Tarim Basin. Already, multiple networks of roads, railways and pipelines connecting Central Asia and Western China and beyond are in full progress. In recent months, China has revived its interest in Central Asian and Caspian oil. An agreement has been signed between Kazakhstan and China to build a pipeline from Western Kazakhstan to Western China that will have a length of 3,008 kilometres, of which 270 kilometres will be within China’s border. The pipeline will carry 20 million tons of oil, with construction costs predicted at US\$ 2 billion.⁴⁸ China and Kazakhstan are also planning to build the second line of the Alashankou-Druzba oil pipeline passing the Dzungar Gate. A gas

pipeline from Turkmenistan to China via Kazakhstan is also under serious consideration.⁴⁹ China itself is building a 4,000-kilometre gas pipeline, 'West-East Pipeline Project Investment B.V' to pump gas from Xinjiang to coastal provinces in the east, with a cost of US\$ 18 billion. Apart from the existing roads, China and Kyrgyzstan agreed to build a road connecting the southern bank of Lake Issyk-Kul in northern Kyrgyzstan and the Aksu district of China's Xinjiang-Uyghur region. The construction is expected to cost US\$ 15 million.⁵⁰ Pakistan has also collaborated in transport and communication projects with Central Asian states passing through China's Xinjiang province after signing the transit agreement in 1995 with China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Pakistan announced that by October 2003 the agreement was to be implemented allowing tariff-free overland trade among the four countries.⁵¹ The completion of these projects connecting Asia with Europe will isolate India from major international transport and communication highways. It is here that the question of whether India should factor China into its Central Asia policy assumes importance.

Policy Options for India

Through the better part of India's history, links with Central Asia had been the most important in its contact with the outside world. In fact, traditionally India's aim had been to take its philosophical and cultural message across Inner Asian countries up to the remote Siberian region. During the British period, political officers, explorers, surveyors and traders, obviously for the 'Great Game' postures, maintained some interest in Central Asia. However, in the post-independence period, India has grossly and perhaps consciously overlooked the studies and understanding of its non-South Asian neighbouring areas, which traditionally formed 'buffer zones' against external aggression. India has already paid prices for this in the case of Afghanistan, Tibet, Myanmar and Xinjiang. Regional complexities are likely to undergo major change with major powers stepping in and around India's northern flanks. In all probability, a repeat of the 'Great Game' or a clash of major power interests cannot be wished away. It is necessary for India to evolve its own perspective and understanding, and to broaden its operational scope of Central Asia, to include Afghanistan and the frontiers of China (Xinjiang). From this perspective, the following points merit consideration:

- Major powers already have their China-centric activities substantially in Central Asia. If India's policy guidelines for relations with

Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan have relevance for its Afghan policy, the guidelines for Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan should also include its China policy.

- Contingency plans should be ready, lest the situation unfolds in a manner that alters the security environment in fundamental ways. India's relations with Central Asia will assume importance should Russia's relations with Pakistan improve in a dramatic way in future.
- Implications of NATO's presence require careful scrutiny, at least in the context of the Sino-Central Asian relations if not in the South Asian context. Linked with this is the growing US-Uzbek strategic partnership, which may shape the future trend of events in South and Central Asia. In the short term, India's security imperatives would demand engaging of NATO.
- The future of SCO and utility of Indian entry into the organisation also needs in-depth analysis. It could be imprudent for India to join the SCO. A sub-regional framework involving India, China, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Afghanistan could form a viable option for a long-term cooperation.
- Central Asia, particularly the role of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, would become critical should Afghanistan get bifurcated along ethnic lines. India should maintain close ties with ethnic-Tajiks and Uzbeks to build a meaningful leverage for future contingencies.
- India's policy outlook for the region should also cover the understanding of regional underpinnings particularly of Shias/Ismailis inhabiting contiguous areas of Pamirs, Hindukush and the northern areas. There is growing patronage of Iran and the Aga Khan Foundation in this region. We should leverage the Ismailis in India.
- The future of the Uyghur movement is critical to India's security. Events in the region have scarcely engaged India's security concerns so far. Inevitably, they will soon draw its compelling attention, more so as Xinjiang directly shares borders with the sensitive Jammu and Kashmir state bordering both Aksai-Chin and the PoK. India should be prepared to face a new situation in Xinjiang. We need to be closely monitoring the events and have a contingency plan, should a situation begin to unfold there in fundamental ways.

