



CONNECT CENTRAL ASIA POLICY' FACTOR IN INDIA'S SOFT POWER INITIATIVES IN CARS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

Sandeep Singh*

Amanpreet Kaur**

Abstract: *It is seen that, after having a successful experience from its Look East Policy, India has now started think ways to develop its relations with the energy rich region of Central Asia which would give boost to its foreign policy on various aspects. Irrespective of the difficulties like the presence of great powers in the region, limited trade and limited size of markets, Central Asia has gained valuable place in the foreign policy of India for more than a decade. The 'Connect Central Asia Policy' is a concrete indication of this growing interest, which is based on pro-active political economic and people to people connectivity with the region both individually and collectively. The growing role of major powers in the region for making their influence is another side of the Central Asian coin. It is in such a context, the present research is attempting to explore how far geo-political calculation is a factor in India's new policy 'Connect Central Asia' and its implications for India. Side by side, it also tries to explore the evolving relations with the region having common interests on many issues in South and Central Asia regions from geopolitical, geo-economic and geo-strategic perspectives.*

Key Words: *India, Central Asia, Geo-politics, Geo-strategy, Connect Central Asia Policy.*

*PhD Scholar, M.Phil. - PhD Integrated Programme, Centre for South & Central Asian Studies, School of Global Relations, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda

**Research Scholar, M.Phil. – PhD Integrated Programme, Centre for South & Central Asian Studies, School of Global Relations, Central University of Punjab, Bathinda



1.1. INTRODUCTION

After the end of cold war cold war period, the Central Asian countries had started a process of nation building and their economic development. At the same time, the Central Asian countries continue to face frightening security and socio-economic problems. Their mutual relations were itself far from reality as compared today. Issues like water and energy security, environmental degradation, borders and migration have become sensitive. Religious extremism & fundamentalism are believed to be serious challenges to regional stability of Central Asia (Gupta, 2013). The role of Central Asia region to India has been recognised as a historically, civilisationally, economically and geopolitically. India's connections with Central Asia have been about three thousand years old. The relations between India and Central Asia are as old as the evolution of human civilization in the two regions. Trade was the backbone of the relationship. India had vibrant trade ties with the region in the ancient silk route days. The Silk Route, covering the distance of about 7000 miles, connected China, Central Asia, Northern India the Parthian, the Roman Empire. It was not a single route, but a web of routes linking Asia with Europe. The route had three branches-norths, south and central. The Northern Route connected China to Black Sea, Persia and Mediterranean Sea. The Southern Route snaked out of Persia (Iran) and traversed the breadth of Afghanistan to enter India over the Hindukush ranges. This route also had a branch that connected India to Central Asia. The central route connected Persia and the Mediterranean Sea. The road stimulated not only commercial transaction but also served as the conduit for cultural exchanges. Buddhism travelled from India to china through this ancient route. Thus, it has a historical and culturally importance for India (Sarma 2010, 11-12).

In 18th century, Central Asia was known for its horses, raw silk, dry fruits and camels. Khotan, Bukhara, Badakhshan, Tibet and Kashmir were important trading centers in the east-west trade which was carried through the famous 'Silk Route'. Due to its geographical closeness to Central Asia and linkage with the Silk Routes system Kashmir, in 19th century, acted as an important transit market in the bilateral India Central Asia trade. Srinagar-Leh-Yarkand-Kashghar-Kokand route was considered as more secure route. The other routes include Punjab-Afghanistan-Central Asia land route and the Bombay-Batum sea route (Kaur 2011, 250).



Indian traders who conducted their business with Central Asia send their income back to India in the form of gold coins and rubbles. In last years of 19th century Russian Gold currency was began to be imported into India. That gold was sold for making ornaments. This trade dropped to the lowest point in 1920 as a result of the British prohibition on such trading. The British feared that Russian rubbles could be used in anti-British agitation in India. After Bolshevik Revolution, state take-over of private trade in former Soviet Russia and restriction imposed by the British on exports from India, affected adversely the India-Central Asia trade relations. These relations, however, were revived after India gained independence. But today its economic presence in the region is far below the potential. The share of trade with five Central Asia republics is meager. The Central Asian economies inherited state controlled foreign trade which was subordinated to central planning (Kornoi 1992).

