

India's 'Connect Central Asia' Policy: Building Cooperative Partnership

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Central Asia has always drawn the attention of regional and extra regional powers because of its abundant rich natural resources, its geographical location as a land bridge between Asia and Europe and its ability to play a role on the world stage. In the last two decades, the Central Asian region has witnessed an unprecedented integration into global economic and political mainstream. The region has successfully expanded its influence in the global energy scene. Despite global financial crisis, the economic outlook remains favourable for the Central Asian countries. According to the November 2012 IMF report, during the period of 2012–2013, an average growth of about five and a half per cent is projected for this region. This positive outlook reflects the benefit of high prices of hydrocarbon resources for exporting countries and the region's increasing relevance for the global energy market.¹

Today, the Central Asian region has emerged as a geopolitical space where numerous regional and major powers are competing to enhance their influence and control the energy resources of the Eurasian region. Given the multidimensional geopolitical interests and positioning of the various powers in the post-Soviet space, India's initiatives in the Central Asian region cannot be analysed in isolation. In the current context, China has emerged as a major player in the region. Its economic and political relations have increased substantially in the past few years. Russia, despite its old links with the Central Asian countries, finds itself giving space to China in Central Asia without compromising on its core interest areas. Despite its lower trade and investment in Central Asia as compared to China, Russia still retains a substantial amount of influence over the regional economies with its deep-rooted security cooperation.² At the same time, the US, which has a major interest in the region, is working towards remodelling and reconstructing its policy towards the Central Asian Republics (CARs) in the new geopolitical reality. It is argued

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by experts like Jeffrey Mankoff, “Central Asia is bound to become less central to U.S. foreign and security policy following the drawdown of forces in Afghanistan, but will remain consequential”.³ All three players – Russia, China and the US have the potential to influence developments in the Eurasian region.

At the same time, regional actors like India, Iran, Turkey and Pakistan are engaging Central Asian countries by developing bilateral partnership with an aim of enhancing economic and political ties. In this jigsaw puzzle, the Central Asian countries find themselves entangled with these regional and extra regional actors, where they have been working towards striking the right balance to gain maximum political and economic gains from each actor while trying to preserve their sovereignty. In such a situation, the CARs are building bilateral strategic partnerships and cooperative arrangements at regional and global levels to address the new security and economic challenges. While countries like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are building partnership based on their own politico-economic strength, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are working closely with Russia while exploring their options of cooperating with other major players as well.

In the context of the new geo-political realities in the Central Asian region, the current article attempts to examine and evaluate various facets of India’s ‘Connect Central Asia’ policy and explores options for India’s future engagement with the region. It argues that to enhance meaningful cooperation with the CARs, India will have to first sustain its current momentum of engagement by effectively implementing the ‘Connect Central Asia’ policy. Second, New Delhi will have to come up with an innovative regional cooperative mechanism to address challenges, which limit its engagement with the region. Most importantly, Central Asia’s own security and economic concerns will need to be taken into consideration while formulating India’s policy towards the region.

India’s Renewed Interest and Growing Engagement with Central Asia

In October 2012, India’s Vice President M. Hamid Ansari articulated his views on India-Central Asia relations by stating, “...the new ground realities in the post-Soviet period called for a redefining of India’s strategic interests in the region”⁴ and argued that India’s primary interest has been stability in the region. Therefore, the primary task of diplomacy has been to build new relationships, and to protect and enhance India’s economic and commercial interests. In this context, so far India has been successful in building a new relationship with this region but is still struggling with the second task of enhancing economic and commercial ties.⁵

After 1991, India has constantly worked towards building strong political ties with all central Asian countries. However, economic and trade linkages with the region have been the most unsatisfactory part of its overall fruitful political relations. While Central Asia continues to be of great strategic significance to India, its engagement with the region has been moderate as compared to Russia, China, and the US. It is not a major but an important player in the region. Existing power politics in South and Central Asia and the lack of a direct land route to the region limit India's ability to play a major role.

