

Ph.D Thesis

New Great Game in Central Asia

Convergence and Divergence among Russia, China and USA



Researcher

Musharaf Iqbal

Reg. No: 67/SS-PHD P&IR/F12

Research Supervisor

Dr. Manzoor Khan Afridi

Associate Professor/ HOD

Department of Politics and International Relations

Faculty of Social Sciences

International Islamic University Islamabad, Pakistan

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DECLARATION

I, Musharaf Iqbal, hereby declare that the work presented here is my original work, except where otherwise I have tried to acknowledge in the text, and is not plagiarized. Moreover this dissertations has not been presented previously to any other institution, or shell be presented for a degree. This work has been carried out and completed at the International Islamic University, Islamabad.

Dated: _____

Musharaf Iqbal
PhD Politics & International Relations
Reg. No. 67-SS/PHD P & IR/F-12

ABSTRACT

Central Asia and Afghanistan has been the hub of international power politics among the big powers. The “Great Game” there came to an end with the disintegration of Soviet Union - creating power vacuum in the region. The big powers rushed to occupy the space so that it may not be occupied by rivals. In this way a competition started among them for different competing interests known as new “Great Game”. Geographic and strategic location, energy resources, market and raw material in the region have been driving forces behind the renovated interests of the big powers and their convergence and divergence in the region’s geopolitics. Through the application of Neo-realist approach, this research has analyzed the significance of the region and competition and cooperation among Russia, China and USA. It has analyzed how big powers interests have converged and diverged in CARs and Afghanistan’s Geo-politics and the logic behind it. The main factors of divergence among the three are related to energy and its transportation routes, market, raw materials, land route between eastern and eastern world, strategic location and its role in bringing changes in the international system and US penetration into CARs and Afghanistan militarily. It has been concluded by stating that what strategies the big powers are applying for attainment, keeping and enhancement of power. The energy resources of the region are considered the means for achieving these exalted interests. It has also been concluded by stating that though the big powers behave aggressively and self-interestedly with each other but they may have a minimum degree of cooperation to deal with shared concerns such as terrorism, separatism, poverty, smuggling, illiteracy and drug and human trafficking. It has been predicted that hot war among them does not seem possible because their interests are mostly connected with the hydrocarbon resources of the region, its infrastructure, market and raw material. In case of war the infrastructure of the energy resources and market would be destroyed and the region would face destabilization. Furthermore, all the big powers are atomic acting as a deterrent among them. Presently, the region is dominated economically by China and politically by Russia and US is struggling to mitigate the influence of Russia and china in the region. Changing geopolitical scenario of the region and shifts in the loyalties and interests of the CARs and Afghanistan may change it. The CARs to materialize its interests are using strategies such as multi-vector approach, balancing and counterbalancing, playing big powers against each other.

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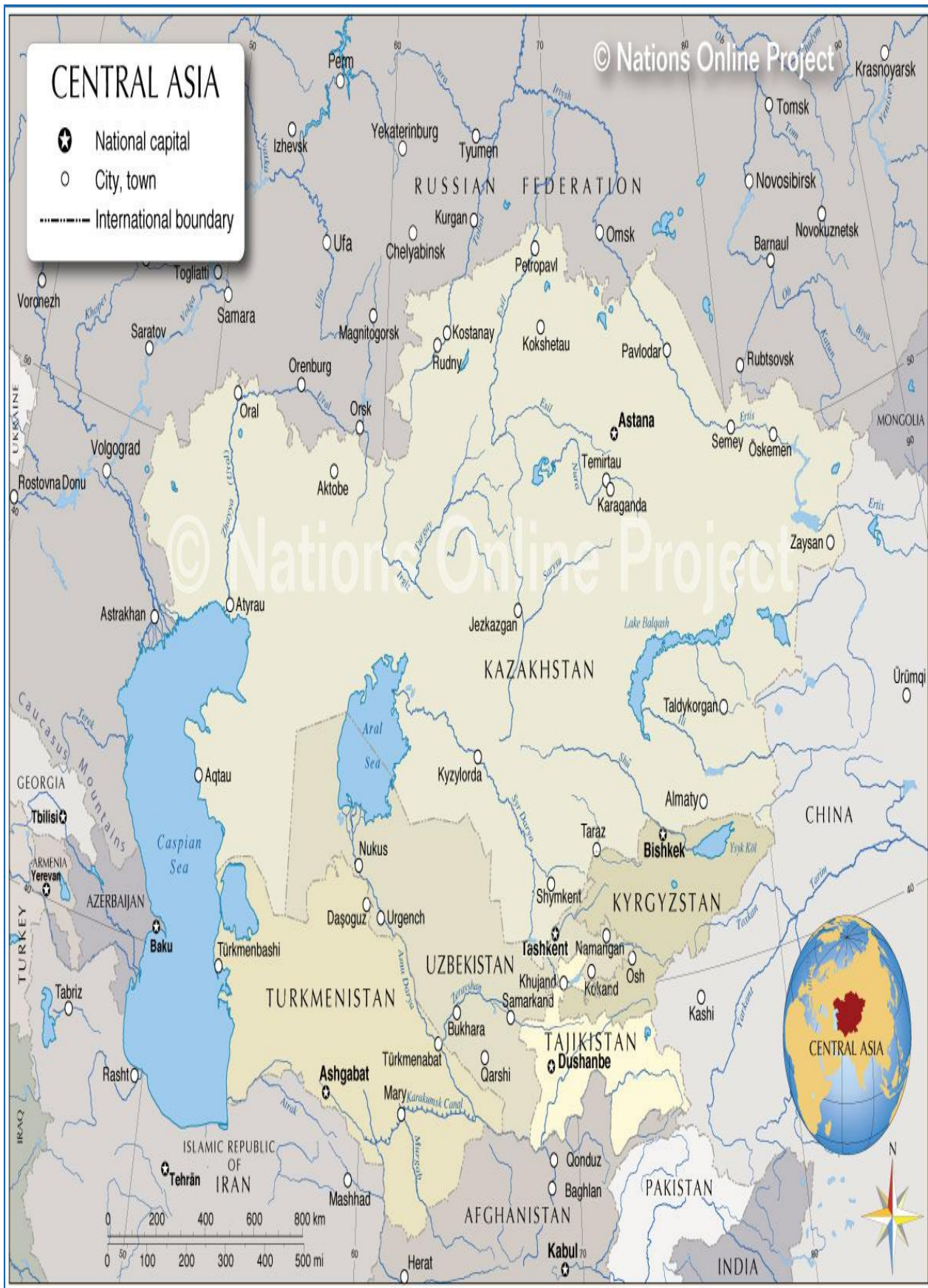
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List of Abbreviation

BCM	Billion Cubic Meter
BTC	Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhen
BTE	Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum
CA	Central Asia
CACO	Central Asian Cooperation Organization
CARs	Central Asian Republics
CASA	Central Asia and South Asia
CIS	Common Wealth of Independent States
CNPC	China National Petroleum Company
CAOP	Central Asian Oil Pipeline
CST	Collective Security Treaty
CSTO	Collective Security Treaty Organization
EEC	Eurasian Economic Community
EEU	Eurasian Economic Union
EU	European Union
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GCA	Greater Central Asia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GUAAM	Georgia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldavia
IPi	Iran- Pakistan- India
KWH	Kilo Watt Hour
LNG	Liquid Natural Gas

NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NPT	Non- Proliferation Treaty
NSS	National Security Strategy
OBOR	One Belt One Road
PLA	Peoples Liberation Army
PRC	Peoples Republic of China
PNAC	Project of New American Century
RMB	Ren Men Bi
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
SU	Soviet Union
TAPI	Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India
TANAP	Trans- Anatolia Natural Gas Pipeline
TRACECA	Transport Corridor Europe - Caucasus
UAE	United Arab Emirates
US	United States
USA	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republic
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction
WW	World War



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Central Asia and Afghanistan is a vast landlocked region, located nearly in the center of Asia. There is no common agreement regarding the exact location of its geographic boundaries. Since ancient times “Silk Road” has been connecting it with the outside world. It provides land route between Eastern and Western parts of the world. Thus, it has been working as a crossroad for the flow of goods, people and ideas among different parts of the world.



The geographic location has great impact on every aspect of human life and so the state. The social, cultural, religious, political, economic, industry and agricultural aspects of a society are greatly influenced by social climate and natural resources of a region. The same is true of

political life, institutions and international relations. The locations of rivers and mountains have clear impacts on political developments of the states throughout the world. The same is true of such geographical conditions as the ratio of rainfall, differences in temperature, the availability of transportation and communication facilities, the location of a state and its neighbors.

The presently known Central Asia is composed of five Muslims dominated Central Asian Republics which came out of Soviet Union when it dissolved in 1991. It is being regarded as a buffer zone for the two neighboring big powers: Russia and China, thus sharing borders with two big players of international politics. It is rich in hydrocarbons, natural gas, black gold, Iron, copper, uranium and other precious minerals. These natural resources, its geographic and strategic location gives immense importance to this region in the modern international politics (Megoran, 2004). This region is land locked and for getting access to international market, it has to depend on any other neighboring state, thus giving it a dependent status. This factor provides an opportunity to the neighboring regional powers Russia and China to manipulate the internal politics of the region.

With the dissolution of Soviet Union, the new energy resources of this region became accessible for the outside world, In the subsequent decade of the dissolution of Soviet Union, long struggle and competition for control and domination of the region's energy resources, its transportation routes, market and raw materials started among the big powers commonly called the new "Great Game" (Edwards 2003).

The initial competitors of this game were Russia and US but later on other players like China, European Union, Pakistan, India and Turkey also got involved in this game for power, power in the shape of CARs and Afghanistan's economic opportunities, energy resources its geographic and strategic location (Standish, 2014).

The geo-strategic value of the region is no doubt increasing in the present day world politics as the demand of energy resources and access to markets are increasing with each passing day due to increase in population and industries, so increasing the intensity of the game. However, its importance is varied for Russia, China, and US according to their relative economic, political, security and strategic interests.

It is certain that the energy reserves of the Middle East are not sufficient to meet the increasing energy demands of the world, particularly the West, its major consumers. Exploring new hydrocarbons reserves is of utmost importance, therefore, the world particularly the big powers:

Russia, China and U.S. have focused on Central Asian and Afghanistan's hydrocarbon reserve. Presently, this region is under the monopoly of Russia with China its ally and the US as its big rival in the region, designing strategies and diplomatic techniques to diminish each other's influence in the region.

Its importance is inherent in its unique geographic and strategic location and huge economic potential. Therefore, it has become the hub of economic competition among the world states, particularly the big powers Russia, China and US (Myant & Drahokoupil, 2011). This region is attractive for trade and investment as its consumption is more than its production. Strategically, it is important because it is located at the place where the three continents of Asia, Europe and Africa intersect with each other and is surrounded by Russia, China and India, the big economies, investing and competing for leading role in the region. While Afghanistan's geographic location has the potential to act as a bridge between South Asia, East Asia and Central Asia. Middle East

Kazakhstan is the sixth largest in the world in terms of natural resources of energy. It has the highest oil resources of thirty billion barrels while Azerbaijan is the second highest in the region with seven billion barrels oil reserves. Turkmen Republic with 7.4 trillion cubic meters gas reserves is the fourth largest in terms of natural gas resources in the world. The Republic of Kazakhstan has gas reserve of 2.41 trillion cubic meters. It is rich in iron and steel resources. Uzbekistan has 1.84% of the world gas reserves. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan which are deficit in natural gas and oil reserves are rich in water resources producing huge amount of hydropower energy. Kyrgyzstan has hydropower energy potential of about 163 billion kilo watt hour per year. The Republic of Kyrgyzstan is the eighth largest in the goldmine in the world (Dorian, 2006). The Republic of Tajikistan has abundance of aluminum. Similarly, Afghanistan has a lot of natural resources such as iron, copper, precious metals, marbles, gemstones, lithium, and tapped hydrocarbons as well. The most important untapped metals are iron and copper. The total volume of copper resources is about 60 million metric tons. Afghanistan has the world's 2nd largest copper deposits in its logar province. These deposits are estimated to be worth \$1-3 trillion. These natural resources along with strategic location have made this region a focus of big powers since long. Such vast opportunities of trade and huge natural resources, conducive for power and capabilities have attracted the big powers like Russia, China and US, constantly trying to outdo each other from the region. Access to this region means enhancement of exports and investment

in energy sector having great prospects for return, and access to cheap energy resources of oil, gas and hydropower energy (Kleveman, 2004). The big powers fear each other in the anarchic international system so they pursue power. CARs and Afghanistan have immense economic potential, in the shape of its geographic and strategic location, natural resources, market and raw material. These potential are conducive for the enhancement of power of the state controlling it. This concept has led them towards the region and the concept of the gain of one state is the loss of its rival has led the big powers towards competition in the region, making their interests competing and divergent.

The increasing importance of the region has attracted the big three powers: Russia, China and United States towards it to enhance its power and capabilities to outdo each other. They are competing in the region for future world order at the behest of the region's energy and natural resources, its market and raw materials (Lima & Venables, 2001). China and Russia are not happy with the prevailing international system of uni-polarity and want to replace it with multi-polarity while US wants to maintain the existing international system, CARs and Afghanistan can play important role in it, particularly its economic opportunities and geostrategic location. The result of this competition among these powers will enable the victorious power to reshape the future World Order.

Historically, Central Asia has been part of the Soviet Union. During this period, the oil and gas pipelines stretching from this region were dominated by Russia and it remained so even after its independence. Construction of energy transportation pipelines is a very complex phenomenon, not financially, but due to international geostrategic constraints and competition among the big powers. Russia still has strong cultural, economic and political relations with the region's states. The present pipeline passing through the Caspian Sea which is under the control of Russia is not enough for supplying the growing Central Asian energy resources to international market. (Tavana, Pirdashti, Kennedy, Belaud, & Behzadian, 2012). China and US want to diversify energy transportation routes thereby releasing the CARs energy transportation supply routes from Russian monopoly. Russia and CARs having huge energy resources are competing for market.

The construction of alternative pipeline may reduce the Russian monopoly over Central Asian energy transportation routes and its influence in the region. The cost analysis is not the hurdle in the way of the construction of alternate pipeline network; it is rather the conflicting geopolitical

interests of the big powers. The only way of its realization is to reduce the Russian influence in the region. Counterbalancing each other influence in the region, fearing that the rivals might not get enough power at the behest CARs and Afghanistan's economic opportunities, energy and geostrategic location to challenge its interests in the region and internationally, is in fact the logic behind the new "Great Game" among the big powers, Russia, China and US. This competition is not limited to energy resources but rather the pursuance of economic and political influence in the region leading to strategic convergences and divergences among Russia, China and US.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Central Asia and Afghanistan, the hub of natural resources, has been the battleground of international power politics among the big powers Russia, China and US since long. For influence there, the Russian and British Empires indulged in the "Great Game". However, it ended with the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991. So long this region was a part of Soviet Union, the second super power; it was not possible for any outside power to interfere, particularly, in its energy resources. When it got independence from the Soviet Union, leaving vacuum, the big powers: Russia, China and US rushed towards it and a sort of strategic competition started among them called the new "Great Game", with multi actors, particularly the big powers for different objectives and interests (D. L. Smith, 1996). The interests of these powers have been strategically convergent and divergent among themselves on the basis of their relative interests, influence and control over the region's natural resources. Russia wants to get back the region into her fold and to prevent the hegemony of other states, particularly the US and China. China is hopeful to use Central Asia and Afghanistan as a catalyst to fuel its rapidly growing economy, revive the "Silk Road" for international trade and accessibility to the hydrocarbon resources of Central Asia and Afghanistan its market and raw materials. The United States wants to lock Cold War victory against Russia, the development of free market economy and establishment of liberal Western democracy in the region in opposition to Russia and China because this may displace the Pro-Russia semi-authoritarian regimes in the region. The big powers are competing among themselves for influence in Central Asia and Afghanistan so that its rivals may not get enough power at the behest of Central Asian and Afghanistan's energy resources, market, raw materials and its geostrategic location to offer threat to its interests in CARs and Afghanistan in particular and in international politics in general. The question which

arises here is what are the economic, political and security interests of Russia, China and United States and the factors of convergence and divergence among them in the Central Asia and Afghanistan's geo-politics?

1.2 Objectives of the Research

This research aims:

- ❖ To highlight the geo-strategic, geo-economic and geo-political importance of Central Asia and Afghanistan in regional and international politics.
- ❖ To investigate the economic, political and security interests of big powers in the Central Asia and Afghanistan.
- ❖ To put the global power politics in context for big powers' policies towards Central Asia and Afghanistan.
- ❖ To underscore the conditions inviting the US, Chinese and Russian role in CARs and Afghanistan.
- ❖ To dig out the factors and levels of convergences and divergences among Russia, China and US in the region.
- ❖ To investigate the strategies and policies of Russia and China to cope with US interests in the region.
- ❖ To bring into limelight the response of Central Asian Republics to the growing interests of the big powers in the region
- ❖ To forecast the expected consequences of this rivalry and competition among the big powers: Russia, China and US in the region's geo-politics.
- ❖ To cover the maximum aspects of "the New Great Game", stakeholders, factors, determinants, current status and possible future with implications.

1.3 Research Questions

Main Question:

What are the economic, political and security interests of Russia, China and US and the factors of convergence and divergence among them in the geopolitics of Central Asia?

Sub Questions:

1. Why Central Asia has become a battlefield for competition of big powers?
2. What are Russia's economic, political and security interests in Central Asia and its convergences and divergences with China?
3. What are China's economic, political and security interests in Central Asia and its convergences and divergences with United States?
4. What are United States economic, political and security interests in Central Asia and its convergences and divergences with Russia?
5. How Russia and China are managing to cope with US interests in Central Asia ?
6. How Central Asian Republics are maximizing its profits in the geopolitics of the region?
7. Where this rivalry and competition will lead Russia, China and United States?

1.4 Significance of the Research:

Central Asia and Afghanistan is an important region of the world due to its geographic location, linking Eastern and Western world, and its rich natural resources and strategic location encircled by big and atomic powers such as Russia, China Pakistan and the perceived atomic powers Korea and Iran. This importance has made it the hub of power politics among the big powers since long. The new "Great Game" there warrants the special attention to know the ongoing developments and trends in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan to review and reframe foreign policy decisions accordingly.

Pakistan being an energy hungry state and its historical, geographical, ideological and political connectivity with CARs and Afghanistan may not remain aloof from its geo-political developments. The country after becoming full SCO member has become an integral part of this game, making it imperative for the leadership of Pakistan to watch curiously each and every shift and development in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan. This research will fulfill the same need for the policymakers especially of Pakistan, Russia, China, US and CARs with rest of the world in general to comprehend the situation from every angle and reframe their policies in response.

1.5 Delimitations of the Study

At the inception, it should be noted that this PhD thesis has focused on a phenomenon which is extremely wide and full of complexities and uncertainties. The geopolitical situation in the region is fast changing so the position of affairs gets changed not every hour, but every minute. Mapping the region accurately is rather cumbersome job. In this respect, the assertion is that as the geographical boundaries of the Central Asian region have shifted throughout history, so have its meanings and the ways in which it may be treated. Because of this dynamicity of Central Asia and Afghanistan's geopolitics, any study related to the region's geopolitics remains a very difficult task and shall not be devoid of shortcomings and limitations. This thesis will focus only on the five energy rich, Muslims dominated Republics: Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan and the role of Russia, China and US and their economic, political and security interests and convergences and divergences among them in the geopolitics of the region related to these interests. A vital limitation concerned is lack of space, and taking overall complexities of the topic of inquiry stretching far beyond that of just an academic paper with limited words. The author has to reduce the substantial number of words to keep it within some limits. Secondly, it deals with geopolitics, a concept which is new in international politics and in academic circles. It has remained relatively underdeveloped and has not been applied in any similar context before. However, it is hoped that the conclusions and the limitations of this study will provide groundwork for new ideas and likely opportunities for future research projects that might be needed in relation to the theme of the current studies.

1.6 Limitations of Research

- New 'Great Game' is a theme which is wide and varied. So it demands a lot of resources. Therefore, lack of reasonable funding has been one of its limitations.
- Literature written in the native languages of Russia, China and CARs has been a bearer in understanding the real views of the local people regarding the new "Great Game" and the role of big powers in the region.
- New "Great Game" and the big powers is a vast topic. So research on it needs a lot of time. The time limitation has made it a little bit difficult to explore and analyze it thoroughly and comprehensively.

1.7 Operational Definitions of Major Terms

Convergence: Convergence means the overlapping of key objectives and interests concerning long term developments in the world politics providing basis for greater cooperation between two or more states.

Divergence: Divergence is just the opposite of convergence.

Geo-politics: It refers to the study of geographic influences on power relationships in regional and international politics.

Geo-strategy: It refers to the combination of geo-political and strategic factors characterizing a particular geographic region.

Great Game: It means the interactions, rivalry, competition, convergence and divergence of regional and global interests of Russian and British empires in the geo-politics of Central Asia.

New Great Game: it refers to the interactions, rivalries, divergences and convergences of regional and global interests of Russia, China and US in the geo-politics of Central Asia and Afghanistan.

1.8 Review of Literature

The previous works on the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan have taken either one aspect or the other aspect of the geopolitics of the region. There has not been any comprehensive document regarding central Asia and Afghanistan's geopolitics encompassing most of the aspects of the new "Great Game". Most of the academic literature has been produced by the US perspective in post communist background. Majority of the authors have described the bilateral relation of big power in Central Asia and Afghanistan. There has not been any comprehensive document encompassing most of the aspects of the the "New Great Game" of the Central Asia and Afghanistan giving the due space for their stance to all the stakeholders especially CARs. Particularly, CARs response to big powers strategies and policies in the region was neglected. The need was felt of a comprehensive study regarding geopolitics of the region encompassing most of its aspects such as importance of Central Asia and Afghanistan in international politics, how big powers were attracted towards it? What role they have been playing in it? What are their competing interests and finally their convergences and divergences creating situation of cooperation and competition? The troika of big powers, the major stakeholders in Central Asia

and Afghanistan, and CARs needed the equi-focused discussion and this was the drive for the study.

The basic strategic interest of US in the region is the development of independent democratic and stable Central Asia and Afghanistan, committed to reforms in economic and political sectors essential for modern societies and its integration with the world economic market (J Nichol, 2014).

After the dissolution of Soviet Union in 1991, Central Asia again emerged as a significant energy rich geo-political prize. The resulting outcome was called as new “Great Game” in the region (Serikbayeva, 2013). Lynn Pascoe Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Europe and Asia said that the driving force behind US interests in Central Asia is sustaining anti-monopoly, while the rationale behind Russia and China strategic interests in the region is based on monopolistic attitude.

The United States asserts that Central Asia and Afghanistan should not become the battleground for big Powers competition connected with blocks and alliances, as it reduces regional cooperation and influences the free exercise of sovereignty. Russia wants to have absolute authority over the natural resources of Central Asia and Afghanistan (S. Blank, 2008). It has exerted pressure upon Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Azerbaijan not to support the construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyphan pipeline or the pipeline construction initiative under the Caspian Sea. Russia does not want any Central Asian Republics to make an alliance with United States or any other Western country in order to have complete grip over the region. It has formed CSTO (Collective Security Treaty Organization) with Central Asian Republics to restrict them aligning with any member of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) (SHEN, 2011). A leading international relations scholar, Guo, Xuetao referred to this area as, where the effects of great powers competition and geopolitics can be seen vividly than anywhere else (Xuetao, 2006).

The aim of CSTO has been explained very clearly by the Russian Defense Minister as the countries of the region are members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization and if the countries of the region are making a decision about hosting new bases on their territory, they should take into account the interests of Russia and consult with other member states (Mowchan, 2009).

Ivanovo in 2003 claimed the right to intervene in the internal affairs of the Central Asian Republics if they want any change in their constitutions. If deviated, they may resort to military

consideration. The CSTO also aims to legalize stationing Russian military forces in the Central Asian Republics.

The interests of China in Central Asia and Afghanistan are based on its security threats from the neighboring unstable Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan and its proximity to the region. The internal situation in the CARs and Afghanistan may have direct effects on China. Therefore, stability in the CARs and Afghanistan is of vital importance to China like Russia (S. Blank, 1995).

The big powers are competing with each others for getting access to energy-rich Central Asia and natural resources rich Afghanistan. The European Union and India have limited influence in the region, so they are unable to achieve their national interests of trade enhancement and access to hydro-carbon resources of the region (Lala).

China's prime interest in the CARs and Afghanistan has been its natural and energy resources. In 1997, China made gas agreement with Turkmenistan. Simultaneously Russia made an agreement with Turkmenistan to pass gas pipeline from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan through Russia to Europe. This may disturb the relations between the two strategic partners in the geopolitics of CARs. The sublime strategic interests of pushing back US from the region have kept them intact (Kurecic, 2010).

After the collapse of Soviet Union and the emergence of five independent CARs, US expected that the region would be dominated by Iran. This expectation proved false rather Russia dominated it. With this, a complex multi state strategic rivalry started to influence and control the region politically and economically, the destiny of the region, trade and its natural resources. The cause of disagreement among the big rivals is the sustained efforts on part of Russia to dominate the region. Russia, wants reintegration of the CARs on the line of former United Soviet Socialist Republics. The Russian forces entered Tajikistan on the plea of civil war stationed there permanently working as in effective tool of Russian policy in Central Asia. The Russian policymakers are of the view that with the help of economic techniques, the Central Asian Republics may be forced to reintegrate with Russia and on the other hand resent any other state attempt to play the same role (S. Blank, 2008).

The European Union came late to the region's energy resources. Therefore, the European Union and Central Asia energy agenda moved slowly (Petersen & Barysch, 2011). Absence of political cooperation among the energy competitors is making energy and economic relations in the

Central Asian region uncertain for them. Germany is the only European state that has diplomatic ties with all of the five Central Asian Republics (Youngs, 2007).

Due to instability and security situation in the Central Asian region China took the initiative of founding Shanghai Five in 1996 with Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It was later on transformed into SCO in 2001 after US military intervention into the region. They signed several treaties for confidence building among themselves. This rapprochement between the two regional powers Russia and China was largely driven by post cold war international system dominated by US. This explains the counter measures among the big powers Russia, China and US in the geopolitics of Central Asia and their conflicting interties in the region (Arthur, 2013).

At the end of cold war US and China were not perceived to be competitors. Beijing's top trade destination has been United States. Gradually, the pattern changed in the post cold war era when US realized that China is rapidly rising economically. It thought that if China's economic rise is not blocked it would reach to the level where it would be in a position to challenge US international status. This led them towards competition in the geopolitics of Central Asian Republics. In these changing circumstances US shifted its focus from Europe towards East Asia (Beenish, 2013).

The main factor of divergence between Russia and China is the sponsorship and recognition of the new independent states of Abkhazia and Ossetia after its dismemberment from Georgia in 2008, and China refusal of it along with other SCO members. The other factor is the construction of gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to China indicating a blow at Russia's monopoly of the Central Asian's natural resources. The third factor of strategic divergence between Russia and China is the Russian's claim of the right of intervention in the internal affairs of the Central Asian Republics on behalf of Russia's Diaspora in it under article 51 of United Nation charter, to which China is against here the writer has missed to clarify its implications for China and the Central Asian states (Gayoso, 2009).

The United States with proven oil reserves of 30.9 billion barrels and 8.5 trillion cubic meters natural gas has greater strategic and political interests in the region (Serikbayeva, 2013).

The first factor of convergence between China and Russia is the need to counter balance the United States superiority in international politics, presently being dominated by it. Both China and Russia want to have multi-polar world. The second factor of strategic convergence between them is United States assertion of democracy and liberal values in the Central Asian Republics

thereby undermining the political systems of China and Russia. No doubt that these factors are bringing Russia and China strategically closer to each other in international politics but the writer has not presented its complete picture i.e. the implications of strengthening democracy in Central Asia on the domestic politics of China, Russia and the Central Asian Republics. It has not mentioned why China want to strategically align with Russia than with any other state of the region. This article only represents the Chinese point of view (Ong, 2009).

The United States Ambassador to Azerbaijan, “Richard Morningstar” summed up the United States interests in the region as, “the US has wanted to make sure that Caspian resources be available for development by United States companies and business interests for friendly countries”. He while referring to Turkey and its enhanced engagements in Central Asia is helping to ensure diversification of energy resources supply routes (Hu & Cheng, 2008).

The strategic convergence between Russia and China is fuelled by its shared interests in the region and their common desire for creating a Multi-Polar world and the greater role of United Nations in the international affairs. Both powers had the same standoff regarding war on terror, NPT, (Non Proliferation Treaty) and international conflict management. He also mentions reciprocal apprehension among Russia and China in their strategic relations in Central Asia. These are increased Russian economic ties with the west, an apprehension for China and its desire of trade routes through Gawadar (Pakistan) to Central Asia via Western world an apprehension for Russia. This article is rather good attempt but not at all comprehensive. He has missed some important things like Central Asian Republics response to the interests of the great powers in the region and the areas of strategic convergence between Russia and China on one side and the United States on the other(Carlson, 2007).

The prime interest of United States in the Central Asian energy sector is that Russia may not have monopoly on the energy transportation routes, instead of that, it should not pass through Iran, a dangerous land. Morningstar writes that China has increased influence in the region’s energy sector and it is difficult for the United States to counterbalance it in the Central Asian Republics (Belkin, Nichol, & Woehrel, 2013).

The United States war on terror and its political economic penetration in Central Asian Republics and its permanent stationing of troops there had transformed the dynamics of the strategic competition among the big players of the world politics. Initially, it brought together Russia, China and United States closer to each other but the subsequent bilateral relations and

agreements of United States with Central Asian Republics generating apprehension for Russia and China about the United States strategic role in the Central Asian states, weakening the role of SCO and Russia influence in the region. This article is one of the commendable efforts by the writer but it has focused only on the Geopolitical situation of Central Asia after 9/11 incident and the subsequent war on terror and its implications for China's foreign policy in Central Asia. He has missed the Central Asian Republics response to the US penetration in the region. It is not comprehensive encompassing all the areas related to the strategic competition particularly the factors of strategic convergence and divergence among the big powers Russia, China and United States(Clarke, 2013).The focus of United States in the region has diverted towards the bordering states of Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan has been important for United States allies in its war against terrorism and extremism (Fatima & Zafar, 2014).

The Central Asian states got prominence after the disintegration of United Soviet Socialist Republics thereby diminishing Russia's influence in the region providing an opportunity for other states to exploit Central Asian natural resources and the Central Asian Republics to expand its relations with the outside world, diverting the attention of the big powers towards the region. The Central Asian Republics in order to keep its independence may cooperate with each other and avoid dependence on Russia. In the last, he states that the strategic rivalry among the big powers in Central Asia is not a good omen for international community(Dinara Kaliyeva, 2004).

The Russian and Chinese security is linked with the stability in the region. In view of the European interests in the region and United States war against terrorism in Afghanistan is increasing tension between Russia and China(Peyrouse, Boonstra, & Laruelle, 2012).

The United States being the major consumer of oil in the world is in search of diversified energy supplies and Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan being the major oil producing countries has become United States focus of attention. He argues that the oil consumption is increasing with each passing day. This increase in the oil consumption brought radical change in the US oil policy diverting United States attention towards Central Asian Republics. The change in United States oil policy is for the control of oil deposits of the region(Goel, 2004). The other is less consumption of the producers and more reserve oil for export. The Central Asian Republics lack capital and technology to explore natural resources providing opportunities for United States investment in the development of oil fields via huge return. Geo-strategically, United States wants to coordinate with Central Asian Republics to explore and develop oil and gas fields

thereby boasting the economy of these states and bringing them out of the Russian influence. In this article, the writer has mentioned a single factor of strategic divergence between Russia and United States leaving aside its convergence. He has neglected the third important player of the geopolitics of Central Asia, the China playing active role in the New Great Game and strategic competition of Central Asia(Kubicek, 2013).

Central Asia became prominent since independence from the United Soviet Socialist Republics in 1991. After independence, the Central Asian Republics, particularly the Caspian region states explored the oil and gas fields with the cooperation of the Western companies. These developments diverted the attention of the big powers towards this region, particularly Russia, China and United States. However, the United States was not much interested in it in the beginning - acknowledging the Russia's domination but the war in Chechnya brought a radical change in its foreign policy regarding the Caspian region. This war manifested the military might and offensive potential of the Russia being a threat to the interests of the United States in the region and the world politics. This finally led the United States to declare Caspian region vital for United States national interests thereby diverging the two big players of the international politics. The writer has mentioned only one factor of divergence neglecting the others. He has written nothing about the convergence between them. He has also neglected the third important player of the rivalry and competition in Central Asia(Cornell, 1999).

The foreign policy of the United States during the cold war was the containment of United Soviet Socialist Republics but with the fall off it in 1991, it changed from containment to the prevention of re-emergence of United Soviet Socialist Republics. He mentions that United States attacked on Afghanistan for eradication of terrorism and its sanctuaries there and its neighboring areas and the control of Central Asia's natural resources so that it may not go to the hands of Russia and China completely thereby challenging the United States strategic interests in the world politics. It is noteworthy that at present, the natural resources of Central Asia are fuelling the Chinese economy immensely. The article, no doubt, has made good efforts, but it fails to cover all aspects as the writer has taken only one aspect of strategic divergence among China and United States leaving aside the factors of convergence among them (Fallon, 2013).

China's president announced in 2013 belt and road initiative. It will connect, if materialized, china with Europe through Central Asia. This initiative is composed of 100 large and small scale projects including rails, roads, communication links, pipelines, industrial zones etc. this has the

potential of increasing china's influence in the world in general and Central Asia in particular at the expense of its rival, US. Correspondingly US announced "Asia Pivot" strategy to counterbalance it (Fanny, 2018).

From this literature review, it can be concluded that a lot of work has been done on the geopolitics of Central Asia but none of them is comprehensive. In short, there have been a number of valuable studies about the newly emerging strategic competition among Russia, China and United States in Central Asia. Some of them have focused on a number of different players and their strategic interests, while others evaluated more specific engagements in the energy sector. However, no academic work yet provides in-depth analysis of this ongoing convergence, divergence and strategic rivalry and competition among the great powers and their regional rivalry in terms of their material capabilities, comprehensively analyzing their economic, political, and military engagements in the Central Asian region. This PhD thesis aims to fill that gap by conducting a systemic comparison of the changes in Russia, China and United States relative power positions and engagement in Central Asian geo-politics.

1.9 Research Methodology

This research is qualitative exploratory in nature so the qualitative methods of research such as investigation and observation of the academic documentaries, newspapers, academic-works, official documents, articles and books related to Central Asian geopolitics with scrutiny of empirical evidence has been applied. Theoretical analysis has been used to purview through practical actions to ascertain the real agenda of great powers instead of their popular rhetoric. It has descriptive-analytical format. This study has been conducted on two levels of analysis.

- State level analysis: The focus of this analysis is on internal and domestic factors, interests, internal conditions of the state and the related elements that impact and reshapes the foreign policies of Russia, China and the United States towards Central Asian Republics. similarly, Internal conditions of Central Asian Republics' inviting big powers or creating space for big powers' role and CARs response to it have also been studied to analyze all factors in the broader context.
- System level analysis: This level has focused on external or global factors pushing big powers for their role and affecting relations among them in Central Asia. The external

factors include post cold war international order which shapes and reshapes the relations among big powers in Central Asia.

Primary and secondary sources of data have been used. The primary sources which have been widely used in this study include policy proclamation, statements, speeches and interviews of political and military leadership to collect the first hand information regarding “New Great Game” in Central Asia. The secondary sources comprised of books, articles and materials related to the topic written by scholars at home and abroad.

1.10 Chapter Organizations

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter contains the whole framework of the research including introduction of the topic, statement of problem, hypothesis, and objectives of the research, research questions, chapter organization and theoretical framework.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Framework

In this chapter, the role of the big powers in the geopolitics of Central Asia has been analyzed neo-realist perspective. The perspective has been applied in the understudy research to evaluate and understand the geopolitics of Central Asia and the role of big powers therein. According to Neo-realism or structural realism theory of international relations, a uni-polar international system is inherently unstable and the emergence of sole super power may compel other states to collectively oppose it. According to neo-realists, the states are always power hungry, seeking balance of power leading to equilibrium. Neo-realists further argue that international structure is anarchic in nature and survival in international anarchic system motivates states to behave in a way that creates balance of power. Deviations from balance of power activate countervailing forces to re-establish it. In this way, uni-polar super power is a danger to it (Waltz, 1997).

Chapter 3: Importance of Central Asia in International Politics

This chapter discusses in detail the geostrategic, geo-economics and geopolitical importance of Central Asia.