- What specific policy outlook can India then adopt? First, it is necessary for India, to broaden the operational scope of Central Asia to include Xinjiang as well. Events need to be closely monitored by developing networks of hard information. Indian Missions in Bishkek, Almaty and Dushanbe are to function as listening posts for Uyghur affairs. India seems to be unaware that it enjoys certain advantages if it chooses to broaden its policy options in the region. It has religious and cultural links with the region going back to ancient times. It shares deep historical and civilisational linkages with the Uyghurs. India had thriving trade relations with Xinjiang until a few decades ago. The Indian Consulate in Kashgar was closed down only in the 1950s. A good number of intellectual and institutional resources capable of reviving the lost linkages exist in the country. What is needed is that our traditional interests be re- harnessed.
- India had received some 20,000 Uyghur refugees of previous generation who fled Xinjiang in 1949. They included their prominent leaders. The Uyghurs acknowledged India's gesture in their difficult times. They do not abhor India; rather they value Indian culture and ethos, which are part of their ancestral heritage, which is Indic and Buddhist. They also know in their hearts that New Delhi is closer to Kashgar, Kotan, and Turfan than any other important city of the world. Relations with Uyghurs could therefore be harnessed through academic contacts and through other means.
- A clear distinction needs to be made between Uyghur/Turkic nationalism and Islamic fundamentalism. Every attempt should be made to divide these streams by promoting antagonistic relationships between them. India should build contacts with various moderate groups based in Central Asia and Europe. Important Uyghur scholars must be engaged and invited for scholarly seminars and conferences in India. Young ethnic Uyghurs in Central Asia must be selected for higher studies in India under the scholarship schemes and should be nurtured under watchful eyes.
- In the context of promoting moderate Islamic groups, India can play an important role to revive their Sufi culture and heritage, which has been very much part of their traditional practices. India has vast resources and institutions linked with Sufi traditions, both in Kashmir and other parts of northern India. Perhaps these linkages and

institutional contacts can be rebuilt through policy implications. In this regard, India could initiate special projects to include Central Asian states, Afghanistan and scholars from China's Xinjiang province.

- India, so far, has not achieved success in winning any deals in the Central Asian oil sector — the reasons for which are many, ranging from technical hurdles to high stake politics. The problem of inaccessibility apart, the issue of avoiding transit through Pakistan itself has become a fact of life. Therefore, it becomes essential, and inevitably so, to factor China in our energy security calculus. During the British rule, the route via Xinjiang was preferred for conducting trade and commerce with Central Asia. As noted earlier, a web of energy pipelines is being planned in the region, including long-distance ones from Kazakhstan and Western Siberia to coastal China. The feasibility of constructing an oil/gas 'Energy Highway' from Central Asia along Western China connecting to Northern India is now well established.⁵² Should this happen, it would bring about unprecedented strategic change, let alone endowing energy supplies to the entire Northern India. Such a project connecting Central Asia and India through China will undermine the much-hyped Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline project.
- Until such a time when construction of direct oil and gas pipelines becomes possible, India's interest should remain focused in the petroleum management sector. The Caspian Sea region and Kazakhstan offer enormous opportunity for Indian technicians and experts. Indian presence in the region is already growing, as hundreds of Indian technicians and skilled workers are finding their way into infrastructure development projects. About a thousand Indians are already working in Aksai and Karachaganak-based Consolidated Construction Company (CCC) and SAIPEM Company, undertaking pipeline construction. With the increasing participation of the Indian workforce in petroleum management, the Caspian Sea region and Central Asia would inevitably become another Gulf model for India. A state intervention to divert the Indian students studying medicine, to petroleum science in the Central Asian Republics, would also go a long way in broadening the scope of energy cooperation.

- India's defence cooperation with Central Asian states is limited to procurement of outmoded aircraft and naval equipment from *Dastan* and KiroMashzavod of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. However, this cooperation will not proceed ahead without clearly adopting a long-term perspective. One major problem that would remain relates to future R&D programmes of those equipments. Secondly, India's cooperation with these states does not have a strategic component, in the context of challenges particularly vis-a-vis China. The cooperation also extends to training of Central Asian military officers in Indian institutions, but its efficacy has not been realised as yet. However, there are several common security concerns for India and these countries. Border management is one area where India needs to share its expertise with Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. Three of the Central Asian states also share borders with China. Training in high-altitude mountain warfare is another area where India could contribute the most. Kyrgyzstan, for example, has a unit for mountain warfare, specially trained in America. The maintenance of this unit has become quite problematic for Kyrgyzstan now. Therefore, defence cooperation with these countries should involve comprehensive strategy with the eventual goal of serving India's long-term interests.

The aforementioned points impinging on India's security require in-depth analysis and specific treatment. Some of our traditional interests could be re-harnessed through rigorous research practice appropriate measures and through activities. India has a good number of intellectual and institutional resources capable of reviving the lost linkages.