During the past few years, New Delhi has stepped up its engagement with the Central Asian Republics with an aim of building a long-term partnership, both bilaterally and collectively. Central Asia is recognised as India's key foreign policy priority and part of its extended neighbourhood. India has now expressed its desire to play an expanded and more meaningful role in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) including its case for a full membership in the organisation.

The high level visits from both sides- Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev's visit to Delhi and President Pratibha Patil's visit to Tajikistan in 2009, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's visit to Kazakhstan in 2011 and Uzbek President Islam Karimov's visit to India in May 2011, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon's visit to India in September 2012, and India's Vice-President Hamid Ansari's visit to Tajikistan in April 2013 and to Uzbekistan in May 2013 followed by External Affairs Minister Salman Khurshid's visit to Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in September 2013 —are all reflective of growing political ties between India and the Central Asian region.

India's political ties can be termed as exceptionally good as compared to its economic relations. Commonalities of interests on regional and International issues bind both India and CARs together. India has Inter-Governmental commissions, and a Joint working group on Counter-terrorism, Textile, IT and Hydrocarbons and Defence Cooperation. There exists Foreign Office Consultations as well. At regional mechanisms, India is a member of the CICA and has observer status in the SCO. New Delhi is now seeking a full membership in the SCO.

Defining India's 'Connect Central Asia' Policy

India has paced up its engagement with the CARs in much more focused ways with a vision to build a long-term cooperative partnership with this region. To realise this goal and cultivate stronger ties with the Eurasian region, New Delhi pronounced in 2012 its new 'Connect Central Asia' policy, which is based on proactive political, economic and people-to-people engagement with Central Asian countries. This is a broad based policy approach, which

includes political, economic and cultural engagement between India and Central Asia. This policy approach is India's vision of the role, which it seeks to play in Central Asia. At the same time, this is also about reconnecting with a region with which India shares a bond of centuries of common history.

The new policy approach was explained by E. Ahmad, Minister of State for External Affairs, in June 2012 in Bishkek during the first India-Central Asia Dialogue, where he said, "India is now looking intently at the region through the framework of its 'Connect Central Asia' policy, which is based on pro-active political, economic and people-to-people engagement with Central Asian Countries, both individually and collectively".⁶In the same year, India's Central Asia policy got a new push during External Affairs Minister, S.M. Krishna's two-day visit to Tajikistan on July 2–3, 2012. This visit could be explained in the context of India's growing interest in cultivating stronger ties with the Eurasian region through its 'Connect Central Asia' policy under the new mantra of the four Cs, namely 'Commerce, Connectivity, Consular and Community'.

S.M. Krishna's visit to Tajikistan was a continuation of India's new policy approach towards the CARs and its readiness to play a pro-active, meaningful and sustained role in the Eurasian region. This was clearly articulated by the minister in his address to the HOM'S conference in Dushanbe where he stated that as the Eurasian region undergoes rapid transition, the time has come for India to evolve a calibrated and co-ordinated response in its engagement with each of the countries in the region to further secure core national interests.

To remain connected with the region and to bring all central Asian countries on the same platform for better understanding, India has also initiated an annual India-Central Asia Dialogue, a Track –II initiative. Two such successful dialogues have already been conducted. The first India-Central Asia dialogue was held in 2012 in Kyrgyzstan and the second in 2013 in Kazakhstan. The objective behind this Track–II India-Central Asia Dialogue is to start a regular annual dialogue forum among academics, scholars, government officials and business representatives from India and the CARs with the aim of providing inputs to governments on both sides.