Chapter 4: United States Economic, Political and Security Interests in Central Asia and its convergence and divergence with Russia.

In this chapter, the US interests and objectives and its rivalries and cooperation with Russia and China in the geopolitics of Central Asia has been explored and analyzed.

Chapter 5: Russia's Economic, political and security Interests in Central Asia and its convergence and divergence with China.

This chapter explores and analyses the Russia's interests and objectives and its rivalry and competition with United States in the geopolitics of Central Asia.

Chapter 6: China's economic, political and security Interests in Central Asia and its convergence and divergence with United States.

In this chapter, the China's interests and objectives and its rivalry and competition with United States in the geopolitics of Central Asia explored and analyzed.

Chapter 7: Russia and China strategies to cope with US interests in Central Asia

This chapter describes and analyses the strategies of Russia and China, collective and individual, to tickle with US interests in the geopolitics of the region.

Chapter 8: Central Asian Republics Strategies for the Maximization of its Profits in the Geopolitics of the region

This chapter explores and analyses the Central Asian Republics strategies.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAME WORK

2.1 Introduction

Theories provide foundation for the analyses and evaluation of international affairs. Intelligent decisions are not possible without following a particular theory as it gives insights for the analyses of any international phenomenon and designing responses to it. Its application provides help in evaluating relations among the states and the logic behind it and to predict about its future.

Neo-realism is one of the important among these theories. It has close relevance with the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan and the interaction among big powers, Russia, China and USA. It took birth from some simple assumptions, seeking to explain how states particularly the most powerful states behave and how do they interact with one another in international politics (Nye Jr, 1997). It watches the relations among states through the prism of reality. In this dissertation, the neo-realism/structural realism has applied to analyze and evaluate the political, economic and strategic role of Russia, China and US in the geopolitics of CARs and Afghanistan and their conflicts and cooperation (Agnew & Crobridge, 2002).

Neo-realism is one of the established theoretical approaches to the study of international relations. It is a complex and rich-tradition of thoughts. It analyses international politics as it is. It presents systemic level analysis of international relations and the prevailing international system is regarded central to international affairs. International power structure is said to be an indicative of states behaviors. Most of the scholars of international politics are of the opinion that the future international power structure is closely linked with influence in Central Asia and Afghanistan (Adler, 1991). This international power structure shapes the relations among the states of the world. In this way, according to neo-realists, the structure of international system substitute power and it is the central factor of analysis.

Neo-realism asserts that there is anarchy in international system, as there is no world government having the authority to keep the states within some limits or an international institution having authority of designing patterns for interactions among states of the world in international politics. Neo-realism is also known as structuralism as it is concerned with international power structure.

This theory implies that global power structure determine the regional power structure while the regional power structure interact to create strategic environment for the weaker states. Hegemonic super power US intends to counter China and Russia's outward expansion towards Central Asia and Afghanistan while China and Russia want to limit the US influence there. Sino-Russian cooperation to compete with US determines the geo-strategic environment in Central Asia and Afghanistan known as the new "Great Game". In such a situation the states are left to self help for survival. So the states pursue power at the expense of each other, considering the relevance to other states. The loss of one state's power is the gain of another. The big players of international politics fear each other which create the situation of security dilemma. Their greatest apprehension is that the rival state might not have the capacity to attack them. This has close relevance with the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan where big powers Russia, China and US are competing with each other for power at the expense of each other. The driving force behind big powers interactions in the region is power, power in the shape of its energy resources, market, raw materials and its geo-strategic location. Russia and China want to have influence in the Central Asia and Afghanistan to keep the region away from US influence and to have so much power at the behest of the region's natural resources, its market, raw material and its geo-strategic location so that US may not be able to challenge it in international politics. It may enable China and Russia to challenge US international status. China wants to have the capabilities of a revisionist state to change prevailing international system at the behest of the region's economic opportunities and its geostrategic location, at the crossroad of the South Asia, East Asia, Europe and Middle East, while US want to have influence there to check the influence of Russia and China so that they might not be able to challenge its interests in the regional politics of Central Asia and Afghanistan and international politics. She wants to prevent the prevailing international system at the behest of the region's economic opportunities and geo-strategic location.

New realists further assert that in this self help international system the weak states due to fear of powerful rivals resort to balance of power. This balancing may be internal and external. External balancing occurs when states enter into alliance, on the basis of mutual and shared interests, to check the power and capabilities of more powerful rival states. China, Russia and Central Asian republics entered into alliance in shape of SCO to counterbalance US in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Afghanistan has an observer member status in SCO. While Russia

and Central Asian Republics entered into an alliance in the shape of CSTO to counterbalance US in the region's geopolitics, so that this region may not go into the fold of NATO.

In this anarchic international system, the states are left to self help for survival. This has created security dilemma in international politics. The states pursue power at the expense of each other because this is the only strategy which may guarantee their survival in such an anarchical system. The pursuit of power has dragged the big powers, Russia, China and US towards CARs and Afghanistan, the hub of power in the shape of its geographic and strategic location, its natural resources, market and raw materials

CARs and Afghanistan have an immense importance due to its geographic and strategic location, its natural resources, market and raw materials. The economic opportunities of the region are considered conducive for the enhancement of power and capabilities of the big powers, Russia, China and US. They fear each other and have an apprehension that the rivals may not get enough power at the behest of the region's economic opportunities and its geostrategic location to challenge its interests in the region and in international politics. This has been the driving force behind big power competition in the region.

When CARs got independence from USSR as a result of its disintegration, the big powers Russia, China and US, due to security dilemma situation in international politics, rushed towards CARs to fill the vacuum left by USSR so that it may not be filled by rival states and get enough power at the behest of CARs unique geographic and strategic location, its energy resources and economic opportunities to endanger its existence and survival. While later under the pretext of 9/11 incident US entered into Afghanistan militarily to restrict China and Russia market expansion. Neo-realism uses different strategies for the analyses of international politics.

2.2 Neo-realists Strategies for the Analysis of International Affairs

Neo-realism uses three levels of analysis in international relations, individual level, state level and international system level. According to neo-realists, international structure is made up of two elements, state (Unit of International System) and its structure (International System). The international structure is anarchic in its ordering principle, creating self-help system emerging out of the lack of trust and uneven power distribution, which may be uni-polar, bipolar or multi-polar (Donnelly, 2012).

The neorealist theorists argue that states are concerned much with the balance of power and struggle among themselves either to gain power at the expense of other state or to retain whatever powers it has (Morgenthau & Thompson, 1992). In the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan, Russia and China want to gain power while US wants to retain its power so that it may not be challenged by Russia and China by getting influence in the region. This phenomenon occurs because of the structure of international system providing no choice to the states for their survival. This struggle for power creates a dangerous world, leading states to fight against each other either implicitly or explicitly (Mearsheimer, 2001). Neo-realism being an offshoot of classical realism argues that international politics revolves round the power. According to them, 'Great Powers' are the main players of international politics paying attention to how much power, economic and military, a state must have relative to its rivals in order to be secure from any outside aggression. It is not enough for a state to have substantial amount of power but to make sure that the rival states might not have the power to change the balance of power. They consider international politics synonymous with power politics. There are, however, differences among realists. The basic difference is regarding the rationale behind state power or in other words why do states want power. It is here that neo-realism/structural realism takes birth. The classical realists are of the opinion that human nature (selfishness) is the logic behind states pursuit of power (Ashley, 1984). While neo-realists argue that the logic behind state pursuit of power is international anarchic system, devoid of any central government or internationally acceptable organization, which may determine the relation between states and keep them with in some limits.

Power seeking is inherent in human nature and states are led by individual bent on dominating its rivals. There is no institution which could stop this drive contrary to idealism which asserts that international institution can create peace in the world by keeping the states within some limits. While neo-realists on the other side are of the opinion that human nature has nothing to do with state pursuit of power rather it is the international structure (international system) which compels states to seek power. They argue that international structure is anarchic in nature and there is no authority above states which may keep them within some limits (Waltz, 2000). This concept has dragged the big powers towards Central Asia and Afghanistan. This region has immense potentials for the enhancement of power of the big three. Russia and China being economically weak have come closer in the geopolitics of the region to drag US away from the region and to

make the region's natural resources accessible for Russia and China. They want to gain powers at the CARs and Afghanistan's economic potential to challenge US international status. While US wants influence in the region to consolidate its international status further and to constrict the influence of Russia and China so that they may not get enough power at the behest CARs and Afghanistan's economic opportunities to revise international power structure. This is why it stationed its forces in CARs and Afghanistan under the pretext of 9/11 incident,

2.3 Neo-realism and Uni-polar International System

Neo-realists assert that uni-polar international system is inherently unstable and the emergence of sole super power may force other states particularly the weak states, to collectively oppose it. In this way it can endanger world peace. The weak economic status of Russia and China and their shared strategic interests in the region have brought them closer to each other to contain US influence in the region, fearing that US on the basis of its might may not endanger their existence and consolidate its international status further. To contain US influence in the region they formed SCO and CSTO so that CARs and Afghanistan might not go into the fold of US for security and stability.

According to structural realism the international power structure determines regional power structure while regional power structure determines the place of regional states in such an environment. The relations between Russia and China have been worse during the Cold War. They have even gone to war several times during this period. But when the international power structure changed in favor of uni-polar international system, dominated by the US, they came closer in the geopolitics of the region in order to balance the US might and to bring changes in international system and to revise the post Cold War international order and to have place for their voice in international affairs . This competition in the geopolitics of the region among the big powers seems to divide the world into two blocks again, as it was during the Cold War, this time into NATO block and SCO block. States are always power hungry due to anarchy in international system, seeking balance of power leading to peace in the world.

They further argue that international system is anarchic in nature and survival in it motivates states to behave in a way that creates competition and balance of power. The satisfied and dissatisfied states are competing with themselves and the dissatisfied states in order to counterbalance the might of the most powerful state are making alliances. Deviation from

balance of power activates countervailing forces to re-establish it. In this way, unipolar international system is a danger to the world peace and security (Waltz, 1997). In such a state of affairs, every state would like to have enough power to protect itself from any outside attack, compelling the great powers to compete with each other for survival and to have voice in international politics. This concept has dragged the big powers Russia, China and US towards CARs and Afghanistan, the hub of power, power in the shape of its geostrategic location, its natural resources, market and raw materials. This may boost the economy and improve the capabilities of the power controlling it. This has led the big powers towards competition and cooperation in the geopolitics of CARs and Afghanistan.

This perspective has close relevance with the prevailing geo-politics of CARs and Afghanistan and can be applied for analyzing and understanding the geopolitics of the region and the big powers political, economic, security and strategic role and their conflicts and cooperation (Jablonsky, 1997).

It is further claimed that cultural differences and differences in the form of government do not affect the relations between states because international system provides the same incentives for all the big and small states irrespective of culture and the form of government they have. Democracy or autocracy matters little for how it behaves towards other states. In this way, neo-realists/structural realist rejects the democratic peace theory of the idealist school of thought. This is what the big powers do in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan. The US wants the promotion of democracy and its ideals in Central Asia. It regards it essential for peace, security, stability, development of the region. On the other hand, Russia and China, following neo-realist perspectives, while defending semi-authoritarian regimes in the region asserts that political system has nothing to do with peace, security, stability and development of any state and region. It means that realism and idealism is interplaying with each other in the geopolitics of the region for the achievement of its respective ideals.

Through promotion of western democracy, liberal values and free market economy US want to wash out the region of communists values and to replace the semi-authoritarian regimes of the region's states with regimes favorable to US. US is of the opinion that these styles of governments are more in the advantage of Russia and China than US and the West in general.

2.4 Offensive and Defensive Realism

Like the classical realists, the neo-realists are also divided among themselves regarding how much power a state must have. Defensive realists like Kenneth Waltz argues that it is illogical for states to maximize its power for the prevailing international system will react to act if they attempt to gain too much power endangering their survival (Paul, Wirtz, & Fortmann, 2004). Hegemony, according to defensive realists, is foolish behavior, on the part of any state. On the other hand, offensive realists like John. J. Mearshimer takes the opposite view of the defensive realists. They argue that it is logical and gives good strategic sense for the states to maximize its power up to the possible limits and in the right circumstances to pursue hegemony (Mearsheimer, 2001).

The underpinning of the power of a state is its materials capacity and capability that it possesses. Power is the result of military assets that state has at its disposal like military divisions and nuclear arsenals. Besides that, state has soft power as well like socio-economic development essential for military buildup and power (Knorr, 2015). The basis of soft power is the wealth and size of the population of a state. Great powers require wealth, technology, human resources and international friends for strengthening military forces to fight against its rivals in international politics. Soft power refers to the raw materials that can be used when fighting and competing with the rival state/states (Layne, 1993). From this it can be ascertained that war is not the only choice for states to gain power. The state can maximize its power by raising the size of its population and wealth and making friends.

2.5 Five Assumptions of Neo-realism

Competition among states, according to neo-realism, is based on five assumptions regarding international system. First, great powers are the main players of international politics operating in international anarchic system. Anarchy here does not mean perpetual chaos and disorder rather it means the absence of any central authority or world government above the states which may keep the states within some limits. This feature can be observed in the geopolitics of CARs and Afghanistan where big powers are competing with each other for influence and power.

Second, every state has some offensive military capacity by the use of which it can harm its rival states. This concept has created security dilemma in the region's geo-politics. To survive in the

international anarchic system the big powers are pursuing power at the expense of each other, leading them towards conflict and cooperation. The uneven distribution of power in the international system has dragged the big power towards the economic opportunities of CARs and Afghanistan and they are struggling to get excel over each other. This capability is different from state to state and for any state it can be changed any time.

Third assumption foretells that states can never be certain about one another intentions because intentions are hidden in the brain of leaders (military and political) of a state so invisible to outside world. States finally wants to know whether the other state have the required capabilities to act as a revisionist state to bring changes in international order or be satisfied with the status quo, not being interested to use force to change it. The problem is that the intention of a state cannot be empirically verified because intentions are limited to the minds of the political leadership, which cannot be ascertained easily. This creates uncertainty in the interactions among the states in international politics. Russia and China fears the might of US and want to counterbalance it in the region so that it may not strengthen its position further. Russia and China want to improve their capabilities by utilizing the economic opportunities of CARs and Afghanistan to challenge US international status.

Fourth, the basic objective of states is its survival and security. States want to safeguard its territorial integrity at all costs and the sovereignty of its domestic political order (Grieco, 1995). They also pursue other objectives like prosperity and protection of human rights. However, these objectives have secondary importance to the survival of a state and are subservient to it. The big powers Russia, China and US are competing in the geopolitics of CARs and Afghanistan, so that the rivals may not get enough power at the behest of CARs and Afghanistan's economic potentials and its geostrategic location to challenge each other territorial integrity and sovereignty.

Last assumption is that states are rationale actors in international politics having its own sound strategies for increasing its prospects for survival. There is no denying the fact that sometime they miscalculate it. This may lead them towards conflict and competition in regional and international politics.

Putting all these assumptions together, a situation arise which compel states to pursue power at the expense of each other. The big players of international politics such as Russia, China and US fear each other due to lack of trust among them. They are always conscious about each other

intentions (Gambetta, 2000). There greatest apprehension is that the rival state might not have the capacity to attack them or put their interests in danger. This is further complicated by the fact that they are living in international anarchic system, meaning that there is no central authority which may keep the world states with in some specific limits. This phenomenon could be observed in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan where big powers Russia, China and US are competing with each other for power. Russia and China want to have influence in the region, particularly in its energy sector for two reasons. Firstly, to keep the region away from US influence. Secondly, to have so much power at the behest of Central Asian energy resources, economic opportunities and geostrategic location, so that US may not challenge them in international politics. China wants to have the capabilities of a revisionist state to change the prevailing international system dominated by US. While US on the other hand want to have influence there to check the influence of Russia and China so that they may not be able to have the status of a revisionist state, thereby challenging its interests in the regional politics of Central Asia and Afghanistan and international politics. She wants to maintain the prevailing international system at the behest of Central Asia and Afghanistan's economic opportunities and strategic location.

Great powers are well aware that they are living in a self help world so they have to depend on their own capabilities for survival because of the rival states as potential threats for there is no impartial world authority to whom they may resort to, in case it is attacked. This instigates states to form an alliance which is regarded useful in dealing with any powerful rival. It means that states have no other option than to prefer their own national interests to the interests of any other state.

Apprehensive of the potential power of any rival state and knowing that they are working in a self help world, the states at once realizes that the best way to follow for survival is to be all powerful (Waltz, 2000). The logic behind this notion is that the states with more power in comparison with its rivals, there is lesser chance that it would be attacked. No country in the Western World would dare attack the United States, because of its economic and military might relative to them. This simple logic motivates great powers to look for the opportunities to shift the balance of power in their favor or bring changes in international order.

States seek to ascertain that another state might not gain power at their expense, leading to competition among the world states.(Wendt, 1992).The structure of international system forces the great powers to act as a revisionist state and bring changes in international system.

Presently, the US is trying to protect the prevailing international structure of uni-polarity while China and Russia are struggling to be at the position to act as a revisionist states to over through the prevailing international system or at least to bring changes in it. The Central Asian energy resources and Afghanistan's natural resources can play an important role in this regard. The US being a satisfied state wants to control it to maintain the status quo while China and Russia being the dissatisfied states want to control it to break the status quo. The power of these states up to some extent depends on their influence in Central Asia and Afghanistan. It is said that the state or states which will have upper hand in Central Asia and Afghanistan would have upper hand in international politics shaping and reshaping the world order.

Looking at the interactions of Russia, China and US in the Geo-politics of Central Asia and Afghanistan through the spectacles of neo-realism, it seems that an offensive realism is in operation in the region and every state is in the pursuit of power and to have voice in international politics. An important motivations involved in the geo-politics of the region is the availability of natural resources, huge market, raw materials and important strategic location. It is increasingly linked to Moscow, Beijing and Washington energy security strategy for different, but equally important reasons. In fact, the countries engagement in the regional hydrocarbon sector justifies their broader foreign, security, and energy policies in Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Central Asia's and Afghanistan's history has been full of the rise and fall of several empires. Major colonial powers fought for political influence and physical control of the land and people in this historic region of Asia (Baumer, 2012).The Russian and British Empire's rivalry, commonly called "The Great Game" was symbolic of this unrestricted zest for the increase of power, hegemony and getting advantages from the region. In the 21st century, however, this Game in the region has transformed into a new power struggle and strategic competition between Russia, China, US and other regional powers known as new "Great Game".

From Neo-realist perspectives, the Central Asia and Afghanistan became an arena for rivalry and competition among the big powers following the two important structural changes in international politics, disintegration of Soviet Union and the end of bipolarity (Fels, 2017). They assert that the behaviors of sovereign and independent states are shaped by interaction between

their power and the pattern in which the international political system enables the exercise of that power. This region was in the grip of Soviet Union till 1991 and no other state could interfere in it. However, its disintegration created power vacuum in the region thereby providing an opportunity for US and other big neighboring powers Russia and China to enter into the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan. China and Russia since then is constantly trying to counterbalance US in the geopolitics of the region.

The opening of economic opportunities observed by US was also seen and recognized by other neighboring states particularly China. It provided for China a market for its finished goods, raw materials for its industries, energy resources for its rapidly growing population. Russia, China and US started checking the influence of each other in the region. The above-mentioned dynamics are based on pragmatic criteria of balancing and counterbalancing, compatible with neo-realism. Transformation of Central Asia and Afghanistan into an area of competition and rivalry produces security dilemma as seen natural by neo-realists. US exclaimed that its interference in the Central Asia and Afghanistan was guided by the imperatives of the establishment of democracy and democratic ideals, protection of human rights and development but the real motive of US in the region is controlling the region's natural resources and its geostrategic location and not allowing its competitors to get access to the economic opportunities of the region (Canfield et al., 1992). Russia viewed Washington agenda in Central Asia and Afghanistan as an offensive one involving projection of US power across vast distances to establish itself politically, economically and after 9/11 militarily in the Russia's area of influence.

In the same way, Russia and China policies in Central Asia and Afghanistan are generally not seen in Washington as a valid attempt to ensure stability.

China aims to make secure its Western borders and getting access to Central Asia and Afghanistan's natural resources through pipeline safe of its rivals' particularly US. However, US take it as a specific manifestation of the rise of China that may challenge its hegemonic position and therefore must be countered.

Neo-realists assert that states compete for power with one another and this may not be affected by the nature of political system and political ideologies. Differences in ideology and internal political structure did not obstruct the convergence of interests among United States, Russia and China.

Authoritarianism, as a common bond between Russia and China, but it has nothing to do with the conflict and cooperation between Russia and China, particularly in SCO(Zakaria, 1992). It is just a tool of balancing against the US. It, by no means, deny the cooperation among the states but they are of the view that anarchy, the absence of any central authority and the states pre-occupation with relative gains obstruct the way of collective action.

The common communist ideology could not prevent Russia and china from war. The common ideology could not bring them closer. However this was done by post cold war international order dominated by US. US has been traditional enemy of Russia while China wants to replace the international system. The mutual interests brought them closer to each other. So the common strategic interests in the region made them strategic partners in the region's politics.

The China's rapid economic development and its rise in international politics has given it a very strong position in Central Asia, which now characterizes, multi-polar competition among China, Russia and the US.

The geo-politics of Central Asia has generally been associated with the neo-realists' view of international relations. In fact, the geopolitical doctrine of neo-realists concentrates on a state's geographic and material features in order to explain its interests and its capabilities in entering certain international relations in a certain way(Dodds, 2014).

At the end of the Great Game in 1917, a new game started for new goals and interests with new actors and new strategies and techniques, called "New Great Game". After the end of the Second World War, a Cold War had started between the then two super powers, Soviet Union and US. With the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991, the bi-polar system was replaced with uni-polar system dominated by United States. Since then, it has started asserting influence in Central Asia to control black gold and other natural resources particularly energy resources, essential for the progress, development and maintaining super power status(Hopkirk, 1994). This period in the geopolitics of Central Asia is called the "New Great Game", characterized by competition between US, Russia, China and other minor actors such as India, Turkey, and Pakistan for influence and hegemony in the Central Asian region.

Great Game was a political competition between Russian and British Empire for the physical control of the region in the eighteenth and nineteenth century. In the "New Great Game", the rivalry is not limited to geographical control of the region like 'Great Game' rather it focuses on the regional policy of oil and other natural resources, pipelines diplomacy, trade routes, and

related contracts. The “New Great Game” is concerned with hydrocarbons oil, natural gas, coal and other natural resources present in abundance in the region, which sparks the interests of the states around. Such a game was launched by US in 1992-1993 taking advantage of the disintegration of Soviet Union aimed to prevent the rebirth of its great rival, Russia. For doing so, it stationed its forces permanently in the region thereby inviting antagonism from the other states interested in the region (Heggenes & Russian, 2014). With this full fledged competition started among the big powers thereby leading to conflicts and cooperation among the states involved in the geo-politics of the region. This envisions that state is the main actor of international politics.

The main objective of the big powers intervention in the geo-politics of Central Asia is the survival and maintenance of state. The present geo-politics in Central Asia is shaped by neo-realism. Keeping in view this theory of international relations, it can be said that interests of the state survival shape the engagement among Russia, US and China in Central Asia. Energy is regarded as the lifeblood of the state power, its maintenance and development. The energy resources are fast decaying while its consumption is increasing day-by-day, particularly in the great powers: Russia, China and US. The US is the first in energy consumption followed by China, making strategic competition among the big powers inevitable (Klare, 2009). Therefore, these powers in order to increase their energy reserves have focused on Central Asia, the big reservoir of energy resources. It can be concluded that neo-realism provides a convincing explanation of why Central Asia has become a battle field of big powers competition since long, how the big powers interact with each other, what led them towards conflict and cooperation in the region’s politics.

2.6 Neo-realism and Security Dilemma

Neo-realists define international structure on the basis of its ordering principles and capabilities distribution, measured by the number of great powers in the international system. The ordering principle of the international structure is decentralized, means that there is no central authority, which may restrict the components (states) of international system within some specific limits or international institution which may design patterns for the interactions of states in international environment (Schweller, 1996).

All the states in this system are equal and sovereign. These independent and sovereign states act according to their own whim and wishes. States in this anarchic international structure strive for their own survival as there is no external savior of it. The driving force (power) behind state survival is the primary agent influencing state behavior in international system. States develop their military offensive capabilities and the increase of power of one state is usually at the loss of the power of another state (Mearsheimer, 1994). It means, in mathematical terminology, that it is inversely proportional to each other as the increase in one state power is the decrease in another state power. Greater the influence of Russia and china in CARs and Afghanistan means lesser the influence of US. States may not be certain of the intentions of other states, creating lack of trust and uncertainty among the components (states) of international system, requiring states to guard the loss of their relative power, this in turn threaten the survival of other states. This lack of trust created by uncertainty is called security dilemma, prevalent in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan (Tang, 2010). This security dilemma is the driving force behind states pursuance of power. This pursuit of powers has led the big powers Russia, China and US towards CARs and afghanistan.

The states in international system are sovereign and independent (H. Milner, 1991). These sovereign states are equal in terms of needs and sovereignty in this decentralized international structure. The two factors may bind them; force and consent. Every action and behavior of the sovereign state is dictated and guided by the logic of self-help. It means that states pursue their own national interests and does not subdue it to the interests of others. In such an anarchic system, state power is the key to pursue its objectives and interests. The survival and defense of the state depends on its economic, political and military capabilities. In this sense, international relation is a story of great power politics. According to neo-realists, state will always seek to maximize their power relative to other states. This creates mistrust among the states via security dilemma. If rival countries possess enough power to threaten a state, it can never be safe. Hegemony is thus the best strategy to pursue.

States are considered equal in terms of needs but different in terms of capabilities for meeting with its needs and requirements (Wendt, 1992). The structure of the distribution of capabilities limits cooperation among states through fears of relative gains made by other states and the possibility of dependence on other state. The desire and the capabilities of each state to maximize its relative power constrain one another. In order to survive, the states use two strategies of balancing against each other. These are internal and external balancing.

External balancing occurs when states enter into alliance, on the bases of mutual and shared interests, to check the power and capabilities of more powerful states. China entered into alliance with CARs and Russia through SCO to counterbalance US in CARs and Afghanistan while Russia and CARs entered into alliance called CSTO to counterbalance China led SCO and to compete with US in Central Asia and Afghanistan. Russia being economically weak to compete with US in CARs and Afghanistan allied itself with China to counterbalance US in CARs and Afghanistan's geopolitics.

The internal balancing, on the other hand, occurs when states increases their own military capabilities by improving economic growth and increasing military spending using internal resources, thereby creating security situation. The rise of China and Russia economically and militarily is an example of internal balancing.

In the present international system, all the states, being sovereign, are operating independently. These actors of international politics are independent in their decisions and policy making and its implementation (Buzan, 2008). They have the legality to use force against those elements which may possibly endanger its integrity and sovereignty. Every actor of the international system has its own national interests and objectives and each of them is struggling for the maximization of its power in this anarchical international system to promote and protect its national interests.

It is not possible for any state to compromise on its national interests rather it is always trying to improve it by all means at her disposal. When any state does not have sufficient power, it is more prone to be subordinated to other more powerful states thereby losing its sovereignty, because security and survival cannot be alienated from maximization of power. Resultantly, competition for the enhancement of power becomes a common affair of the world politics (Paul et al., 2004).

All the states around the world are busy in perpetual struggle to get the satisfied level of protection against any kind of external threat and aggression. States interact with one another in the environment of uncertainty and are in a constant fear of being attacked by its rivals and opponents or lose whatever they have to their opponents. Because of this environment of uncertainty, some states may resort to use force endangering the survival and security of other rival state so all the states of the world should be prepared for facing such a surprise attack.

Waltz asserts that state of nature is a state of war. It does not mean that wars will occur all the time but a sense that such an uncertain environment may lead states to war which may erupt

surprisingly at any time. In this way, the international structure creates security dilemma in the world politics (Waltz, 1990).

Looking into the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan and the big powers competition there in, it can be said that the same security dilemma is prevalent in the region. All the three powers are engaged in the Central Asia and Afghanistan to maximize its power at the behest of its natural resources and geostrategic location. This region has been a part of Soviet Union so it has an old legacy with Russia and so political influence. China has made huge investment in its energy sector for upholding upper hand in it. US entered in the region under the pretext of 9/11 incident. All of them are uncertain about each other intentions in the geopolitics of the region.

This concept of security dilemma has dragged Russia, China and US towards CARs and Afghanistan, a reservoir of power, power in the shape of strategic and geographic location, energy resources, market, and raw materials. Concept of the gain of one state is the loss of another, made most of their interests competing and divergent. The might of US have brought Russia and China closer to each other in the geopolitics of CARs and Afghanistan.

2.7 Neo-realism and Balance of Power

2.7.1 Balance of Power as a Concept

Balance of power is one of the basic concepts of neo-realism theory of international relations. The theorists of international affairs has defined balance of power in different ways highlighting its importance in the world politics. David Hume has defined balance of power as a “scientific law” due to its significance in international politics. Glenn Snyder defined it as a “core theoretical concept in international affairs”. Hans Morgenthau has defined it as “Iron law politics”. While Henry Kissinger defines it as a “more an art than a science” (Debin, Naseer, & Amin, 2012). However, whatever it is, its importance in international politics cannot be denied.

It was a fashionable trend in old days and so as in the present age. An international system of states, power is unevenly distributed (Waltz, 2010). Due to this, some states are more powerful than others. There is no tool to measure the power of states and it is always measured in relative terms such as economic development, standard of life and military capabilities.

Weaker states, in international anarchic system, usually cannot achieve their own security without outside help and cooperation. So, they depend on other powerful states for their security.

In this way, the weaker states conclude alliances with other powerful states to counterbalance the power of an adversary or threatening state. The term balance of power usually refers to the general concept of one or more states being used to balance with that of another state or group of state (Levy & Thompson, 2005). States may balance against each other by using different strategies to secure itself from external adversaries.

2.7.2 Strategies for Maintaining Balance of Power

Balance of power is a concept which ensures distribution of power in such a way that no state is in a position to dominate or attack on any other state. Relative military capabilities and economic resources determine the power of a state and are playing crucial role in the establishment of a superpower or big power status. A big power adopts the strategy of balancing as an important priority in the area of security because a successful balancing guarantee peace and sustain the world state system (World Order)(Odgaard, 2007). Its precise example is the balance of power between USA and Soviet Union during the Cold War.

In the Second World War, Russia and US met with negligible losses while the other powers of the time such as Germany, Japan, Britain, France, and Italy met with huge losses of men and materials. So, in the post World War second period the international system transformed into bi-polar system dominated by Russia and US. The world was dominated by two super powers Soviet Union and USA. Both of them had got weapons of mass destruction and had concluded alliances with other states to enhance their influence internationally. The USA formed NATO and Soviet Union had formed Warsaw Pact. By doing so, they established balance of power. It kept them away from going into hot war and the Cold War remained Cold War till the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 (Mastny, 2001).

World states generally adopt different strategies to enhance their power relative to its competitors. International relations are diverse in nature; due to this, states cannot rely on other for security permanently and for the achievement of its national objectives and interests. The most reliable strategy to counterbalance any external threat is internal balancing. It means improvement in its economic growth and military capabilities relative to its adversaries so that they may not dare attack it. The reason behind this is that every state of the world watches its own interests and is ready to sacrifice other's interests, no matter friend or foe. In order to highlight the nature of diversity of international relations, there is a famous proverb "there is no

permanent friend or enemy in international politics but interests are permanent, a friend of today may be the enemy of tomorrow and enemy of today may be friend tomorrow”(Kupchan, 2010). Russia and China were enemies during the Cold War. The post Cold War international structure brought dramatic changes in their relations. Both of them have been against of uni-polar international system dominated by the US. This shared interest and their common world view made them strategic partners in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan.

The above stated proverb explains China-Russia relations in the Central Asia and Afghanistan’s geopolitics. They were not on good terms during the Cold War period. They had even gone to war and engaged in clashes on border and ideological issues. But during the post Cold War period, the international politics and international structure brought them closer to each other, resolving all their border issues and became strategic partners. Mutual interests brought them closer to each other as they both were against of uni-polar international system.(Walt, 1985). As there is no permanent friend in international politics, therefore, states prefer to adopt a policy of internal balancing by increasing economic growth and building military strength/capabilities.

Neo-realists scholars are of the opinion that balance of power dynamics, up to certain and variant degrees, are operating in the contemporary international relations (Huesken, 2012).This could be seen in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan as both Russia and China has entered into alliance with CARs in the shape of SCO, in order to create a balance of power against the US-led NATO. According to neo-realists, the theory of balance of power framework is an appropriate tool for the explanation of world politics and international relations.

Furthermore, balance of power theory is regarded as an influential choice for the study of world politics and international affairs. Wolfforth asserts that neo-realism occupies a paradoxical position in international relations. The use of neo-realism and its soft balancing makes it possible to study uni-polar nature of international structure that has emerged since the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 (Ikenberry, Mastanduno, & Wohlforth, 2009). The soft balancing variant of neo-realism makes it possible to study whether the balancing strategy of Russia and China against US in the geopolitics of CARs and Afghanistan could better be understood as a response to the policies of uni-polar world situation.

Big and small states use balance of power alike against the perceived threats. Pakistan joined US-led security pacts of SEATO and CENTO to balance against Indo-USSR alliance. In the

same way, Pak-China entente cordiale is balancing indo-US strategic partnership to bring peace and stability in the region. (Goldstein, 2005).

Cold War presents an important example of balance of power between Soviet Union and US. Both these big powers had developed Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMDs) and had formed alliances with other states to increase their influence across the world. It made security alliance of NATO and Soviet Union counterbalanced it with Warsaw pact (Odgaard, 2007). States adopts a lot of strategies to strengthen its powers in comparison with the rival state/states (Walt, 1985).

The main theme of the theory of balance of power is the idea that national security is increased when military capabilities are distributed in such a way that no state is strong enough to dominate all others. If one state gets substantial power, then according to the theory, the powerful state will take advantage of its strength and attack the weaker state, providing an opportunity for the threatened states to make a coalition for its defense and security (Humphreys, 2012).

The neo-realists maintain that this would be more stable as aggression would appear less important and would be avoided if there is balance of power between the rival coalitions. This is the main tenet of the theory of neo-realism regarding balance of power (Mearsheimer, 1994).

It is generally believed that in anarchic world system states have different cultures and ideologies. Interests and norms cannot live harmoniously. This seems to be accurate up to some extent but there is an important element triggering unity among all these states which is called security. This concept of security integrated Western Europe against communism and today the world is integrated against terrorism. So, the states never go to war when their national interests converge with other states irrespective of religion, power and size of the state. The second best option for any state is to reach a balancing position against the powerful rival as to rely on external sources including aid in arms from friendly states against a common threat (Walt, 1990). Balancing with other friendly state/states may strengthen the defense of the weaker state. This is why states make alliances against a shared threat.

The advocates of the theory of balance of power assert that peace is generally preserved when balance in the power exists among the big powers. Power balancing among states helps in preventing war because no state can expect victory. Balance of power between Soviet Union and US ended the crisis nicely during the Cold War and did not escalate to nuclear war between them. Whenever the balance of power exists between the two rival states it helps in preventing

full fledged war as no actor expects victory as was the case during the Cold War (Mearsheimer & Walt, 2016). Russia and China are following the concept of neo-realists for balance of power. Therefore, they are against of uni-polar international system.

According to neo-realists when powerful states in international anarchic system use their resources to achieve their security objectives, the rival powers try to keep check on its rising power, which may pose a threat to its interests in future. The neo-realists argue that power is most effectively checked by the strategy of counterbalancing (Schmidt, 2007). Russia and China being weak as compared to US have entered into alliance to check the influence of US in the geopolitics of CARs and Afghanistan.

Big powers even do not feel secure from other big and rising powers as they are feeling continuous threat from them. They think that the other powerful states may endanger its security when they gain relatively substantial power. US is feeling continuous threat from rising China Russia and therefore wants to reduce their influence in CARs and Afghanistan so that she may not reach to the level where it could challenge US international status. US has stationed its forces in CARs and Afghanistan to check the rising power of China and Russia so that they may not be able to threaten its super power status. On the other hand, China is trying to control Central Asia and Afghanistan's natural resources to boost its economy to challenge US super power status.

The fundamental tenet of the balance of power theory is that big powers will always mobilize and develop military capabilities sufficient to contain the most powerful among them (Taliaferro, 2006). This refers to the competition among Russia, China and US. States tend to balance against the threat of hegemony over the entire international system.