However, despite the region's geo-economic significance, India has as yet not made any significant breakthrough in making its economic presence felt in the region. But there are still economic relations between India and Central Asia and this paper will highlight these economic and trade relations. It is seen that, India's growing population and significant economic growth is forcing the country to bring drastic changes in its foreign policy initiatives in the region. In such a context, to boost up the efforts in this direction India has recently launched the 'Connect Central Asia Policy' (CCAP). The article focuses on how Indo-Central Asia relation problems and India's energy needs are factored in its CCAP.

1.1.1. Objectives

- (1)** To analyze and study the evolving Indo-Central Asia Relations in the current regional geo-political/geo-strategic realities, Challenges and their concerns over common regional issues
- (2)** To study and explore India's 'Connect Central Asia Policy' as a factor of determining its relations with the region in present context and its prospects

1.1.2. Methodology

The study mostly relies on secondary sources as well as on primary sources. Mostly books, scholarly articles, web sources have been used for writing this paper. Article builds up through the analytical and historical approach. The report has made an attempt to trace the nature of situation from historical times to present one to know



the current geopolitical realities because past events/circumstances always influenced the present of any countries in the world. All the other relevant sources on the India's 'Connect Central Asia Policy' have been considered.

1.2. CENTRAL ASIA: GEOSTRATEGIC AND GEOPOLITICAL IMPORTANCE IN CENTRAL ASIA

Globalization has become a buzzword of the 21st century but the process of globalization did not occur uniformly across the globe. It has been shaped and modified by the unique characteristics of regions and nations which include the history, level of economic development, existing political systems, regional cooperation, established patterns of civilization and stability of culture providing geographical distinctiveness to any defined space (Hanks 2010: 3-4). In today's multi-polar world, regionalization and regions are assuming importance in international affairs and Central Asia is also one of the important burgeoning regions in this regard. It is the heart of Asian continent and a crossroad of invaders and traders since the ancient times as represented by the ancient silk route. It constitutes five republics today, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. It constitutes a vast geographical space which has always been a source of attraction and analysis for neighbouring powers as well as foreign ones due to its geopolitical and strategic importance (Duarte 2013: 30-31). With more than a total population of 92 million people, availability of abundant natural resources and strategic location on the global map, particularly on that of Asia's map, it has emerged as most eye-catching region in the world both economically and strategically (OECD 2011: 3). This region is also surrounded by some of the fastest growing economies in the world such as Russia, India and China. Central Asian economies are heavily dependent on the export of energy resources. Kazakhstan holds an estimated 65 years of oil reserves and 308 years of coal reserves. On the other hand, Turkmenistan holds 223 years of natural gas reserves, while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have substantial sources of hydropower (OECD 2011: 4). Tajikistan has great potential to generate 527 billion kWh of hydropower capacities among the former Soviet States and second after Russia (Prasad and Mullen 2013). The region's richness in both human and natural resources have thus contributed to its strong growth over the past decade (OECD 2011: 4).