Explaining India's present policy approach towards Central Asia, an Indian official stated, "Our relationship with Central Asia is based on a unique model of political, economic and development partnership, not driven by an exclusive objective of access to resources".⁷ India's policy towards the region has been marked by an increasingly deep relationship based on political and technical cooperation as a partner. India has shared its experiences and expertise with focus on capacity building and training through its ITEC and other assistance programmes.⁸

Facets of the 'Connect Central Asia' Policy

India's new policy approach is an attempt to augment India's renewed linkages with the entire Eurasian region. Its various facets include enhancing India's engagement in economic, political, strategic fields, in education, connectivity and in the areas of culture and people to people contacts. As a part of its 'connect Central Asia' policy India plans to set up an Indian-Central Asia University in Kyrgyzstan and medical centres. India is looking towards deploying its soft power to consolidate goodwill in all Central Asian countries through IT, culture, networking with young politicians and academia. Various elements of the 'Connect Central Asia' policy are highlighted in Table 1.

Table 1
Elements of the 'Connect Central Asia' Policy

Political Cooperation	Build strong political ties through high-level exchange and interaction between leaders at bilateral and multilateral level.
Economic Cooperation	Develop long term partnership in energy and natural resources; cooperate in production of profitable crops with value addition; participation in construction sector; India to help set up several medium size industries; to help increase trade and investment Indian banks to expand their presence in Central Asia.
Strategic Cooperation	Strengthen strategic and security cooperation with focus on military training, joint research, counterterrorism coordination and close consultations on Afghanistan.
Connectivity with the Region	To address the problem of connectivity work jointly to reactivate the International North South Transport Corridor(INSTC) with focus on
Information Technology	Working on setting up a central Asia e-net work linking all five Central Asian states with its hub in India to provide tele-education and tele-medicine connectivity.
Cooperation in Education	Setting up of a Central Asian University in Bishkek to provide World-class education in areas like IT, Management, Philosophy and languages.
People to People Contact	Exchange between youth and future leaders of India and Central Asia. Greater interaction between scholars, academics and civil society.
Cooperation in Medical Area	Setting up of civil hospitals/clinics in Central Asia.
Cooperation in Regional groupings.	Boost multilateral cooperation through regional institutions like the SCO, Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) and Custom Union.

Source: Keynote Address by MoS Shri E. Ahamed at First India-Central Asia Dialogue, June 12, 2012, India's 'Connect Central Asia' Policy at <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-statements.htm?dtl/19791/-eynote+address+by+MOS+Shri+E+Ahamed+at+First+IndiaCentral+Asia+Dialogue>, -accessed on September 12, 2013.

Seeking Development Partnership with Central Asia: Capacity Building

Given the geographical limitations, India's 'soft power' approach could potentially pave way for an enhanced cooperation and this is clearly being reflected in its 'Connect Central Asia' Policy. The advantages which India enjoys as compared to other major powers in Central Asia because of its historical links, its benign image, its scientific and technological advancement and economic potential offers it an opportunity to reenergise its current relations with the Eurasian region.

Under its development partnership programme, India has embarked on contributing towards capacity building and human resources development with Central Asian countries to bolster its engagement with the region. Today, IT centres of excellence are operational in Tashkent, Ashgabat, Dushanbe and Bishkek, with one in the pipeline in Astana. India has gifted a Fruit Processing Plant in Dushanbe and a Potato Processing Plant in Talas in Kyrgyzstan. Some other significant projects in Central Asia are the computerisation of post offices in Uzbekistan, an Entrepreneurship Development Centre in Tashkent and a Tool Room in Dushanbe. Under its ITEC programme, India allocated 645 slots to Eurasia in 2012–13, out of which 435 were allocated to Central Asian countries. This is the most successful programme and was appreciated by the Central Asian countries. All these initiatives are reflective of India's 'soft power' in the region.

In addition to above initiatives, India is working on a number of flagship projects. It is working on setting up an e-network to connect all five CARs with an aim of delivering tele-education and tele-medicine. As part of increasing air connectivity, since July 20, 2012, the Ministry of Civil Aviation has sanctioned fourteen flights per week for each Central Asian country. In April of this year, the Indian Vice President Mohammad Hamid Ansari embarked on a four-day visit to Tajikistan, primarily to discuss issues of regional security and counterterrorism.⁹

Engaging Central Asia to address the Afghanistan Quagmire

India's new policy approach towards Central Asia needs to be evaluated in the context of uncertainties surrounding the security situation in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region. To ensure that Afghanistan emerges as a commercial bridge between South and Central Asia and to prevent it from becoming the hub of terrorism and extremism is one of India's core national interests. India's current

policy approach towards this region is reflective of its growing concerns about future developments in Afghanistan after the US military drawdown in 2014. This concern is shared by other Central Asian countries as well. India has already stepped up its engagement with the US, Russia, China and regional countries to address the Afghan quagmire.