Due to anarchy in international system, neo-realists assert that states must ensure their survival through increasing and maintaining their power in a self-help world with no authority above the states to come to its rescue if attacked by a hegemonic or any other powerful state. The weak states usually attempt to prevent the hegemonic state from aggression by balancing against it (Powell, 1994). The CARs made an alliance with Russia through CSTO to protect itself from any outside aggression, particularly the super power. Besides, it made an alliance with China through SCO as the regional power to counter balance US in the region.

According to the founder of neo-realism, Kenneth Waltz, balancing of power prevail when two requirements are met: anarchic order in international system and units (states) having wish for survival. This can be done either through internal balancing where a state is striving for

increasing its economic capabilities and military strength. Internal balancing is also called self-reliance balancing. States design strategies to have check on external threats. The threatened state, which is always weak, adopts internal balancing or self-reliance balancing strategy by making weapons indigenously to obtain counterbalancing capabilities attempting to balance against the rising power, military strength posing threats to its national interests and security in future (Lieber & Alexander, 2005). The basic sources of internal balancing through which states counterbalance one another are economic growth and the making up arms domestically.

This trend was in fashion during the eighteenth and nineteenth century international politics. During this period, the states were always busy in building of stronger armies equipped with modern weapons to cope with enemies in the battlefield. When India detonated atomic explosion, Pakistan started working on it to counterbalance it. So Pakistan detonated atomic explosion in May 1998 and balanced itself with India so that it may not dare to attack on Pakistan.

This fashion of balancing was not efficient and sufficient in enhancing security of the states. Whatever the quality of weapons a state could have which strengthens its military power but when its enemy is in a position to attack from different sides with the cooperation of their allied states, it is difficult to defend against them. From this, the states may realize that self-reliance balancing is, although, important but not sufficient to divert external threat and aggression (Debin et al., 2012). During the initial period of Pakistan, she was looking for security against Indian aggression and joined the US camp by joining South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). Pakistan despite being the member of US security pacts; US could not provide any security against Indian aggression during 1965 and 1971. Therefore, it is preferable for the states to adopt a strategy of internal balancing which is regarded more reliable than any other form of balancing (Franklin, Powell, Emami-Naeini, & Powell, 1994). Russia made alliance with China through SCO to counterbalance US in CARs and Afghanistan. The other way is external balancing, this occurs when a state take external measures to increase its security by forming alliances with other powerful state(s).

The states which are satisfied with the prevailing international system are known as status quo states as US at present while the states seeking to alter it are called transitory states as China (Sagan, 2004). Both of them are using the strategy of balancing against each other both internally and externally.

Balance of power is one of important and widely used concepts in international politics. It is concerned about the idea that hegemony will always be counterbalanced by an alliance of rivals for the sake of their own survival and maintaining sovereignty. The concept of balance of power becomes popular in the study of international politics, particularly after the Second World War which is associated with neo-realist's theory of international politics. According to the scholars of neo-realism, power balancing is an intrinsic feature of international relations (Agnew, 1994). This concept of balance of power was introduced to the international politics by Hans Morgenthau in his book "*Politics among Nations*". According to him, balance of power is the state of affairs where power is distributed among several states with approximate equality (Deudney, 1995).

Neo-realists as well as the realists have analyzed how power is distributed in the prevailing international political structure. This idea is called as the balance of power. It could be simply defined as the mechanism operating to defend and prevent any state to dominate the international system. Sometime, this balance of power, is thought to be naturally occurring while other time, it looks like a strategy consciously followed by states (Grieco, 1997). States pursue such kind of balances to counter threats from other powerful states to ensure its own survival. It is measured in terms of military strength and capabilities. For neo-realists, the basic objectives of it is not preserving peace rather the security of states (Grant & Keohane, 2005). The basic tendency towards creating a balance of power is said to exist in international system that grows out of the perpetual struggle for existence (Marciacq, 2009).

2.8 Power, Neo-realism and the CARs and Afghanistan's Natural Resources

The definition of power makes it clear to understand behavior of a state in international system. When states compete for power, a lot is learnt about it during the process of its competition. In order to understand what power is and what states are competing for and how much power a state must have would help it clear that how big powers compete with each other in international system in general and in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan in particular. The Oxford dictionary defines power as "the ability to make others do, whatever they otherwise would not (Oxford Dictionary, 2013). This definition of power has no operational significance because the intentions of participants are immeasurable. Due to this, most scholars consider tangible aspects of power as the capabilities making the measurement of power of any state

possible. Morgenthau in his book, *“Politics among Nations: the struggle for power and peace”* (1948)”, asserts that there are two groups of national power. One is constantly changing the other is stable and constant. According to him, natural resources and geography of states is the most constant and stable factors of national power while on the other hand military and industrial capabilities are changing with the change in national character, morale, population, diplomacy and the nature of governance they have. Germany, Japan and Italy’s military capabilities declined at the Second World War. The Pakistan’s military capabilities declined after the disintegration of East Pakistan in 1971 (Serikbayeva, 2013). He further writes that one factor of a state’s power cannot determine the national power of any state because the nature of national power is very comprehensive and aggregate

Central Asia and Afghanistan’s natural resources, its market and raw materials are the most important decisive element in the economic growth of any state and the measurement of any state power and development. It plays important role in the economic development of any state. It enables a country to utilize natural resources including energy resources for the production of finished goods. It is an important source of other related factors of power (Cooley, 2012). This can be vividly seen in geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan that all the big powers, Russia, China and US are in the pursuit of CARs and Afghanistan’s natural resources for their economic growth to increase its national power

The rapidly growing economy is essential for transforming raw materials into making it serviceable to military and industrial use and welfare of the state. According to neo-realists, besides economic growth, the other factor of national power of a nation’s power to be recognized as a big power is military capabilities (Brown, 2007). Military power is a major physical factor of a state power, serving as an underpinning for its soft and political power. Moreover, the military preparedness needs sufficient military set up capable of supporting a state’s foreign policy objectives and goals.

Nye and Keohane are of the opinion that military power is not enough in the pursuance of foreign policy objectives of any state. Contrary to that Robert asserts that military capabilities should be used carefully and suitably in a geographic location like Central Asia and Afghanistan (Biscop & Coelmont, 2013).

The other factor of a nation’s power is political influence such as political friends and public support in the Central Asian region and Afghanistan. Morgenthau regards this factor as

“Psychological Element of Power”. It plays important role in influencing decision making and getting favor in the outside world. With respect to Central Asia, the capabilities of the big powers are helping them in the achievement of their national interests. Political might plays crucial role in influencing the decision making and policies of a state. This factor can be seen in the post soviet Central Asia and Afghanistan where Russia has been replaced by China. Each one of them is expecting that the counterbalancing states would be able to transform its power into actual outcomes.

Superiority in economic capabilities may lead towards dominance in the energy sector of Central Asia. Central Asian energy resources are regarded important with respect to economic growth of the competing states, Russia, China and US (S. Blank, 1995). For the strength of a national power of any state, energy resources of Central Asia its market and raw materials and natural resources of Afghanistan are important. So, the realist perspectives may be seen in operation in the region, where the three big powers Russia, China and US are in pursuit of Central Asian energy resources and its economic opportunities and Afghanistan natural resources for the enhancement of their economic growth adding to its national power to secure itself from external aggression and impose its will on other weaker states. Increase in power and capabilities increases the level of involvement in the energy sector of Central Asia and its market. US is struggling to get influence in CARs and Afghanistan to maintain its international status while on the other hand, China and Russia want to have influence there to bring changes in the prevailing international system.

2.9 Mutual Interests in Neo-realism

Mutual interest is an important element of neo-realism theory of international relations. It means interdependence of interests between two or more states. In other words, it means the common and shared interests between two or more states or the interests related to each other. The cooperation among states depends on their mutual and shared interests. The states make an alliance or cooperate with each other when their interests are common or interdependent.

China and Russia came closer to each other after the disintegration of Soviet Union as they were against of post Cold War international system and for changing the uni-polar international system which was not in the interests of either Russia or China. (Wendt, 1994). It is regarded as a risk to international peace and security.

Prior to disintegration of Soviet Union and replacement of bipolarity with uni-polarity, China and Russia had no cordial relations but mutual interests of changing the international system of uni-polarity with multi-polarity and obstructing US intervention in Central Asia and Afghanistan brought them closer to each other. They are not satisfied with the prevailing power distribution structure in the international system (Baldwin, 1993). Same is the case with balance of power, all those states that have common and interdependent interests enter into alliance to make balance of power against their rival, having interests different from them.

2.10 International System in Central Asia

International system is composed of the structure and patterns of relationships and interactions among the most powerful states of the world. The concept of situation is used to identify patterns of relationship that do not encompass the whole international system. The situation and international system together makes the environment of the actors of international system (Lentner, 1984). In international system, the actors and the situation are big units for analysis of international politics.

This study is an attempt to deal with a theme which involves a number of variables. The actors involved under it are Russia, China, US, five CARs, Afghanistan and regional and international organizations. The location and physical features had great impacts on the foreign policy of a state. Generally, neighboring states has more influence in a country or a region than a country which is located far away from it. Taking Central Asia and Afghanistan as a hub, two rings of states surrounds it. The 1st one is composed of those states which share borders with Central Asia and Afghanistan. The 2nd ring is composed of states which are located near to it. In a broader sense, there are totally seventeen states in Central Asia and surrounding areas. All these states have influence on the regional affairs (Whitlock, 2003). The inter-governmental organizations such as CIS, NATO, SCO, CSTO, and EEC are also playing vital role in the geopolitics of the region and shed great influence on the internal and external affairs of CARs and Afghanistan. The internal situation of a country and the external environment has great impact on the foreign policy of a country. Russia being weak economically made an alliance with China to counterbalance US in the region, particularly after US military penetration into CARs and Afghanistan.

Geopolitics studies the relationship between the politics and the geographical features of a state or region and its possible impacts on the state behavior in conducting its foreign relations and the strategies it adopts to play its role in the world politics. In geopolitics, different factors such as economy, demography, strategies and techniques play active role in the decisions making and states behavior in international politics. The changes in international power structure bring changes in the behavior of states in its interaction with the outside world (Dwivedi, 2006). The world has witnessed new patterns and trends of geopolitical relations soon after the collapse of Soviet Union and subsequently the prevailing international power structure of bipolarity was replaced with uni-polarity, thereby changing the long system of two power blocks of communism led by Russia and capitalism led by US.

It is an admitted fact that international politics has always been a ruthless business and it is expected that it will be so in future but the intensity of its competition may change depending on the situation.

Big powers fear each other, therefore, competing with each other either for gaining power or maintaining it. Gaining power is always at the expense of others. The goal of each state is the maximization of its share of world power. They do not merely strive to be the strongest but their ultimate aim is to become the world hegemonic power - to be so powerful that other state may not dare to attack it. Moreover, such states want to be in a position to force other states to do or accept whatever they would not have done or accepted.

Looking towards the engagement of Russia, China and US in the Geo-politics of Central Asia and Afghanistan through the spectacles of neo-realism, it seems that every state is in the pursuit of power and to have voice in international politics. Some of the prominent motivations to be involved in the area relevant to power are the availability of rich energy and natural resources, raw materials and trade opportunities which are helpful in economic growth and so its military capabilities. The Central Asian energy resources are increasingly linked to Russia, China and US energy security for different, but equally important, reasons (Serikbayeva, 2013). In fact, the countries' engagement in the regional hydrocarbon sector justifies their broader foreign, security, and energy policies in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan.

The history of Central Asia and Afghanistan has been full of rise and fall of several empires and major colonial powers such as Russian and British empires fought for political influence and physical control of the land and people of this historic region of Asia. This rivalry commonly

called “The Great Game” was symbolic of unrestricted zest for the increase of power, hegemony in the region. In the 21st century, however, the old “Great Game” in the region has transformed into a new power struggle among Russia, China and US and other regional powers such as Iran, Turkey, India and Pakistan.

From neo-realist perspectives Central Asia and Afghanistan became an area of rivalry and competition among the big powers following two important structural changes in international politics, disintegration of Soviet Union and the end of bipolar international system. It asserts that the behaviors of a sovereign and independent state are shaped by interaction between their power and the pattern in which the international political system enables the exercise of that power.

Until the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991, Central Asia was in the grip of Soviet Union, no other state could interfere in it (Ahrari & Beal, 1996). However, its disintegration created power vacuum in the region thereby providing an opportunity for US and other big neighboring powers such as Russia and China to enter into the Geo-politics of the region. Russia since then is constantly trying to counterbalance those contending forces, China, US and other minor states such as Turkey, India, Pakistan and European Union.

The opening of economic opportunities observed by US was also seen and recognized by other neighboring states particularly China. It provided for China a market for its finished goods and rich energy resources for its rapidly growing population and industries. Russia, China and US started checking the influence of each other in the region (Taliaferro, 2006). The above-mentioned dynamics based on pragmatic criteria of balancing and counterbalancing are compatible with neo-realism. Transformation of Central Asia and Afghanistan into an area of competition and rivalry creates security dilemma as seen natural by neo-realist school of thought. The US exclaimed that its interference in the Central Asia and Afghanistan was guided by the imperatives of establishing democracy there, while Russia viewed Washington’s agenda in the Central Asia and Afghanistan as an offensive one, involving projection of its power across vast distances to establish itself politically, economically and after 9/11 incident, militarily in the Russia’s area of influence (Russia’s near abroad). In the same way, Russia’s policies in the region are generally not seen in Washington as a valid attempt to ensure stability and influence in the adjacent regions of weak and unstable states of Central Asia with immense of Russian population.

China aims to secure its Western region and to get access to Central Asians energy resources through pipeline safe of its rivals' particularly US (Wishnick, 2009). However, US view it as a specific manifestation of the rise of China that may challenge its hegemonic position in the world around in general and in CARs in particular and, therefore, must be countered.

The neo- realism further asserts that the nature of political system has nothing to do with the states competition for power; therefore, repudiating US propagated democratic peace theory of the idealist school of thought. Differences in ideology and internal political structure did not obstruct the convergence and divergence of interests among Russia, China and US because in international relations only interests matters. It predicts that authoritarianism has nothing to do with the cooperation between Russia and China particularly under SCO rather the mutual interests or interdependence between them have brought them closer to each other.

The other factor which brought them closer to each other is their shared perception regarding international system and counter balancing US to bring changes in the post Cold War international order. The neo-realists do not deny cooperation among the states but they are of the view that anarchy, the absence of any central authority, and the states pre-occupation with relative gains obstruct the way of collective action. China's rapid economic development and its rise in international politics has given it a very strong position in Central Asia, which now characterizes multi-polar competition among Russia, China and US (Walt, 2009). In this way, it provides a convincing explanation of why Central Asia has become a battle field for big power competition.

Geo-politics of Central Asia and Afghanistan has generally been associated with the neo-realist view of international relations. In fact, the geopolitical doctrine of neo-realists concentrate on a state's geographic and material features in order to explain its interests and its capabilities in entering certain international relations in a certain way.

At the end of the Cold War in 1991, a new game of strategic competition started for new aims, goals and interests with new actors and new strategies and techniques, usually known as the new 'Great Game'(Cooley, 2012).

The Second World War was followed by a Cold War between the then two super powers Soviet Union and US. With the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991, the bipolar international system was replaced with uni-polar international system dominated by US. Since then, the United States has been struggling to have influence in Central Asia and Afghanistan to control black gold and

other natural resources and Central Asian market for its finished goods, essential for the progress and development of any state, particularly the super power. This period in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan is called the new “Great Game” which is characterized by strategic competition between Russia, China, US and other members of SCO for influence and hegemony in the region.

Great Game was political competition between Russian and British Empire for the physical control of the region in the eighteenth and nineteenth century (Meyer & Brysac, 2009). But in the new “Great Game”, the strategic rivalry is not limited to physical control of the region like the Great Game rather it focuses on the regional policy of oil, gas and other natural resources, energy pipelines diplomacy, trade routes, and related contracts being the characteristics of this new strategic competition. This new strategic competition is concerned with hydrocarbons oil, natural gas, coal and other natural resources present in abundance in the region, sparking the interests of the states around the world, particularly Russia, China and US.

Such a strategic game was launched by US in 1992-93, taking advantage of the disintegration of Soviet Union, aimed to prevent the re-birth and re-emergence of its traditional rival, Russia. For materializing it, it stationed its forces permanently in the region after the incident of 9/11 on the pretext of eradication of terrorism and extremism, thereby inviting antagonism from the other states interested in the region, particularly the regional powers Russia and China. With this initiative of US full fledged strategic competition started among the big powers, leading to strategic, economic and political convergences and divergences among them.

It further argues that state is the main actor in international politics. The main objective of the big powers intervention in the geo-politics of Central Asia and Afghanistan is the survival and maintenance of state. The present geo-politics in Central Asia and Afghanistan is shaped by neo-realism. Keeping in view this theory of international relations, it can be said that the state interests of security and survival shape the relations among Russia, China and US in the region.

Energy is regarded as the lifeblood of the state power, its maintenance and development. The energy resources are fast decaying while its consumption is increasing day-by-day, particularly in the great powers: Russia, China and US. The US is the first in energy consumption followed by China and Russia (Asif & Muneer, 2007). These powers in order to ensure perpetual supply of energy have focused on Central Asia and Afghanistan, the big reservoir of energy resources of oil and natural gas. Therefore, these powers in order to have lion share in the energy and other

natural resources of the region have converged and diverged based on their relative interests in the region.

2.11 Neo-realism and Energy Security

It is increasingly important to study the energy security at regional and international level. Energy security do not view only the security of demand and supply, diversification of its sources and energy efficiency but also the complex relations between the consumers and suppliers, world interactions at international energy markets and issues related to energy transportation and the relation of energy with state power (Serikbayeva, 2013).

Neo-realists consider energy security specifically as “a subset of world power politics” going beyond profit maximization and absolute gain (Luft & Korin, 2009). The Central Asian energy resources and Afghanistan’s natural resources and its geostrategic location are playing crucial role in the economic growth of China, Russia, US and other actors of the new “Great Game” making it big regional powers. The progress and development of China depends on its access to Central Asian energy resources and Afghanistan natural resources and its geostrategic location. The high prices of hydrocarbon resources re-established the regional power status of Russia (Petersen & Barysch, 2011). Thus energy policy goals are to control Central Asian energy transportation routes for becoming big energy supplier to East Asia, restricting foreign intervention in gas and oil fields and to remain an important energy supplier to Europe and to secure its own energy demands (AYDIN, 2012).

Contrary to Russia, China is struggling to broaden its energy portfolio and secure reliable and continuous energy supply and to lower down harms caused by the volatility of prices through state to state agreements bringing energy resources and its transportation under state control (Erica Strecker Downs, 2004).

China and Russia, despite similar energy objectives, are applying different economic, Security and political strategies for the achievements of their energy interests in the Central Asian region. For both these states, the concept of energy security, being a high politics, is in line with realist theory of security. For both of these authoritarian governments, the security of energy is closely connected with domestic stability (Umbach, 2010). Contrasting energy interests and the strategies adopted for its accomplishment are making cooperation among the three big players of the new “Great Game” in the central Asian energy sector impossible. In this competition, the

decisive element for dominance in the energy sector of the region is how these three international players transform their potential power into actual influence in the region.

Conclusion

Neo-realism is one of the important perspectives for the study and analyses of international relation and interactions and engagements among the states. It looks the world through realistic spectacles as it is and asserts that international system is inherently anarchic in nature. There is perpetual chaos and disorder in it. Chaos in the international system is due to lack of any central authority above the states, which may keep vigilant eyes on the powers, behaviors and interactions of states for ordering their relations. This characteristic of international system has made the states of the world at odd with each other. This situation creates security dilemma.

The states are left with nothing except self help to protect itself from any outside aggression. According to neorealist, in such anarchic system, lacking impartial authority above states, all the states are worried about their own security and defense. In such a system, all the states are in search of maximizing its power relative to other states. For maximization of power and enhancement of security, states adopt different strategies such as balance of power based on mutual interests.

They may balance their power either by following internal balancing, increasing its economic and so its military capabilities or external balancing by making alliances with other powerful states. This phenomenon can be observed in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Internal balancing means increase in economic growth, building up arms and ammunitions, obtaining counterbalancing capabilities as an attempt to balance the rising military power of the rival states. An important means of internal balancing is economic growth and making arms and weapons domestically. This will enhance its capabilities to deal with its rivals. The second strategy of power balancing is through alliance formation. Weak states usually counterbalance the might of a big power by making alliance with other big and powerful state/states.

Russia and Central Asian Republics entered into alliance with China through SCO to counterbalance US an international politics in general and in Central Asia and in Afghanistan in particular. Pakistan entered into security alliance with US led security structures of SEATO and CENTO to protect itself from Indian aggression.

An international system power is usually unequally distributed among the states. Some are weak while others are strong. So the weaker states have no option other than making alliance with the strong and powerful state/states to save itself from the aggression or threat of aggression of its rivals. It is usually the mutual interests of the two or more states which bring them closer to each other and thereby making alliance. According to neo-realists such a state of affairs creates security dilemma.

In a self help system created by the prevailing international structure, all the states are striving to enhance its power either by making up arms domestically or making alliance with other powerful state(s). States usually enhance their power at the loss of the power of any other state. Central Asian energy resources and Afghanistan's natural resources plays important and decisive role in balancing and counterbalancing the power and capabilities of the big powers Russia, China and United States. States are usually not certain about each other intentions as there is no instrument for the measurement of the intentions of a state as it resides in the minds of the leadership, creating lack of trust among the components of international system, requiring states to guard the loss of their relative power which may threaten the survival of other states.

CHAPTER 3

IMPORTANCE OF CENTRAL ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN IN INTERNATIONAL POLITICS

3.1 Introduction

To study the geo-economic, geo-strategic and geo-political relations and the complex nature of interests of the big powers, Russia, China and United States, and their convergences and divergences in Central Asia and Afghanistan, it is essential to have an in-depth study of the importance of Central Asia and Afghanistan in regional and international perspectives, particularly its geo-economic, geo-political and geo-strategic value in the world politics. It is one of the important regions of the world. From historical point of view, central Asia has been playing an important role in an international politics. This region was once owned by the Iranians but later on it was confiscated by Turks from them and removed their cultural, language and the related elements from it. Due to continuous conflicts and crises the Iranians and Turks finally made a compromise between themselves and established Persian-Turks culture and civilization there, hence it became a center of Persian-Turk civilization.

It is located in the heart of Asian continent, from Western side it is stretched up to the Caspian Sea, in the East bordering with China and in the North Russian plains of South, towards the South it borders with Afghanistan and Iran.



Map of Central Asia

The Caucasus and Central Asia



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It was known as Turkistan since 1924. Some sources describe this region as “West Turkistan” or “Russian Turkistan” while some geographical sources has described it as “Middle Asia” which is not regarded as a correct term used for it. This term is derived from the Russian language who called this region as “Serednii Azii” meaning Middle Asia. Russians were commonly using this term during Soviet era for administrative convenience as Soviet Union had been divided into eighteen economic divisions/ regions and four Central Asian Republics of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan forming “Middle Asia Economic Region”. Kazakhstan was regarded as an exclusive economic region known as “Kazakhstan Economic Region”. The states in Central Asian regions are sharing common culture, way of living, customs and traditions enhanced by the experiences of centuries working as the agents of social, cultural, scientific, artistic, commercial and religious exchanges between the Western and Eastern world.

3.2 The Region Defined

Central Asia and Afghanistan is a vast landmass landlocked region situated nearly in the center of Asian continent. There is no commonly agreed definition of central Asia’s exact geographic location. Instead there are various definitions about its geographic composition; however, none of it is universally accepted. Despite of uncertainty in defining its boundaries, it does have some unique characteristics. Historically, It has been a habitat of Nomadic people and world popular Silk Road is passing through it, connecting East with West. Therefore, it has worked as a crossroads for the movement of people, goods, cultures and ideas between Europe, Middle East, South and East Asia. It is also known as middle Asia or inner Asia and is within the orbit of wider Euro Asian continent (D Kaliyeva, 2004). So it is called Eurasia.

The idea of Central Asia was introduced by a geographer, Alexander Von Humboldt in 1843 and Halford Mackinder introduced its importance in his famous theory of “Heartland”. This theory dates back to a century. He first elaborated this theory with respect to the, “Geographical Pivot of History” in the year 1904 and articulated it in his famous book “Democratic Ideals and Reality” in the year 1919. In this book, Central Asia, the pivotal area of the world was introduced as “Heartland” and was taken as the most important area of the world with respect to geo-strategic perceptions of international politics(İşeri, 2009). This theory of Heartland encompasses much of the area of present Russia, Siberia and Central Asia and then Central-Eastern Europe as shown in the map below (Strandsbjerg, 2010)



Source: (Scott & Alcenat, 2008) (Strandsbjerg, 2010).

The boundaries of Central Asia are subject to multiple definitions. The most restricted definition of this region was presented by the central government of Soviet Union defining Central Asia as solely composed of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan. Kazakhstan was not included in it at that time as it was an exclusive economic zone under Soviet Union. This was included in it later on. This definition of Central Asia was used even outside the Soviet Union in this period. In Russian language two distinct terms are used for it, “Srednyaya Azia” or “Middle Asia”. This was the narrower definition of the region of Central Asia. The other term was “Tsentralnaya Azia” meaning Central Asia (Abazov, 2008). This was the broader definition of the region. There is no meaningful difference between the two terms middle and central in the English language. However, after the disintegration of Soviet Union, the Russian Federation has included Kazakhstan in its new definition of the region. The leaders of the newly independent Central Asian Republics met in Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan soon after the disintegration of Soviet Union and announced that Central Asia from now onward would be composed of Kazakhstan and the original four Central Asian Republics included by the Soviet Union (Grousset, 1970). Since then, it became the common definition of the region.

The general history of the world by the UNESCO written just after the disintegration of Soviet Union, defined the region on the basis of climate and demarcated it with far larger boundaries.

According to it, Central Asia includes Mongolia, Western China, North East Iran, Afghanistan and Western Pakistan, Central East Russia, South of Taiga, the former soviet republic.

Besides that, the other way of defining it is based on ethnicity, particularly, the areas populated by Eastern Turkic, Eastern Iranian, and Mongolian people. It included Xinxiang, the Muslim region of Turkey, Turkic Muslim dominated region of South Siberia, the five Central Asian Republics, Afghanistan and Turkistan. The Tibetans populated area is also considered to be its part. The above mentioned people are considered to be the indigenous people of the region.



Source: (Kurecic, 2010)

Central Asian region located in the heart of Asia is landlocked. Therefore, it has no direct access to the sea. For trading with the outside world it has to depend on any third neighboring country. This is why its energy resources were passing through Russian territory during Soviet Union period. There is no clear demarcation of its boundaries. Different writers have used different criteria for defining it. History reveals that the region was consist of a large landmass, starting from the southern boundary of the Siberia and runs through Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, including Caspian Sea, former Soviet Central Asia, areas of Inner China, Chinese province of Xinjiang, areas of Tibet and Inner Mongolia. Historically, this vast landmass was called as Turkestan (Christian, 2000). Central Asia's boundary cannot be clearly defined on the basis of ethnical and cultural criteria. Its population is composed of different ethnic group's e.g. in Kazakhstan the population is composed of Russians and Kazakhs. Central Asia was inhabited by the Russian minorities owing to the colonization of the Central Asia by Russia in the nineteenth Century (Kurečić, 2010).

3.3 Central Asia and the Great Games; Historical Perspectives

The clock of geopolitics is rewinding in the Central Asian region. The late 19th century conditions and the political environment are returning, affecting greatly the foreign policies of the region's states. Central Asia and Afghanistan has been a battle ground of "Great Game" played between Russian and British empires to physically control the region. the british government wanted to restrict the spread of communism towards Afghanistan and subcontinent while wanted to get access to warm water through Afghanistan. Great game was a competition between capitalism and communism. Presently it offers a platform for Russia, China and United States to review its strategic competition for influence in the region known as the new "Great Game" (G. Chufrin, 2004). This is not a repetition of the 19th century "Great Game" where the CARs were passive spectators, being at the disposal of neighboring protagonists Russia. Now as they are sovereign and independent states so they are playing actively in this geopolitical tussle among big powers for power, influence and hegemony in the region (Rezun, 1992).

Since 1813 till 1907 Great Britain and Russia under Tsarists were engaged in a struggle for controlling Central Asia physically. Britain named this competition as the "Great Game" while Russia named it as the tournament of shadows. Britain feared that Russian control of the region

would work as a springboard for its invasions on the Britain controlled territories in the Sub-Continent and was conscious particularly regarding Russia gaining access to warm water (Indian Ocean) and warm water port. The British naval power and its bases in the Indian sub-continent worked as a platform for a push towards North-West into Central Asia while the Russian empire pushed towards South from the North. The Russian troops controlling Khanate one after the other feared the Britain that Afghanistan might not become a stage for Russian invasion of the Indian Sub-Continent. The Anglo-Afghan wars were aimed at the establishment of a forward policy to control Southward expansion of Russia. After the humiliating defeat and subsequent retreat from the Afghanistan, Britain put aside its imperialistic ambitions and declared Afghanistan as a buffer zone state.

However, the Russians kept its advancement Southward towards Afghanistan and Tashkent was formally annexed by 1865 and three years later Samarkand became the part of Russian empire and the same year in a Peace Treaty the independence of Bukhara was stripped away. Russian domination now extended till the Northern bank of Darya Amu (River Amu). Its expansion feared to collide with increasing British dominance of the territories of the Sub-Continent. These two powerful empires played a furious game of espionage, expeditions, exploration and imperialistic diplomacy throughout Central Asia and Afghanistan.(Arghandawi, 1989). Implementation of “Grand Mark Treaty” concluded on May, 26th 1879 by Britain upon Afghanistan and the implementation of the “Treaty of Durand Line” of 1893 were some of the incidents of the stripping of Afghanistan of its sovereignty. The “Treaty of Grand Mark” was reaffirmed through the pact of “Anglo-Afghan” in 1905. The rivalry and competition always threatened each other but never led them to hot war. However, Afghanistan remained the center of confrontation between Russian and British empires. Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 closed the period of “Great Game” outlining framework for future diplomatic relations.

The next phase of the “Great Game” started with the eruption of Bolshevik revolution in the year 1917, nullifying the existing treaties and agreements and setting up new goals and objectives. Third Anglo-Afghan war of 1919, declaration of Amanullah khan as a king for Afghanistan’s independence, invasion on British India Northern frontiers and subsequent signing of “Rawalpindi Agreement” of 1919, all these events contributed to the re-establishment of Afghanistan’s independence and self determination in external affairs and stripping off the Anglo yoke (Arghandawi, 1989).

Afghanistan and Soviet Union signed a treaty of friendship in May 1921. According to this treaty it granted an aid to Afghanistan in the shape of cash, technology and military apparatus. Seeing Afghanistan slipping out of their domains of influence the Britain imposed lenient and minor sanctions as a reaction to the violation of treaties. During the regime of King Mohammad Nadir, both the British and Soviet Union played the political circumstances to their relative advantages (Kakar, 1995). The Soviets (CARs) were getting aid for counterbalancing Uzbek rebellions in 1930-1931 while Britain was providing aid to Afghanistan to create a professionally trained army so that it may be able to fight against communists. Soviets and Britain interests converged with each other at the start of Second World War, bringing an environment of cooperation between Soviet Union; consequently this phase of “Great Game” came to an end.

At the end of Second World War, United States replaced Britain as the world super power. Since then it started containing the influence of Soviet Union, asserting its influence in the Middle East in pursuance of energy resources. This renewed realignment of power politics between Soviet Union and United States round the world was known as Cold War. With the fall of Soviet Union in 1991 the Cold War between the then super powers reached to its logical end. As a result of the disintegration of Soviet Union five Muslims dominated Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan got independence (Brzezinski, 1992).

All these states are ethnically heterogeneous; sharing common culture, way of living, customs and traditions enhanced by the experiences of centuries of living together, working as the agents of social, cultural, scientific, artistic, commercial and religious exchanges between the West and East. With the independence of CARs from the Soviet Union the new “Great Game” began with new players, new aims and objectives.

The newly independent CARs were looking beyond Russia for investment in its oil and gas sector. The oil and gas companies of Europe and US rushed towards the region. It was not acceptable for US that CARs energy resources may travel through Russian and Iranian territory to international market. She wanted to put an end to Russian monopoly over CARs energy resources, its transportation routes and its role in the determination of its price in international market (Friedrichs, 2010).

The next best suitable alternative route of CARs energy resources transportation according to US was through Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. Pakistan and US collectively supported the Taliban

when they came to power in Afghanistan in 1996, bringing stability required by foreign investors to pursue their energy deal. The Taliban regime unfortunately was not willing to support US plan of its oil and gas supply through Afghanistan, Pakistan via India. Soon afterward US decided to demolish and destroy Taliban regime in Afghanistan. The White House was looking for an appropriate political pretext to go to war against Taliban. The pretext was designed in the shape of 9/11 incident. Taliban regime was accused of supporting the leader of “Al-Qaida” Osama Bin Laden thus deserved to be destroyed (Khan, 2010).

The third phase started in October 2001 when US established its military bases in the Central Asia and Afghanistan to fight against the Taliban and other terrorist’s net works. However, this has been the stance of US, while the stance of Russia and china has been altogether different from it. US influence in the region shattered when it started promoting Western style of democracy in the CARs. The main point of these policies, with negative repercussions for the US, reached when it responded to the Andijan incident in May, 2005 in Uzbekistan by criticizing the government severely, as a reaction US was asked to vacate its bases located there.

Similarly, Kirgizstan also asked for the vacation of US air base but later on Kirgizstan agreed on extending the lease with a multifold increase in the lease amount. This call was also echoed by all the members of SCO in July 2005 demanding the withdrawal of NATO forces from Uzbekistan and Kirghizstan (Kan, 2009). The importance of Central Asia and Afghanistan can best be understood by explaining it under three dimensions, geo-political, geo-economics and geo-strategic.

3.4 Geo-political Dimensions of the Importance of Central Asia in the International Perspectives

Central Asia and Afghanistan has an important geo-strategic location due to its nearness to big players of international politics, Russia and China. It has been divided, re-divided, conquered and fragmented of and on but has never become a seat of power for any empire or any big and powerful state. Resultantly, the region has served as the battle ground for the external powers than to be a power itself. Once an owner of the “Silk Road”, this region’s centrality in the world politics remained comparatively insignificant during the Soviet Union’s occupation, is on the way of reclaiming its lost importance because of its huge energy resources and its infrastructure

left by Soviet Union. These energy resources are very important in boasting the world economy in the time to come, particularly due to depleting energy resources of the Middle East and its increasing demands. It is noteworthy here that before the exploration of CARs energy resources and later on its occupation by Soviet Union, the world states, particularly the big powers, whose energy consumption was more than the other states, were mostly dependent on the energy resources of Middle East (Capisani, 2000). At present, the region is passing through turbulent period because of instability caused by religious extremism, terrorism, poverty and lack of education. It has been faced with a number of challenges which could be held responsible for eroding of its stability, obstructing its development, threatening its external and internal security and its sovereignty. Besides having huge energy resources and economic potential due to exploration of energy resources, the region is endowed with the threat of continuous instability, ethnic and religious violence, economic difficulties, drug trafficking, and smuggling, the constant sources of instability. Prevailing geopolitical importance of Central Asian region can be characterized in the following ways.

Geographically, it is located with Russia in its North, towards East is situated China, Pakistan and Iran, and to the South Afghanistan, Georgia and Turkey to the West. It borders with nuclear powers China, Pakistan and Russia. Same is the case with Afghanistan. It share borders with regional and atomic powers such as china, Pakistan and the perceived atomic power Iran. Besides it has boundary with CARs.

It possesses abundance of natural gas and oil reserves and other huge and precious mineral and natural resources. Rivalry and competition among the big powers in the region along with economic opportunities is centered on the exploitation and exploration of these energy resources (Kim & Indeo, 2013). Approximately from 110 billion barrels to 243 billion barrels of crude oil worth about \$4 trillion are present in the Central Asia region. According to US department of energy, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan alone has more than 130 trillion barrels of oil three times greater than United States (Kleveman, 2004). In a tabulated form it is shown in the table below.