For centuries, Central Asia has been the centre of rivalries and conspiracies by the great powers. During the nineteenth century, Britain feared that there was possibility that another European power would take advantage of Islamic Asia's political decay. It began with France and followed by Russia (Duarte 2013: 30). It was apprehended that Russia wanted to move forward along the caravan routes of the ancient conquerors, threatening to establish a new world monarchy (Fromkin 1980: 936). Consequently, Britain expressed its concern regarding the consequences of the steady march of the Russian Empire towards South Asia. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it was relatively a common statement in Europe, that the next major war - the inevitable war - would be the final confrontation between Britain and Russia. Central Asia was thus at the center of rivalry between Tsarist Russia and British Empire, which was called as the 'Great Game' (Fromkin 1980: 936; Lansford 2002: 128). Both the imperial powers fought for control over Afghanistan as a strategic base that could be used for invading each other (Abbas 2012: 3). Russia and Britain never declared open war against each other; instead the war occurred as silently and secretly in remote places of Central Asia, which apparently went through three phases. The first phase started with the expansion of the Russian Empire in the Caucasus and Central Asia region from late eighteenth century which was ended in 1907 with the signing of Anglo-Russian convention. Subsequently, the second phase began in 1907 which lasted up to 1917 and ended with the agreement on the same methods used in the previous phase as resorting to secret agents who sought to manipulate local population and tribes. In the end, the final phase of the Great Game occurred after the 1917 Russian revolution to liberate the whole Asia from imperialist domination through the armed revolt (Duarte 2013: 31). Security and power were two objectives of the two powers and the game continued until the Second World War. After the World War II, Soviet Russia and the United States emerged as the dominant powers in the world politics, leading to the called cold war. Cold war witnessed so many vibrant conflicts and confrontations occurred in the Middle East and other Asian regions, while the present Central Asian countries were part of Soviet Russia. The collapse of Soviet Russia in 1991 and independence of CARs brought Central Asia back as a site of contestation between diverse powers, often referred to as the New Great Game (Duarte 2013: 31; Edwards 2003: 85). It is said that the level of regional internationalization remained at peak even in the New Great Game era. In the new power game, the United



States and its allies are using the region as an important supply hub for the Afghanistan war effort to control terrorism (Edwards 2003: 87). Russia wants to exert its geopolitical influence to maintain its legacy in the region and China is looking at the region with energy hungry eyes and wants to make partnerships with them to stabilize and develop the restless Xinjiang (Cooley 2012).

The expression of the New Great Game was introduced by Pakistani Journalist Ahmed Rashid in 1990s, in which regional energy resource potential became geopolitical concern in the international interactions (Abbas 2012: 3). Central Asia again has become core place of the new geopolitical game which also involves Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan along with major big powers such as Russia and United States and other emerging powers such as China, India, Turkey, Iran and Pakistan showing interests in the power game at play in the region (Abbas 2012: 3). However, the New Great Game does not meant for the effective control of a certain geographical area in Central Asia, rather it is changing from geostrategic pull to the politics of energy and making economic profits from pipelines, tanker routes, petroleum consortium, treaties and contracts (Edwards 2003: 85). CAR's energy resource potential has already been mentioned in the table given in Introduction chapter. Kazakhstan has 30.0 thousand million barrel oil reserves and 1.3 trillion cubic metres (tcm) of gas reserves at the end of 2012 and gas reserves in Turkmenistan are 17.5 trillion cubic metres highest in Central Asia and 0.6 thousand million barrel oil reserve capacity. However, it does have much amount of oil reserves. Uzbekistan has 0.6 thousand million barrel oil reserves and 1.1 trillion cubic metres gas reserves (Dudley 2013).

Not only other powers are taking interest in the region, Central Asian countries have also started to establish relations with neighboring countries for their advantage. Unlike the old Great Game in the period of conquest and competition, CAR governments are now working overtime to capitalize the involvement of the external powers for their power advantageous and political control (Kharkongor 2013). It is their misfortune that they are land-locked, which results in limited space for oil and gas transport routes. Nevertheless, there are four routes are available for this such as Northern route, Western route, Southern route and East route (Jacob 2005). Mostly, oil and gas are imported through Northern and Western routes as shown below in two different maps of oil and gas transportation.

Map 1.1: Oil Transportation Pipeline Routes in Central Asia



Source:http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/spl/hi/world/10/oil_gas_786/img/gas_network_jan2010_786.gif
(Accessed on November 15, 2014)

Map 1.2: Gas Transportation Pipeline Routes in Central Asia



Source:http://news.bbc.co.uk/nol/shared/spl/hi/world/10/oil_gas_786/img/gas_network_jan2010_786.gif
(Accessed on November 15, 2014)

Northern route is favoured and occupied by Russia which runs from Baku and Tengiz field of Kazakhstan to Novorossiysk, a Russian seaport in the black sea. However, with the passage of time, CARs started to search for new transport routes because of Russia's monopolistic and dominant policies over the most transport network of the region (Shah 2010). As a result, they have started to develop Western and Southern routes. The western transportation route is being developed with the help of extra-regional powers such as



Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey and the United States. This route flows to the Georgia port of Suspa on Black sea from Baku. Another option is BTC (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan) pipeline in western route. This route is favoured and supported by Iran to transport oil and gas to Persian Gulf through its territory but it is opposed by the US. So, it is still under-consideration (Shah 2010). If it becomes operational, India can also certainly benefit from this. The Eastern route is proposed and supported by China which is connected with two oil fields of Caspian Sea in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan-China oil pipeline is 3200 km long in which both have invested (Shah 2010). It is also proposed to construct Kazakhstan-China gas pipeline. China has also invested in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to join gas pipeline. Since China has a border with South Asia, there is possibility to bring Kazakhstan oil to South Asia through the Eastern route (Shah 2010).

India is also interested in cooperation in mining, IT, Agriculture, hydro-power and pharmaceutical sectors in order to strengthen and complement the imperatives of energy. It is expected that such diverse cooperation would strengthen the profile of India in CARs, which would allow it achieve important gains in energy cooperation. Generally, In terms of commercial relations with Central Asia, India is far behind in trade with this growing region. India-Central Asia Trade is hardly near \$750 million, comparatively very lower to that of China's \$46 billion in 2012 (Garibov 2013; Gupta 2013; Foshko 2012: 50). Table 1.1 below shows India's total trade with Central Asian countries, in which it has very good trade relations with Kazakhstan as their trade is \$ 436.25 million in 2011-12 and \$ 887.84 million in 2013-14. India's total trade with the region is \$ 687.67 million in 2011-12 and less than \$ 800 million in 2012-13 and more than \$1200 million in 2013-14. At the same time, it has grown more than ten times between 2001-02 and 2013-14 which is showing the dramatic change in their trade relations.

Table 1.1: India-Central Asia Trade (2001-13) (Trade in US\$ millions)

Country	2001-02	2003-04	2005-06	2007-08	2009-10	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
Kazakhstan	53.09	84.07	117.16	188.77	291.45	436.25	426.22	887.84
Kyrgyzstan	11.53	38.74	29.56	32.43	27.48	31.44	37.08	35.18
Tajikistan	2.56	8.42	12.13	22.21	32.56	30.14	48.02	55.13
Turkmenistan	6.30	28.55	31.18	44.64	46.15	63.41	78.25	87.72
Uzbekistan	23.80	42.84	50.57	56.52	84.00	126.43	156.75	145.57
Total Trade	97.28	202.62	240.60	344.57	481.64	687.67	746.32	1211.44

Source: Export-Import Data Bank, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department of Commerce, Government of India, 2014



No doubt, overall Indian trade with the region remains low, but there are increasing trends in the export of certain sectors. The trade in Indian pharmaceuticals is an instance, which shows substantial increase during the period 2008 to 2013 and it now constitute India's primary export to the region (Taraporevala et al 2014). India imports minerals such as zinc, sulphur and limestone largely from Central Asia. Moreover, it signed an agreement on Cooperation in Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy in 2011 to import uranium for its civil-nuclear reactors from Kazakhstan. Now it is planning to import uranium from Uzbekistan as well. On the whole, Indian exports to the region are relatively increasing than imports (Ibid 2014). There is thus vast scope for economic cooperation with the region. The growing trade relations are certainly a good news in determining their relations in strategic sector too in security perspectives for maintaining peace in South and Central Asia and robust energy cooperation. India is thus making its economic policies not only to ensure its economic prosperity but also aiming at certain political goals to translate its foreign policy as an effective tool in Central Asia (Ibid 2014).

On the whole, CARs have been stretching the world powers and the 9/11 and its aftermath has accelerated the region's strategic, geo-economic and geo-political importance. And the abundance of natural resources remains to be their primary asset, which made the region an arena of competition of various powers which are investing in big development projects in Central Asia. Central Asian countries are also trying to develop their diplomatic as well as economic relations to secure stability and economic growth. India, an emerging power is also expecting these countries as good friends to secure energy security as a result of its increasing demand (Kharkongor 2013). To strengthen relations with the region, India has been seeking permanent membership in SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization) and makes considered attempts to achieve important breakthrough through its CCAP.