New Delhi views the Central Asian countries as reliable partners in addressing this problem. In June 2012, during the third Indo-US Strategic Dialogue, India agreed to formal trilateral consultations with the US on Afghanistan. This initiative will enable India and the US to explore opportunities to promote Afghanistan's development in the areas of agriculture, mining, energy, capacity building and infrastructure. India also hosted an international investor's meet on Afghanistan in New Delhi on June 28, 2012, in which more than 270 private sector firms and consultancies from India and Afghanistan besides regional and global partners participated. This is an attempt to help Afghanistan's transition from an economy so far being sustained by foreign aid to one sustained by private investments. This meeting precedes an international meeting of donors to Afghanistan in Tokyo on July 8, 2012. India is contributing in a big way for capacity building in Afghanistan by earmarking more than US \$2 billion in reconstruction assistance as well as by providing security and training. It is also supporting the New Silk Road initiative in the region.

In this context, the Central Asian countries are considered to be of significant importance for India, specifically, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. India has a Joint Working Group Mechanism on Counter-Terrorism with these three countries. However, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan assume significance given the key strategic location that these countries occupy as Afghanistan's neighbours. Tajikistan has worked closely with India along with Russia and Iran in supporting the Northern Alliance against the Taliban regime earlier. Tajikistan is on the same page as India on Afghanistan. Terrorism and extremism are common threats faced by both countries. India and the CARs have agreed repeatedly that without a stable Afghanistan the region cannot be stable.¹⁰

Enhancing Strategic and Defence Partnership with the CARs

India also shares close defence and security relations with the CARs, which helps in cementing the strategic ties between India and the CARs. This element of India's Central Asia policy is considered to be a key area of developing strategic partnership under New Delhi's 'Connect Central Asia' policy. India's

defence and military cooperation can be explained under the following subject headings:

- Military Assistance
- Defence Cooperation Agreements
- Aid of Defence Equipment and Joint Development of Defence Equipment
- Joint Military Exercises
- Exchange of high level visits of Military officials between India and the CARs

The status of cooperation in the abovementioned areas is summarised in Table- 2.

Table 2

Ongoing Defence Cooperation between India and the CARs

Military Assistance	India has upgraded the Ayni airport near Dushanbe, which is fully operational now; gifted mixed military-civilian hospital to Tajikistan.
Defence cooperation Agreements	India has signed a formal defence cooperation only with Tajikistan but has a defence cooperation agreement with all other Central Asian countries.
Aid of Defence Equipment and Joint Developments	India delivered 2MI-8 in 2001 to Kazakhstan; Imports of torpedoes for India from Kazakhstan; In April 2013, two MI-17 military transport helicopters were gifted to Tajikistan; Joint production of transport aircraft with Uzbekistan. All aircrafts have been delivered to India with Kyrgyzstan and India agreeing to co-develop a torpedo testing centre.
Joint Military Exercises	There is ongoing cooperation with Tajikistan.
Exchange of Visits of high Military officials	There are high-level visits taking place between Indian and Central Asian military officials.
Security Dialogue	India does not have security dialogue with any Central Asian country.
Military Training courses	India provides military training to Tajik, Uzbek, Kazak and Kyrgyz military personnel. There is ongoing cooperation in the defence sector, with India providing training to the CARs forces. It is providing slots to a large number of Tajik military cadets and young officers at various defence training institutes in India. This military training is offered free of charge to military personnel.