Country	Oil Reserves in Billions Barrels			Gas Reserves in Trillion Cubic Feet		
Country	Proven	Possible	Total	Proven	Possible	Total
Uzbekistan	.3-.59	2	2.3-2.59	.55-1.7	38	38.55-39.7
Turkmenistan	.55-1.7	38	38.55-39.7	9-40	92	101-132
Kazakhstan	9-40	92	101-132	1	15	15.1

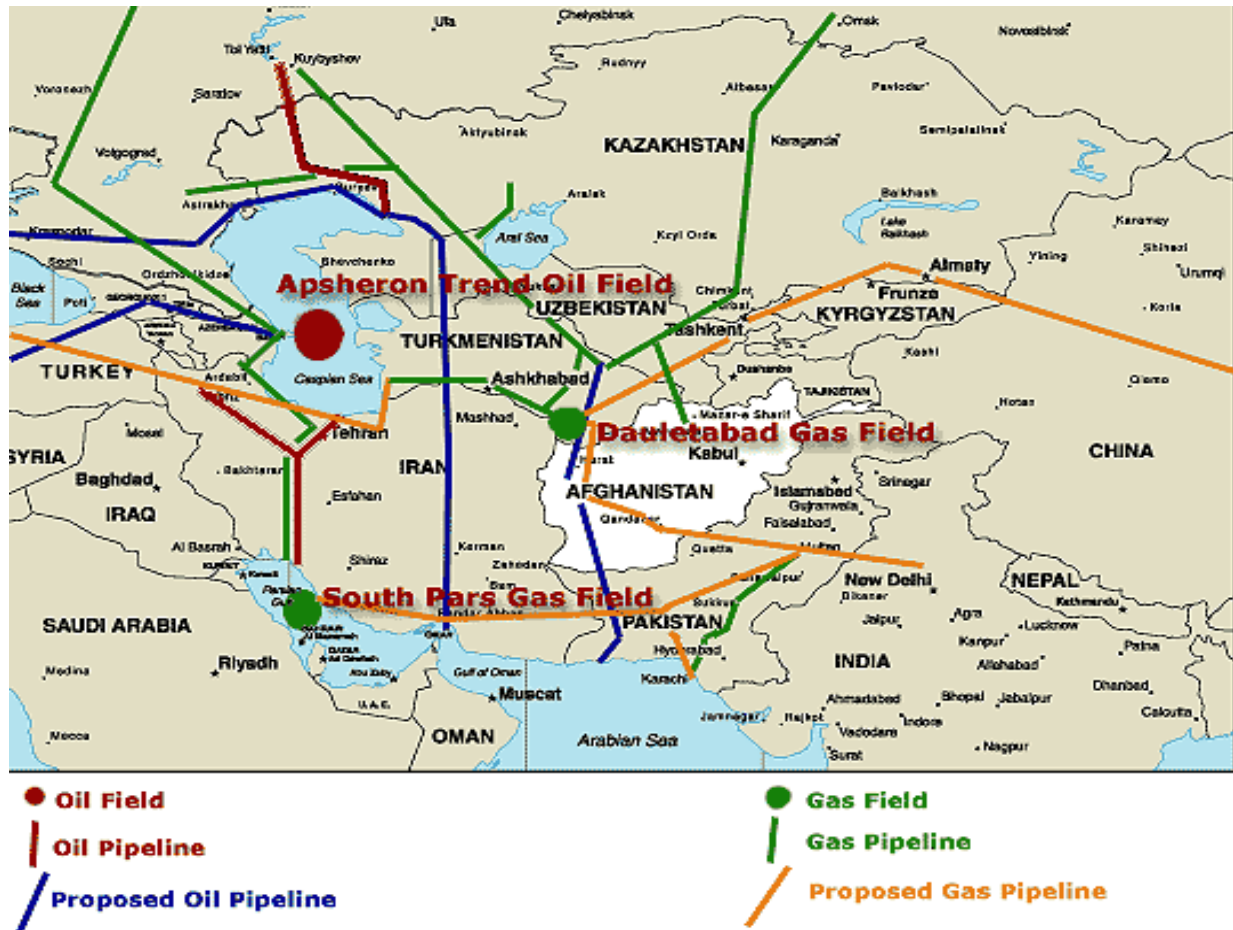
Table: 1 Natural Gas and Oil Reserves in Central Asian Republics

Source: United States Department of Energy Information Administration, July 2014 Russia, United States and Central Asian Republics themselves are desirous to speed up the oil flow to international market but there is lack of pipeline infrastructure. The pipelines which are operational in the region are capable of transporting a small portion of oil and natural gas to the international market. To attain these objectives of speedy, quick and huge flow of oil, the most suitable pipelines identified are the following.

- Northern pipeline route: Russia is in favor of a Northern pipeline route. Kazakhstan desires to increase and expand its present pipeline network, linking it with Russian pipelines infrastructure.
- Western pipeline route: US, Georgia, Turkey and Azerbaijan are in favor of a Western pipeline route transporting oil and natural gas to the Supsa, a Georgian port, from there it would be transported by black sea to the continent of Europe.
- The most suitable, direct and the cheapest of all is the route towards South through Iran to the Persian Gulf. This option is, however, not acceptable to United States, therefore, obstructing it by alternative pipeline.
- China wants to construct a pipeline of oil across Kazakhstan to China.
- The United States oil company Unocal is planning to construct oil and gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI).

This pipeline politics if materialized would convert the region into a hub of oil and gas pipelines as well as communication corridor emerging from it in different directions linking Russia, China, European Continent and the Caucasus region, Indian Ocean and trans-Caspian region (Ebel & Menon, 2000).

Map of Central Asia Oil and Gas pipeline



Source: (Hopkirk, 2013)

Investment of West has made some inroads into the Central Asian region Oil and natural Gas industry. The leadership of the largest oil and natural gas producing countries in Central Asia has not been friendly with the United States and their investments climates are, therefore, not encouraging.

3.5 Geopolitical Dimension of the Importance of Central Asia in the Regional Perspectives

At the end of 21st century, the “Great Game” of the 19th century between Russian and British Empires has transformed into “New Great Game” being played at the Central Asian ground. The Central Asian region is a cradle of Islamic and Iranian civilization. Most of the Muslims of this region are Sunni and they are re-seeking their lost identification causing challenges and conflicts

among the people of different sects as well as the governmental authorities reminding Soviet era, where liberty and democracy were not known. Along with economic factors, these crises and conflicts caused the disintegration of Soviet Union. Presently, Central Asia is bridging North-South and East- West and has a privileged position in the world politics (İşeri, 2009).

It is located between two big powers Russia and China and some trans-regional and regional powers like India, Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan playing active role in the geo-politics of the region. The big trans-regional and regional powers have converted this region into a battle ground for competition and rivalry among themselves over the energy resources and its transportation routes of the region causing crises, therefore, making it an important geo-political region of the 21st century(Sahir & Qureshi, 2007). Its geo-political importance has been enhanced by its location in Eurasia and in the middle of Asia.

Islamic fundamentalists and extremists movements like Wahabism, Sufism, Salafism, Talibanism and arms smuggling, separatism, weapons of mass destruction, drug trafficking, radioactive materials besides these color revolutions, separatists' movements, unemployment, poverty and corruption are some of the characteristics of the region that has destabilized the Central Asian region(Rubin & Snyder, 1998). The presence of illegal arms gangs and secret armies in the hilly and mountainous regions of Badakhshan, Pamir, and the valley of Farghana and Tian Shah, sometime secretly and other time openly, terrifying the people in the concerned region of Central Asia (Amirahmadian, 2010).

At the inception of independence in early 1990s, a civil war started, led by Abdullah Noori (Collins, 2002). It settled precedence for the Islamic movements in the valley of Farghana in 2000. Its aim was the removal of inequalities and discriminations between developed, prosperous North and underdeveloped, poor South. These movements led Kyrgyzstan towards color revolutions in the year 2004 resulting in the downfall of the Aghayev regime. Hizb-ul-Tahrir operating in Uzbekistan is comparatively large and expanded movement working against the federal government. It has widespread activities and has attracted a lot of volunteers. The incident of Andijan in the valley of Farghana that occurred in the beginning of the celebrations of Nouroz in early 2000 has also been attributed to Islamic extremism against the federal government (Abdullaev, Kazbekov, Jumaboev, & Manthritlake, 2009). This revolution was ruthlessly and cruelly suppressed by the federal government authorities in the same year.

Disputes and crises over water resources of the region has become a big challenge for regional and local authorities (Sievers, 2001). This factor is playing important role in the geo-politics of Central Asia; presently its signs have started arising. It is considerably important from the eco-strategic and geo-political point of view. Water resources in the region is a legend of have and have not, a bone of contention among the region's states (Lopour, 2015). The upstream states such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan has big water reservoirs while downstream states of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan has scarcity of water. For water, it depends on upstream states of the region (Peachey, 2004).

It has continental climate and is under the influence of humid currents of Atlantic Ocean. Due to this, deserts and semi-deserts conditions are prevailing there. The existence of two big and large deserts of “Kyzyl-Kum” situated in Turkmenistan and “Karakul” situated in Uzbekistan projects that the region has harsh and tough climate (Zhou, Zhang, Chen, & Sun, 2007).

In spite of unfavorable conditions for agriculture in the Central Asian Republics, the basic source of income, livelihood and employment of the people of the region has been agriculture. Agriculture in the region has suffered because of underdevelopment in the Central Asian Republics. This factor of underdevelopment had gained much importance and played active role in the Central Asian region states struggle for independence. Water resources are regarded yet to be an important source for agriculture sector. Due to centralized planning, there were no water issues and conflicts during Soviet Union period, but soon after its disintegration and subsequent independence of the Central Asian Republics, immense of problems erupted such as water conflicts and crises, economic stagnation, brain drain, descending mutual cooperation among the Republics and social disorder (O'Hara, 2000).

3.6 Water Crises in Central Asia

The Tajik president stated the importance of water resources in the following words “The value of water is not less than the value of oil and natural gas and other natural resources” (Bichsel, 2011). It is professed that in the coming time, the oil producing states will exchange its oil for water, with the water enriched states like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. They will think that you have oil resources and we have water resources, let exchange it, a seriously dangerous and destructive thinking challenging the region. Everyone is well aware that this is not a valid comparison to be made. International law stresses the fair and righteous distribution of water

resources common among different countries whose lives depend on the use of these common water resources.

Water obtained without human efforts and financial investment is regarded as a gift of God. Contrary to that, oil is produced with human efforts and financial investment. Water is renewable source while oil is non-renewable source of energy. Some reservoirs of water have been constructed during Soviet period for the storage and distribution of water in the Central Asian Republics such as in the mountainous region of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (Votrin, 2003). In those days, the federal government of Soviet Union was paying for the maintenance and operation of these reservoirs. Now this responsibility has fallen on the fragile shoulders of successor independent states of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In return for the water supply, these Republics need to be financially supported by all other states which are utilizing water from these reservoirs such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, having less water and more oil and natural gas resources. But these republics are not willing to pay in return for water supply (Severskiy, 2004). They want to use it as they were using it during Soviet era, free of any kind of payment, thereby, creating water conflicts and crises among the different states of the region.

The Tajik and Kyrgyz Republics of Central Asia own sixty percent (60%) of the water resources of the region. They both are poor states having no energy resources. Instead of oil and gas, these states have immense of hydro-power energy resources (Bohr, 2004). The states need oil and natural gas mainly supplied by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan but presently they have no sufficient funds to pay for the import of energy resources, thus creating problems and conflicts in the region.

The volume of water resources has not changed and relatively remained the same but its demands has increased immensely in the lower basin states. Due to this, water does not flow into Aral Sea thereby, creating environmental destruction and catastrophe. The management of the common use of the common water resources either of the surface or underground has got political characteristics (Micklin, 2000). The upstream states construction of projects on international rivers may decrease the flow of water making conflicts among states inevitable. Disputes concerning trans-governmental waters may not be solved due to lack of international laws and methods of its operation (Kraska, 2009). However, governmental compromises and agreements on the basis of friendly neighborliness may solve such water disputes arising between two or more states.

It is evident that these principles are not framed by recognized authority as there is no such determined procedure and effective executive guarantee behind it. SCO and CSTO can play crucial role in it.



Source: (Blank, 2014)

3.7 Ethnic Conflicts in the Central Asian Republics

Multi-ethnic and multi-national composition of the Central Asian Republics is another important issue that needs the attention of the governmental authorities. The problem of Meskhetian Turks that has arisen during the initial period of independence of it is an example that has not been resolved yet. During the Second World War Stalin, the then ruler of the Soviet Union, ordered the Meskhetian Turks for leaving Georgia and to settle in Farghana valley of Central Asia. They were blamed for spying and, therefore, were not allowed to return to their homelands. Furthermore, they were forced by the local population of the Farghana valley to leave the valley in the beginning of 1990s. So, they were forcibly migrated and were settled in the North Caucasus and Azerbaijan.

The Islamic movements led by Hizb-ul- Tahrir and their terrorists activities in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, particularly in Farghana valley such as Batken, and Andijan incidents are

some of the geopolitical issues of the region (Hunter, 2001). Due to ethnic composition of the population, the gap between the rulers and the ruled and the distance among the different geographical regions of Central Asia, it has the potential ability for separatism and disintegration. These factors have brought them together for the establishment of Collective Security Treaty Organization and Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

There are several ethnic conflicts in the Central Asian region. According to a survey conducted by “Atlantic Council of the United States” some important among them are the following.

Country	Conflict	Nature of Conflict	Current Status
Uzbekistan	Eastern, Northern and Southern borders	Incidents with neighbors/ Skirmishes with guerrillas	Active
	Kara Kalpakstan	Separatists activities	Potential
Turkmenistan	Chirag (Caspian)	Boundary demarcation dispute With Azerbaijan	Active
Tajikistan	Civil War	Government versus United Tajik Opposition	Cease fire since 1997
	Khujand	Tension and skirmishes with Uzbekistan	Active
	Gorno-Badakhshan	Separatists activities of Ismailis	Potential/ latent
Kyrgyzstan	Batken and Lailek	Periodic guerilla activities	Active
Kazakhstan	South-Western border/Farghana	Tension skirmishes with Uzbekistan	Active but at intervals
	Vostochnyy Kazakhstan	Ethnic Russian separatists demand for independence in Southern borders	Occasional incidents
	Eastern border	Uighur separatists to Uyghur's in Xinjiang (China)	Active
	Southern border	Skirmishes and tensions with Uzbekistan	Active

Table.2 source: (C. Fairbanks, Nelson, Starr, & Weisbrode, 2001)

3.8 Geographical Issues

Besides ethnic conflicts, there are also some geographical issues and disputes. These are particularly regarding administrative divisions and boundary demarcations. It is in fact regarded as the result and legacy of the Soviet Union policies. The protests of the Tajik community of Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand living between Turks and Uzbeks in the region of Uzbekistan regarding Stalin's policies to separate them from Tajikistan is one of the important unresolved problems having the potential to spring again at any time.

It is known that at the start of Bolshevik revolution in 1917, the anti-communism Islamic movement known as "Basmachis" was primarily led and guided by Tajiks based in Tajikistan and resisted in the mountainous areas (Singh & Bodh, 2010). After suppression of the resistance, the said parts of the Central Asian region were given to Uzbekistan. Now they wish to be reunited and annexed from Tajikistan. The trend of Russian living in the North of Kazakhstan, constituting forty percent (40%) of the total population and their desire to be acceded to Russia is one of the important challenges to the federal government of Kazakhstan (Lubin & Rubin, 1999).

3.9 Problems of Identity

The dual citizenship of Russians and their identity in the Central Asian Republics is playing an active and important role in the destabilization of the region (King & Melvin, 2006). Identity regaining and the issue of national identity are other serious and challenging problems faced by the people of Central Asia. Nation-state and nation building are the subjects of the main concern of the governments of Central Asian Republics.

3.10 Geopolitical Description of the Individual Central Asian Republics

Geographic location has great impacts on every aspect of human and the state life. Whether it is social, cultural, religious, political, economic, industrial or agricultural- all are influenced by social climate and natural resources of the state and the entire region. The same is true about political life, institutions and international relations. The locations of rivers and mountains have clear impacts on political developments throughout the world. The same is true of such geographical conditions as the ratio of rainfall, differences in temperature and the availability of transportation and communication sources. Nevertheless, some scholars have gone to the extent

in the geographical approach to the study and analysis of international politics and international relations. An example of the importance in the study of international relations has been the Heartland theory of Halford Mackinder. He asserts that;

“Who rules Eurasia commands the Heartland

Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island

Who rules the world island commands the world” (Bassin & Aksenov, 2006)

In this way, he predicted that the power which will control this region of Central Asia will be in a position to rule over the whole world. No doubt, geography does influence the political life of a state and its decision making regarding the international politics. A scientific application of geographical approach is the influence of geographical conditions on the foreign policy decisions of a state commonly known as geopolitics. Accordingly, the foreign policy or international relations of states or regions is determined by its geographic location which means that geography influences many kinds of political decisions (Snyder et al., 2002). Knowledge of geography may help provide the basis for predicting decisions that would be made and the probable results of it.

Uzbekistan:

Uzbekistan has unique geo-strategic and geo-political position by sharing borders with the other four Central Asian Republics. It has the largest population of about 25 million with considerable diaspora in the neighboring countries which can be used as a source for influence there. The use of force by the government of Uzbekistan to suppress the Andijan uprising was condemned by the United States. However, Russia, China and India support it. The European Union even imposed economic sanctions on the government of Uzbekistan in 2005. Karimov, the president of Uzbekistan, ordered the United States troops to vacate Karshi-Khanabad air base within the time period of six months (Sevim & Rozanov, 2014). Next year in December, Russia got the right to use Navoi air base in case of emergency. China on the other side, is constantly trying to get air base on the territory of Uzbekistan.

Kazakhstan:

The next important and big state of the region is Kazakhstan. Presently, its GDP is \$138.7 billion and approximately its growth rate is 8%. After Russia, it is geographically the largest country of

all the former Soviet Republics. It has huge energy resources and other precious metals and minerals. It has a large agricultural land producing livestock and food grains. Kazakhstan industrial sector depends on the exploration and processing of other natural resources. There is a fierce competition among Russia, United States, China, India, European countries for the acquisition of energy resources. The South Korean government agreed to invest \$2 billion in joint projects in energy, uranium exploration and extraction, transportation, construction and banking sectors(Khan, 2002).

The disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991, divided the vast land mass of Central Asia into small states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Olcott, 1991). Kurecic estimated the total population of the Central Asian states as approximately 60 million and the total area of these Muslims dominated independent states as approximately 4 million square kilometers.

The regional geography tells that this region shares borders with the major powers including Russia and China and it is in proximity to the countries of Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran, facing instability and is the hub of the war on terrorism (Foster, 2008).Kazakhstan's total area is 2.7 million square kilometers and, therefore, the largest among the five Central Asian Republics. The smallest among them is the Republic of Tajikistan which is occupying an area of 143,100 square kilometers (Dhaka, 2005).

Kyrgyzstan:

Kyrgyzstan has \$10.49 GDP and 2% growth rate. It is a poor and mountainous country with agro economy. Wool, tobacco, cotton and meat are the prominent agricultural products. Cotton and tobacco are exported in large quantity. Natural gas, uranium, electricity, mercury and gold are its industrial exports (Nasritdinov, 2007). Soon after independence, Kyrgyzstan was active in carrying out market reforms like improvement of regulatory systems and land reforms but political destabilization in 2005-2006 undermined the investment climate. The new government in Kyrgyzstan is pursuing a policy of counterbalancing United States and Russia's interests. It has allowed Russia to maintain an air base while the United States a military base through which it may conduct operation in Afghanistan. The Moscow has started to transfer military equipments free of charges to Kyrgyzstan as a part of the base deal (O'malley & McDermott, 2003).

Tajikistan:

Although it is deficient in oil and gas resources but due to huge water resources, it has abundant of hydro-power energy. In order to fulfill its oil and gas requirements, it is dependent on downstream states of Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Instead of oil and gas, it has been gifted with huge water reservoirs which enabling it to produce huge hydro-power energy. So the downstream states rich in oil and gas depends on Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan for water essential for its agriculture (Marinina, 2007).

It has allowed Moscow to maintain an air-base in Tajikistan and China to put investment in Tajikistan state owned Telephone Company. It doubled sales of aluminum to Norway and selling diamonds, gold and copper to Britain. In return for the provision of air-base to Russia, the Russian governments has given military equipments to Tajikistan free of cost in a way she is doing with Kyrgyzstan in return for the provision of an air-base there. Tajikistan's Ministry of Defense has received two MI- 24 and two MI- 8 Helicopters in November 2006 (Starchak, 2009). The government of Tajikistan granted Zarubezh neftegaz a subsidiary of Russian national oil company, Gazprom, two licenses for the conduction of geological survey in Tajikistan, an action which is usually taken prior to oil and gas exploration deals, in December, 29, 2006.

Turkmenistan:

Turkmenistan shares borders with Kazakhstan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan and Caspian Sea (Effimoff, 2000). It has large hydrocarbon and natural gas resources that could prove beneficial for this developing country if its extraction and delivery are advanced and expanded. Turkmenistan is active in searching for alternative petroleum transportation routes to break Russian energy transportation pipeline monopoly (Bahgat, 2002).

It is largely deserted country with limited agriculture and huge energy resources. It is usually governed by authoritative ex-communists and has tribal social structure. Turkmenistan has developed cautious approach towards economic reforms with the hope to use natural gas and sales of cotton to maintain its inefficient economy.

Turkmenistan suffered a lot from lack of adequate export routes for its natural gas from 1998-2003 (Wignarajan & Wignaraja, 2006). But in the period from 2003-2006 its export rose by an average of 15% per annum mainly because of higher natural gas prices internationally. This was followed by signing an agreement with Russia to sale all its natural gas to Russia in 2009. Its

future prospects are discouraging because of excessive poverty, lack of proper education system and misuse of oil and natural gas revenues by the state government and its unwillingness to adopt market oriented reforms. Natural gas and oil resources that are proven in Turkmenistan are estimated to be 273 billion barrels (2003est) and 2.01 trillion cubic meters (2005 est.) respectively. However, currently China has expressed willingness and interests in the natural gas of Turkmenistan. The political leadership of China and Turkmenistan signed an agreement on April 3, 2006 according to that natural gas pipeline will be constructed from Turkmenistan to China and it will buy 30 billion cubic meters of Turkmenistan's gas each year for 30 years starting from 2009 (Hancock, 2006). This pipeline called Atlasu-Alashanku became operational in 2009.

The Caspian Sea region is regarded to be the part of this region because its Eastern portion touches it. Caspian Sea is a landlocked reserve of water (Kurečić, 2010). The Caspian Sea Basin possesses huge energy resources, increasing the strategic importance of the bordering states. These energy resources of the Caspian Basin are of immense importance to the major economies of the world (Yergin, 2006). In order to get advantage from these energy resources, it is important to develop a geo-strategy in connection to the geo-economy. The energy strategies of the region depend on different prevailing political and economic strategies.

Physiographic features mark it with deserts, plains, steep grasslands, mountains and small water reservoirs. Its Physiographic description is that, the steppe grasslands are situated in the northern part of Central Asia. Towards the western side, there are vast plains. The southern and eastern sides of Central Asia have mountain peaks. The mountain ranges include Koppeh Daghi of northern Iran, Pamir, Afghanistan's Hindu Kush mountain range, mountain range which makes part of Tajikistan southern side and the Tien Shan mountain range which runs up to the western China. Deserts and semi deserts also form part of it. Turkmenistan has a desert of Karakorum. The western part of the Uzbekistan is a desert area which is Kyzyl-Kum (Shovkoon, 2010).

The vast Central Asian region has an inland water system. The rivers and lakes of this region are locked inside the region. The major important rivers of the region are the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, having tributaries which are the important source of the water in the Central Asian region. Amu Darya is the largest river of Central Asia (Libert, Orolbaev, & Steklov, 2008). The length of this river is 1,578 miles and falls in the Aral Sea in the northwestward. The main tributaries of this river include Zeravshan River and The river of Kasha, flowing to the desert of Kyzyl-Kum

and end there. It has mostly dry climate (Akbar, 2012). Its irrigation depends on its water system. This region receives very little rainfall due to high evaporation rate.

Inter-regional trade is the important factor of its economy. The prevailing infrastructure of the region shows its excessive dependency on Soviet Union in the economic field. The infrastructure of the region is insufficient to allow the states of this region to get benefit from the opportunities of accessing the international markets (Rashid, 2002).

After the fall of Soviet Union, the Central Asian states got independence. The dependence of these states on Soviet Union prior to their independence cost them heavily disabling them to manage the economic affairs even after independence. Immediately, after their independence, the GDP of these states went down. They were not integrated to the world markets; therefore, it became a reason for the decline of their GDP. After an immediate blow, the GDP of these newly independent states started growing in the latter half of the 1990s. In 2009 Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan witnessed the abrupt trends of rapid increase in their GDP (Babali, 2009). Main cause of this rise GDP has been the increase of oil export.

3.11 Three parameters for the analysis of Central Asia's Geopolitical Environment

Three parameters are usually used for the analysis and evaluation of the importance of Central Asia. The first one is its geopolitical environment that can be analyzed by understanding the neighboring countries and the concerned powers. It is surrounded by major powers as its neighbors such as Russia and China. Russia being one of them is the former colonial master of it. It is connected to Russia in the North and shares Eastern borders with China, an economic giant of the century. On the Southern side, it borders with Iran and Afghanistan. It shares close ethnic and cultural links with the neighboring countries. This region also has close proximity to the countries like Pakistan, sharing historic links and the trend of tribal movements. Turkey is the other important country with which it has historic relations (Fatima & Zafar, 2014). In its geopolitical environment, some intra-regional links are also important. Among these, the US and its allied nations have strong diplomatic relations with the regional states. Its relations with the regional and intra-regional powers establish a geopolitical environment which enhances its importance in the world politics (Sengupta, 2005).

3.12 Energy Reserves

Central Asia is the region which has immense of natural resources particularly oil, natural gas and hydropower. The most important among it are oil and natural gas reserves. It has the second largest energy reserves in the world. This region also has vast reserve of precious metals such as gold, silver, magnesium and uranium etc. These natural resources enhance its geopolitical importance in the world around. The powerful international players and the regional powers are trying to get lion share in it and are pursuing different policies to further their national interests in the region (Marlène Laruelle & Peyrouse, 2009).

3.13 Geo-economic Dimension of the Importance of Central Asia

Central Asian region oil reserves are estimated to be 15-30 billion barrels while natural gas reserves are estimated to be 230-360 trillion cubic feet. The quality of Central Asian oil is highly good in comparison to Middle Eastern oil (Kurečić, 2010). The huge energy reserves and its high quality had attracted great powers to pursue their objectives and interests in this region. It has been the bone of contention among the great players of international politics involved in the region's geopolitics. They are trying their utmost to exploit these hydrocarbons and natural gas resources for their future energy security and demands. The major aim of the great powers particularly Russia, China and United States is to export these energy resources to the international markets and to control its pipeline routes to put an end to Russian monopoly over it (Yergin, 2006).

One of the important aspects of this "New Great Game" is that the Central Asian region states do not have modern technology and lack economic resources required for the exploration and exportation of these energy resources. Therefore, offering opportunities to the big players of international politics to invest in the energy sector so as to establish their influence in the region (S. Blank, 1995). They depend greatly on Russia for trading and transportation of its energy reserves. Russia has firm control over the transport pipelines of gas and oil from the region to the international market. The US and its European allies are in favor of construction of pipelines with different routes in order to put an end to Russian and Chinese monopoly in the region. For this purpose, private oil companies at international level and the state owned companies of

different countries paid attention to invest in Turkmenistan which had huge gas resources and Kazakhstan which had rich oil reserves(Petersen & Barysch, 2011).

3.14 Geo-Strategic Dimension of the Importance of Central Asia

Helfords Mackinder described it in 1943 as the “Geographical Pivot of History”, means the world history revolves round it because of its unique geographic location and rich natural and energy resources. The other names given to this region by Helfords Mackinder: Pivot Area or Heartland. According to him, it is surrounded by two concentric crescents, the inner crescent and the outer crescent. Inner crescent is composed of China, India, Turkey, and Japan. The outer crescent includes Japan, Canada, United States, Britain, South Africa, and Australia(Banuazizi, Weiner, & Blank, 1996).

Its geostrategic importance is the result of its geopolitical and geo-economic significance. Helfords Mackinder in 1904 stated that it is the Heart of Eurasia- it has been playing an active and a significant role in the international politics. According to his “Heartland Theory”, the state which would control the Heartland (Central Asia) would control and influence the world affairs or international politics (Blacksell, 2004).The Central Asian Republics are also part of Mackinder’s Heartland. It became the centre of attraction for big powers such as Russia, China and the United States soon after its independence from Soviet Union in 1991. It enjoys close proximity with the regional powers and important countries which are these days regarded as a centre of strategic and security interests. These include Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. Its location and the battle for interests among the big powers involved in the region makes it a strategic-hub of world politics(Ehteshami, 1994).

From the geo-strategic point of view, according to Mackinder heartland theory, it has positive and peculiar characteristics favorable for defense and strike. It has also been a bone of contention between marine geo-strategic realm led by United States and “NATO” and continental geo-strategic realm led by Russia and “Warsaw Pact”. Presently, the same trend in new guise and model has started since the disintegration of Soviet Union and is going to have firm basis in the region, probably bringing Russia and United States into military and ideological clash(Faringdon, 1986).

The Central Asian Republics are mostly located in the extreme South of the ex-Soviet Union. 1/3rd of its territory is situated at 40- North-geographical latitude. In the South, these republics

are restricted to “Kopet Dagh” mountains and in the East “Pamir and Tianshah” mountains. The only way to pass it is through narrow gorges and high passes. There is a narrow way to Afghanistan from Kushka, the extreme southern part of it. Transportation and transit of passengers and goods from Central Asia to Afghanistan is usually made through it.

Marine routes through Caspian Sea are facilitating the relations between Central Asian region states with Russia, Iran, and Caucasus states. The Central Asian Republics can get access to the free and common water and many other countries through “Volga Don Water Way Canal”(Libert, 2008).The vast and expanded plains and low lands as well as the low height mountains in the North of Kazakhstan are connecting it with Russia through rail and road networks. This region (Central Asian Republics) is situated between two big and powerful Asian states China (Asia) and Russia (Eurasia) and other regional players like India, Pakistan and Iran and is greatly influenced by it, therefore, playing active role in its geo-politics.

One would have to go across many neighboring states in order to enter in this landlocked region. From the South, one would have to pass through Afghanistan or Iran. The prevailing environment of Afghanistan makes it rather difficult to pass through the mountains of Afghanistan.

One factor of the presence of the troops of United States and its allies under NATO in the East of Afghanistan is to encircle and surround Russia and Iran and to get firm control over Central Asian region, commonly known as Heartland. Due to above mention factors, the only way to enter the heart of Russia is through Central Asian states. This is why Moscow is against of the presence of US and its allied forces on the Central Asian territory(Ahrari & Beal, 1996).

From the East side getting access to this region is passing through the Western part of China, Xinjiang. Beijing would never allow any trans-national state to enter this critical, geopolitically important Western area via Central Asian region. The other way to enter this region by any trans-national power is through caucuses, the West of Central Asia via Caspian Sea. Due to this caucuses region has got the status of gateway and the Caspian Sea is itself regarded the gateway to Russia. This region was effectively defended by the Soviet Union and other members of the Warsaw pact during the Cold War period. After its disintegration, the successor Russia Federation tried its level best to keep and preserve this region. But after a decade, the Western world conspired against it and mobilized rose revolution-led by “Mikhail Saakashvili” in the

year 2003, thereby changing the status quo and allowed the West to enter this important region of the globe(C. H. Fairbanks, 2004).

The establishment of SCO by the Central Asian Republics and its neighboring states is the result of geo-strategic challenge between the West and East. This is a sort of novel strategy for counterbalancing US hegemonic movements in the region.

3.15 Eco-Strategic Dimension of the Importance of Central Asia

There is much resemblance in the economic structure and similarities in the geographical landscape of the five Central Asian Republics. The Republics of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan together is forming an economic region having economic base in agricultural activities, particularly growing of grains, cotton, natural gas and oil production and metallurgy, production of metal, and their economic foundation and infrastructure are formed on the basis of inter-republics activities. The basic problem of the Central Asian Republics is regarding the extraction and utilization of these natural resources. After the disintegration of Soviet Union and subsequent independence of the Central Asian Republics in 1991, they are reshaping their economies on the basis of their own national interests, relevant to their national economic structure(Walsh, 1993).

The watershed basin of the Central Asian Republics is an internal basin having vast deserts and semi-deserts, tapped natural energy resources in the mountainous regions, making it difficult to extract and they are taking advantage of them in economic terms. On the other hand brain drain of the skilled manpower, which is mostly Russians, lack of sufficient capital for investment and the lack of favorable conditions and climate for foreign investment, disputes and political crises and social disorder are making economic development and progress complicated and difficult there. Improper and inefficient irrigation systems and networks, the climatic conditions which are unfavorable for growing cotton, the basic agriculture product of the region, long and warm summer seasons are playing spoiling role in the region's agricultural production(D. R. Harris et al., 1993).

The rivers flowing through the land of Central Asian Republics is the basic source of water supply and hydro-power generation in the region. The water resources are distributed in the region unequally. Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are rich in water resources while other Central Asian Republics are rich in oil and gas. The rivers which are originating from the high mountain

ranges in the Eastern part of the Central Asian region flowing towards the lowlands in the Western and Central area are being used by them.

The use of canal irrigation system networks and the use of urban water supply system is not possible in the mountainous regions due to lack of proper facilities thus creating frustration and disappointment in the mountainous region because the water produced from these areas is being used by other regions and they themselves have no access to it to be utilized for irrigation and other miscellaneous purposes(Hermann & Linn, 2011).The main oases of Central Asian Republics are located in the lowland areas. The rivers full of water and vigor likeAmudarya (Amu River) and Sir Darya can flow through warm and hot deserts and semi-deserts to fulfill the water requirements of the Central Asian region and then fall into Aral Sea. For the supply of required water oases situated in the deserts and semi-deserts infrastructure is composed of water reservoirs, dams, equipments required for water supply and the networks of canal has been constructed during the Soviet Era by spending huge amount of funds.

The hydro-power generation in the Central Asian Republics, particularly in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is equivalent to 1/6th of the total hydro-power energy generation of the Soviet Union. Hydropower generation and irrigation system is the base for the economic activities of the Central Asian region states. The economic activities may be carried on with the help of water supplying equipments such as water reservoirs, dams, hydro-electric power generation stations and proper networks of canal for irrigation(Gerstle, 2004).

Oil, natural gas, Gold, Silver, raw materials for making chemicals, metals which are found rarely such as Titanium, Uranium, Manganese and industrial materials such as Iron, Copper, have made it important for the world states in general and the big powers in particular. Due to these valuable potentials, it has become a battle ground for the big and powerful states of the world. Russia considers this region important for security point of view while United States is seeking new energy resources in order to be less dependent on the energy resources of Middle East particularly its oil(Cohen, 2006).

Following the incident of September 11attacks; the United States penetrated into this region on the pretext of fighting against terrorism/extremism wants to strengthen its domination there. Russia on the other hand also wants to maintain its presence there considering it its “Near Abroad” means their second home. Because of the above mentioned factors, the international

and regional powers have and would have important roles in the stability and security of the region(Obama, 2007).

The SCO has acquired significant role in the eco-strategic agenda of the region. The subsequent incidents such as color revolution in Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in the year 2005 have added much to its importance as well as to the whole Central Asian region.

Mutual cooperation among the member states of SCO is inevitable due to many reasons such as transportation and transit of energy resources, pipelines of oil and natural gas etc. Transportation routes and the role of external powers like European Union and its economic structures and organizations such as TRACECA have great effects on its political environment(Allison, 2004a). Asian highway and some other related networks may also be considered as eco-strategic issue in the region.

Smuggling of arms and other goods, drug trafficking and illegal emigration across the border of Russia and Kazakhstan are creating problems for both the states. Minimization of tariffs and other barriers to trade is the best way for the prevention of illegal goods smuggling but drug trafficking and other contraband commodities is still a major challenge being faced by Central Asian Republics.

It is without any doubt that the oil and natural gas and other natural energy resources of Central Asian region are very important. These energy resources of the region are valuable due the presence of big powers in the region and economies of the world. China, the second big economy and energy consumer in the world, depends on the imported energy resources while the international oil market and the sea routes for the transportation of oil, besides this, the oil producing regions except Central Asian region, such as West and North Africa, Latin America, Middle East and East Asia are dominated and controlled by United States.

In such a situation, alternative sources of energy supply for China is Central Asian region, particularly Central Asian Republics from where it can transport oil and gas through trans-national pipeline without any outside intervention and obstructions(Lieberthal & Herberg, 2006). The Central Asian Republics energy resources are considered constant and important having great potential for the developing economy of Beijing, compelling her to invest a lot of money on its exploration, extraction and expansion. For the achievement of these objectives of energy resources of the region, she has constructed oil transportation pipeline from Kazakhstan to China in the year 2005 and gas pipeline from Turkmenistan. Apart from energy resources, Beijing is

also obtaining other raw materials that could be found in abundance there. Besides oil transportation, pipeline from Kazakhstan natural gas transportation pipeline from the Republic of Uzbekistan to Russia via regional market and the transportation of oil and natural gas from the Republic of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to Russia via Iran to China, Ukraine, Turkey and Caucasian region states (Allison, 2004b). All these projects have eco-strategic value for the Central Asian Republics. As a result, two movements, one led by the United States in the West-East direction from Black Sea towards Central Asian region and adjoining areas, through caucuses, Caspian Sea the other led by Russia from North-South direction in the vertical direction cutting West-East axis, are working in Central Asia and neighboring region (Dorraj & Entessar, 2013).