1.3. CENTRAL ASIA: INDIA'S LUKEWARM APPROACH TOWARDS THE REGION

India has concluded several energy ties with many countries, particularly with those in the Persian Gulf. As already pointed out, the uncertainties in the Middle East compelled India to look for new supply options to sustain its economic growth and achieve development (Bhaskar and Roche 2011). Economic growth of India in turn has facilitated its efforts to



increase the number of energy suppliers (Taraporevala et al 2014). As a result, it has shown persistent interest in the newly energy rich CARs to pursue its energy security and regional security goals. Though broken into five independent republics, India has been invoking the Indian subcontinent's historic connection with Central Asia, as the two regions were closely linked with each other through trading routes and cultural linkages, the beginnings of which can be traced back to the time of Harappan civilization (Kaur 2011: 250). Trade was the vibrant source of their relationships in the ancient silk route time which have decreased after the partition in 1947 in the absence of direct land corridor to the region and due to its lukewarm approach. Therefore, Indian trade has to find much longer routes which usually involved the sea route to Iran and through Iran to Afghanistan and Central Asian republics. This made India's trade less competitive in the region (Kaur 2011: 250; Taraporevala et al 2014).

In addition, it is pointed out that the disintegration of Soviet Union and the emergence of Central Asia have placed Central Asia in a specific intellectual context influenced by geopolitical theories and debates around the concepts of "end of ideology" and "clash of civilizations" which have very much shaped the new framework of power around Central Asian states and Afghanistan. Therefore, Sir Halford Mackinder gave idea that one, who controls the heartland (Central Asia), controls the world (Laruelle et al 2010: 1-2). However, this situation changed the geopolitical perspectives of India. Although, India has lost its visibility in Central Asia since the disintegration of Soviet Union but now it is trying to regain its footprints in the strategic and energy sector through political negotiations and economic cooperation and by partaking in the efforts aimed at deterring terrorism in the region to the desired extent (Mukerji 2012: 2).

It is pointed out by some experts that Central Asia is going to become an important region by the 21st century. This is why because India is taking geopolitical, geostrategic and economic interests in CARs as it is extended neighbour of the region that is determining the future prospects for their cooperation in energy security sector and appears to be very substantial reason for forging their relationship. On the same time, Peace and regional stability by reducing the threat of fundamentalism extremism and terrorism in Central Asian region and neighbouring country Afghanistan can be the most crucial factor in determining India's security. Existence of external world powers in the region, on the other side, is posing



challenges to India's engagement with the region. In this situation, India needs to step with hard approach strengthen relation with the region (Roy, 2002). No doubt, India has good historical, cultural and ethnic and economic relations but has not tried to develop its relations in early years and ignored the region since the independence of CARs in early decade as it has been dependent on Middle East Asia for trade and regional development. There are some reasons behind India's lukewarm approach towards Central Asia region as it is facing the following challenges:

1.3.1. Challenges to India-Central Asia Connectivity

In fact, importance of Central Asia is a challenge in itself and there are several drawbacks in speeding up the relationships and governmental interactions of India with the region under the present circumstances. In the present settings of South and Central Asia it seems to be very difficult to bring energy directly and easily from the region. Here are some of vibrant challenges to India and to establish connectivity with Central Asia to satisfy its energy needs in particular.