The aforesaid details of defence cooperation between India and Central Asian countries clearly highlight the centrality of Tajikistan as a major partner of India in the region in addition to close defence cooperation with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. However, Turkmenistan continues to be a weak link in India's defence cooperation as compared to other Central Asian countries. Under its new policy approach, India plans to further strengthen its existing strategic and security cooperation with all the CARs with a focus on military training, joint research, counter-terrorism coordination, and close consultation on Afghanistan.

Building Long-Term Economic Partnership with Central Asia

The other important area of the 'Connect Central Asia' policy, which merits attention is efforts to enhance India's economic ties with the region. There is an effort to boost India's multilateral engagement with the region. India has proposed a Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) to integrate India's market with the unifying Eurasian space.¹¹ While there is greater realisation to enhance trade and economic ties with the region the trade figures between India and Central Asia reflect low level of economic engagement with the CARs. In 2012 Former External Affairs Minister, S.M. Krishna during his address to the eleven Indian heads of the mission in the region asked them to work on converting India's "enormous goodwill" into "tangible and strategic advantages", but the current status of India's trade, which is pegged at a mere US\$ 746 million in 2012-13 as compared to China's US \$ 46 billion and Russia's US \$28 billion indicates the most unsatisfactory part of its overall successful political relation with the region. However, there has been increase in its trade over the years. In 2010-11, its total trade was US \$ 486 million, which increased to 687.68 million in 2011-12 and in 2012-13 it increased to US \$746.3 million. Kazakhstan stands out as the major trading partner of India with US \$ 436.25 million in 2011-12 and 426.22 million in 2012-13 and 298.89 during 2012-13 April-June period (See Table 3, 4, 5 and 6). Lack of connectivity with the region, still remains a major impediment for India to reach out to the region for boosting economic cooperation. To overcome the connectivity hurdle, in 2012, India's external affairs minister suggested, "India needs to explore innovative and practical solutions in consultation with local Government" to address this problem.

Table 3
India's Trade with Central Asia Countries
2004-2013 (In US\$ Million)

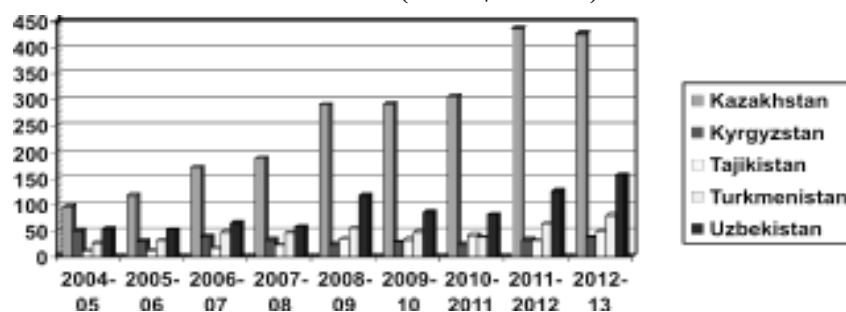
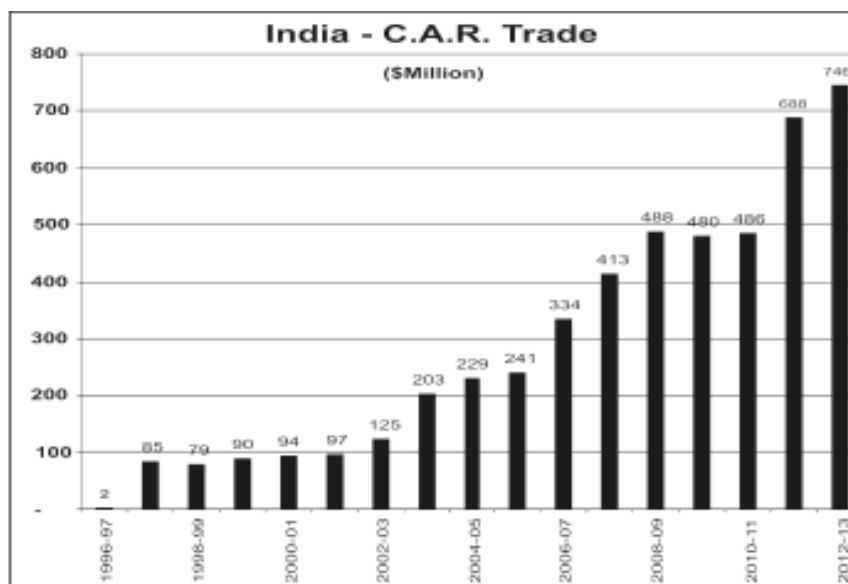