United States is trying to re-establish its military bases in Uzbekistan which had been withdrawn by it in the year 2005, as a result of the pressure from SCO members, and it has been invited by Kyrgyzstan to establish air base there (Atal, 2005). The Republic of Kyrgyzstan is a member of SCO how is it possible for it to play in two opposite poles. This is a paradox for the members of SCO, Central Asian Republics and other regional organizations. Russia has attempted through economic and regional organizations to reduce the influence of the United States in the Central Asian region. Russia has effective sources of influence there which the United States does not have. It is playing basic role in the geo-strategic and security environment of Central Asia. Its future, in fact, depends on the consequences of the “New Great Game” that is being played among China, Russia, United States and few other regional players.

3.16 Energy Politics in the Central Asia: the Role of big Powers

Many scholars explain the significance of this region with reference to its vast natural resources such as Oil, natural Gas, Uranium, Cotton, Gold, hydropower and other metallic resources. At first look, the conventional wisdom directs that international big powers gave priority to these energy resources to determine its national strategic objectives in the region and develop relations with the regions states. These geo-political engagements are economically motivated and are envisaged and reinforced by Russian and other Western social scholars soon after the disintegration of Soviet Union and the independence of Central Asian Republics (Tolipov, 2006). It has been involved in big power competition and struggle due to its unique geographic location and rich energy resources. Russia with historical, political and cultural linkages with it and China

with wide economic base are the big regional powers. Access to its energy resources and sharing in its potential wealth represents objectives that motivate national and corporate interests, rekindling historical claims, and reviewing imperial ambitions therefore fueling international competition (Brzezinski, 2016). Its geo-strategic implications for United States are obvious. It is so distant to get domination in the region but so powerful that it cannot be excluded from the game. On the other hand, Russia is so weak economically to regain its lost position in the region's geopolitics to exclude other powers from it. But it is so close to the region that it cannot be neglected and excluded. Same is the case with China being in the proximity of the region and economic giant has active role in it (Brzezinski, 2016).

Energy resources are regarded as the life-blood for the economy of any state whether big or small. Central Asia has been gifted with rich energy resources of oil, gas and hydro-power. This region was under the control of Soviet Union before its disintegration in 1991. After its disintegration the energy rich Central Asian region states got independence from it. So long it was in the control of Soviet Union other states could not get advantage out of its energy resources. However, conspiracies were under way to liberate this energy rich region from the clutches of Soviet Union. After its disintegration the world powers got an opportunity to be involved in the energy game of Central Asia, relative to their economic power (Brzezinski, 2013). The powers which are most interested in it are Russia, China and United States. They have devised different strategies to achieve their objectives and interests in the energy sector of Central Asia.

3.17 Role of China in the Energy Game of Central Asia

After the disintegration of Soviet Union and subsequent independence of Central Asian Republics, China was the first country which recognized its independence and established diplomatic relations with it. In its energy policy, this region is regarded as a trustable supplier of energy, offering it an opportunity for solving several challenges related to energy transportation. In pursuance of its energy policy there, it started investment in the region in 1993 (Serikbayeva, 2013).

Its energy demands are increasing very rapidly, bringing changes in its energy policy. It has invested billion dollars in the infrastructure of energy and in the exploration of oil and gas in the region, changing relative power structure in Central Asian geo-politics (Bustelo, 2005). Besides

investment it has provided considerable loans to the economically weak Central Asian Republics for its uplift economically, politically, socially. Reciprocally it has increased China's economic and political influence there(Erica S Downs, 2004).

The government of China established its first energy policy regarding oil and gas in 2003 titled "21st Century Oil Strategy" asserting the security of energy(Constantin, 2007). With increase in its energy consumption due to growth in industries and population, China suggested the pipeline of oil and gas transportation from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan respectively to mainland China (IEA, 2010).China implemented the first phase of this proposed project, despite Russian implicit opposition to it, in 2004 and 2nd phase in 2006. It considers Central Asia an important source of perpetual energy supply. Due to instability in the Middle East and unreliability of Russian energy resources supply(Luft & Korin, 2009). Central Asian energy resources are located at a short distance from China than the Middle Eastern and African energy resources. Its government considers Central Asian energy resources crucial in resolving the "Malacca Dilemma" providing energy security for it(Sovacool & Brown, 2010).

Presently, China imports of oil and gas (about 60%) are coming from Middle East passing through Malacca Strait, a region under US naval forces control. United States may block this passage any time thereby creating problems for China. Central Asian region provides secure energy supply to China. This can lower down its dependence on Middle East energy resources (W. Jiang, Storey, & Mattis, 2006). So China has become new competing energy consumer with huge economic power involved in the "New Great Game" (Amineh, 2003).

3.18 Role of Russia in the Energy Game of Central Asia

Russia's influence in former soviet space including Central Asian Republics is regarded essential for its progress and development in the international politics and for the integrity of its territory. With the disintegration of Soviet Union, its influence in the region in political and security sphere became limited as well as in the energy sector. The underpinning of Russia's future well being and development is based on its economic growth. Therefore, its important goals in the energy sector of Central Asian region are, to be an energy supplier to Europe, Far East and Asia and to secure its energy demands, to control the energy transportation routes and reducing foreign investment in oil and gas fields of the region (Perovic, Orttung, & Wenger, 2009).

Russia's energy policy in the region is regarded as a neo-imperialism after the disintegration of Soviet Union (Menon, 1995). Its foreign energy policy in the Central Asian region is changing with the change in domestic political, economic and security situation (Trofimov, 2003). Its approach towards Central Asian energy resources are changing with the change in regional geopolitical dynamics (Feddersen & Zucatto, 2013). China and United States broke Russia's monopoly of the energy transportation routes by ousting Russian oil and natural gas companies from the energy exploration projects of the region. United state constructed BTC (Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhen) and BTE (Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum) connecting Central Asia with Europe and TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-India-Pakistan) gas pipeline is under consideration while China was able to construct oil and gas pipeline from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan respectively. In such a situation, the Russian government under Putin emphasized to become main energy supplier to Europe and East Asia (Baran, 2007). He even suggested for the creation of energy hub with SCO soon after China was successful in the construction of oil pipeline from Kazakhstan in 2006 (Guang, 2007).

Now it is evident that despite Russia's proactive stand in the region, it is difficult to regain its lost position in the region. Russia cannot own Central Asia again; however, it may maintain its presence in the region due to some natural factors like shared borders, Russian Diaspora in Central Asian Republics, security, terrorism, and the presence of United States and China in the region.

3.19 The Role of United States in the Energy Politics of Central Asia

United State recognized the independence of Central Asian Republic soon after its liberation from the Soviet Union as a result of its disintegration in 1991 and established diplomatic relations with it. The US did all this due to its national interests connected with the region. One of these interests is the energy security and diversification of its supply routes to block cold war victory against Russia. Moreover, the United States is the first in energy consumption in the world followed by China. Before the exploration of Central Asian energy resources, it has to depend on Middle East energy resources particularly its oil. The energy resources of this region are diminishing compelling US to search alternate energy resources and from here the concept of energy security evolved. The liberation of Central Asian Republics from the Soviet Union provided an opportunity to it to get benefit from its energy resources. It is said that the future

world order depends on the control of energy resources of this region and its supply routes (Forsythe, 1996). The country which will control it would be in a position to control the world and so the world's super-power.

This region is land locked and for trading with the outside world it has to depend on any third neighboring country. During Soviet Union period, the Central Asian energy resources of oil and gas were supplied to international market through a pipeline passing through Russian territory. Subsequently, to the disintegration of Soviet Union, Russia maintained this tradition of monopoly - supplying Central Asian energy resources to the international market. Thus it had efficient role its price mechanism. It was purchasing Central Asian energy resources at a low price and was selling it at high price in the international market, thereby obtaining huge revenue. In this way, it had greater role in the determination of the prices of its energy resources in the international market (Cohen, 2006).

United State being a traditional enemy of Russia in the world politics was not happy with this. It feared that Russia may not gain its lost position to challenge its international status of world super power. Due this, US have been in search of diversification of Central Asian energy supply routes to obstruct the Russian monopoly over it. US has been successful in its mission of diversification of energy supply routes by the construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) and the third one Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan and India is about to be initiated (Oliker & Shlapak, 2006). US in order to have strong foothold in the region entered into it militarily under the pretext of 9/11 incident and subsequently fighting against terrorism. But its real aim is to reduce Russia and China influence in the region through different strategies.

3.20 Geopolitical Importance of Afghanistan in International Politics

For centuries Afghanistan has been a natural route for invaders, conquerors and traders that moved from West towards East between Middle East, South Asia and East Asia. This was the land rout chosen by Alexander the great. This region is, in fact, more than a corridor. It is a crossroad of roads in the Asian continent. It has the potential to provide china an access tto central asia, middle east and Europe. It has also the potential to provide Russia an access to south asia ans east asia.it is because of the geostrategic importance of Afghanistan that US has

Scale 1:48,000,000
Azimuthal Equal-Area Projection

Boundary representation is not necessarily authoritative.

<http://geology.com>

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Afghanistan has an area of 652000 square kilo meters. Its political, economic, social and military life is influenced by 600 kilo meter long massive mountainous range stretching from northeast to southwest. The great amount of its area is composed of mountains, hindering transportation among different parts of the country (Allan, 2001). Besides, it is landlocked area just like CARs and to get access to international market it has to depend on any third neighboring country, giving a chance to the neighboring countries to have influence in Afghanistan's affairs.

Map of Afghanistan



Source: <http://www.understandingwar.org/afghanistan-project/maps>

The mountainous terrain is helpful in the guerrilla warfare. In the mountainous valleys it is easy to take refuge (Buhaug & Gates, 2002). In the northern areas communication problem has been worse till the opening of Salang tunnel by Soviet Union in 1964.

The international boundary of Afghanistan is not natural so lack any kind of control over it. Due to this it is prone to illegal weapons, drugs, humans trafficking and smuggling (Shahrani, 2002). It has immense geographical importance. It is surrounded by Pakistan in the east, Central Asian Republics in the north, Iran in the west and the regional power china in the north-east of Afghanistan (Gopalakrishnan, 1982).

The corridor of Wakhan situated among the Pamir Mountains in the North- East of Afghanistan, where China is located, is preventing armed conflict between china and Afghanistan. China boundary with Afghanistan remains closed for five months every year due to snowfall (Smirnova, 2003). This route can play pivotal role in energy transportation from Central Asia and Afghanistan to china and South Asian countries.

Afghanistan emerges as one of the results of the great game between Russian and British empires in the 19th century. Great game refers to a geopolitical tussle that held the Russian and British empires in the Central Asian region in the 19th century (Mojtahed-Zadeh, 2004). As no one of them was able to conquer it so they left it as neutral independent state.

During the 20th century, Afghanistan has been the scenario of another competition, this time between American and Soviet Union Empire for different competing interests. US, during the cold war, planned to encircle the expansion of communism. This strategy of US is called Kenan strategy. When in 1979, USSR invaded Afghanistan US supported the insurgents against the communists (Gibbs, 1987). Presently, in the Afghanistan's conflict some external actors are involved, making the situation more complex. It is important to analyze the roles and interests of these external actors involved in the conflict directly or indirectly.

Geographically, It could maintain some kind of neutrality but despite it has not been seen peace till the last 31 years. However, in order to strengthen neutrality, in 1931 the king of Afghanistan and Soviet Union signed a treaty of non aggression (Arnold, 1985). But the Cold War dynamics caused the Soviet Union to intervene in Afghanistan in 1979 when the USSR military troops crossed over to Afghanistan under the pretext of protecting the communist government in Afghanistan (Galeotti, 2012).

It has geographical importance due to its location. It has boundaries in the first circle with Pakistan and regional power China. Both are atomic powers. Besides that it has boundary with oil rich and perceived atomic power Iran and energy rich CARs. In the 2nd circle it is surrounded by India, and Russia, the atomic powers and Korea, a perceived atomic power (Khalid, 2011).

This gives it immense geostrategic importance and therefore has the focus of big power particularly Russia, China and United States.

Afghanistan has a lot of natural resources such as iron, copper, precious metals, marbles, gemstones, lithium, and taped hydrocarbons as well. The most important untapped metals are iron and copper. The total volume of copper resources is about 60 million metric tons. These natural resources have made Afghanistan attractive for the big powers, Russia, china and Afghanistan.. Afghanistan has the world's 2nd largest copper deposits in its logar province (Skinner, 2015). These deposits are estimated to be worth \$1-3 trillion. These natural resources along with strategic location have made this region a focus of big powers since long.

Conclusion

Central Asian region is an important region of the world. Geographically, it is connecting East and West. It has rich energy resources of oil and gas, market and raw materials. These features of the region invite confrontation among the powerful players of international politics, Russia, China and United States. Its importance had made it a battle ground for international power politics.

The international system of anarchy has dragged the big powers towards this region as this region is conducive for the enhancement of power of the state controlling it. The big powers rushed towards it, when it got independence from USSR in 1991, to empower itself with the help of its economic opportunities offered by the region and its strategic location so that their rivals may not control the region and get enough power to endanger its existence. The concept of the gain of one state is the loss of its rivals led them towards competition and made most of their interests conflicting and competing.

It has been regarded as the pivot of history. First "Great Game" was played between Russian and British Empires over it followed by new "Great Game" among Russia, China, United States and European Union along with other minor actors such as Turkey, Iran, India, Pakistan, for getting influence in the region for the sake of greater share in the energy resources of the region and its transportation and communication links.

It has been a focus point for the political, economic, security and strategic interests of Russia, China and US, because of its geostrategic and geo-economic importance enhanced after the

disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991. Its importance is not a fresh one rather it is very old and goes back into history and several empires have been tried to control it.

The strategic and political importance of the region finds its logical frame work in the “Heart Land Theory” presented by Halford Mackinder. He has described this region as the heart land and the pivot of history. According to it the world history revolves round it. In the beginning this region has been the battle ground between British and Russian empire in order to get domination in the region. This event is known as “Great Game”. With the disintegration of Soviet Union and the decrease in Russian influence in CARs and Afghanistan, new international players such as China and US along with other minor actors got involved in the geopolitical competition of Central Asia and Afghanistan in order to get access to the rich hydrocarbon resources, market, raw materials, to impose their will over the fragile states of the region and to fulfill diverse strategic interests.

The difference in the 19th century “Great Game” and the present rivalry among Russia, China and US in the Central Asian region commonly termed as new “Great Game” is regarding its objectives. The “Great Game” was concerned with physical subjugation of the region and clash of two opposing ideologies of capitalism and communism, while the later (the new great game) has been concerned with economic opportunities of the region and its strategic location. Russia, China and United States are playing crucial role in the political, economic and security sphere of the region. However, it should be noted that despite enhance and growing commercial and political presence of these three big players of international politics Russia is still regarded as the most powerful regional power and has important impacts on the economic and political issues of the region and consider this region its sphere of influence and a buffer zone against all kinds of threats.

It is going to use all possible means to keep this region within its sphere of influence. It is because of its proximity to it and its cultural affiliation with it that it has still strong hold in the region. This region is surrounded by two big regional powers, Russia and China. It is nuclear encircled zone of the world. It is surrounded by nuclear powers such as Russia, China in the near circle while in a little broader circle it is surrounded by Pakistan, India the declared nuclear powers and Iran, Korea the predicted nuclear powers. This feature gives it immense importance in international politics. Afghanistan due to strategic location and natural resources has important place in the new “Great Game”. China wants to get access to Afghanistan’s market, natural

resources and to get access to Middle East, Eurasia and Europe through Afghanistan. Similarly Russia wants to get access to Afghanistan's market, natural resources and through the land of Afghanistan to get access to south Asian market, US on the other hand fearing that Russia may not regain its lost position and china may not reach to the level of transition state at the behest of CARs economic opportunities and its strategic location to endanger its international status stationed its forces in Afghanistan and central Asia. Russia and China being aware that so long NATO forces are there in the region it would not be possible for them to materialize their interests connected with the region want to with it from the region altogether.

CHAPTER 4

RUSSIA'S ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SECURITY INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA: ITS CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE WITH CHINA

4.1 Introduction:

Central Asian Republics has been a traditional area of Russia's influence and its national interests. Russia has been crucial player of the geopolitics of Central Asia throughout its history. It, as compared to other players of the Central Asian geopolitics, has a long history of engagement with Central Asian Republics. This region has been an integral part of Russia for nearly two hundred years; right from the "Great Game" between Tsarist Russia and British Empire till the disintegration of Soviet Union and the emergence of new "Great Game" in the first half of 1990s.

Following the dissolution of Soviet Union, this region became an important priority in Russia's geo-strategic policy. Since then, it has been trying its utmost to maintain her influence in the economic, political and security spheres of the region and to reinforce its grip over the lost areas. For the sake of controlling former Soviet space, it has asserted its influence in this region which is also an important part of its foreign policy priorities and its vital interest's zone. Its attitude towards the region was expressed in "Segodnye", a national daily newspaper, "not just oil officials and diplomat, but cultures and geopolitical orientations are clashing there. The status quo there will not be maintained for long, the only question is who will change it and to whose interests". Ex-Russian Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov, asserted his concerns regarding the increasing United States interests in the region that "Moscow views the region as the United States views Latin America: a backyard, where no strangers are allowed"(Yazdani, 2006).

On September 14th, 1995, ex-president of Russian Federation Boris Yeltsin while enumerating Russia's interests in the region said, Russia will order its external policy priorities and its national interests concerning Central Asian region in order to get rid of the contradictory features of Russia's regional policy and increasing cooperation with the members of Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS), promoting pro-Russian integration program, identifying national interests of other big regional powers, particularly Russia and China, eradication of terrorism and controlling drug-trafficking in Central Asia and Afghanistan, dominating oil and

gas transportation routes of the Central Asian region (Kazantsev, 2008). However, in 1990s, the government of Russian Federation was unable to realize its national interests in Central Asia and Afghanistan because of deficit economy and political deficiencies. When “Vladimir Putin” took over the reign of the government in the end of 1990, Russia initiated long term policy for the stability of Central Asian Republics (O'Lear, 2004).

Russian government under Putin made drastic changes in its foreign policy priorities and convened Security Council special meeting in April, 2000. Important state ministers and businessmen participated in it. The aim of this meeting was the re-establishment of the credibility of the foreign policy of Russia regarding the states of Central Asia and Afghanistan (Baev, 2004). Resultantly, Central Asia and Afghanistan was asserted as a zone of Russia's vital interests and specified the advancement of other powers towards the region, construction of West supported oil and gas transportation route such as Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum transportation routes leading from Azerbaijan to Turkey through Georgia and the increasing West intervention in the security issues of the Central Asia and Afghanistan, threatening Russia's regional hegemony and national economic interests and urged the oil and gas companies to compete with Western World in the Central Asian region. Following Putin assertions, the government of Russian Federation actively supported the strengthening of international expansion of big Russian oil and gas companies including three major energy companies like “YUKOS, Luke Oil and Gazprom”(Perovic, 2005). As a result of the political changes brought about by Putin administration, Russia started following more stable and effective foreign policy in Central Asia. Besides the complex foreign policy priorities of Russia in the region, the internal instability and chaos is further complicated by foreign intrigues and conspiracies particularly by the big powers, China and the United States for greater role in the energy sector of the region and controlling geostrategic location of the region.

Big powers are always busy in playing their own tricks in the game in the geopolitics of the region to achieve their national interests. The big powers are trying their level best to have influence there by getting strong foothold and controlling the routes of oil and natural gas flow. Controlling energy reserves and its transportation routes is becoming one of the important issues in 21st century international politics. Moscow is projecting its influence into the Central Asian region through dominating political decision making even after independence of Central Asian

Republics. Although, up to some extent the Central Asian Republics have put aside their post soviet yoke of authoritarian systems.

At present, Moscow leverage is gradually diminishing while that of China is rising. China is the world largest country population-wise and Russia is the world largest country by area-wise, geographically connected to each other. Both are nuclear and permanent members of United Nations Security Council having great impact on the world politics. Both are the world largest states with a lot of strategic importance. The future of their bilateral relations is of great concern. Relations between them have been contentious during the Cold War. They have even gone to war on boundary and ideological issues. There has not been any official visit between them during this period. From 1950 till 1980, the relations between China-Russia were filled with territorial, political, geopolitical conflicts (Bedeski & Swanström, 2012). On border issues, they fought a war in 1969 followed by proxy war in different parts of Asia and Africa thereby weakening the socialist block. Improvement in their relations started since the Soviet Communist Party General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev visit to China in 1989. During the meeting of Mikhail Gorbachev and China's president "Deng-Xiaoping" decided to forget the past and to start fresh beginning, thus started a new era in their mutual and bilateral relations.

After Soviet Union's disintegration and the emergence of Russian Federation in 1991, the process of normalization of their relations started. Since the signing of friendship pact in 2001 they are now strategic partners. Their association with strategically designed Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) shows the depth and scope of their bilateral relations (Turner, 2009). Commercial relations between them are flourishing and their strategic interests converge in Central Asia, Afghanistan and North East Asia. The Cold War expiry with the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 brought abrupt changes in their mutual relations. They signed border agreements and resolved the long standing 4300 Kilo Meters border issue followed by treaties of friendship and that of friendly neighborliness (Zhao, 2008). Besides they started reciprocal official visits leading to strategic partnership between them. They also became the members of the SCO. So the question which needs an attention is what factor brought China and Russia closer to each other after the fall of Soviet Union in 1991 (D. L. Smith, 1996).

In the first decade after the disintegration of Soviet Union and subsequent independence of Central Asian Republics, Russia's primary strategic interest in Central Asian region, has been its maintenance and stability through political, economic, and military influence with the instrument

of bilateral relations and the engagement of Central Asian Republics in the multinational organization like CACO in the economic sphere, Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in the military sphere and Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS) in the political sphere (Azizian & Zhang, 2016).

If Moscow had followed the policy of strengthening its relations with the Western World and left Central Asian Republics to their own fate thinking them to be an economic burden, this region would have proceeded to the following regional security concerns like civil war in the region, promotion of Islamic extremism and separatism, that would have been in turn impeded Russia's strategy to keep the newly independent Central Asian Republics under its traditional and historical influence, pushing Russia to apply the policy of integration to these states of Central Asian region (E. B. Rumer, 2002). When the Russian president Vladimir Putin took over the reign of the government in 2000, Moscow policy of integration was further enhanced.

The Islamic militants attacks in Uzbekistan as well as in Fergana valley in 1999 and 2000 emphasizing the existence of a serious threat to international as well as regional security and stability. Besides this the United States access to energy resources of Kazakhstan by getting concession and contracts for American oil companies emphasized Russia's strong hold and secure presence in the region (Wilhelmsen & Flikke, 2011). Russia is an important player of the new "Great Game", playing active role in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Russia because of its geographic location, is getting maximum benefits from the region's energy resources (Malashenko, 2013). It has following basic interests in the Central Asia and Afghanistan.

4.2 Russia's Economic Interests in Central Asia

The relations between states are motivated mostly by economic and strategic interests. This factor can be observed in the relations between Russia and Central Asia and Afghanistan. Russia is not the only trading partner of CARS because it has been surpassed by People's Republic of China. Moscow economic and commercial involvement in the region is multi-vectored, comprising construction, agriculture, mining, military hardware, transport and telecom sectors. The trade turnover in the year 2011 was estimated at \$27.3 billion between Russia and CARs. Russians important exports are composed of finished goods such as food stuff, machinery and the equipments of transportation; while Central Asian Republics mostly exports natural and

agricultural raw materials and chemicals to Russian federation (Nixey, 2012). These mutual and interdependent interests have brought them closer to each other.

Another important thing to be noted is that Kazakhstan's infrastructure is linked with Russian Federation, working as a gateway to all other Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan. Russia in order to pursue its economic interests has established a number of economic institutions like "Customs Union", "Eurasian Economic Community", "Eurasian Development Bank", and "Anti-crises Fund", "CIS Free Trade Zone Agreement" etc.

One of the important issues linked with Russian's economic engagement with the Central Asian region is the labor migration and local remittances. This feature is playing vital role in Russia-Central Asia relationship. It is estimated that two million people migrates to Russia and Kazakhstan for temporary/seasonal work, eight hundred thousand from the Republic of Tajikistan, and six hundred thousand from the Republic of Kyrgyzstan. According to Russia's foreign affairs ministry there are as many as 4.5 million Central Asian migrants working and living in Russia, thereby contributing to its economies (Oliphant, 2013). Most of these migrants are not skilled; they are usually successful in finding jobs like street cleaner and agriculture workers or working in construction industry. This inflow of low paid labors is very significant in respect of its economic growth and development. The Central Asian migrants to Russian Federation have an edge over other neighboring countries because the migrants of Central Asia need not any kind of visa to enter Russian Federation (Alexseev & Hofstetter, 2006). They are ready to take up any manual work which is regarded essential for Russia's economic growth. This has been one of the main source of Russia's influence in central Asia Many in Russian Federation are resenting the fact that 2% of its GDP is remitted to Central Asian Republics. However, presently, steps are being taken to reduce the influx of Central Asian migrants to Russian Federation.

Economic cooperation between Russian Federation and Central Asian Republics is hampered by prevalent security issues in the Central Asian region. It includes border issues, water management, extremism, terrorism, human and drug trafficking from Central Asia and Afghanistan to Russian federation. The amount obtained from illegal drug trafficking is approximately \$20 billion probably equal to the mutual official trade. For Russian Federation, this problem of drug trafficking has humanitarian impacts along with economic dimension, making a major issue of concern for Russia (Walker, 2009). However joint venture has been

started by SCO members to eradicate terrorism from the region and discourage drug trafficking and smuggling.

This menace of drug trafficking like anywhere else financially supports an illegal economic sector, corruption as well as organized and planned crimes both in Russian Federation, Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan (Kamarova, 2014). According to United Nation report, the narcotics market of Russian Federation accounts for 20% of the world turnover, with per annum income from drugs trade amounting to \$13 billion (Oliphant, 2013). This projects that Moscow has the largest volume of drug turnover due to instability in the neighboring Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan. Besides it Central Asian energy resources are regarded closely connected with Russia's economic growth.

4.3 Russia's Interests in Energy Sector

Central Asia is rich in hydrocarbon resources; this in turn increases its importance in the world politics. One of the prime interests of Russia in Central Asia is to maintain its monopoly over the Central Asian energy transportation routes and its price determination in international market. Moscow wants to have firm grip over the energy supply routes to get increased advantage from the Central Asian hydrocarbons and to make its own energy reserves secure (H Bergsager, 2012). So long this region was a part of Soviet Union, its hydrocarbon resources were transported to international market through the Russian oil and gas transportation routes called Druzhba, as most of the Central Asian Republics are landlocked. There was no other transportation route available at that time because no state could dare to intervene in the Central Asian region and its energy resources. Russia still wants to maintain its monopoly over the Central Asian energy transportation routes, although now it has lost its control over it (Christoffersen, 1998).

Russia used to buy the energy resources of CARs at a very low rate and was selling it at a very high rate in the international market, using its strategic location to maintain its monopoly over the energy resources of the region. Its geographical location provides it an opportunity to control the energy resources and its transportation routes for its export to the international market (Duarte, 2012). Besides this, Russia is eager to block Western World accessibility to the energy reserves of the region. To realize it, she has arrived at a long term agreement in 2007, with the energy producing states such as the Republic of Turkmenistan and the Republic of Kazakhstan (Kissane, 2015).

Although, Russia's monopoly in Central Asian Republics has been challenged by China and United States, but still it has a prominent role in the energy sector of Central Asian Republics. Initially, its focus was exclusively on the Republic of Kazakhstan where it had close ties with the industrial ruling "Old Guard". Russian Oil Company Luke Oil has been actively involved in seven hydrocarbons onshore projects and three offshore exploration projects in the Caspian shelf of Kazakhstan (A. M. Jaffe, 1998). Furthermore, Russia is still controlling the main oil pipeline of Kazakhstan by enhancing the capacity of the "Caspian Pipeline Consortium" a project that has been an important test case in their mutual energy cooperation. It has been successful in convincing Kazakhstan to pour more hydrocarbons into it and favoring more control of it to Russia. Presently, Kazakhstan approximately accounts for 40% of "Luke Oil" discovered reserves. Some projects in Kazakhstan are providing about 90% of hydrocarbons and 40% of gas produced by "Luke Oil", a Moscow company, outside Russia. It is exclaimed that Russian share in Central Asian hydrocarbons and natural gas sale is far greater than other neighboring countries (Boas & Spaiser, 2016).

"Luke Oil and Gazprom" the two big oil and gas companies of Russia, are not only engaged in oil and gas purchases, but is also developing their own production capabilities and skills. These companies account about 20% of gas production in the Uzbek Republic. In the Turkmen Republic, the interests of Russia are limited to gas only. "Itera" a Russian company, is engaged in the exploration and development of gas in the Republic of Turkmenistan. However "Luke Oil" has been consistently trying to get access to Turkmen market. Russia share in Turkmen natural gas is limited because Turkmenistan is allowing foreign investment in offshore area only, which is cost intensive and difficult to develop technically (Yergin, 2011).

The natural gas of the Turkmen Republic is transported to Iran through a pipeline and now to Beijing thereby disturbing the Russian monopoly over Central Asian oil and natural gas transportation. The oil and gas of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan is transported to Western World (Europe) through "Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyphan" and "Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum" respectively. This diversification of oil and natural gas transportation routes means that Russia now no longer controls the prices and transportation of the region's energy resources, as it did in the past (Kalicki, 2001). Now its prices are determined by energy needs and demands of the consumers such as Iran, China and European Union.

Along with hydrocarbons, large scale cooperative investments projects with Russian Federation have focused on hydro-power generation in the Republic of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. One of the important Hydro-power projects is located in “Kambarta” in the Kyrgyz Republic. Further \$2.1 billion has been allocated by Moscow for the 2nd “Kambarta Hydro-Power Project” in addition to the one in existence (Marlene Laruelle & Peyrouse, 2013). Putin, the president of Russian Federation has signed agreements regarding the construction of further four Hydro-power projects in Kyrgyz republic in the year 2016. Along with Hydro-power Projects in Kyrgyzstan, it has installed a big Hydro-power Project in the Republic of Tajikistan called “Sangtuda”, inaugurated in July 2009. The Russian Federation and its companies “Roastom and inter RAOUES” owns 75% of “Sangtuda” share and have invested approximately \$680 million on its installation while Tajik Republic is investing about \$ 120 million(Eder, 2012). Besides this, some other projects are either under consideration or on the way of construction.

It is clear for Russia if any state or block is able to construct alternative energy resources transportation pipeline, will ultimately reduce Russian influence in the region thereby giving an opportunity to the oil and gas producing countries of the region to sell directly their energy resources in international market for greater profits. Russia in order to obstruct Western World particularly US supported energy transportation pipeline, initiated a new energy transportation infrastructure(Marketos, 2008).Alongside it, Russian Federation has signed an agreement with the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Republic of Turkmenistan regarding the construction of new transportation pipeline in the year 2007 in order to counterbalance US backed trans Caspian pipeline(Kazantsev, 2008). Furthermore, Russia put forward two proposals, the “Blue Stream II” and “South Stream” for the energy transportation routes in order to counterbalance Western backed Nabuco project. “Blue Stream ii” was supposed to transport gas to the Balkans countries and “South Stream” was supposed running through the Black Sea from Russian Federation to Bulgaria to supply Russian energy resources to the European and international market (GEOPOLITICS et al.).

For maintaining upper hand status in exportation of Central Asian energy resources was formalized by it through the creation of gas cartel commonly known as “Gas Exporting Countries Forum” in the year 2008. This organization was comprised of sixteen members, including Central Asian Republics of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan(Gjenero-Margan et al., 2011).Its aim was the consolidation of Russian hegemonic position in the gas transportation

sector, allowing Russian Federation's greater control over the energy resources supply routes and limiting Iranian competition in the international market, particularly European market(Abilov, 2012).

4.4 Russia's Interests in Nuclear Sector

Enumerating the interests of Russia in Central Asia, nuclear sector cannot be neglected. An important interest of Russia in the energy sector of Central Asian region is her investment in the nuclear sector.

The Republic of Kazakhstan has huge volume of high quality of Uranium. To get advantage of it, It has initiated a new project in the Republic of Kazakhstan concerned with enrichment of nuclear power plants in the area of Balkash about forty Kilo Meter North of Almatay, the capital city of Kazakhstan in the year 2002(Yakubovskaya, 2011). Similarly, Russia and the Republic of Kazakhstan in the year 2006 arrived at an agreement for the initiation of other three projects of uranium-mining for commercial purposes.

Following this, Moscow and Uzbekistan entered into an agreement for Uzbekistan's Uranium deposits development. Through these measures, it was trying to ensure its ambitions and achieve its national interests in the region. The logic behind these nuclear agreements was that the enrichment of Uranium and its development will reduce burden on the utilization of domestic energy resources, thereby providing an opportunity for Russian Federation to get more energy resources from Central Asia to transport it to international market and earn a lot of profit(Allison, 2004b). Besides this, its investment in the nuclear sector of the region will help in the promotion of Russian nuclear sector by getting cheap Uranium resources from the Central Asian region states and restricting them not to sign such like pacts and agreement with any other regional or international power such as Iran, China, India and United States, which may resultantly pose a threat to Russian national objectives and interests in the region(Bhatty, 2008).

4.5 Russia's Political Interests in the Region

Central Asian Republics has remained Russia's backyard and its sphere of influence for more than hundred years. It has been an area of its privileged interests for about seventy years. Initially, she was not much interested in it. But the changing geo-political realities activated its role in the region particularly when US penetrated there soon after 9/11 incident. Presently,

Russian Federation has recognized this region to be vital for its economic, political, strategic and security interests. Russia thinks itself to be one of the major actors in the geopolitics of the region along with United States and China. Besides them, there are some minor actors such as Iran, Turkey, India, Pakistan and European Union acknowledging the region to be multi-polar. Since other players of the geo-politics of Central Asia are trying to increase their influence in the Central Asian Republics particularly in its political decision making and economic policies, compelling Russian Federation to adjust to the new geo-political realities and interact with new actors of the new “Great Game” in the Central Asian region (Banuazizi & Weiner, 1994).

Moscow is of the opinion that secondary actors like India, Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan and Iran lack adequate means to challenge its interests and displace its superiority in the Central Asian Republics while United States penetration and her subsequent influence in the region after the incident of 9/11 would diminish after its withdrawal from Afghanistan (Menon, Fedorov, Nodia, & Insitute, 2016). Broadly speaking, United States and Russian Federation relation has been tense but still has practical grounds of cooperation in the geo-politics of Central Asian Republics over the issue of terrorism, stability and Afghanistan issue.

On the other side, China is altogether in a different category for Russian Federation. However, she could offer problems for Russia in the time to come and in longer terms in the Central Asian region (Marlene Laruelle, 2009). Generally speaking, Russia is double minded regarding China, whether it will offer opportunity or risk or even a threat to the Moscow interests showing uncertainty and lack of trust in their bilateral relations.

In the context of Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan, both Russian Federation and China have tactfully managed their relation for the achievement of their objectives, goals and interests without being clashed with each other in the geo-politics of the region. But the present geo-political realities profess that this situation may change abruptly particularly due to competition on Central Asian energy resources and its supply routes that may become acute any time. Since, Beijing and Moscow relations and cooperation in the Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan seems workable so long China has interest in keeping the region under the security and political umbrella of Russian Federation (Berryman, 2007). If the political leadership of the Beijing considers change in its activities and policies from economic and commercial to be involved in military, political and cultural issues then China’s interests may clash with the interests of Russian Federation. Russia and china are in favor of semi-authoritarian style of government in

the Central Asian Republics because it is more helpful for her in achieving its objectives and interests in the Central Asian region.