- a) Lack of direct route connectivity: India has been lacking direct land route links since its partition. This forms the fundamental challenge in establishing easy and sustainable connection. This poses a great difficulty for India's trade with Central Asia as it has to seek other options to connect with Central Asia. Land route connection plays a key role in developing trade and transport of energy materials (Foshko 2012: 8).
- b) India's relations with neighbouring countries and weak border: This is the main geopolitical challenge and associated problem with the above stated point. Governments of India's neighbours are poor, corrupt, unstable and dysfunctional, and can be easily manipulated. Moreover, India has hostile neighbours like Pakistan and China. China's encirclement of India via Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan poses problems for its security. These types of relationships with neighbouring countries and weak borders (e.g. Pakistan's infiltration into Kashmir, pressures of migration from Bangladesh, Tamils' identity in Sri Lanka and Nepal's open borders) made India an isolated land which has to struggle for making presence



across the region.¹ These conditions are the major challenge for projects like the TAPI pipeline as Indian government apprehends that Pakistan would do everything possible to jeopardize its energy security. In addition, the present political situation of Afghanistan not conducive to this project (Jacob 2005: 311).

- c) Islamic extremism: This issue has been focal point of India's concern on its national security. The terrorist activities such as Taliban insurgency on domestic soil of Afghanistan and Pakistan has been threatening. The attack on Indian Parliament in 2001 and Mumbai attacks in 2008, masterminded by Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) are telling examples. Due to the proximity of CARs to the Afghan border, Central Asian countries are also experiencing terrorist activities and drug trafficking which has become a big security concern for India too. The threat of Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Islamic Jihadists Union (IJU) undermining domestic stability are grappling the region (Sharan 2012). Since there is always threat of disruption to India's energy initiatives across the region it has become vital for India to ensure strategic and border security along with energy security.
- d) Geopolitical competition between great powers in the energy sector: There is an intense competition in the region between great powers of the world such as the US, Russia and emerging power China, which are economically as well as politically involved in the region, in the energy sector. China is one of the major energy competitors for India in the Central Asian energy story. Chinese companies are outbidding the Indian companies like ONGC Videsh Ltd. Recently, in 2013 China won \$5 Billion oil deal from India, thereby facing intense competition with China (Saikia 2013) as already mentioned in previous chapter.. Russia wanted to maintain its soviet legacy over the region. Both China and Russia are members of SCO and aiming at reducing the US influence in the region. On the other hand, the US is trying to exploit energy resources of the region and make this a strategic base to control Islamic terrorism (Ahmad 2010: 139). Hence India has to push its interests through the interplay of these powers and across their individual interests. Moreover, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey are trying to pursuing their interests in the region and Pakistan continues not only to block India geographically but also politically (Blank 2014).

¹ "China, India and Energy in South and Central Asia". Accessed on November 19, 2014. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Heq5T9SdMx4>



China is not supporting India's membership in SCO and left India behind as an investor in Central Asia, particularly in energy sectors. There is a probability that US withdrawal from Afghanistan would reduce India's ability to gain foothold in the region (Ibid 2014). In addition, US sanctions on Iran are reducing India's potential to invest in INSTC linking Central Asia.

In short, India has been lagging behind in meeting its energy needs in Central Asia because of these challenges. Nevertheless, India has been trying to make foothold in the region in several ways using its soft power and investment measurements and diplomatic and political negotiations. It is with such an intention India has recently launched the CCAP which covers all areas of India's goals to achieve in the region. It is an integrated, multifaceted and long-duration strategy to achieve positive results on Central Asia. Such a concerted approach would allow India to push its energy priorities with regard to CARs.

1.4. INDIA'S EVOLVING RELATIONS WITH CARs: 'CONNECT CENTRAL ASIA POLICY'

As already pointed out, after having a successful experience from its Look East Policy, India has now started think ways to exploit the energy rich region of Central Asia which would give boost to its foreign policy on energy. Irrespective of the difficulties like the presence of great powers in the region, limited trade and limited size of markets, Central Asia has gained valuable place in the foreign policy of India for more than a decade. The 'Connect Central Asia Policy' is a concrete testimony of this growing interest, which is based on pro-active political economic and people to people connectivity with the region both individually and collectively (Parashar 2012). CCAP obviously add to its energy policy to tap the natural resources in the region.