Table 4



Source: Ministry of Commerce, India at <http://commerce.nic.in/eidb/default.asp>

Related to the issue of economic cooperation is the aspect of the relevance of the energy-rich Eurasian region for energy deficit India. One of the key elements of India's 'Connect Central Asia' policy is to develop long-term partnership in energy and natural resources trade. The Caspian region is emerging as a significant source of oil and gas for world markets. According to the U.S. Energy Information Administration, the estimated

gas exports from the region could account for 11 per cent of global gas export sales by 2035. The proven natural gas reserves of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan are estimated at over 450 trillion cubic feet (tcf), which is among the largest in the world.¹² The region's proven oil reserves are estimated to be 48 billion barrels. Kazakhstan possesses 30 billion barrels of proven oil reserves, which is about 2 per cent of world reserves and 66.4 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves—about 1 per cent of world gas reserves. What is important to highlight is that the two major offshore oil fields (Kashagan and Kurmangazy) in Kazakhstan's sector of the Caspian Sea are estimated to have at least 14 billion barrels of recoverable reserves.¹³

So far, India has made some progress in the Turkemistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline and has acquired 25 per cent stake in the Satpayev exploration oil block in the Caspian Sea by signing a commercial agreement between the ONGC Videsh Limited and the Kazakh State Company- KazMunaiGas (KMG), the National Oil Company of Kazakhstan on 16 April 2011. This agreement marks the entry of the Indian company in hydrocarbon rich Kazakhstan. The Satpayev exploration block located in the Kazakhstan sector of the Caspian Sea covers an area of 1482 sq.km. The Satpayev Block is situated in close proximity to major discoveries in the North Caspian Sea. Acquisition, Processing and Interpretation of 1200 LKM of 2D Seismic data have already been completed and location for drilling has been identified. India's share of investment in the project would be about US\$ 113.93 million.¹⁴

In addition to Kazakhstan, Tajikistan occupies a special place in terms of its hydro resources. The country is the second largest producer of hydroelectricity in the Commonwealth of Independent States, after Russia. Its potential, according to official figures, is about 40,000 MW, which is around 4 per cent of the world's hydroelectric potential. According to the official report "Tajikistan's National Strategy for Energy Sector Development 2006–2015", the country is likely to reach a production of 35 billion kwh in 2015. However, it is important to note here that despite this potential, Tajikistan produces only 17 billion Kwh per year and has to import energy from Uzbekistan. The country needs investment in this sector. Russia, Iran and China are already involved in Tajikistan. India is providing help for the Varzob-I Hydro-Power Station. Bilateral cooperation in the hydroelectric power sector is another important issue being discussed between India and Tajikistan. Tajikistan's hydroelectric sector offers great opportunity for government as well as private Indian companies.

Major challenges for India in Central Asia

Despite India's current and past initiatives to increase its relations with the Central Asian countries it has not been able to emerge as a major economic or strategic partner of the Central Asian countries. There are a number of challenges, which limit India's role in reaching out to the Central Asian region. While there is a greater realisation that enhancing economic cooperation is one of the key factors for building a stronger partnership with the region, lack of direct transport linkages and other related factors limit India's economic engagement with the region. Some of the important impediments for India in the CARs are :