The other political objective of Russia in Central Asia is the provision of protection to its Diaspora in the CARs (T Marketos, 2009). The ratio of Russians in the region is about 20%. The ruling class in the region is mostly composed of these pro-Russians. One of its important politico-strategic interests of Russia and China in the region is to diminish and obstruct United States influence in the region (Gorodetsky, 2004). During Putin regime, one could see similar developments from emotional favor to war against terrorism following the 9/11 incident to the souring of Moscow- Beijing relations in the mid 21st century (Stulberg, 2005). From Moscow perceptions, the Tulip revolution in the Central Asian Republics was the results of US interests in the region. Putin's Munich speech delivered in a Cold War tune was the final accord of Moscow anti-western trends in its foreign policy (Pisarev, 2012). The new Russia- US relations during Barak Obama and Medvedev administration were of partial success and its bilateral relations were characterized by lack of trust. After Putin's return to power it is expected that anti-western trend will prevail and rapprochement with the West is unlikely.

Most of the ruling Russian leaders and military officials are still defending the concept of "Greater Russia" with sound ties and links with former Soviet Union States. Russia's military doctrine in 1993 proclaimed CIS region to be vital for Russia's interests and the new foreign policy concepts of Moscow proclaimed former Soviet Union region's security and other interests as Russia's special responsibility (Hall & Grant, 2009). Russia has already exhibited its deep commitment of developing strong political and commercial relations with former Soviet Union states, called by them as their near abroad. While United States on the other side has and perpetually opposed the interference of Russia in the former Soviet Union space affairs because such interference as a sign of imperial revival inconsistent with United States strategy to promote political pluralism (Democracy) to avoid reemergence of any potential challenge to her global hegemony and its established order in the world.

In the Georgian war, Russia clearly stated that it would not waive its interests in the Central Asian region, its near abroad, as an answer to United States attempts to diminish Russia's influence there. During this war, Moscow demonstrated that it would play hard to defend its geopolitical interests in the region and warned United States that it would have to comply with new rules and conditions for engagement in Central Asia and international affairs. She also made

it explicit that diversification of pipeline system under the supervision of United States (BTC and BTE) would operate under Russian rules and regulations (Nation, 2007). Russia has continued their effort to revive its lost influence in it's near abroad through the policy of stick and carrot, presently with less resistance from United States.

Moscow in order to have influence there has formed different forums of integration with Central Asian republics like Shanghai Cooperation Organization, (SCO) Common Wealth of Independent States, (CIS) and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). SCO, being composed of Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan is one of the influential organizations in the region. This organization was formed initially to resolve border issues among its member states but presently its scope has been widened covering counter terrorism, military and intelligence cooperation (Peimani, 1998). It has been a powerful instrument for counterbalancing United States influence and is used as a diplomatic tool for Moscow and Beijing's interests in the region. Russia is paying special attention to Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan because of the threat of radical Islamism. Russia's territory adjacent to Central Asia particularly Caspian region has a large proportion of Muslim population. Russia in order to provide security to its citizens from radical Islamism, would have to pay particular attention to its Southern border, exposed to the Muslim world and keep fighting against terrorism at home and abroad (Kazantsev, 2008). In this situation, the Central Asian Republics can serve Russian interests by buffering and eradicating Islamic extremism.

Russian and Western strategies, particularly of US in Central Asia and Afghanistan are contradictory to each other. Contrary to that Russia and China interests and strategies in the geopolitics of the region are complimentary and converge in strategic and security sphere. Russia is playing a significant role in central Asian hydrocarbons exploration, extraction and development and its transportation to the world market. Its role in Turkmenistan's gas and Kazakhstan's oil is a significant aspect of Moscow policy in the region (Kurečić, 2010). Russia used to buy the energy resources of Central Asian Republics at a very low rate and was selling it at a very high rate in the international market, using its strategic location to maintain its monopoly over the energy resources of the region. Its geographical location provides it an opportunity to control the energy resources and its transportation routes for its export to the international market (A. Jaffe & Manning, 2001).

The focus of Russia is the establishment of hydro-power energy projects in the region, particularly in Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, having huge water reservoirs. Russia in order to achieve its interests in the Central Asian Republics is trying to keep the region in its sphere of influence. For this, it wants the eradication of extremism and terrorism from the region. It considers this part of the globe as its backyard and call it it's near abroad. To keep its influence and maintain its hegemony in the region, Russia has stationed its troops in the Republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan under the pretext of security provision to counterbalance US in the region (Cooley, 2008a).

4.6 Russia's Security Interests in the Region

Disintegration of Soviet Union instigated Russian Federation to re-think and re-evaluate its policy of security regarding Central Asia and Afghanistan, an area of complex ethnic, political and religious issues, posing potential threat for the status and position of Moscow in the region's states. It's important security interests in the region are establishment of exclusive security zone over the former soviet space for the sake of re-establishment of its lost position in the world politics (Abilov, 2010).

Moscow's security interests in the Central Asian Republics are comparatively the same as that of United States. Presently, Russia's important concern in the Central Asian region is that of security. After the fall of Soviet Union in 1991 and the appearance of independent Central Asian Republics on the world map, this region has lost its previous value for Moscow as a buffer zone. Historically, this region has been worked out as a military buffer zone between British and Russian empire, between US and former Soviet Union and China and Soviet Union, The main problem that Russia is facing within Central Asia is not the border issue but lack of barriers protecting it from the spillover of the sources of instability towards Russian Federation (Dmitrii Trenin, 2002).

Russia is regarded as the powerful security actor in the Central Asian Republics. It has resources to meet with crises situation and assume responsibility to engage with Central Asian Republics. On the other side, she feels reluctance to intervene unless Russian Federation territory and important interests are at risk. This feature was evident during Osh crises in 2010 in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan to which Russian Federation failed to respond thinking it not to be a threat to its vital interests. Multilateral organizations such as Collective Security Treaty Organization and

Shanghai Cooperation Organization, in the opinion of Russia, are playing their role in the security sphere of Central Asian Republics (Frost, 2009).

Presently there is important innovation and development in Russian foreign policy towards Central Asian Republics and that is bilateralism which can increasingly dominates in the domain of security, with a focus on mutual relations with the Republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. These are regarded as equally important pillars in the military and economic cooperation.

In the sphere of military, Moscow's mutual cooperation with Tajikistan involves the development of its 2nd contingent abroad in Central Asia. Approximately, seven thousand troops are deployed at the air-base near Dushanbe in the shape of three motor-rifle regiments. Russian Federation has signed a bilateral agreement with Dushanbe in October 2012, thereby, providing Russia a rent free basing rights for Russian military till 2042 (Opdahl, 2005). Kyrgyz Republic provided an extension to Russian Federation military facilities at Kant up to 2032, with a possible five year further extension. This new agreement would be operational from the year 2017 providing an integrated and unified Russian Federation military base in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan combining all facilities elsewhere in the Kyrgyz Republic. In response to these concessions, Russian Federation written off extraordinary debts of Kyrgyzstan owed to it, approximately, amounting to \$489 million. Similar policy has been applied to the Republic of Tajikistan. Russian Federation would spend about \$1.5 billion on the up gradation of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan's military. These debts of the Kyrgyz Republic were shifted to capital holdings for Russian Federation in Dustan, a Kyrgyz military industrial complex. This debt cancellation and extraordinary economic assistance about \$2 Billion to Kyrgyz Republic are used by Russian Federation for influence and for military and security arrangements (Collins, 2009).

United States military penetration into the Central Asian region increased Russians security concerns there. Russia was apprehensive of the color re-evolution near the Southern border of Russia supported by Western World, particularly the United States. This forced Russia to make strategies for counterbalancing the interests of the United States there. Resultantly, Russia activated security cooperation with the region's states through the organization of Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (Zabortseva, 2012). Besides that she announced eleven thousand strong rapid response

forces in order to counterbalance any imminent potential threat to its security as well as the members of these organizations.

Russian Federation has been successful in getting several military bases and military research facilities in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. The most important among them are those in Kazakh Republic, constituting an important element of Russian Federation defense system. Kazakhstan has given Russian Federation the use of many firing ranges at the cost of military equipments, technical services and trainings. It has got on rent “Bikaner Space Complex” from Astana. Approximately, 70% of Russian rocket launches takes place from there, and missile tests ranges in “Dzhambul, Karaganda, Aktobe, and Kyzyl Orda”(Marlene Laruelle et al., 2013).

In the sphere of multilateral security loose organizations such as CSTO, CIS and SCO led by Moscow and Beijing respectively provides for flexible arrangements for the member states to be either integrated like in Customs Union or they may opt for withdrawal. The disadvantage of these loose type organizations is that its agreements and decisions are rarely implemented. The member states usually neglects to ratify its legislation to enforce it or not and to provide necessary finances to implement it. While such efforts can make these loose organizations an effective tool for Moscow power. These shifts may alienate other member states who just offer lip services to the obligations of the above mentioned organizations declining to enforce its decisions as Uzbekistan did. Uzbekistan provided military bases to United States and NATO forces against the will of other members of SCO. The republic of Uzbekistan withdraws from CSTO in June 2012 and its hesitation to fully integrate with the organization involving Kazakhstan and Russia(Kim & Indeo, 2013).

Central Asian region is playing the role of a buffer zone in the security sphere of Russia by protecting it from the potential threat from Middle East and Afghanistan(Abilov, 2012). Due to this security factor Russia was struggling to have greater influence in the region through the creation of exalted security cooperation with the region's states under the auspices of Russia led CSTO and China led SCO. In this regard, Russian Federation signed several security agreements with the Central Asian Republics so that she may deploy its military forces in the region and get military bases there. As a result of these agreements, approximately, fourteen thousand Russian troops have been deployed in the Central Asian region like Ukraine, Republic of Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Georgia, Belarus and Moldova(Bhatty, 2008).

Besides this, she has asserted the regional states to vacate the United States military bases from their respective region. She also offered aid package to the Republics of Kyrgyzstan for the withdrawal of United States forces and simultaneously started increasing its military presence in the region. In such a state of affairs, a specialist in Eurasian and Russian affairs, Nichol Jim, wrote, “During a meeting held on 3rd February, 2009 in Moscow with Russian president “Dmitri Medvedev”, Kyrgyz president, “Kurmanbek Bakiyev” announced that the United States Manas air-base would be closed. Bakiyev claimed that United States compensation for use of the base had been inadequate and that the Kyrgyz Republic wanted the base to be closed. At the meeting, Medvedev had offered a \$1.7 billion loan to Kyrgyzstan for building a dam and Hydro-electric power station and a \$300 million loan and a \$150 million grant for budget stabilization. Russia also agreed to cancel a \$180 million debt owed by Kyrgyzstan in exchange for some properties. Many observers suggested that the assistance was a quid pro quo (something in return for something) for Kyrgyzstan’s agreement to close the base” (Jim Nichol, 2010).

As a result of this meeting, the agreement between the Republics of Kyrgyzstan and US for the use of an air base at “Manas” was cancelled, resultantly the United States was ordered to vacate the base within the coming six months. By doing so, Russia achieved her basic objective of increasing her military presence in its “Near Abroad”(Nichol, 2010b). This in turn enabled Russia to put limits on the United States activities particularly the spread of democracy in the Central Asian region (Lepingwell, 1994).

4.7 Russia’s Convergences and Divergences with China

China-Russia convergence here means the overlapping of main interests regarding long term development in international politics providing underpinnings for greater strategic and tactical cooperation between them. In order to evaluate convergence between Beijing and Moscow’s, we will have to analyze its physical and economic aspects, emphasizing complementary economies, geography and their views on international political order, separatism, Islamic radicalism, terrorism, democracy, drug trafficking, smuggling, nuclear proliferation, weapons of mass destruction and weapons trade and internal conflicts in the region (Weitz, 2011).

Since the signing of the treaty of “Good-Neighborliness” in 2001 and “Strategic Cooperative Partnership Treaty” in 1996, fifteen years has elapsed. During this period, significant changes have occurred in the world politics, particularly in China and Russia. China has emerged as a

regional economic giant and Russia has got the importance of great power status in the region. Assessing the relations between Russia and China is of immense importance in the geo-politics of Central Asia and Afghanistan .(Wilhelmsen & Flikke, 2011). It is worth noting that Russians and Chinese officials often belie the mutual relations between Russia and China and the inherent obstructions preventing the emergence of a strategic partnership between them in a true sense. The officials, particularly the Chinese officials regularly note that relations between them are at the best, hiding the actual state of affairs (Michailova & Hutchings, 2006). However , there are areas where their interests converges.

4.8 Convergence in Economic Sphere

Convergence in economic sphere between Russia and China is very rare. Convergences between them are mostly strategic in nature. Subsequently to disintegration, Russia was worried about its economic problems such as scarcity of consumer goods supplies breakdown and market for its finished goods and its energy resources. It saw in China an opportunity as an economic partner, cheap source of consumer goods, purchaser of fertilizer, steel and other raw materials and border stabilization as an added advantage (Kuhrt, 2007). This brought them closer to each other in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan in opposition to US so that it may not be able to challenge its interests in CARs and in Afghanistan in particular and in international politics in general. This growing economic interdependence brought them closer in central Asian geopolitics.

After the collapse of Soviet Union, the China's president Deng Xiaoping said that regional and international environment is ripe for China's good neighborly relations with Russia and that China would allow it to make economic reforms via economic development, opening its borders for foreign trade thereby reducing military expenditures (Wilson, 2015). Trade volume between them is very low, not at the level to bring Russia-China closer to each other in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan. Despite the strong pledges by the Russian-Chinese leadership to improve reciprocal trade. Although, Russia ranked 10th in 2010 among China's trading partners. Trade is not the only criteria to gauge the existence of strategic partnership between the states (Yunfeng & Laike, 2010).

4.9 Convergence in Political Sphere

China regards multi-polar world as a penance for the present world order problems, dominated by United States. It seeks an alternative for the present uni-polar world system. Worried by the decline of Russia in 1990s, China is constantly in search of multi-polar international system in order to counterbalance United States in international politics, particularly in Central Asia and Afghanistan. In 1991, United States was expecting to be at the top of world order. Obviously, Russia had no option other than to turn towards China to express its refusal and to provide safeguard to Russian Diaspora in Central Asian states, opposing Islamic extremism, keeping away the West from the region and finally reasserting its control over Central Asia and Afghanistan (D. L. Smith, 1996). One of the shared strategic interests of Russia and china in central Asia and Afghanistan has been withdrawal of NATO forces from the region. So long NATO forces are there in the region it is not possible for Russia and china to extend its market. With the disintegration of Soviet Union, a new great game started in the region but with different players and interests. United States is representing the West in this game. This became one of the important factors of Russia's acceptance of Beijing's dynamic role in Central Asia and Afghanistan's affairs as China was on the rise while Russia had declined economically. China has the potential to avert the West from the region to secure Russian interests there (Kanet, 2010).

On the question of United States penetration into the Central Asian region, China and Russia beside their limited differences in economic sphere started strengthening their strategic relationship with one another as well as with Central Asian Republics. This relationship between Russia and China in the region is based on mutual interests rather than on shared values. United States, under the pretext of fighting against terrorism, has entered into the region by deploying its military forces in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. This move of United States was simultaneously disliked by both Russia and China. They view US penetration into CARs and Afghanistan to have check on Russia and china, to obstruct SCO member's integration and to restrict Russia and China market expansion. Both of them have shared interests of the constriction of United States influence in CARs and Afghanistan (Ferdinand, 2007). In this respect Leonid Ivanhoe, head of "International Military Cooperation" said, "Under condition of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) expansion, there is real threat to national security of Russia. Hence I am convinced that only Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) could

become a real counter weight to the expansion of NATO towards Central Asia and Afghanistan. In future, what the SCO need to do is to admit Iran, India and Pakistan as its members” to further consolidate its grip on the region (Weitz, 2006). The real aim of SCO has been to provide security measures to the region states so that it may not go into the fold of NATO for security.

China and Russia has similar views regarding international strategic relations and prevailing world order (Fawcett, 2004). China-Russia convergence in the Central Asia and Afghanistan region is based on their shared views on international issues. During the period of 1995-96, the Russian political leadership had decided that the first priority of its foreign policy must be the restriction of NATO expansion towards Central Asia and Afghanistan (Menon, 1997). Among the big powers of the world only China supported it, thus enhancing Russia’s international status (Rozman, 1998).

China also faces pressure from US regarding human rights, interference in Taiwan issue and the threat of its containment. Both China and Russia did cooperate with each other on many international issues, particularly the “Post Cold War World Order”. They are against of uni-polar hegemonic world, willing to do efforts for fair and just international order devoid of the domination of one state. Both are against of single state hegemony, power politics and Cold War thinking (Chen, 2010). Russia and China has totalitarian styles of governments, therefore, it supports the sustenance of present semi-authoritarian governments in the region, contrary to United States which is striving for the transformation of present semi-authoritarian regimes into democratic regimes. According to Stephen Blank, Moscow and China national interests in the region could obstruct the swift promotion of democracy because it could prove instrumental in the achievement of US and other Western countries interests (Dittmer, 2007).

4.10 Convergence in Security Sphere

Nuclear weapons have been a threat to Central Asian regions security since the disintegration of Soviet Union. The nuclear weapons of soviet period were owned by Kazakhstan after its dissolution. During several rounds of talks held in 1995 with the Republic of Kazakhstan, China, Russia and US, were able to convince it to give up nuclear weapons on the basis of security guarantees from the big powers(A. Milner & Johnson, 2001). Besides Kazakhstan, It was also agreed that Belarus and Ukraine, the communist’s states would give their nuclear weapons back to Russia furthermore nuclearization in the post soviet states was conditioned with economic

development. Russia, China and the US are against of nuclearized Central Asia. This is why they tied it with its economic development so that they may not be able to have nuclear arsenals for a foreseeable future.

Internal stability and security is a prerequisite for Russia and China national interests in the region. Therefore, they are collectively striving for internal stability in the region through investment, loan and grants, training, education, transfer of technology. They want to settle border disputes among Central Asian Republics through negotiation and other peaceful means which will pave way for the stability of region.

Drug trafficking is another grave problem of the region, a big source of instability in the region. Russia and China has common views regarding drug trafficking. Usually, the revenue generated from drug trafficking and smuggling goes into wrong hands which is utilized against the security of the region, therefore, both are striving individually and collectively for the eradication of drug trafficking from the Central Asian region (Pisarev, 2012). The SCO member states including Russia and China held regular summits in the capital of member states. Its agenda has been the eradication of terrorism, organized crimes, and drug trafficking. At the Bishkek summit of August, 1999 a declaration was made by the member states and approved the president Akaev's "Diplomacy of the Silk Road" doctrine, concerned with development and maintenance of peace and stability, including eradication of drug trafficking (Osmonaliev). The leaders of the member states of SCO regularly meet with each other while its routine matters are dealt with by the secretariat situated in Beijing and the regional anti-terrorists structure headquartered in Tashkent. Same is the case with illegal smuggling -goods across the border are rampant in the Central Asian society after the disintegration of Soviet Union. The revenue of it just like drug trafficking strengthens the illegal hands which may besides affecting the economy of Russia and China badly also threaten the peace of the region (Olcott, 2010). It is certain that both Russia and China has important interests connected with the Central Asian region. Its achievement depends on the stability and security of Central Asian region. It is one of the factors that both Russia and China wish to eradicate drug trafficking and smuggling of goods (Buszynski, 2005).

4.11 Russia's Divergence with China in the Geo-politics of Central Asia

It is said that Russia-China relationships are warm at the level of government and cold at grass root level, mature politically and weak economically. China is of the opinion that stagnant

Russian economy is responsible for the difficulties in Russia–China relationship (Kim & Indeo, 2013). Despite the strong pledges by the Russian-Chinese leadership to improve reciprocal trade. Although, Russia ranked 10th in 2010 among China's trading partners. Trade is not the only criteria to gauge the existence of strategic partnership between the states.

The uprising in Kyrgyzstan in April 2010 and the instability caused by ethnic conflicts between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz ethnic groups in June 2010 exposed the perceived threat to the status quo and the danger of domino effect, prevailing instability in the Central Asian region affecting its energy and strategic interests. These fears are further confirmed by Islamic militants' attacks in Fergana valley. Due to the fled of Central Asian militants from Afghanistan and the tribal areas of Pakistan as a result of United States attacks on them. Their activities and movements across borders through Afghanistan-Tajikistan borders is posing a serious threat of destabilization in Central Asia particularly Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, sharing the Fergana valley region (Kim & Blank, 2013). For China it creates fear of instability in its Xinjiang province as a result of United States efforts to bring stability in Afghanistan. Presently Russia seems to be the main savior of Central Asian region security involving in military cooperation such as CSTO. It thinks Central Asian region to be its exclusive domain of influence to be protected from any outside intervention through CSTO, which can be called as a counterbalance to Chinese and Western influence in the former Soviet space (Wallace, 2014). Russia thinks this organization to be an effective technique of political and military integration between Moscow and region states, maintaining its influence in the region through joint military exercises delivering modern arms and ammunition to the Central Asian states at Russia's internal price like the centre of anti-terrorism in Tashkent, the air base in Kyrgyzstan Kant and the Russian 201st motor rifle division in Tajikistan Kulak (Frost, 2009).

Its military cooperation with region states cannot be completed by China because it has no military bases in Central Asia partially because of Central Asian Republic's opposition, fearing Chinese potential of expansion in its territories. China's military assistance is limited to Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan only neglecting the other three. In the Chinese security objectives, the China's Kazakhstan strategic cooperation has great significance and seems to be increasing in cross border security cooperation, containing the potential threat of separatism of the Uyghur ethnic group.

4.12 Divergence in Security Sphere

Looking at the multilateral perspectives, SCO is the only equipment at the disposal of Beijing to influence the military and domestic strategy and policy of Central Asian Republics. Geo-political rivalry between China and Russia regarding the future development of bilateral and multilateral regional organizations is much evident. Russia focuses on military cooperation and gives priority to security concerns while China aims at diversifying and widening the SCO competencies in the economic sphere(Indeo, 1998).

SCO and CSTO signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2007 of increasing cooperation in security and military fields. While Russia is proposing the formation of energy club with in SCO members, reflecting the Moscow's strategic ambition to diminish and control Beijing expansion in the Central Asian region's energy sector. This agreement of understanding might be said as Moscow's move to attempt to engage China in absolute military alliance. The real goal of Russia has been to limit Chinese freedom of maneuvering with Central Asian Republics by the engagement of regional competitors in strengthening military cooperation with in the auspices of multilateral organization, aiming better control of China's desires and ambitions thereby exposing Moscow's preponderance in the sphere of regional security(Wishnick, 2009).

China gives preference to SCO as an important tool of its economic development and to integrate Central Asian Republics economically and is not willing to change SCO into a full fledge security organization on the line of CSTO. Nevertheless, Central Asian states aversion to free trade area and common market due to the fear that in this way they would become the protectorates of China (Tang, 2000).

China's net trade in 2009-2010 with Central Asian Republics surpassed that of Russia. During 2000-2003 Central Asian Republics trade with Moscow stood at the level of 1990s while on the other hand trade between Beijing and Central Asian Republics increased 200 percent(Marlène Laruelle & Peyrouse, 2009). Russia and Central Asian Republics trade in 2007 totaled \$21 billion on the other hand China Central Asian Republics trade has been \$14 to \$18 billion. In this way Russia is not happy with china's increased economic engagements with Central Asian Republics.

Beijing's important security goal in the Central Asian Republics is the creation of friendly regimes in the region that may support China's strategy of combating terrorism, separatism and

extremism and that may prevent separatists groups from gaining strength and power in the Central Asian Republics and Xinjiang and securing trade and business opportunities in Central Asian Republics.

Presently, Beijing has involved all the Central Asian states in security dialogue thereby increasing security cooperation through the strategy of multilateralism and bilateralism. China's traditional focus in the security sphere is the eradication of the three evils, terrorism, separatism and extremism. The geopolitical dimension of this strategy, by engaging the Central Asian states, they may become more dependent on China's financial aid and cooperation, which in turn may increase China's influence in the region. Beijing is still regarded as an external actor in the region by Russia; this is why China has no military bases in the Central Asian Republics. This is all because of Russia unwillingness that China may have military bases in the Central Asian region states (Melnikovska, Plamper, & Schweickert, 2012). Russia contrary to China wants to maintain the present Pro-Russian governments and wants minimum engagements of China in the Central Asian region security.

4.13 Divergence in Economic Sphere

Beijing has predominant economic influence in the Central Asian Republics' particularly in those states situated near to its borders. It's important trading partner in the region is the Republic of Kazakhstan and the first trading partner of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and the second of Tajikistan sharing 34% Kyrgyzstan foreign trade and 15% that of Kazakhstan AND 10% of Tajikistan. China is Kazakhstan second largest export partner following European Union and Tajikistan of 10% (Clarke, 2010). It means that China is replacing Russia's monopoly in the trade sector of the Central Asian Republics.

The China's growing economic ties with Central Asian Republics is a matter of apprehension for Russia. Russia, in fact, is not happy with Beijing's economic expansion in the Central Asian Republics particularly, its successful attempts to enhance energy cooperation with energy rich Republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan because Moscow prefers to monopolize energy transportation pipeline system which it inherited from Soviet Union.

Similarly, Beijing is not happy with Moscow that it does not show willingness of China inclusion in economic integration project such as EEU (Eurasian Economic Union) in the region. China thinks free trade zone and common market to be important for its economic enhancement and

fast growing economy. This divergence in their opinion can be vividly observed where Moscow give priority to cooperation in certain projects in energy and mineral sector, infrastructure, transport, communication, nuclear power and new technologies and give less importance to economic integration with Beijing while China stresses for economic integration(Luzyanin, 2012). On the other side Russia stresses on security issues identified in the SCO activities.

Their competition in the Central Asian hydrocarbon sector is another factor of potential irritation in their bilateral relations. The implementation of China-Kazakhstan oil pipeline (Atlasu-Alashanko) and China-Turkmenistan natural gas pipeline, involving Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan because the pipeline is passing through these states selling part of their oil and natural gas, has influenced Moscow's monopolistic control of the region energy resources export. Before the implementation of these pipeline projects ninety percent of Turkmenistan natural gas and seventy percent of Kazakhstan oil was being exported through Russian pipeline infrastructure, Central Asia-central gas pipeline(Sheives, 2006). The China Kazakhstan oil pipeline is connecting the Caspian Sea shore with Alashankou/Destyk, Chinese bordering areas. Its last section has been completed in 2011 increasing the pipeline transportation capacity to 20 million tons per annum. The China-Turkmenistan natural gas pipeline has a capacity of 40 billion cubic meters with Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan supplying about a third of its natural gas.

In response to Chinese pipeline initiative, Russia's reaction is the development of the Russian backed Prikaspiiski natural gas pipeline project involving Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Now this project is delaying politically and due to economic deficiencies. Russia is losing its influence in the Central Asian suppliers, because now Central Asian Republics are not dependent to sell their energy resources to Russia only due to diversification of its transportation routes. In this way, the Central Asian Republics are maximizing their gains allowing them to get higher prices of their energy resources(Andrews-Speed & Vinogradov, 2000). The option of China is much favorable for Central Asian Republics' energy suppliers than that of Russia -China has focused on the construction of new pipeline infrastructure, exploiting and developing new energy fields ensuring greater oil and gas production for the Central Asian energy suppliers.

The Russian-led Eurasian Union is a direct attempt at undermining China's influence in the CARs; however, Beijing has not voiced its displeasure against it. The SCO is considered more powerful than Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) as two big regional powers,

Russia and China, are its members. Both these powers have convergent and divergent political and economic interests in the region (Lanteigne, 2005). Economically, Beijing is interested in the establishment of uni-economic space within the SCO while Russia views this long term perspective would prevail economic hegemony of the Beijing in the SCO leading to influx of China's cheap goods in the region, resultantly making the whole Central Asian region completely dependent on Chinese finished goods. The basic exports of Russia to China are composed of raw materials while that of China to Russia and Central Asian Republics are finished goods (Tang, 2000). Controversy also exists between them regarding energy supply routes and China's energy policy in the Central Asian region, resultantly increasing Russia's anxiety. Due to these factors, the Russia perceives economic integration under SCO as a long term priority of China in the region while Russia has interests in short term objectives and goals like security and political cooperation, fighting against terrorism, extremism and separatism (Kazantsev, 2008).

4.14 Divergence with Respect to Central Asian Energy Transportation Routes

China just like United States wants to diversify Central Asian energy transportation routes. China with increase in its energy consumption due to rapid industrial development and economic growth, proposed the construction of oil and gas pipeline from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan respectively to have cheap and perpetual energy resources to fuel its industry and rapidly growing population. Russia strongly opposed this pipeline project initiated by China. She despite Russia's opposition was successful in implementing the first phase of this project in 2004 and 2nd phase in 2006 (İpek, 2007).

Central Asian region is land locked and for trading with the outside world it has to depend on any third transit country. During the Soviet Union period, Central Asian energy resources were transported to international market through a pipeline passing through Russian territory thus it has monopoly over it. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, Russia maintained this tradition of purchasing Central Asian energy resources at low prices and was selling it at very high prices in international market and was earning huge revenue. In this way, it was playing active role in the price determination of central Asian energy resources and had monopoly over its transportation routes (S. J. Blank, 2006).

China in order to put an end to Russia's monopoly and its energy security wanted to diversify energy transportation routes in opposition to Russian interests. China has been successful in the diversification of energy transportation by construction of oil and gas pipeline from Kazakhstan Turkmenistan respectively. Russia wants firm grip on Asian market particularly China for its domestic energy resources (Lanteigne, 2005). This is the second reason of Russia's opposition to Central Asian energy diversification route in this way the Asian market may be controlled by Central Asian republics energy resources.

4.15 Arms Trade with Central Asian Republics

Russia and China arms sale to Central Asia is inversely proportional to each other. When one increases the other decreases, creating conflicts in their bilateral relations in the Central Asian region. Along with military aid, China is selling arms to Central Asian Republics. Presently, it is composed of light weapons like snipers rifles to Uzbekistan, military equipments like flak jackets, equipments for night vision and vehicles (Swanstrom, 2007). As the China's arms and military equipments sale to Central Asian Republics increases, it is expected that it will have great effect on Russian arms sale to the said region and its prices thereby affecting Russia's economic growth.

Usually, China provides Russian copied and low price (in comparison with Russian arms) arms and the arms prepared under self developed technology at a lower price to Central Asian Republics thereby diminishing Russia's arms sale to Central Asia (Donaldson & Donaldson, 2003). Before China's arms sale to Central Asian Republics mostly Russia was supplying arms to it.

4.16 Divergence in Political Sphere

The fundamental problem in China-Russian relation is the difference regarding their world view. It is said that political and strategic concerns brings Russia and China, the two regional powers, closer to each other, creating underpinning for triangular maneuvering (Turner, 2011). Nevertheless, divergent interests on the issues like Asian security, Missile Defense, regional economic cooperation, the forces bringing them together as well as the forces pulling them away from each other should not be underestimated. Developments in Russia, China and United States

policy towards Central Asian region will work as a key in designing the parameters for Sino-Russian partnership in the coming years.

Chinese analysts and policymakers have diverse opinion regarding Russia. However, there is common agreement among them concerning three factors of the weaknesses of Russian and China strategic partnership such as lack of political trust, pragmatism and the US factor. The pragmatic approach applied by Russia and China to its relative national interests creates disagreement between them (Ong, 2009). The time of ideological solidarity to overcome the differences of foreign policies has gone far away. The strategic partnership has no importance when interests between the two states are in divergence.

Russia's invasion of Georgia in 2008 and its recognition of the independence of South Ossetia and Abkhazia constrict their strategic partnership. These actions of Russia were not acceptable to China, being against of the fundamental principles of the foreign policy of China. These fundamental principles are, respect for state sovereignty, territorial integrity and the principles of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries. Besides it could settle precedents for the liberation movements in Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinxiang. China, putting aside the desire of its strategic partner for support refused to recognize Abkhazia and south Ossetia. China's president Hu Jintao went to the extent of refraining SCO members from supporting the position of Russia. Since then Russia has started maximizing its influence in the region through multilateral organization, excluding China, the CIS, CSTO, EEC and bilateral relations with Central Asian states.

Moscow wants to have dominant position in the energy sector of Central Asia(Medeiros, 2009). In contrast to that China has already dominated the agenda of SCO since 2008, focusing on enhancing integration in trade and infrastructure with Central Asian Republics.

The initial concerns of the West regarding SCO to be anti-United States, opposing its influence in the Central Asian region proved false because of the lack of will on the part of Moscow and Beijing to agree on mutual interests in the region(Sheives, 2006). They pursue cooperation when their interests converge as highlighted by the neo-realists scholars that mutual interests are indispensable for two or more states to cooperate with each other.

4.17 Lack of Trust in their Bilateral Relations

The other factor of divergence is the weak and fragile political trust between Russia and China. Officially, both the countries stress that their strategic partnership is based on strong mutual

political trust but the Chinese scholars explicitly asserts that there lies lack of political trust and uncertainty in their strategic relationship(Nam, Park, Kim, Nam, & Baik, 2016).The academicians still refers to Russia's great power ambitions. As a result, they argue whether Russia, having this ambition in mind, will follow the policy of cooperation with China or not. Similarly, the historic enmity and suspicions forwarded by some Russian scholars of a mighty and powerful China's intentions towards Central Asia and Russia obstructs the developments of a genuine trust between Russia and China(Piontkovsky, 2007).

Chinese scholars are aware about Russian hard liner nationalist's perceptions that the Chinese government and People Liberation Army (PLA) are considering the feasibility of waging a war in the near future against Central Asian countries. Russian liberals use this threat as an instrument of pulling Russia towards Europe away from Asia. They resent the debate of China threat in Russia and the debate about the inherent risks of China rise(S.-Z. Yang et al., 2010). They refuse Russia's assertion that Beijing would marginalize Russia politically and economically in Central Asia Republics. On the other hand, the Russian scholars argue that a powerful China may renew their historic clashes with Russia, re-emerging the past resolved border issues (Fleisher, Sabirianova, & Wang, 2005).

The China's increasing economic presence has led both Russia and China towards competition for the energy resources of Central Asia and political influence in the region. Many Western analysts view China-Russian cooperation in the Central Asian region to be inevitable. Xing Guang Cheng, a Chinese expert asserts that China supports Russian presence in Central Asia but opposes its dominance in the energy sector of the region(Hall & Grant, 2009).This is evident in the energy game between them in the Central Asian region. The inauguration of China–Kazakhstan oil pipeline in the year 2005 and Turkmenistan Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and China natural gas pipeline in the year 2009 broke Russia's monopoly over transportation networks of Central Asian region export of energy, thereby weakening the ability of Russia to receive high transit fee. Russia will not be able to reject these pipelines projects, they will have to accept them(Han & Wang, 2004). The countries which have mutual interests in the region may not be absolutely enemies or friends.

4.18 Problems inherent in their bilateral relations

Besides sound cooperation between Moscow and Beijing, there are some potential problems in their bilateral relations. These include imbalance in their economic growth. China economy is

growing rapidly as compared to Russia and China is getting more advantages out of strategic partnership in Central Asia(Shambaugh, 2006). Distrust and uncertainty near their border areas emerging from territorial disputes, illegal immigration of Chinese to the Russian far eastern region and regional economic problems.

During the period 2009-2011, a fresh configuration of big powers started to set in, in Central Asia. Most of the analysts are of the opinion that China is gradually reorienting and dragging Central Asia towards Beijing, away from the other great powers particularly United States and Russia (Dittmer, 2007)).The Central Asian region has become laboratory for Beijing's foreign policy. Its increasing engagements in the energy sector of the region as a challenge and invites competition rather than cooperation among the big three(Kim & Indeo, 2013). In 2009 its economic status increased immensely compelling Moscow to acknowledge Beijing's investments in the CARs as a positive phenomenon(Feigenbaum, 2011).Central Asian region's states now also go to China's money market for capital formation and accumulation. In the same way, China's economic and commercial penetration into Central Asian region compared with Russia shows clear signs of Russia's inability to compete China economically and commercially, has triggered increasing anxiety in Russia.

Till 2010, China had become the largest commercial external actor in the CARs, the core of its money market and a source of great amount of aid, loans, trade and investment in the infrastructure of its energy sector. Its military capabilities for operation in the Central Asian region including its support for peace operation have grown immensely. The gains of China there have generally come at the expense of Russia, posing special challenge to its interests. Beijing is already surpassing Moscow in the basic and key commercial and economic arenas in the region. China is increasing military potentials to compare or eventually surpass Moscow war potentials for action in the Central Asian region. Tajikistan is replacing its Old Russian aircraft with that of China's made aircraft. In the same way, Beijing will be able to get more natural gas from the Central Asian Republics than does Russia has. This trend poses long term serious challenges to Russia in the region.