Acknowledgement

The author thanks the two anonymous referees for their comments and suggestions on the paper.

References/ End Notes

- 1 Central Asians have been resurrecting their heroes of the past. Apart from Timur and Babur, the figures of all historical importance have been evoked for identifying themselves as nations. The author was witness to several occasions when the heroes like Kaban Bai Batyr, Bogan Bai Batyr, Ablai Khan, Toli-bi, Haider Dulati and others were resuscitated. For details read P. Stobdan, "India

- and Kazakhstan: Civilizational Explorations”, *Heritage Publication*, New Delhi, 2003.
- 2 Cohen, Ariel, Uncertainty Still Defines Russia’s Role in Central Eurasia. *Eurasianet*. September 19, 2002. The proceedings of the conference organized by the Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy (ELIAMEP) highlights the misgivings about Russian’s policy. <http://www.eliamep.gr/main.asp?cat+1&scat=1&obj=true>,
 - 3 Levkin, Andrei, “*Chto takoe Evraziya, kazhdyy (poka?) ponimaet po svoemu*” cited in *ITAR-TASS*, April 21, 2001.
 - 4 Panarin, A.S., “*Global’noe politivheskoe progozirovanie v usloviyakh strategicheskoy nestabil’nosti*”, (A Global Political Forecast under Conditions of Strategic Instability), *Editorial URSS*, Moscow. 1999. Also see Nikolai Bindyukov and Petr Lopata, “*Obsobaya tre’ya sila: Novyy politicheskiy fenomen*” (A Special Third Force: A New Political Phenomenon. *OTRK* Moscow. 1999.
 - 5 Dugin, A., “Post-Liberal Era” at www.arctogaia.com/public/eng-lib.htm
 - 6 Dugin, A., Posleliberal’naya epokha. *Zavtra*. May 26, 1998, (21) 7
 - 7 When Putin said in November 2000 that Russia has always felt itself to be a Euro-Asiatic country, Dugin responded by saying “An epochal, grandiose, revolutionary admission that changes everything. The most important signs of secret history of the world are revealed.” www.strana.ru/stories/2000/11/11/973934n10497117268.html
 - 8 Putin’s Response on Anti-Terror Cause. *RIA Novosti*. Moscow. September 24, 2001.
 - 9 Balmforth, Richard, Russia End Cold War Chapter by Quitting Cuban Spy Base. *Reuters*. October 18, 2001.
 - 10 Rubinstein, Alvin Z., A US Policy for Russia. Foreign Policy Research Institute. April 25, 2001.
 - 11 Lapidud, Gail W., Central Asia in Russian and American Foreign Policy after September 11, 2001. Presentation from Central Asia and Russia: Responses to the ‘War on Terrorism’. Panel Discussion held at the University of California Berkeley, October 29, 2001. For details on the US and NATO’s policies towards Central Asia, visit <http://www.bits.de/NRANEU/CentralAsia.html#III>.)
 - 12 Kazakhstan will Chair COCA. *Interfax*. July 8, 2003.
 - 13 Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov’s statement on Russian’s foreign policy concept, spelled out in November 2002 prior to NATO’s Summit in Prague. *Kommersant Daily*. Moscow. November 2002.
 - 14 RIA News Agency. Moscow (in Russian). July 7, 2003.
 - 15 *Interfax*. June 27, 2003.
 - 16 For details see, www.eurasianet.org/department/insight/articles/eav072403_pr.shtml.