- Apprehensions in the private sector about new or unfamiliar markets of Central Asia
- Lack of conversion facility service
- Insufficient infrastructure facilities in the region
- Information gap and language barrier
- Corruption and lack of adequate business/ commerce chambers
- Lack of Financial Institution/Banks
- Visa problems
- Lack of satisfactory surface routes
- Economic and geopolitical interests of regional and extra regional powers
- Security fears and political differences among the countries of the region
- Geographical and economic constraints to build new corridors and revive old routes
- Concerns about the security situation in Afghanistan

Roadmap for India's Future Engagement with the Central Asian region

While India's new 'Connect Central Asia' policy covers all dimensions – Political, Strategic, Economic, Connectivity and people-to-people contact to further boost India's engagement with the Central Asian region, the biggest challenge is to ensure the implementation of suggested projects and proposals and sustain this momentum. Most of the proposals are still in the pipeline and many of them will demand consistent follow up at the highest political level. The effective implementation of various proposals presupposes equal attention

and cooperation from India's Central Asian partners to make the 'Connect Central Asia' policy a success. At this point in time, it is too early to expect quick results from the policy.

At present, the South, Central and West Asian region is exposed to a completely new set of challenges. It has been very rightly pointed out by our leadership that these new developments make a case for India to "evolve a calibrated and co-ordinated response in its engagement with the regional countries to further secure India's core national interests". Current geopolitical developments in the region offer new opportunities for India to revisit its policy towards the Central Asian region. The key elements of India's strategy for future engagement with the region could include following:

- To overcome the challenges faced by India and to build stronger economic, trade, transportation and energy ties with the region, it needs to develop a long-term innovative strategy to enhance its engagement with the region.
- Besides bilateralism, India would need to embrace regionalism as a tool of its engagement with the Eurasian region. India needs to concentrate and support the Central Asian led regional groupings. At the same time, it would have to ensure sustained engagement with the region.
- Work towards greater engagement with Central Asian regional groupings, like the SCO and the CICA. India needs to focus on cooperation in the energy and transportation sector under the SCO mechanism. Creating a working group to examine prospects of cooperation between the CARs and the SARCC would go long way in augmenting cooperation between South and Central Asia.
- Exploring pragmatic cooperation with the key regional players- China, Iran and Pakistan would be fruitful. Develop cooperative engagement to achieve India's interests in the region. In addition, enhance partnership with Russia and the US in Central Asia.
- Focusing on new and innovative ways of economic engagement in the regional context would help greatly. Capacity building in Central Asia should become the key priority area of India's Central Asia policy. India's economic engagement with the region will require the involvement of the private sector in the Central Asian market, which has so far not been viewed by Indian big business houses as a very attractive market. Therefore, a twofold strategy will be required to address this issue. First, the Indian government should facilitate greater interaction between the private sector of India and the Central Asian market forces. Second, Central Asian states should help in creating a more attractive investment

environment for the Indian private sector.

- As discussed earlier that various economic and education projects under the framework of the 'Connect Central Asia' policy will demand a huge financial investment. Therefore, in the long run, around US \$10-15 million should be assigned for this purpose.
- Most importantly, Central Asia's own security and economic concerns would need to be taken into consideration while formulating India's policy towards the region. To develop effective partnership with the regional countries, India would need to factor Central Asian security as a high – priority for its future cooperation with the region. Building comprehensive security partnership with the CARs to address new security challenges in the post 2014 situation will do the countries well.
- An annual security dialogue with all Central Asian countries could be initiated to enhance the cooperation in defence and security arena.
- Adopting a pragmatic approach with focus on various connectivity projects linking South, West and Central Asian region. One could also create a high-level working groups on energy and transport cooperation with the CARs and other regional partners. Setting up of regional funds to invest in various infrastructure projects will help in completing missing links in the existing trade corridors. To make the air-connectivity economically viable, India and the CARs could work to make India the hub for air connectivity not just for traffic between India and the CARs but for reaching out to South and South East Asia.
- To improve India's connectivity and energy cooperation, India would need to play a pro-active role both bilaterally and through regional cooperative mechanisms. In this regard, India could consider factoring both China and Pakistan in addition to cooperating with Russia, Iran, Turkey and the US.