Big change in the balance of power has always revolved round the disputes over the ownership and control of the territory between big powers and its allies. Nations, generally, have resorted to war over territory more than anything else that divides them (L. C. Harris, 1993). The underpinning of Beijing's policies towards Central Asia and Russia since 1991 in the border

treaties which it signed with these states during this period, demarcating the boundaries between China and other Soviet Union successor states of Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Russia. Resultantly, these treaties laid the foundation of Beijing-Moscow amity in 1991. Subsequently, Beijing's increasing political and trade relationship with Central Asian Republics, establishing basis for "Shanghai Five" in 1996 thereby establishing framework for SCO (S. J. Blank, 2011). Afterwards, the repeated examples of China's rectifying border treaties with the Central Asian region state, reclaiming previously conceded territories. During signing these borders treaties, Beijing position has been concessionary. However, later on China revised its borders with Tajikistan, Kirgizstan and Kazakhstan in a more benign way than it did in the period 1991-1996 territorial settlements with these states, resultantly, these settlements have forced anti-China passions in responses from Central Asian region states and Russia in particular (Nadkarni, 2011).

China requested Kazakhstan in 2009 for allowing China farmers to use one Million Hectares of the land of Kazakhstan to grow a soybean and rape seed (Eurasian plant) (Bhadrakumar, 2010). Roughly 3000 Chinese farmers are growing now soybeans and wheat on that land, provoking protests in Russia and Central Asian states, apparently because of concerns that country was carved up at the behest of Russia (Marlène Laruelle, 2009).

Tajikistan declared new border rectification with China in the year 2011, ensuring Tajikistan territorial inviolability, solving its borders issues with Beijing. This ensured its stability for the time to come. That statement means that otherwise the security of Tajikistan and China would have been questioned if it was not at risk. These agreements indicates China's visible role in Tajikistan's decision making (Fravel, 2005). This agreement is based on prior bilateral accord in 2002 ratified in 2010 ceding about 1100 Square Kilo Meter area in the Pamir Mountains to Chinese farmers.

4.19 China's Provision of its Port Facility to Central Asian Republics

Before the decline of Soviet Union, all transportation and communication links of Central Asian states were passing through Russian territory. Now Beijing after its disintegration has provided to this landlocked Central Asian states an access to the sea through its ports on the Pacific Ocean (Blank, 2004). Central Asian states access to the sea through China's territory is providing these states an opportunity to search alternative routes and these measures reduces their dependence on

Russia. China looks the region as a source of fuel that may reduce China, risky dependence on maritime route (Karrar, 2010). In this way, they have created interdependence between China and Central Asian Republics. Routes connecting Central Asian states to the Indian Ocean would enable them to get access to maritime transportation channels which are no doubt longer but cheaper than inland transportation (Kim & Blank, 2013).

4.20 Gawadar Port and its Impacts on Russia-China Relations

Russia has great desire for North-South trading corridors connecting Moscow, Delhi, Tehran and Central Asian states. Moscow views Beijing's construction of the Gawadar port in Pakistan is conflicting with Russian interests and goals in the region. Russia desires to ensure that she is not bypassed in the building of transport and pipeline project and related plans in the Central Asian region. She would like to be linked with it at any cost and in any way (Malik, 2012).

It also desires projecting herself as a bridge between Asia and Europe through the transport and pipeline network passing through its territory. Beijing is trying to get access to the energy resources of Central Asia contradicting with Moscow's objectives of establishing monopolistic control over the energy resources of the Central Asian region (Indeo, 2010). The resources of energy have been an important divisive issue in the Sino-Russian relations in the geopolitics of the region. Beijing's growing energy footprints in the region is reducing gradually Moscow's politico- economic influence in the Central Asia (Danchenko, Downs, & Hill, 2010).

4.21 China's Increased Economic Presence in the Region

China's investment and contribution in the Kazakhstan economy are increasing at a rapid pace. Expectedly, Chinese investment in Central Asia may exceed US \$20 billion. Some members of the parliament of Kazakhstan have expressed alarm over the increasing national debt to Beijing. The amount rose from \$4billion in 2008 to \$ 7.9 billion in the first half of 2009.

Currently, China is the fourth among the important lender counties to Kazakhstan after United Kingdom, Netherland and United States(Tang, 2000).China controls important and key oil and gas fields in the Republics of Kazakhstan. Beijing's twenty one percent (21%) stake in the oil production of Kazakhstan has surpassed Moscow by 205 times. Beijing's import-export bank lent the state controlled Kazakh National Development Bank \$5billion and its CNPC granted

Kazakhstan state owned national gas company \$5 billion in the year 2009(Muzalevsky, 2010). Along with this China's national petroleum company bought 49% holdings in the Kazakh Company A.O. Mangistau Munaigaz from Kazakhstan, Kazmunaigas National Company for \$ 3.3 billion, enabling Kazakhstan to continue and pace up its oil exploration, financing its overall plan of development (J. Yang & Ruan, 2009).

After the reception of an estimated \$ 21 billion investment in 2008 for exploration and production of oil and gas, the Kazakh government needed to keep this pace during the crises to prevent even more severe economic contraction that happened during the period 2008-2009. Thus Kazakhstan need of reliable export market and for capital accumulation played into China's strategy that was obviously facilitated by its deep pockets and cash reserves.

At present Moscow is the third largest importer of Turkmenistan's natural gas. She was first during the period 2008-2009, now being replaced by China. The pipeline between Turkmenistan and China leaves Russia with 30 billion Cubic Meters of natural gas opposed to the target planned of 80 billion cubic meters (Raballand & Andr sy, 2007).

Beijing rescued Turkmenistan from Russian aggressive attempts concerning natural gas supplies and prices and granted it \$4 Billion to finalize China- Turkmenistan natural gas pipeline, sending China with 30billion cubic meters natural gas yearly (Godement, 2011).

Once the pipeline with Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan is finalized China would receive approximately 40 billion cubic meters natural gas yearly, more than Moscow gets from Central Asian Republics. China's backing to Turkmenistan not only strengthens its energy independence allowing it to diversify its export of energy resources, thereby weakening Russia in East and Central Asia(Lee, 2005).

Beijing's loan to Turkmenistan in 2009 has given priority to the exploration of Turkmen energy reserves. Similarly in December, 2009 a consortium composed of China National Petroleum Company (CNPC), United Arab Emirates (UAE) and South Korean companies got contracts to develop the oil and natural gas fields in south Lolo tan. Further deals have only magnified China's priority in Turkmenistan's natural gas (Henrik Bergsager, 2004).

Beijing's superiority in the Central Asian region natural gas sector is without any doubt a crushing blow to Russia with everlasting repercussions. Russia agreed to increase the natural gas prices from 2008 for Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan bringing it at par with Europe. Resultantly, Gazprom has to buy Turkmen's natural gas wells at a rate more than the market rate,

thereby obstructing the ability of Turkmenistan to transport natural gas as a mysterious explosion on the Russian-Turkmenistan natural gas pipeline occurring in 2009, shutting natural gas shipment there for the rest of the year. China-Turkmenistan natural gas pipeline project came as an indication that Turkmenistan designed to develop alternative natural gas transportation routes (Li & Wang, 2009). Beijing effectively viewing Russian designs and desires for competition in energy resources of the Central Asian region states, crushing all hopes and desires of Russia with great success by carrying-out its own designed planes and projects (Fazilov & Chen, 2013).

In April 2009, Russia overplayed its role by obstructing natural gas flow from Turkmenistan all alone, citing the slump as well as by chance explosion of the Turkmen natural gas pipeline adjacent to Degtyarlik. These measures destroyed Turkmenistan's confidence in Moscow trustfulness in terms of the demands of the security (Melnykovska et al., 2012).

China no longer wants to approach Moscow for natural gas supply and now she has superior bargaining status despite its increasing demands for natural gas. Despite fifteen years of negotiation and discussion no common agreement on the route, volume, and price of the Moscow's natural gas for China has been decided yet. The huge supply of the Central Asian region natural gas from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan beginning in the year 2012 enabled China to disdain Russian demands for market price for its planned gas pipeline from Siberia to Beijing. Beijing is already producing 76 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year and is consuming 80 billion cubic meters. The difference is made up by liquid natural gas (LNG) of Australia. The new discovery of large volume of Shale Gas in Beijing is further strengthening the hands of China against Russia (Frankenstein, 2011).

4.22 China-Russia and SCO

The SCO as an institution initiated at the behest of China having Chinese characteristics. Beijing formed this organization is an institution reflecting Chinese preferred values and desires. The Central Asian governments like to include both China and Russia in SCO in such a way that it may not be dominated by a single great power, a condition that gives them more room to maneuver (Weitz, 2012). Despite the possible emergence of a China-Russian condominium,

China's balancing presence presumably reduces fears of external subordination and gives them more room to maneuver.

Conversely, another reason for the SCO popularity among Central Asian governments is that the organization allows them to multilaterally manage Beijing's growing presence in their region, backstopped by Russia, rather than deal with the China colossus directly on a bilateral basis(Weitz, 2011).

Most Central Asian leaders considered the Peoples Republic of China less an alternative great power patron to Russia than a supplementary partner that could assist them in moderating Moscow's predominance in the region as well as furthering their economic development".

Despite mutual harmony and competition, the SCO provided Russia and China platform for promoting their competing views on the future organization for the security of Central Asia whereby no one wants the other to go ahead (Skea, Ekins, & Winskel, 2011).

An explicit divide occurred between China and Russia over the aims and objectives of the SCO after 2008, which was considered yet as a security provider(Cooley, 2009).Russian interference in the affairs of Georgian Republic, supporting Abkhazia and South Ossetia separatists causing contention with in the SCO member states and friction with the Republic of Kazakhstan (Kim & Indeo, 2013).

The SCO member's refusal to support Russia is contradictory to Moscow's expectations, showing the limits of Beijing-Moscow partnership in Central Asia. It also projected that Central Asian Republics alliance with China may resist Moscow in the SCO. China may also organize Central Asian Republics in the SCO acting jointly to obstruct Russia. The last decade made it evident that Moscow preferred to see the SCO as an international security organization with anti-western fervor while China on the other hand like to diminish its political role in favor of an enhanced economic cooperation facilitating its access to natural resources of central Asian region (Aris, 2011a).

4.23 Russia-China Economic Integration in Central Asia

Moscow's authorities obstructions and unwillingness had delayed Beijing's proposal for the establishment of free trade zone under the auspices of SCO and within the domain of Central Asia till 2020, because the removal of trade barriers like tariffs and limits on trading would likely

result in the Chinese cheap products replacing Moscow's exports to the Central Asian region (Carroll, 2011). Russia's fear of free trade zone is based on its perception that China may not get enough power at the behest of CARs economic opportunities to challenge its interests in the region. Chinese goods are usually cheap as compared to Russia so it would be able to compete with China in free trade environment.

The most controversial and interesting issue is perhaps the inclusion of Tehran, Delhi and Islamabad as an observer in the SCO. China is willing to provide membership to Pakistan in it to balance against Russia-India interests in the SCO while Russia on the other hand favors the inclusion of India (Kim & Indeo, 2013). Russia is trying to overshadow SCO's regional influence by Russian led competing organization CSTO.

China can take action unilaterally if she thinks necessary and desirable on the basis of its ongoing and progressive development of new projects of transportation routes and her investment in the infrastructure of Central Asian region states having both military and economic capabilities. China may use these new capabilities of the rails of train, roads and infrastructure of airports to materialize the commonly known "Silk Road" from Central Asian region to Shanghai China. In its domestic and military exercises in the year 2010, Beijing transported its military troops from Shanghai to Kazakhstan through its own developed railway system. The use of these new transportation routes heightens fears in the minds of Russia about Beijing's intentions on the basis of its huge rise in her capabilities (Fredholm, 2012).

Some Indian writers are of the opinion that Beijing's "Grand Periphery Military Strategy" and its infrastructure development is entailing proactive military action in many theaters, Central Asia being included in it. These evidences refer to the changing China's security environment. Whether China is moving towards a new strategy or not it actually envisages unilateral proactive actions or interventions. The increasing capabilities and her threat assessment capabilities cannot be denied having certainly great repercussion on Russia's military thinking. It was on the bases of these events and the rise of China's capabilities that CSTO decided to prevent its member states not to accept unilaterally any third state bases on its territory without the consent of the other member states particularly of the United States and China (Kucera, 2011). In the same way, the CSTO members' states military exercises on Russian territory, comprising air, naval, and land forces looked as the major operation, mere exercises representing efforts to deal with the possible China's military operations in the CARs.

China and Russia recently evolved strategic cooperative partnership that has boosted mutual trade and economic development and has increased cooperation in hydrocarbon and natural gas sector. Putin, the President of Russia and Hu Jintao, the then President of China has agreed on the realization of China-Russian pipeline of oil and the exploration of Russian oil fields in its Far East and Siberian region (Lee, 2005).

Besides this, cooperation in the geo-political competition between them is perceived to be increasing in the years to come, keeping in view the significance of their concerned strategic interests in the region. Russia aims to maintain its influence in its near and abroad and to control Central Asian oil and natural gas transportation routes (Venancio, 2018). China on the other hand, aims to be the leader of big economic zone and to base its energy cooperation with Central Asian Republics on sound footings notably with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan for the sake of enhancing energy security and diversifying energy transportation routes.

However, in the recent period, the declining influence of Moscow could be witnessed in the region which is being progressively replaced by China. China has become the most influential leader of Central Asia in the present day regional politics, thereby reducing Russian influence there (Frost, 2009).

Several factors show the downfall of Russian influence in the CARs. Russia's domestic economy has been disturbed by the global economic crises resulting in its geopolitical worth in the Central Asian Region, retarding and delaying most of Russia's projects due to lack of financial resources like Prikaspiiski's expansion of gas pipeline project, developing Uzbekistan energy sector, delay in the formation of "Custom Union" primarily because of Central Asian Republics reluctance to become its members and the Uzbekistan withdrawal from European Economic Community (EEC).

Russia has faced some geographical defeats in the region such as Turkmenistan denial to get membership in regional multilateral organization like SCO, CSTO, EEC and their worst relations in the sector of energy, while it has increased its energy relations with China and the failure of Kyrgyzstan governments to withdraw military forces of United States from Manas Air Base in 2009 (Dmitri Trenin, 2009).

Regarding Moscow's economic weaknesses and geopolitical issues, the Central Asian Republics leadership has designed a multi-dimensional policy to strengthen political commercial and energy relations with other geopolitical powers such as China and United States reducing

traditional links with Russia to maximize their economic and strategic interests (Petersen & Barysch, 2011). Along with economic aspects, the Central Asian Region states are worried about Moscow's strategy in the Post-Soviet Space and its influence exposed during the war in Georgia in 2008. This aggressive strategy has harmed Moscow's efforts posing itself as a powerful state in the region; as a result, China is appearing to it that it could protect Central Asian Republics better than Russia.

4.24 Russia's Interests in Afghanistan and its convergence and divergence with China

The power vacuum emerged as a result of the disintegration of USSR renovated great powers interests in Central Asia and Afghanistan. Initially, Russia was not much interest in the region. US military intervention in CARs and Afghanistan renovated its interests in the region; Russia's initial concerns in Afghanistan have been limited to security, stability, drug trafficking etc (Hodes, 2013 #527).

Afghanistan has important place in the foreign policy of Russia especially since 9/11 attacks. Russian policy in Afghanistan can be viewed as an attempt to strengthen its influence in Central Asian Republics as well as extending its reach to South Asia and Middle East. Power relations are changing in the region as the big powers Russia, China and United States are competing for influence in the region. Russia comparatively has strong position in Central Asia due to historical, geographical and cultural ties, military presence and economic relation with region's states (Ziegler, 2014). Afghanistan is an important bridge between regions. Former ISI Chief Lieutenant General Retired Asad Durrani once stated that Afghanistan is an important post for the US to maintain military presence for ensuring strategic interests in the region. Dramatically, Russia's relation with Central Asia and Afghanistan became stagnant in 1990s but under the dynamic leadership of Putin it regained its lost position. Russian policy towards Afghanistan has become one of the important subjects of its foreign policy and is determined by Afghanistan's internal conditions (Mankoff, 2009 #528). Nevertheless, it has been shaped by its relations with US, China, CARs and South Asia.

The US invasion and NATO extension to Afghanistan rang alarms in Moscow and Beijing as both latter powers perceived this as an advancement to counter their re-emergence. Since collapse of Taliban's regime in Afghanistan Russian policy towards Afghanistan has been changing fastly. In 2001-2002 Russia tried to strengthen its influence in Afghanistan. This was

followed by a period of stagnation in 2003-2006, when Russia came to know that it was not possible for Russia to compete with the US. However, Russia resumed its activities in Afghanistan in 2007 as Russia started capitalizing on failing internal security conditions to ameliorate its relations with the government of Kabul and to increase its prominence compared to NATO forces. 2009-2016 marked breakthrough as Moscow started working actively to ease the Afghanistan problem. Hamid Karzai government, meanwhile, reached to an agreement with Taliban while Moscow supported withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan (Steele, 2013). Unilateral attack of the US with pretext of pre-emptive approach was taken by China as a kind of warning. China in order to resolve border disputes with Central Asian Republics took the initiative of Shanghai Five in 1996 which was later on transformed into Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in 2005 after US military penetration into the region. China started focusing improving relation with its neighboring countries as China share border with 14 countries. Though China shares only 53 kilometer border but domestically problematic region of Xinjiang shares this border. Russia and Afghanistan both considered emergence of Da'esh despite presence of the US and Resolute Support Mission (RSM) troops as threat to their security and security of SCO members. This development further focused their concentration in Afghanistan. Russia has been one of the important pillars of this organization (Contessi, 2010). The main objective of this organization has been eradication of the three evils of separatism, extremism and terrorism along with resolving border issue among the member states. Afghanistan has an observer status in this organization. Another objective of this organization has been regional integration. Unstable and insecure Afghanistan creates hurdles in the way of regional integration under SCO. Chinese interest mainly focused security of its bordering region Xinjiang while Russia came here to extend its sphere of influence but both Russia and China have convergence of their interest in expelling the US from Afghanistan. In National Security Strategy of the US released in January 2018, Secretary of State James Mattis categorically defined that primary focus the US foreign policy had changed from countering terrorism to countering the revisionist powers i.e. Russia and China (Mead, 2014). China and Russia had perhaps perceived the same the moment the US forces invaded Afghanistan.

The growth of Islamic extremism and drug trafficking stemming from the land of Afghanistan became an impetus for Russia to have closer security ties with China. SCO has been one of the mechanisms to fulfill this end. Russia has been worried that the forces of instability prevailing in

Afghanistan may not spell over to Russia through Central Asian Republics. It will destabilize Russia's near abroad. China just like Russia wants to eradicate the three evils from Afghanistan so that it may not spell over to China particularly its Xinxiang province adjacent to Afghanistan. Production of drugs particularly opium has increased manifold since 2001 and Russia is the largest market for it (Golunov, 2007). About 6% of Russian population is using these drugs stemming from Afghanistan and get access to Russia through Central Asian Republics. Due to this Russia is facing with serious public health issues. Besides health problems, the revenue obtained from these illegal drugs trafficking goes into the hands of separatists, extremists and terrorists. Its arch rival US may use these extremists against Russia and China. It may strengthen the hands of anti-state forces. Both Russia and China want stability in the region and drug trafficking creates hurdles in it. They fight collectively for it to bring stability to the region.

Russia wants a stable and prosperous Afghanistan so that it may integrate with South Asian region and get access into South Asian market. So long US is there in Afghanistan stability is not possible, making it impossible for Russia to integrate with South Asian, particularly, the members of SCO. It also obstructs China access to CARs, Europe and Middle East. It also prevents Russia's access to warm water. One of the important objectives of Russia and China in Afghanistan is to force NATO for withdrawal from the region, to have stable government in Afghanistan, making it possible for Russia to get access to South Asian market and for China to get access to CARs, Middle East and Europe. Stable Afghanistan will enable Russia to extend its market up to South Asia and East Asia.

Russia has huge amount of oil and natural gas. Russia has been in search of market for its oil and gas. The only way to transport its natural gas and oil to South Asia and East Asia is Afghanistan. Therefore she has been striving to have stable government in Afghanistan. China on other hand is in search of stable and continuous energy supply for its rapidly growing population and industry and stable Central Asia and Afghanistan may realize it. Russia has signed an agreement with Pakistan for supplying its gas to Pakistan.

Afghanistan has immense economic opportunities. It has huge market for the finished goods of big powers. Besides market it has a lot of natural resources such as iron, copper, precious metals, marbles, gemstones, lithium, and untapped hydrocarbons as well. The most important untapped metals are iron and copper. The total volume of copper resources is about 60 million metric tons. These natural resources have made Afghanistan attractive for the big powers, Russia, China and

United States. Afghanistan has the world's 2nd largest copper deposits in its Logar Province. These deposits are estimated to be worth \$1-3 trillion. These natural resources along with strategic location have made this region a focus of big powers since long. Russia and China are inherently competing for economic opportunities in Afghanistan but the sublime strategic interests of ousting US from the region have brought them closer. So long NATO forces are there in Afghanistan it is not possible for Russia to get access to South Asian and East Asian market. Similarly it obstructs the way of China access to CARs, Europe and Middle East.

China announced Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in 2013. The initiative is aimed integrating 65 countries of Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America for construction of infrastructure and integrating the economies. Chinese built China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistan could not be realized to its fullest potential until the US leaves Afghanistan as spill over of militancy is keeping the nodal of CPEC i.e. Baluchistan unstable. China intends to extend the CPEC to Middle East and Eastern Europe but presence of the US in Afghanistan is keeping it at bay (Wolf, 2016). These key interests of China are aligning it with Russia against the US.

Conclusion

Russia and CARs has been part of Soviet Union till its disintegration in 1991. The influence of this historical relationship may be observed even today from its political inclination towards Russian Federation. Besides this, historical legacies both are in proximity to each other, sharing political, cultural and linguistic characteristics and values. More than twenty percent Russians are still living in CARs. It is an important source for Russia's influence in the region. Most of the present regimes in the region are dominated by pro-Russian.

Russia has economic and strategic concerns with the region. The region states are mostly land locked, having no access to the sea. For commercial engagements with the outside world, it has to depend on any third neighboring transit country. As it has been a part of Soviet Union and therefore, CARs energy resources were transported through a pipeline passing through Russian territory. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, Russia inherited this transportation pipeline and established its monopoly over it. It was purchasing energy resources of CARs at a low price and was selling it at a very high price in international market, thereby earning huge revenue from it. Moscow wants to maintain this monopoly over energy resources transportation routes and is obstructing every move of any external power for its diversification. This can be observed from

its inherent irritation over China-Kazakhstan oil pipeline (Atlasu-Alashanko) and China-Turkmenistan natural gas pipeline. Similarly, it opposed US sponsored BTC and BTE.

Russia itself has huge energy reserves and is obtaining considerable revenue from it. Diversification of energy resources transportation routes from CARs would challenge Russian energy exports to the international market particularly South Asia, a huge market for energy resources. It wants to export its own energy resources instead of CARs energy resources to Asian market. It is against of TAPI gas pipeline project because if this project is materialized, Russia will lose its grip on South Asian market. While China wants to diversify CARs energy supply route to have safe energy for its growing industry and population and to put an end to Russian monopoly over it, to limit its role in its price determination in international market, to create competition among the energy producers particularly Russia and CARs to have perpetual and cheap energy resources.

The next interest of Russia in the region is concerned with its security. Presently, Central Asian region states are politically, economically, and with respect to security are weak and fragile. Central Asian governments are so weak that it has no control over its public. Due to this, elements of instability are fast emerging in the region such as separatism, extremism, terrorism, drug-trafficking, smuggling, illegal immigration, arms trade etc. The revenue obtained from these illegal activities usually strengthens the hands of anti-state elements. Russia has an apprehension that these factors of instability may spell over to Russia causing instability there. It is also because of this reason that Russia is striving hard for the stability of the region by giving financial aid, loan, direct investment and trading in different sectors. To give effect to this objective, she wants the removal and eradication of the three evils of separatism, extremism and terrorism, drug-trafficking, arms trade, smuggling, illegal immigration etc by removing its route causes. In this respect, it is collaborating with other powers such as China and United States. This region, in fact works as a buffer zone protecting it from any external threat.

Politically, it wants to have influence in CARs and to maintain pro-Russian semi-authoritarian governments there in opposition to US democratization process. To have political influence there, it has integrated itself with the region's states through bilateral and multilateral organizations such as CSTO, CIS, SCO and EEC.

Moscow-Beijing relations in Central Asian geopolitics have witnessed extraordinary improvement in the last twenty years. From the military conflict situation during the Cold War,

they have reached to the situation of strategic partnership and have developed good neighbor's relation under a treaty concluding in 2001. Its policy in the region, backyard of Russia and rear of China is reflecting their intentions regarding mutual relations and the world politics at large. The important factor which brought them closer to each other was the presence of US on the Central Asian land. In order to counterbalance US in the region, they established SCO, allowing its member states to check its conflicting interests.

Moscow has been emphasizing on the issues of security in the region and the need of collective action against it under SCO so that the elements of insecurity may not spell over to Russia while Beijing has focused on the region's market for its finished goods and its natural resources. Contrary to Moscow, Beijing is inclined to use Shanghai Cooperation Organization in arguing with the Western World and politically prefers to keep low profile.

Moscow is not happy with China's increased economic engagements with Central Asian Republics, particularly its efforts for domination of Central Asian energy resources and diversification of its supply routes but prefers not to demonstrate its unwillingness. Politically, China wants to interact with Russia on the basis of equality and is disgruntled by Moscow unwillingness to invite Beijing to be member of regional economic organizations such as EEC but prefers to keep its feelings hidden. Moscow would like to see Shanghai Cooperation Organization as the basis of future Eurasian security and economic cooperation block from Europe to Pacific under its auspices. Beijing is conscious and is struggling to slow down this process. Besides these conflicts of opinions and actions, both of them desire to focus on the common objectives in the region. The new challenges faced by Central Asian Republics and the SCO as an international organization is the fast shifting international political environment. After NATO withdrawal from Afghanistan would possibly aggravate the security situation in the region and more responsibility would fall on the fragile shoulders of SCO and its member states. The analysis of Russia and China interests in the region projects that most of their political and strategic interests are common with the exception of few. They want stability in the region. It is conducive for the achievement of their national interests concerned with the region. For its stability, they regard it essential to eradicate the forces of instability such as separatism, extremism and terrorism, removal of drug-trafficking, smuggling, arms trade, illegal immigration, nuclear non-proliferation and promotion of education, human rights, minority rights, justice and equality, rule of law, good governance. However, they both oppose promotion

of western democracy in the region and the replacement of the present semi-authoritarian regimes with western oriented democratic governments. It is because, they are of the opinion that US usually intervene in the internal affairs of other states under the garb of democracy. They are against of US military penetration in the CARs and are striving to oust NATO forces from the Central Asian region. They are also against of the present uni-polar international power structure dominated by US and want to substitute it with multi-polar international power structure as they consider it conducive for international peace and security. These factors have brought them closer to each other in the geo-politics of Central Asia. There is divergence among them regarding diversification of Central Asian energy resources transportation routes. Russia wants to have monopoly over the energy transportation route as it had during Soviet Union period and even for sometime after its disintegration while China wants to diversify it to have cheap and perpetual energy supply for its growing industry and population and to put an end to Russian monopoly over it. Just like China and United States, CARs also want diversification of energy supply routes so that they may have greater space for maneuvering in international market. In Afghanistan the shared interests of US withdrawal has brought Russia China closer to each other. So long US is there in Afghanistan it was not possible to get advantage from the natural resources of Afghanistan and to expand its market towards south Asia, similarly it would not be possible for China to get access to middle east and Europe and benefit from Afghanistan's natural resources so long NATO forces are there in Afghanistan.

CHAPTER 5

CHINA'S ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SECURITY INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA AND AFGHANISTAN: ITS CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE WITH UNITED STATES

5.1 Introduction

China's involvement in the Central Asian geopolitics called "New Great Game" started soon after the collapse of Soviet Union. It was the first country recognizing the independence of the Central Asian Republics and in January, 1992 established diplomatic relations with them (Liao, 2006). In this way, it established itself as a major player in the geopolitics of Central Asia. Its geographical proximity, security and economic interests in the region and the Central Asian Republics, needs and dependent status have brought them closer to each other. Following the establishment of diplomatic relations it resolved all of its long standing territorial disputes of Soviet period with Central Asian Republics. In order to strengthen their bilateral relations and resolving border issues, they formed an organization known as "Shanghai Five" in 1996, which later became Shanghai Cooperation Organization in 2001 on the occasion of Uzbekistan inclusion into it (Zhuangzhi, 2004). US military penetration into the region in 2001 prompted the member states particularly Russia and China to further strengthen this organization.

Russia after realizing to tackle with US hegemonic ambitions in the Central Asian region unilaterally, was beyond its capacity, particularly after the incident of 9/11 and the subsequent war against terrorism, and its penetration into the Central Asian region, was in search of allies. Moscow has been willing to turn its eyes towards those states which share its concern over US military penetration into Central Asia and their opposition to post cold war international order (Lampton, 2005). This perception of Russia has brought it closer to China evident in the shape of SCO in 2001 and Russia's silence over China's initiative of diversification of CARs energy supply routes.

Among other reasons, the Beijing's plan of building high-speed rail infrastructure connecting Central Asia, Far East and Europe is the reason behind the conflict between big powers over

Central Asian and Caucasus region's energy resources. The ambitions of creating modern transportation infrastructure, China took a big and bold step towards it in November, 2006 by signing an agreement by the eighteen countries representatives for the realization of high speed rail project. Expectedly, it will be completed with the cooperation and assistance of member states involved in 2025(Zevelev, 2015). This project is regarded as reinterpretation of the old Silk Road connecting East with West in an environment of tough competition with the Siberian railway infrastructure. This is not intended for passengers only. A basic reason behind it is the generation of new industrial centers in the Eurasian region urging to speed up trade in goods and lowering down transportation expenses to facilitate the transportation of energy resources(Garver, 2006). This has been a matter of apprehension for Russia and US as China has surpassed them in the economic sector of the region.

China's strategy is well thought and simple. Its aim is to increase its participation and cooperation with the countries of all continents South East Asia, South America and Central and South Asia. In order to meet with this end, she is providing low cost technology, advanced railway and road infrastructure to the energy rich Central Asian region's states(Ionela Pop, 2010). In exchange, China will be able to get access to Central Asian region hydrocarbon resources and raw materials. Central Asian energy resources are indispensable to meet with the vast energy needs of China, an Asian economic giant. However, it presents a perceived threat to Russian monopoly over central Asian energy resources. Russia's Gazprom, currently holds a monopoly in the Central Asian region and withstand crucial attacks on its position from United States and China in the shape of proposed pipeline projects, designed as an alternative to the present operational pipeline controlled by Moscow(Leung, 2011).

5.2 Presence of China in Central Asia: Historical Perspective

Since ancient times, China's culture has been a part of the culture of Central Asia. Its presence in the region can be traced back to Huns Dynasty (206 BC- 220 AD) about two thousand years back. China established land routes and trade ties with the Western World, particularly with Roman Empire through Central Asia, a gate way to the Western world. This land route is historically known as "Silk Road". Through this land route, Chinese goods were getting access to the Middle East and other Western countries. Development of this route coincided with the

Western empire of Huns and encountered with a Turkish nomadic tribe in the Central Asian region, called as Xiongnu. Those people had relations with Huns (M. A. Peterson, 2005).

Encountering with these people for security of “Silk Road” further increased China’s control on Central Asian region in order to maintain gate way to the Western world. Due to internal conflicts and dissensions among the “Huns Dynasty” it collapsed, leading to China’s loss of the region in 220 AD. During “Tang Dynasty” (581-902 AD) China reunified bringing the region into focus as a potential source of cultural and economic trade, since then China began increasing its influence in the region more than it had during “Huns Dynasty”.

Finally, they come across the Muslims of Turkistan and encountered with them. Greater Turkistan was composed of the Muslims of Uyghur, Arabs, Tibetans (Gill & Oresman, 2003). This battle is known as the “Battle of Talas” in the history of Central Asia, fought in 751 AD. In this battle Tang Dynasty was defeated, leading to increased Arab control over the region. The defeat of China in this “Battle of Talas” and subsequent instability led to the collapse of Tang Empire via control of the region.

During “Qing Dynasty” (1644-1911), China once again got stability and started expansion towards the Central Asian region. It after controlling Tibet and Taiwan controlled Chinese Central Asia after defeating Uyghur and Mongol forces. The rule of the Qing was limited as it allowed the local and religious leaders to maintain their influence in their respective areas. The Qing campaign finally encountered with Russian expansionism towards Central Asian region leading to several battles from 1751-1881 AD, resulting in a treaty over disputed areas (M. A. Peterson, 2005).Xinjiang, having considerable Muslim Uyghur population was made the part of Qing Empire in 1884. This region was got back by China in 1911 after the fall of “Qing Dynasty”.

This region of Xinjiang was ruled by several tribal leaders from 1911-1944 who banded it together and formed the Republic of Eastern Turkistan. When in 1949, People Republic of China was formed it regained Xinjiang and was made a part of China. Its relations with Central Asian Republics have been limited due to Russia-China border disputes and Russia’s support to Uyghur Muslims in Xinjiang province(Pelham, 2007). In the late 1980s, the decline of Russian influence and eventual independence of Central Asian states re-emerged China’s interests in the region.

5.3 Politico- Economic Interests

China's political and economic interests in the central Asian region go hand in hand. It is difficult to separate one from the other. China in order to maintain and develop its economic, security and political interests in the Central Asian region signed several multilateral and bilateral agreements related to religious extremism, border disputes, arms control, terrorism, separatism, drug trafficking and illegal immigration and several other contracts (O'Lear, 2004). The important reason for China's involvement in the region appears to be an effort for her growing need of natural gas and oil along with her security concerns on the Western border and Xingjian internal security, based upon peaceful development in her Central Asian region's neighboring states and Beijing relations with it (O'Hara, 2004).

China considers Central Asia important for its cheap raw material and a large market for its finished goods. Due to these reasons, China entered into "New Great Game". She established trade relations with region's states such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. She, in pursuance of her energy strategy, supported the exploration and extraction of oil and gas sector of the region (Wong, 2011). China looks this region important for its security, ethnic stability, trade enhancement and energy interests. For these mentioned interests and to bring the region's states closer to itself China has developed pipeline for oil and gas, high ways and railways for transportation between China and Central Asian Republics via Eastern Europe.

China's dependence upon imported oil increased with the increase and development in its industries and population in the latter half of 1990s. She has constructed Eastward pipeline of oil and gas from Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan respectively to mainland China. China hopes to utilize Central Asian region huge market as a catalyst to fuel a new prosperity zone in Xingjian for international investment and reviving the old "Silk Road", forwarding China's economic interests further then Central Asia to the Persian Gulf and even to the Western market (Peyrouse, 2007).

Further on the politico-economic side China wants to promote economic and political ties with the states of the region. For the promotion of economic relations with it, geo-economic policy was adopted for guaranteeing security and stability in the Central Asian Republics. To give effect to this it improved bilateral relations with the three neighboring Central Asian Republics, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan by solving border issues with them, allowing China to control Uyghur population in Central Asia in a better way, developing security cooperation and

increasing trust reciprocally. New agreements were made with the Republic of Kazakhstan in 1994; the left over disputed zones were resolved in 1999 (Banuazizi & Weiner, 1994). The border issues with the Republic of Kyrgyzstan in 1996 here the left over disputed issues were resolved in 1999 as well and after the reconciliation process at the end of Civil War in 2002. All this became possible after the formation of “Shanghai Five” in 1996 by China and the three Central Asian Republics Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan as well as Russia. It was later on upgraded to “Shanghai Cooperation Organization” in 2001 on the occasion of Uzbekistan inclusion into it on the eve of US penetration into the region (Maksutov, 2006). Now its aim is not limited to resolving border issues with post soviet Central Asian Republics but to integrate them with China politically and economically so that it may not go into the hands of US (Chung, 2004). It has also brought China and Central Asia closer to each other who were hitherto enemy for counterbalancing US in the geopolitics of Central Asia.

Development of mutual economic relations between China and the post soviet Central Asian Republics was comparatively an easy task because their economies are complementary to each other. China needed energy resources, raw materials and market provided by Central Asian Republics and alternatively Central Asian Republics need finished consumer goods providing an opportunity for China economic growth and development (Khodzhaev, 2009).

Central Asian Republics have great potential for China’s economic development, particularly for its North Western region. Central Asia is situated rightly in the middle of Eurasian continent. It has been the part of traditional major trade route, known as “Silk Road” between the West and East. The revival of this traditional route between the West and East can overcome the development deficiencies of land locked North Western province of China. In 1992, after a year of the collapse of Soviet Union, trade between China’s North-Western region and Central Asian Republics increased 130 percent (Dorian, Wigdortz, & Gladney, 1997). Presently, Xinxiang province of China work as a crossroad between China and the Central Asian Republics. The three big powers, Russia, China and United States are struggling with each other for the enhancement of its power and that Central Asian energy resources are thought to be a mean to this supreme objectives. They fear each other that their rivals may not get enough power at the behest of Central Asian economic opportunities to challenge its interests in CARs in particular and in the world in general.