- 17 *Interfax*. June 24, 2003.
- 18 *Interfax*. Military News Agency Newswire. June 22, 2003.
- 19 Russia Will Strengthen Military Base in Tajikistan. *Interfax*. April 28, 2003.
- 20 www.interfax.com/com?item=tajik&pg=20&id=5637953&req=
- 21 *Interfax*. AVN, July 10, 2003.
- 22 *Interfax*. Military News Agency. May 22, 2003.
- 23 “China Praises Anti-Terror Exercise” at www.cnn.com. August 13, 2003. Also see “Russia, China, Central Asia Launch Anti-Terrorism Drills”. Reuters. August 11, 2003 at www.uyghurinfo.com/viewNews.asp?newsid=8696
- 24 *Interfax*. April 10, 2003.
- 25 *Interfax*. August 6, 2003. Also see Russia, Uzbekistan to Increase Oil-Gas Cooperation. *VOA News*. August 6, 2003.
- 26 *China Daily*. May 29, 2003. Jeremy Bransten, China-Russia Summit: Giants Strengthen Ties. *RFE/FL Inc.*, May 28, 2003.
- 27 China Offers Financing for Russian Oil Pipeline. AFP. July 29, 2003.
- 28 Sung-woo, Park, “Beijing, Seoul Mull Siberian Gas Link”, *Reuters* at [www.themoscowtimes.com/Business/Oil & Gas](http://www.themoscowtimes.com/Business/Oil%20&Gas), July 22, 2003)
- 29 Bloomberg, “Moscow Extend Caspian Hand to Iran” at [www.themoscowtimes.com/Business/Oil & Gas](http://www.themoscowtimes.com/Business/Oil%20&Gas), July 21, 2003.
- 30 Koksharov, Alexander, “An Upgrade for Russian Oil” at www.gateway2russia.com/st/art_124488.php
- 31 David Skeels of British Gas, BG Kazakhstan told the author in a conversation during the Conference in Almaty in June 2003 that Russia is getting far more focused in energy sector and it would be difficult for outsiders to compete with Russian companies in the years ahead.
- 32 Russian experts have completely admits that the US actions in Central Asia enjoys Russian consent. V. N. Egorov of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies also expressed this view, in the First Annual Conference on Security and Regional Cooperation Issues, held at Almaty on June 17, 2003. For details read IDSA Seminar Report Series by P. Stobdan, June 2003.
- 33 “Testimony of Secretary of State Colin Powell at Budget Hearing Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Washington, D.C., February 5, 2002” at www.state.gov/secretary/nm20027797.htm
- 34 *Interfax*. April 28, 2003.
- 35 For details, see *Interfax*. Military News Agency Newswire. July 9, 2003.
- 36 Blagov, Sergei, Renovation of Russian Base in Kyrgyzstan Near Completion. *Eurasia Insight*. July 24, 2003.
- 37 Opinion expressed by experts at the First Annual Conference on Security and Regional Cooperation Issues held at Almaty on June 17, 2003.

- 38 Hagt, Eric, "China's Water Policies: Implications for Xinjiang and Kazakhstan". *Central Asia and Caucasus Analyst* at www.cacianalyst.org/iew_article.php?articleid=1615.
- 39 Alibekov, Ibragim, "Clashing Approaches Becloud Central Asia's Water Future" at www.eurasianet.org, April 28, 2003.
- 40 As told to author by Uyghur activists based in Central Asia.
- 41 Pitman, Todd, NATO to Command Peace Force in Kabul. Associated Press. August 10, 2003.
- 42 Associated Press. August 11, 2003.
- 43 Roy Allison and Lena Johnson in their edited volume, *Central Asian Security: The New International Context* 2001. Brookings Institution Press; Washington, DC have analysed different patterns of interplay between internal and external conflicts in Central Asia in the context of 'regional security complex'.
- 44 View gathered from Azizulla Gaziev, a political analyst of the International Crisis Group (ICG) during a conversation in Tashkent in July 2003.
- 45 Oresman, Matthew, and Daniel Steingart, "Radical Islamization in Xinjiang: Lessons from Chechnya?" www.cacianalyst.org/view_article.php?articleid=1616
- 46 Stobdan, P., India and the Uyghur Problem: Some Policy Options (unpublished monograph).
- 47 The issue is rather sensitive and an emotional one. Many opposition leaders and intellectuals both in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are critical about the government position on water disputes with China. I have discussed this extensively with Murat Avezov, a prominent Kazakh leader, belonging to the Azamat Party. He served as the first Kazakh Ambassador to China.
- 48 Hu's Visit Seals Energy Deals. *China Daily*. June 3, 2003.
- 49 www.interfax.com/com?item=Kaz&pg=80&id=5641877&req=; Study On Sino-Kazakhstan Pipeline Construction and Investment Expected to Finish This Year. Interfax. June 19, 2003.
- 50 Kyrgyzstan, China to Build 360 Kilometre Road. *Interfax*. May 22, 2003.
- 51 Pakistani Communication Secretary Iftikar Rashid said in a press conference that, "Each country will issue 200 road permits each to traders of the other three countries for transportation of goods of the territories of the other states". Pakistan, China, CARs to Enforce Pact from October. *Daily Times*. August 10, 2003.
- 52 For details read P. Stobdan, Geopolitics of Oil in Central Asia: Options for India. In P. Stobdan Ed., *Building a Common Future: India and Uzbek Perspectives on Security and Economic Issues*. 1999. IDSA; New Delhi. pp 122-169.

P. Stobdan is a Research Fellow at IDSA and former Director of the Indian Cultural Centre, Embassy of India, Kazakhstan. He specialises in Central Asian states, Afghanistan, Mongolia, Chinese Frontier regions (Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Tibet) Bhutan, Myanmar and the Himalayan region.