Conclusion

India's renewed interest and increasing desire to play a more active role in Central Asian region through its newly pronounced 'Connect Central Asia' policy can be termed as acceleration of its engagement with the region to build a cooperative partnership. However, the biggest challenge for India is to convert these proposals into reality. The realisation of various initiatives taken by India in the past few years demand not only heavy investment but also long-term sustained implementation of various proposed projects. It is

suggested that active bilateralism combined with innovative regionalism will help India build an inclusive partnership with the Central Asian region. It is important to adopt a strategic approach encompassing elements of strong economic, energy and infrastructure cooperation with the Central Asian region.

Notes

- ¹ World Economic and Financial Surveys, Regional Economic Outlook : Middle East and Central Asia, International Monetary Fund, Washington DC, November 2012, pp.61, 67
- ² World Economic and Financial Surveys, Regional Economic Outlook : Middle East and Central Asia, International Monetary Fund, Washington DC, November 2012, pp.78.
- ³ Jeffrey Mankoff, The United States and Central Asia after 2014, A Report of the CSIS Russia and Eurasian Program, Washington, Centre for Strategic and International Studies, January 2013, pp. V
- ⁴ Inaugural Address by the Hon'ble Vice President of India, Shri M Hamid Anasari at National Seminar on "India and Central Asia: a Perspectives on Bilateral and Regional Cooperation", 17 October 2012, CRRID, Chandigarh, Raspal Malhotra ,Sucha Singh Gill , Neetu Gaur ed., Perspectives on Bilateral and Regional Cooperation South and Central Asia, Centre for Rural and Industrial Development(CRRID), Chandigarh, 2013, p. i
- ⁵ Ibid., pp. ii
- ⁶ Keynote Address by MoS Shri E. Ahamed at First India-Central Asia Dialogue, June 12, 2012, India's 'Connect Central Asia' Policy at <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-statements.htm?dtl/19791/Keynote+address+by+MOS+Shri+E+Ahamed+at+ First+IndiaCentral+Asia+Dialogue>, accessed on September 12, 2013.
- ⁷ Ajay Bisaria, "Connect Central Asia Policy", Raspal Malhotra ,Sucha Singh Gill , Neetu Gaur ed., Perspectives on Bilateral and Regional Cooperation South and Central Asia, Centre for Rural and Industrial Development(CRRID), Chandigarh, 2013, pp. 184.
- ⁸ Keynote Address by MoS Shri E. Ahamed at First India-Central Asia Dialogue, June 12, 2012, India's 'Connect Central Asia' Policy at <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-statements.htm?dtl/19791/Keynote+address+by+MOS+Shri+E+ Ahamed+at+ First+IndiaCentral+Asia+Dialogue>, accessed on September 12, 2013.
- ⁹ "India Boosts Ties in Central Asia", June 24, 2013, at <http://carnegieendowment.org/2013/06/24/india-boosts-ties-in-central-asia/gbso> accessed on September 15, 2013
- ¹⁰ Meena Singh Roy, "SM Krishna's visit to Tajikistan and India's 'Connect Central Asia Policy" July 5, 2012 at http://idsa.in/idsacomments/SMKrishnasVisittoTajikistan_MeenaSRoy_050712, accessed on 24 September 2013
- ¹¹ Ajay Bisaria, "Connect Central Asia Policy", Raspal Malhotra ,Sucha Singh Gill , Neetu Gaur ed., Perspectives on Bilateral and Regional Cooperation South and Central Asia, Centre for Rural and Industrial Development(CRRID), Chandigarh, 2013, pp. 184.

¹² BP Statistical Review of World Energy, June 2010.

¹³ Jim Nichol, Central Asia: Regional Developments and Implications of U.S. Interests, Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, January 9, 2013, pp.39-40

¹⁴ at <http://www.ongcvidesh.com/Assets.aspx?tab=0> accessed on September 12,2013.