The Connect Central Asia Policy was first disclosed by the Minister of State for External Affairs E. Ahmed on the occasion of First India-Central Asia dialogue organized on 12-13 June in 2012 in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan for strengthening India's relations and interests in its extended neighbourhood countries in the region. It aimed at increasing India's engagement with the region both bilaterally and multilaterally, which has been limited in the last two decades (Sarma 2012). This also offers chances for Central Asian countries to meet their desire to diversify hydropower and energy export routes, corresponding with India's quest for diversifying energy imports (Kharkongor 2013). CCAP highlights the broader aspects of



India-Central Asia cooperation on several subjects such as exchanges of high level visits to strengthen political relations both bilaterally and multilaterally, to gain strategic and security cooperation via military training, joint research, counterterrorism coordination and close consultation on Afghanistan. It also proposes to bolster engagement with Central Asian partners through the SCO, Eurasian Economic Community and the Custom Union and for this purpose it is already proposing Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement to integrate its markets within Eurasian space. The policy is also looking at the region as a long term partner in energy and natural resources (Das 2012). Apart from this, setting up of civil hospitals and clinics in the medical field to ensure modern health care system in CARs, contributing to higher education system like setting up a Central Asian University in Bishkek to impart world class education in areas like IT, Management, Philosophy and languages, to work on Central Asian e-networking with its hub in India, to encourage construction sector, promote land connectivity through reactivating INSTC route are some of its soft power initiatives in the region (Taraporevala et al. 2014). In addition, through this policy India wants to expand viable banking infrastructure and policy environment which is absent in the region, a major impediment to trade and investment. Finally, to improve air connectivity to promote tourism and to enhance people to people connectivity through mutual exchanges of youth delegations, students, scholars, academics and future leaders of India to sustain our deep engagement are also India's policy concerns (Ahamed 2012).

Such a comprehensive approach would be beneficial for India to strengthen its engagement in the energy sector of the region from a long-duree perspective. A country which is relying on imports for 90 percent of its oil and more than half of its gas and coal requirements, Central Asia is will certainly remain a favourable option for India (Taraporevala et al. 2014). Chabahar port of Iran in the Gulf of Oman and Bandar Abbas port near the Strait of Hormuz are likely to become as potential route for transporting into Afghanistan and through its territory to Central Asia (Ibid 2014) which is part of INSTC route as already have been discussed previously. India has already allocated \$ 100 million to develop Chabahar port in May 2013. The policy outlines the role of India to promote INSTC trade route as it is involved in ongoing discussion with Iran to complete under-construction portion of this route which will result in shorter transit time for trade with Central Asia (Ibid 2014). In



addition, the policy ensures other route other possible routes discussed previously (Das 2012). These all are the concern of CCAP.

Exchanges of high level visits by leaderships from both sides as described in the policy can help in strengthening the cooperation in multiple areas. In addition, joint research programs and exchanges of ideas of scholars on energy, trade and geopolitical issues probably contribute to the research on India-Central Asia's joint ventures in the energy sectors which would provide them a space for decision making regarding energy and security strategy (Ahamed 2012). This policy further emphasizes on People to people connectivity and humanitarian concerns such as opening hospitals and education systems through which they can know about each other needs and win the governments favour (Ahamed 2012). Thus, it is expected that India would increase its cooperation in the region both bilaterally and multilaterally through these soft power initiatives which would prove to be effective tools of its engagement in the region's energy sector.

This policy also outlines the role of India's engagement with Central Asian partners through the SCO, EEC and Custom Union. SCO is more influential multilateral organization in Central Asia. India has already engaged the SCO member states in humanitarian areas which are also covered in its CCAP and would continue to seek to strengthen these through the SCO platform. For achieving goals and objectives of CCAP India is seeking cooperation of Iran and SCO members (Ahamed 2012). It also considers SCO as strategic platform to discuss the challenges related to Afghanistan because stability in Afghanistan which can complete political, economic and security transitions in the years to come and acquire its historical importance as a hub of trade and transit routes during silk route days (Ibid 2012). Moreover, in spite of not a member of SCO, India has strongly endorsed the proposal of Russia creating an SCO energy club that was first articulated in 2007. Further, SCO Development Bank could be a useful vehicle for economic cooperation. SCO Development Bank would be effective tool in promoting South and Central Asian cooperation and exchanges (Anand 2013).

No doubt, realization of this policy can spur the development of Indian engagement in the region. Indian government and business has already started to make contacts with their Central Asian counterparts for enhancing mutual cooperation through this policy framework. Its main focus on cooperation on developing transportation infrastructure



linking India-Central Asia region to facilitate the increase of trade turnover and import of strategic natural resources still remains a needed component which is essential for the growth of Indian economy (Garibov 2013). It is thus expected that this policy would help to revitalize South and Central Asia trade links which can further give boost to energy imports of India from the region (Taraporevala et al. 2014). Finally, it looks impossible to bring energy directly from Central Asia on the face of the current geopolitical realities in South Asia, but CCAP is going to be an effective tool for India in order to make strong footholds in the region, and slowly push its energy agenda effectively. The challenge is to bring the policy into practice in real sense rather than considering it just as a written document.

1.5. PROSPECTS

It is pragmatic to bring stability in Central Asian region which would have a significant impact on the internal security of Russia, India and other neighbouring states which is a big question needs to be addressed in the region. What is the need here is to use potential resources by bringing together the two regions South and Central Asia in the cooperative environments which will be great contribution to regional stability and lasting peace building programmes and help the removing drug smuggling and attacking terrorist groups in the region for which India needs to boost sub-region groups between South and Central Asia as it has did in Southeast Asia Context on the lines of following Look East policy (Roy, 2002).

India has to work out a multipronged strategy to address the energy issue and overcome the crisis it is currently undergoing. There is a need to stabilize the population growth, to make the growing middle class accountable and to enhance trade, cooperation and peace through planning and diplomacy. Steps need to be taken for using energy intelligently and discriminatively. Providing education to the people about the environmental consequences of fossil fuels and about the energy efficiency, and giving more and more emphasis on non-conventional energy resources which have good environmental implications are important here (Roy, 2002). At the same time, strategies to reduce dependency on external supply would only bring long term solutions and India must accelerate its domestic exploration of energy resources and develop sophisticated technologies for the same. Subsidies must be carefully and intelligibly dispensed, alongside putting in place institutional structures to address corruption in the energy sector. There is a need to bring greater cooperation and



coordination in the working of different ministries, particularly those handling different energy sources. Having realized the practical difficulties in transporting energy from Central Asia under the present geopolitical realities, India should adopt pragmatic strategies (Nazemroaya, 2009) and should continue its political dialogues with CARs and other transit countries. A strategy of cooperation rather competition would best suit its interests. India needs to pursue its 'Connect Central Asia Policy' energetically, irrespective of its unimpressive gains so far, to achieve plausible breakthroughs in energy cooperation with CARs.

1.6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, It is very important to mention in relation to India that it needs ensure cooperation with the region thereby by reduce the possibilities of the region to engage into hostile environment against India which must be the first priority of India to achieve its foreign policy initiatives. It is also imperative for India to scrutinize carefully Pakistan's strategic gainings in the region keeping its anti-India feelings in mind. Trade and economic diplomacy must be the focusing base of India.s foreign policy dialogues with the region because business relation can help maintain good relations and deeper cooperation. In the area of security issues, India and Central Asia must be required to contain the fundamental Islamic groups. India and Central Asia need to shake hands on several fronts like anti-terrorism agenda, smuggling, economy development, pipeline geopolitics education improvement, e-connectivity, land reform project, hospital, fraternity, religious understandings etc. are needed to be addressed carefully. Having realized the practical difficulties in connectivity with the Central Asia under the present geopolitical realities, India should adopt pragmatic strategies and should continue its political dialogues with CARs and other transit countries. A strategy of cooperation rather competition/clash would best suit its interests. India needs to pursue its 'Connect Central Asia Policy' energetically, irrespective of its unimpressive gains so far, to achieve plausible breakthroughs in regional, economic, trade and energy cooperation with new states. The policy can play a role of anchor in increasing India's hard and large period planned attention in view of its further relations with Central Asia.



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