China in order to diversify its energy resources supply is interested in exploring oil and gas reserves of Central Asia. It has a potential relatively safe energy supply, having rare chance of blockade and threat such as faced by ships passing by the Malacca strait being vulnerable to terrorism and in the control of US. Central Asia is not only energy supplier to China but it also provides transit route to it for getting access to western world(Daojiong, 2006b) (Swanston, 2005). On the other hand, Central Asian Republics are also willing to diversify its energy transportation routes for dual objectives, to put an end to one power monopoly over it and to have greater space for maneuvering in international market for getting higher profits. In this way China and Central Asian Republics are made interdependent.

China is the world emerging economy; therefore, its energy requirements are increasing with each passing day. In energy consumption, it is the second in the world. China has a great appetite for energy. Uninterrupted supply of energy is essential for China's economic development in the time to come. This energy need and demand is the important aspect of China's interests in the Central Asian region (Petersen & Barysch, 2011). It has always been the desire of China to have firm control over the energy resources of Central Asia, ensuring future energy requirements with clear intention of exploiting the energy resources and its location to determine its role outside its boundaries. Firm control over the region gives an opportunity to China to have a significant and important geo-political position in the world politics. It wants to have and establish multilateral relations with Central Asian states(Fedorenko, 2013). It wants to establish partnership with Central Asian Republics in energy trade and its transportation to international market(Wenmu, 2003).

Beijing energy policy is two dimensional. First dimension focuses on the oil reserve of Central Asia. In order to meet with its oil demands China's National Petroleum Company has invested and signed agreements with Kazakhstan, the oil rich Republics of Central Asia. This will pave the way for China to play active role in other oil projects in Kazakhstan, making way to the Caspian region energy resources. It has constructed oil pipeline known as "Atlasu-Alashanko" stretching from Atlasu (Kazakhstan) to Alashanko (China). It performs dual functions on one side it fulfills the energy needs of China and on the other side, it plays strategic role of putting an end to Russian monopoly over Central Asian energy transportation routes and its role in price mechanism. Before the realization of this pipeline, there was a single pipeline of oil and gas called "Druzbha" for transportation of central Asian energy resources passing through the

Russian territory. So Russia had complete monopoly over it for a long time till 2009(Dmitri Trenin, 2009). Central Asia-China pipeline became operational in 2009.

The second dimension has concentrated on the natural gas reserves of the Central Asian region. For fulfilling these objectives, China has constructed gas pipeline to get access to the gas reserves of Central Asia, particularly Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan has the rich natural gas reserves. China-Turkmenistan gas pipeline became operational in 2009. This is considered as a great achievement of China's energy policy in the geopolitics of Central Asia. Beijing is playing an important role in other areas such as economy, trade and security. China through regional organization wants to integrate Central Asian Republics(Wu & Chen, 2004). This is why she is playing active role in the regional forum, SCO.

Xinjiang is an important region of China because of its geographic location, at the cross roads of five different geographical and cultural regions and energy resources such as oil, gas and uranium. The Chinese government sensitivity towards the increasing ethnic nationalism in the province of Xinjiang has been reinforced by developing economic, political and ethnic conflicts and the rise of militant Islam. The perceived destabilizing influences to come across Chinese borders and threats to its pre-dominant control over Muslim dominated province of Xinjiang are a Beijing major fear. The Xinjiang geo-strategic location along with China developing economic reforms has placed Xinjiang in an important position, becoming China's economic and political gateway to Central Asian region. Recently, its strategic significance has been increased by the exploration of energy resources in Tarim Basin; Turfan, Zhungar, transforming China's economy(Christoffersen, 1993). The challenges to Xinjiang control do not come only from the ethnic community or Islamic political group but from the various states forming part of "New Great Game".

5.4 China's Economic Interests in Central Asia

China has been self sufficient in energy for several years since its independence in 1949. However, with the growth of its economy due to rapidly growing industries as well as population, the demand for energy resources also increased. In the year 1993, the demand of energy, particularly oil and natural gas, increased than the domestic production could support. This made China an importer of oil and natural gas and within two decades she became the world second largest energy consumer and by the year 2012 she had to import about 57% of

oil(Garrison, 2009). If this trend continued, China would have to import 66% of its oil by the year 2016. China became the second largest importer of hydrocarbon resources after United States(Xuetang, 2006).

Due to rapid industrial development in China, the demand for energy increased. The oil demand increased from 1.7 to 3.4 million barrel per day from 1985 to 1995 and reached to 6.8 Million Barrel per day in 2004. Forty percent of this demand is fulfilled from external resources(Lekka & Kyriazes, 2013).This situation worried the Chinese authorities and initiated numerous strategies in order to fulfill these demands. Domestically, the government of China encouraged natural gas and oil production and exploration, conservation of energy and the renewable energy resources promotion and internationally, she focused on securing energy supply chain and its transit routes(Smith Stegen, 2015). To have safe and perpetual energy supply from CARs she has been successful in materializing in energy pipeline from CARs to mainland china in 2009.

Besides energy which is essential for the economic growth of China, it also offers a huge market for its finished goods. China due to advanced technology, cheap labor and abundance of energy resources are producing huge volume of finished goods which cannot be consumed domestically. For these finished goods she has been in search of foreign markets. CARs due to its huge population and less production of consumer goods, offers huge market for China's finished goods.

Furthermore, industry cannot run without perpetual supply of raw materials. CARs have abundance raw materials for export to the outside world so china provides market for its raw materials. While China has replaced Russia in the Central Asian market while US is struggling to control Central Asian market.

5.5 Economic Development of Xinjiang and Central Asian Region

Central Asian Republics got independence from Soviet Union in 1991, the result of this disintegration offered Beijing, an opportunity, to promote its interior provinces economically and to re-establish historical "Silk Road" in the Central Asian region. Economic interaction with Central Asian region states enabled China to encounter separatism in its border regions and to strengthen secular regimes in the Central Asian Republics in order to counterbalance against religious groups, who backed anti-state organizations in China like that in Xinjiang (Burles, 1999).Due to its open borders and ethnic ties, the small population could easily interact with

neighboring countries of Central Asian region, thereby making Xinjiang region key to economic strategy of China. The government of Xinjiang received permission from the central government in 1992 regarding opening its borders for trading and economic interaction with the outside world, particularly the neighboring Central Asian states (Constantin, 2007). All other provinces, prefectures, areas and cities received state permission in 1995, to have trade with external world. Beijing re-appraised the significance of economic development and foreign trade in 2000 with its policy of “Go West” focusing on the enhancement of trade with Central Asian Republics and economic development, resultantly; all trade activities were concentrated in Xinjiang region of China. For Central Asian Republics, Xinjiang is the center of trade. The exports of Xinjiang can be divided into food products (Primary Products) and finished industrial goods usually produced near coastal areas (Spechler, 2003).

Its increased investment and trade in the Central Asian region focused on Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan because of its shared borders with Xinjiang and Central Asian ethnic minorities living in Xinjiang. Among these three states sharing border with Xinjiang, Kazakhstan is the biggest trading partner of Beijing till date (MacHaffie, 2010). Due to geographic location of Xinjiang, the President of Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev said, “Xinjiang is one of the fastest growing areas in economic activities, in the total \$ 3 Billion trade between China and Kazakhstan; approximately \$ 2.5 Billion is done here. The impact of Xinjiang on Kazakhstan is sure to grow here in the future”.

For maintaining commercial presence and stability in the region, China considers foreign direct investment (FDI) and loan conducive for it. It has invested a lot in its infrastructure development particularly railways, and roads allowing China to have commercial presence in the region, including potential railways linking Xinjiang and Uzbekistan via Kyrgyzstan (S. Blank, 2010). Total foreign direct investment in the region is \$500 Million, which is far greater than the Central Asian states could provide for themselves. Loans to Central Asian Republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan for purchasing China’s finished goods are official incentives for backing Chinese policy of eradication of the three evils of separatism, extremism and terrorism from its Xinjiang province, considering economic development of Xinjiang and Central Asian region essential for stabilizing and strengthening the region against Islamic extremism and fundamentalism (Dorian et al., 1997).

5.6 China's Energy Security

Central Asian Republics and China's interaction in the energy sector has increased since the exhaust of China's self-sufficiency in energy in the latter half of 1990s. The growing energy demands of China increased its interest in the Central Asian Republics, rich in energy resources. Presently, China is second in energy consumption and third in its production in the world. So, in energy consumption, it is second to the United States. This has invited competition among the big powers over the energy resources in the world in general and Central Asia in particular(Daojiong, 2006a). Majority of China's domestic energy resources are located in the North and North Western regions of Xinjiang. This is why its security and stability is essential for Beijing's economic growth and development and its security is of prime concern for China.

The independence of Central Asian Republics was followed by China's negotiation with it regarding trade and energy for the establishment of strong hold over its energy resources and market to fuel its industries and fulfill the growing energy demands of its population. The total oil imports of China was 122.7 million tons, out of it sixty five percent were imported from Middle East. and African countries passing through Malacca strait of Indonesia(Lanteigne, 2008). Presently, she imports about 2/3 of its oil from the region of Middle East. The energy policy makers of China are aware that the Middle East energy resources are vulnerable to terrorism, military conflicts and other factors of instability and blockade from US(Ji, 2007). Mostly, (about 80 %) China's oil and natural gas imports from African continent and Middle East region are passing through Sea route of Malacca strait, an area controlled by the perceived rival United States naval forces which may obstruct this sea transportation routes in case of conflict between China and United States or its allies in the pacific (J. Lin, 2012). Resultantly, the Strait of Malacca has become a strategic weakness for Beijing. To cope with this situation, the Malacca dilemma, China is increasing its blue water naval capacity and capabilities, besides this it has focused on the construction of pipeline through Iran, Pakistan and Myanmar from Central Asian Republics particularly Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Blumenthal, 2008). Due to above mentioned reasons; China is in search of diversifying its energy supply imports and to reduce her dependence on Middle East energy resources. In this regard, the energy rich Central Asia can play an important role (Swanström, 2007).

China's energy strategy is the diversification of its energy imports making it less dependent on M.E and African states and establishing strong hold over the energy transportation routes leading

from Central Asia to China through Xinjiang. Along with the establishment of economic and political relations with CARs, it initiated its energy diversification strategy by signing energy agreements between the Republic of Kazakhstan and China's National Petroleum Company (CNPC). It got 60.3 % shares in Kazakhstan's Akzubin project in 1993, which latter on in the year 2003 increased to 85.6 % (Hawkins & Robert). Alongside an agreement was signed between China and the Republic of Kazakhstan for the construction of oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to China's Xinjiang region via mainland China, and its further distribution to its Eastern region. Resultantly, it materialized its ambition of diversifying its energy supply by stretching oil pipeline from Kazakhstan and gas pipeline from Turkmenistan in 2009.

Map of oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to China



Source: (Johnson, 2010)

Besides it, it also entered into an agreement with the Republic of Turkmenistan for the construction of natural gas pipeline from there to Xinjiang and also an oil pipeline from there to enter into Kazakh-China oil pipeline. China involved herself in the Central Asian oil and gas sector, developed oil pipeline from Kazakhstan and gas pipeline from Turkmenistan. In order to further secure the energy supply, China has increased its engagement in the Caspian and CARs energy sector (Smith Stegen, 2015). Cooperation in energy sector between China and

Turkmenistan started in the end of 20th Century. Mitsubishi, a Turkmen gas company and CNPC in 1992 proposed for the delivery of the natural gas of Turkmenistan to Beijing. The two companies agreed on the feasibility study of the said project and in 1996, it was finalized (Ionela Pop, 2010). Two years later, the government of China and the government of the Republic of Turkmenistan arrived at an agreement of delivering 30 billion cubic meters gas from the Republic of Turkmenistan to China in the ensuing thirty years (Niazi, 2006).

Map of oil and gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to China



Source: (Akiniev, 2016)

Similarly in pursuance of its energy strategy in Central Asia, China's National Petroleum Company signed an agreement with the Republic of Kazakhstan in 1997 for buying sixty percent AktobeMunay natural gas. Along with it in the next year, it signed another agreement with Kazakhstan regarding the exploration of its western oil fields (Dinara Kaliyeva, 2004). After that,

China National Petroleum Company (CNPC) got fifty percent share in the “Salejan Oil Field” of Kazakhstan in 2002, thirty percent share in “North Buzaiche” in the year 2003 and sixty five percent in Chevron oil and gas. This was followed by signing an agreement related to production and sharing with Turkmenistan for the exploration of gas in Bagtiyarlik, located in the Eastern part of it (Downs, 2010). China provided \$4 billion loan to the Republic of Turkmenistan for the development of Yolo ten gas field, located in the Southern region of Turkmenistan. Reciprocally, Turkmenistan increased 10 billion cubic meters gas exports to China.

Besides, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and China also made energy deals with the Republic of Uzbekistan. During the Chinese President Hu Jintao’s visit to Uzbekistan, China made a contract for cooperation in oil sector of Uzbekistan with “Uzbekneftegaz” for the exploration and development of oil and gas on the shore of Aral Sea (Liao, 2006). Such like projects would provide China’s direct access to the energy deposits of the Republic of Uzbekistan. China’s technological services and its abilities of energy explorations further increased China’s Uzbekistan’s relations. They managed to establish long term cooperation in oil and natural gas exploitation and exploration, reciprocally, China provided a loan of \$ 600 million to Uzbekistan for the construction of oil and gas pipeline (Zweig & Jianhai, 2005). Regarding energy imports and energy security and its diversification Yang Yu wrote, “When oil imports exceeds 100 Million Tons, it must take diplomatic, economic and military measures for the security of its energy” (MacHaffie, 2010).

China like other competitors in the region, US and Russia has strategic as well as commercial interests in the Central Asian Republics (CARs). Initially, China was concerned in Central Asia about the security of its Western borders adjacent to Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan. For a long period of time, China was not dependent on the other’s oil because she had sufficient oil resources which could meet its domestic energy demands (Austin, 2005). But with the growth in its industries and other machines, particularly automobiles, the oil demand increased. In 1993, she became the big oil importer, and in 2003, she went further ahead of Japan and became the second largest oil consumer in the world and the third largest importer. Its economy was growing strongly and at a very quick pace. During this period, she was transforming from coal energy to hydrocarbon energy. Now China is one of the three big competitors for the Central Asian energy resources. The energy diplomacy of China acting directly or in coordination with SCO has been successful in guaranteeing sound commercial and friendly ties with growing energy suppliers

like Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. In order to get firm control over the energy resources of the Central Asian Republics, China made energy cooperation agreements with energy rich Kazakhstan and Chinese petroleum companies started investment in Kazakhstan's oil field with the aim to construct a new pipeline to convey Kazakhstan's oil to China thereby diversifying energy imports of China(J. Jiang & Sinton, 2011).

For the transportation of Central Asia's oil and gas the government of China invested Million Dollars on the construction of energy transportation pipeline connecting it with western province of China, Xinjiang (Peter Pham, 2006). During the Turkmen president, Safer Murad Nyazove,s visit to Beijing both the countries signed an agreement for the construction of China Turkmenistan gas pipeline in 2006 (Niazi, 2006). The China-Kazakhstan oil pipeline "Atlasu-Alashankou" was made operational in the last days of 2005.

China has been commercially active to ensure long term supply contracts with former Soviet Union hydrocarbon producing states and agreed on new oil and gas transportation pipeline to transport energy resources into its bordering areas. New Turkmenistan-China pipeline is an example of this success which became operational in December, 2009 inaugurated by Chinese president Hu Jintao. China's National Petroleum Company completed 7000 Kilo Meter long gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to Beijing in the year 2009. Here it should be noted that Turkmenistan is the biggest gas producer in the Central Asian region like Kazakhstan which is the biggest oil producer in the region. This pipeline project was financed by China. It provides China an opportunity to get additional gas supply from other Central Asian Republics as well (Bosbotinis, 2010). China has resorted to all the means and measures at its disposal to secure its domestic energy resources from terrorism in the region of Xinjiang and has used economic and diplomatic means to secure its national interests in the Central Asian region.

5.7 China's Security Interests in Central Asia

Beijing viewed an opportunity to develop relations with Central Asian Republics following disintegration of Soviet Union and subsequent decline of Russia's leverage in the region. Its foreign policy in Central Asian states is dictated by the following determinants, its position in the new strategic environment after 1991, economic needs, economic enhancement of inland regions, security and stability of its western border adjacent to three Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan (Pelham, 2007).

During the initial decade of the independence of Central Asian Republics, China aimed at the achievement of the following three goals, security of its western border, security of energy supply and a large market for its finished goods and raw materials. The pivot of Beijing's policy in Central Asia following the disintegration of Soviet Union has been the integration of Xinjiang with Central Asian Republics and China mainland. She exposed this strategy through increased investment in the construction of infrastructure particularly in its energy sector and management and controlling minority, ethnic, cultural and religious practices. The foreign policy of China regarding Central Asian Republics has always reflected the prominence of this goal of integrating its Xinjiang province, emphasizing the establishment of economic, political, and infrastructural connections with Central Asian Republics particularly Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. The aim of this process has been the state's efforts for strengthening integration and security of the Xinjiang and getting advantage of the increased political and economic opportunities created by the vacuum left by Soviet Union in 1991 (Clarke, 2008).

Energy supply security is not the only concern of China in the region but the security of its Western border, Xinjiang, has equal importance and it is one of the basic reasons dragging China into Central Asian region. Security and stability has been the focal point of China and Central Asian Republics relations.

Main focus of China's foreign policy is the three Central Asian Republics of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. For the security and stability of Xinjiang, Beijing realized that the top priority of its foreign policy should be containment of Islamic radicalism, extremism, separatism and fundamentalism and the activities of Pan-Turkic by favoring secular governments in the Central Asian region (B. Rumer, 2003). China is sharing 3300 Kilo Meter long border with the three Central Asian Republics, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. Due to this shared border, it has security concerns regarding the stability of the border areas adjacent to Central Asia (Liao, 2006). This has linked the stability of Central Asian Republics with the security of China's province of Xinjiang. It has been the bases of all the five Central Asian Republics foreign policies regarding China till date. For the achievement of security objectives, the initial step taken by China was settling border disputes with all the three Central Asian Republics sharing borders with China such as the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan by entering into several bilateral agreements with Kyrgyzstan from 1994-1999 settling all long standing disputes among them (Scobell, Ratner, & Beckley, 2014). For settling border issues

they with the exception of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, collectively formed “Shanghai Five” in 1996. Uzbekistan however joined it in 2001. It settled border disputes with Tajikistan under the agreement of 2002, whereby China returned 28000 Square Kilometers territory to the Republic of Tajikistan (Zhao, 2008).

Dissolution of Soviet Union provided to China an opportunity to get whole hearted advantage from its strategic geopolitical location to enhance its economic and political influence in Central Asia. Along this, it also offered ethnic minority opposition of Uyghur’s to Beijing in Xinxiang (Starr, 2005b). The disintegration of Soviet Union also coincided with Beijing economic reforms program having great impact on states policy for Xinxiang. The underpinning of this policy was the execution of economic and political measures for integrating Xinxiang with adjoining Central Asian states as well as its domestic economy (Mackerras & Clarke, 2009).

The next threat to China’s stability was left over Nuclear Weapons of Soviet Union period owned by Kazakhstan. In a several rounds of talks with the Republic of Kazakhstan, China, Russia and United States were able to convince the Republic of Kazakhstan to give up nuclear weapons by securing guarantees from the big powers, Russia, China and United States in 1995 (Scobell et al., 2014). It was agreed that Belarus and Ukraine, the communists’ states would give their nuclear weapons back to Russia and nuclear issue (Uranium Enrichment) was connected with economic development of the state concerned.

China shares 3300 km long border with the Central Asian Republics. The China’s region of Xinjiang that borders with Central Asian region has 60% Uyghur Muslim population, similarly, Central Asian region has considerable amount of this ethnic group. These Uyghur Muslims of Xinjiang and the Central Asian region share common religion, culture and language. Due to this, China fears that the Uyghur ethnic group of its Xinxiang province may be inspired by the independent states of its western borders to support separatist’s tendencies claiming independence from the mainland China on the basis of its religious, ethnic, and cultural affinities with Central Asian Republics.

It is noteworthy here that this region is much important for china as most of its energy resources are located here. Xinjiang province of China is one of the important regions of China (L. C. Harris, 1993). It is rich in mineral and energy resources which are considered essential for the economic growth of china. The first goal of Beijing’s policy in Central Asia is guarantee and insurance of regional stability as well as security. Since accession of Xinjiang in the year 1959,

the Muslim Uyghur minority strongly resisted the control of China till 1960. The Chinese Hans population migration to Xinjiang started under a state policy for the establishment of government influence there. Hans's migration to Xinjiang instigated the Muslim Uyghur minority.

The government saw the re-emergence of Islamic values and beliefs during 1970s. During 1980s, the propagation of Islamic ideology in the region was so much quick that it became the region possessing the largest number of mosques in the world (Johnson, 2007). Since radical Islamic ideology emerged and large numbers of Islamic religious schools (Madrasas) were opened and other Islamic rituals and activities were started without permission of the government. The promotion of radical Islamic ideology finally unified the Uyghur separatists with the organizations of terrorism like "Islamic organizations of Turkistan" and "Turkistan Islamic movement" collectively it took action against the government of China and several bombs were blasted in the Chinese province of Xinjiang since the latter half of 1990s till date. The government of China took serious military action against it (Davis, 2008).

However, some external powers and terrorist's organization, regional and trans-regional, were providing safe havens to the separatist's elements from the government action. These organizations include Al-Qaeda and Taliban government in Afghanistan. After the disintegration of Soviet Union and Central Asian Republics independence, China feared that it would encourage the separatist movement of Uyghur inspiring it for independence just like Central Asian Republics.

Extremism, separatism, terrorism and radicalism are the greatest security concerns of China in the Central Asian region. The Uyghur is the main Muslim ethnic group in the China's province of Xinxiang. The other ethnic groups of Central Asia like Kazaks, Tajiks and Uzbeks have established their own independent states. The Chinese government fears that the Uyghur's of Xinxiang may follow the other ethnic groups of Central Asian region to get independence from China. Small minority of Tajiks, Kyrgyz and about a million Kazakhs residing in Xinjiang along with seven million Muslim Uyghur is one of the reasons that they are getting influence from the Central Asian Republics (Burles, 1999).

China is currently facing the challenge of Uyghur insurgents groups like "Uyghur Liberation Organization", "Xinxiang Liberation Organization", and "United Revolutionary Front of Eastern Turkistan". Approximately, there are three hundred thousand Uyghur's living in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. They are potential targets of Uyghur insurgent's political mobilizations. A violent

incident erupted in Urumqi, the capital of Xinjiang on 5th July 2009(Ong, 2005). In the said incident, 184 people died and about 1600 were injured. The China government thought this incident to be engineered by separatists and extremists outside China. In order to tackle with this problem China has to collaborate with Central Asian countries.

Besides the stability of Xinjiang, the other security concern of China in the region is related to United States penetration into Central Asian region on the pretext of war on terror and her increasing influence in the region. China views it as a potential threat to its economic, political and security interests. Therefore, she uses every possible means at her disposable to constrict the influence of United States in the Central Asian region (C. Lin, 2011). She fears that CARs may not be used against china by its rivals.

Drug trafficking is another non-traditional challenge faced by China in Central Asia. Drug trafficking activities are increasing day-by-day in Central Asia, having great implications for China. China, Russia and India have taken notice of drug related activities in Central Asia. About 90 percent of world heroine is supplied by Afghanistan (Li & Wang, 2009). The three countries China, India and Russia have formed security belt to eradicate drug trafficking from the region. Usually the revenue generated from drug trafficking strengthens the hands of anti-state elements such as terrorists, separatists and extremist. These concerns are framing the real bases of China's security interests in the region, particularly regarding Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan(M. A. Peterson, 2005). China wishes to establish political ties with Central Asian Republics and is backing the secular governments in the region against the three evils of extremism, separatism and terrorism.

5.8 China's Convergence with United States

Shared and mutual interests always bring the states closer to each other. This could be vividly seen in the geopolitics of Central Asia since the disintegration of Soviet Union, where the shared interests has brought China and United States closer to each other in some areas such as stability of the region, its security and development. Security and stability is conducive for the interests of both of them. This is why China has joined hands with the United States to combat terrorism, extremism and separatism in the region. United States, after the incident of September, 9, 2011, has a lot of important strategic and economic interests in the Central Asian region same is the case with china. For the realization of these strategic interests stability in the region is essential.

For the economic and political stability in the region eradication of the three evils of separatism, extremism, terrorism and other forces of instability such as smuggling, illegal immigrations, is necessary. The confluence of China and United States interests in the region may offer a unique opportunity for strengthening and promoting China-US relations in the future(Friedberg, 2005).however, there is rare convergence between them as they are fighting for international status and CARs may play role in it.. It may mitigate the tension caused by United States military presence and its political influence in the Central Asian region.

5.9 Convergence in the Security Sphere

On the security front of Central Asian Republics, United States and China share common concerns regarding Islamic radicalism, terrorism, and separatism in the Central Asian region. These evils may weaken Beijing's control over its fragile unit of Xinjiang. The Uighur Muslims of China is a continuous threat for the governments of Central Asian region. Presently, the stability of China depends on its strong and cordial relations with Central Asian states(Xinbo, 2000). Due to these concerns, China has developed several mechanisms to cooperate with US and Central Asian region states in the sphere of counter terrorism and stability of the region including intelligence sharing, cooperation in the military affairs and supply of the equipments of security to Central Asian region states (Javaid & Dashti, 2017).

United States is primarily interested in Central Asia in three sphere, security, energy and stability of the region. Initially, its concern was energy and development of the region. But the 9/11 incident prompted its interests in the security sphere as well. United States in order to fight against terrorism in Afghanistan sort the cooperation of the Central Asian region states, particularly those adjacent to Afghanistan for stationing its military troops and logistics support. The Central Asian states were initially cautious about that but latter on agreed to share intelligence services, logistic support and grant access to Central Asian air bases, particularly in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to USA(Wishnick, 2002). The "Operation Enduring Freedom" for the removal of Taliban administration in Afghanistan and in crippling down terrorist network, Al-Qaida, led by Osama Bin Laden in the Afghanistan and adjoining areas. The success of this operation raised several questions regarding United States future political, economic and security interests and military policy in the Central Asian region. Assistant Secretary of State for Eurasian and European affairs stated the following interests of US in the region. In the security sphere,

these were combating drug trafficking, nuclear non-proliferation, and eradication of terrorism. In the energy sector, these were ensuring reliable and economically viable access to international market and the use of the revenue of the energy resources for the sustainable development of the Central Asian region and promotion of internal reforms such as democratization and free market economy (Wishnick, 2004). The changed circumstances brought changes in the US security interests in the region and it increased its involvement in the central Asian Republics under “National Security Strategy” (NSS). Key objectives under NSS were the prevention of hostile domination of the important region and the establishment of stable balance of power, reducing the potential of terrorism in the weaker state and autonomous regions (Wishnick, 2002).

Under this strategy (NSS) United States has to increase its intervention in the region through economic, political, and military means to block the way of fundamentalist’s government and to provide stability to the Central Asian region. The primary focus of United States military engagements in the region was backing operation in Afghanistan for eradication of terrorism and security threats from Islamic fundamentalists and Islamic movements of Afghanistan.

5.10 Stability of the Region

There is no doubt that stable Central Asia is in the interest of all those states which are actively involved in the geopolitics of Central Asian Republics particularly Russia, China and USA. Without stability, no state would be able to get advantage out of the Central Asian energy resources, huge market, raw material and its geographic location, providing transit route between East and West(Akiner, 1997). Due to these reasons, every state connected with geopolitics of central Asia is trying up to its capacity some time unilaterally and other time collectively to bring stability to the region. Collective efforts could be observed that most of the states around the world including China and Russia supported US initiated war against terrorism after the incident of 9/11. Unstable Central Asia put hurdles in the achievement of national interests of the big powers in Cars. Without stability in the region, it is not possible either for China, Russia and United States to achieve their national objectives in the region. Both of them want and strive for its stability(Starr, 2005b). For its stability they provide loans and training to the Central Asian Republics. For the stability of the region eradication of terrorism, separatism, extremism, arms control, eradication of drug trafficking are regarded essential by both of them.

5.11 Drug Trafficking

Drug trafficking is a challenging problem of the Central Asian region. The revenue obtained from this illegal trade usually strengthens the hands of terrorists and separatists groups. These groups may fight against the interests of the region's states thereby destabilizing it. Initially, the Chinese government has relaxed its borders for illegal drug trafficking but its swamping in the Chinese territory realized the authorities about its negative effects on the society. It acknowledged that the rising tide of illegal drugs may increase criminal activities in the society. About 90% drugs are produced in Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (Jackson, 2005). China and United States has, undoubtedly, common views regarding drug trafficking in the Central Asian region. China and United States are actively involved in the eradication of drug trafficking and narcotics from the Central Asian region. Bilateral anti-narcotics cooperation has been observed between them. China is sharing intelligence services with United States for the cause of eradication of drug trafficking. Both China and United States are helping the Central Asian states financially and are providing equipments to the Central Asian states to get rid of the menace of drug trafficking from the region. Drug trafficking is an accepted threat to Beijing's security and SCO is trying to design activities to eradicate drug trafficking from the region (D. Roy, 2005). However they have not been successful in the achievement of its objectives yet. Drug trafficking is another non-traditional challenge faced by China in Central Asia. Drug trafficking activities are increasing day-by-day in Central Asia, having great effect on China. China, Russia and India have taken notice of drug related activities in Central Asia. About 90 percent of world heroine is supplied by Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (Makarenko, 2002). The three countries China, India, US and Russia have formed security belt to eradicate drug trafficking from the region.

5.12 Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Nuclear free Central Asia is in the advantage of all the stake holders of the "New Great Game". China and United States has the shared interests and objectives of nuclear non-proliferation in the Central Asian region. Nuclear non-proliferation in CARs is one of the main objectives of the SCO. The Central Asian region states are themselves trying for making Central Asia a "Nuclear

Free Zone”. Although China, Russia and US had a tough time in convincing China to engage in counter proliferation move led by United States. The next threat to China, Russia and US interests in the region has been left over nuclear weapons of Soviet Union period owned by Kazakhstan after its disintegration in 1991. In a several rounds of talks with the Republic of Kazakhstan China, Russia and United States were able to convince the Republic of Kazakhstan to give up nuclear weapons by securing guarantees from the big powers, Russia, China and United States in 1995 (Rousseau, 2011). To further ensure de-nuclearization in the region it was tied to the economic development of the state concerned. It was agreed that Belarus and Ukraine, the communists’ states would give their nuclear weapons back to Russia and nuclear issue was connected with economic development.

5.13 Terrorism, Separatism and Extremism

China like Russia is supporting United States in its mission of eradication of separatism, extremism and terrorism from the Central Asian region because of the presence of terrorist’s organizations near their borders. China has a concern that these organizations may support the Uyghur separatist’s movements in its province of Xinjiang(Davis, 2008). While United States view it to be an imminent threat to international peace and security. Due to these shared interests, they have joined hands to remove the three evils from the Central Asian Republics and adjoining areas so that they may be able to achieve its national interests in the region.

5.14 Convergence in the Economic Sphere

Convergence in economic sphere between China and US in the region seems to be rare. However, in the economic sphere both China and United States are encouraging Central Asian Republics for the implementation of reforms in the economic sector and trade policies recommended by World Trade Organization (WTO).

Presently, Kyrgyzstan is the member of World Trade Organization while other Central Asian states are on the track to become its members. They are on the track to implement economic and trade reforms on line with World Trade Organizations. United States and China are providing technical assistance and capacity building for the fragile economy of the Central Asian Republics. This in turn will facilitate the needs and demands of Beijing, Washington and Central

Asian Republics and the international trading community. These converging economic interests between China and United States may prove fruitful for the mutual interests of both the parties.

5.15 Diversification of Energy Supply Routes

Central Asian region states are mostly landlocked. It has no direct access to the sea. For the transportation of its energy resources to international market, they have to depend on any third country. During Soviet period, there was one energy transportation route passing through the territory of Russia, so it had complete monopoly over the energy transportation route(Thrassy Marketos, 2009). It was buying energy resources of Central Asia at cheap prices and was selling it at high prices in international market. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, both China and United States are trying to diversify the Central Asian energy transportation routes to put an end to Russian monopoly on it. Both of them have been successful in achieving this objective. United States has been able in the construction of Baku-Tbilisi Ceyhan oil pipeline and Baku-Tbilisi Erzurum gas pipeline(Zhao, 2008).

In the same way, China has been successful in the construction of oil pipeline from Kazakhstan the China through Xinjiang and gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Xinjiang to mainland China. Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAPI) is the proposed pipeline backed by China and United States. China has dual interests in the diversification of energy supply routes, to fuel its growing industry by cheap energy, to have perpetual energy supply without any kind of interruption and put an end to Russia monopoly over it(Rosenberg, Gordon, Maruyama, & Sullivan, 2016). Just like China, US also has the diversification of energy supply routes, to put an end to Russian monopoly over it and to have safe energy supply for its European allies so that they may not go into the fold of Russia in case of disruption of Middle Eastern energy resources. In case of disruption, they will have no option other than going into Russia fold.

5.16 Islamic Culture in the Central Asian Republics

Most of the population of Central Asian Republics is Sunni Muslims. They have Islamic culture, traditions, customs and the ways of life. China as well as Russia wants to mitigate the influence of Islamic culture in the Central Asian region. Xinjiang, a Western province of China, has the Muslims majority who are desirous of having an independent Muslim state. With mitigation of

Islamic culture in Central Asia, the influence of Islamic ideology in Xinjiang would also be reduced. Security and stability has been the focal point of China and Central Asian Republics relations. The main focus of Beijing's foreign policy is the three Central Asian Republics of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. For the security and stability of Xinjiang, Beijing realized that the top priority of its foreign policy should be containment of Islamic radicalism, extremism and fundamentalism and the activities of Pan-Turkic by favoring secular governments in the Central Asian region (Rashid, 2002). Russia wants its mitigation for the sustenance of pro-Russian regimes in the region, while United States wants to reduce the influence of Islamic culture in the region which is creating hurdles in the way of achievement of the national objectives of United States in the region. However, she is not sincere in its mission of containment of militancy and Islamic radicalism in the region. She used it as a tactic to penetrate into the region otherwise she has nothing to do with Islam and Islamic culture in the region.

5.17 China's Divergences with United States

China-US convergence may not be taken that they have all in common in the region. There are certain areas where their interests clashes with each other. Inherently, they are playing with each other to outdo each other from the region. Zbigniew Brzezinski, former United States Adviser for National Security stated Central Asia to be a "Chess Board". Major Powers are competing with one another because of its geo-strategic location and geo-economic opportunities. He argues further that United States should try to expand its influence in Central Asia and Afghanistan and to keep vigilant eyes on the balance of power in Central Asia and regional developments (Brzezinski, 1997). The areas of divergences between China and United States are following.

5.18 Divergence in Security Sphere

It is in the great interests of China to have the region free of any other big power, regional or international. She does not like the presence of United States military troops in the Central Asian and Afghanistan. She is already facing United States allies, Singapore, Philippines, Taiwan, South Korea, Japan and Australia in the shape of its North Eastern and South Eastern borders. Soon after the 9/11 incident and subsequent war on terror, United States established its military

basis at Khan Abad, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, provided United States refueling and transit rights in their respective regions (Wishnick, 2002).

Apart from this there are suspicions that United States may deploy nuclear weapons in the Central Asian and Afghanistan, threatening China's national security (Li & Wang, 2009). So Russia and China demanded withdrawal of United States military basis from Central Asia in 2005, with the collaboration and help of SCO. United States was forced to withdraw from Uzbekistan for talking against the Uzbek political authorities in 2005 at Andijan. Currently, Uzbekistan political authorities have allowed United States bases again on renewed terms and conditions and enhanced profits.

United States military outposts in Kyrgyzstan's region of Manas near Bishkek has great concerns for the national security of Beijing then mere supply of war equipments to Afghanistan as a counter terrorism measure. Manas air base is a special breeding ground for United States intelligence agencies as well as for Pentagon to run secret destabilizing operations in the China's important strategic and fragile region of Xinjiang (Kim & Indeo, 2013). Since, it is only 250 km away from China, providing far-ranging reconnaissance and surveillance capabilities for United States. The flow of people between China and Kyrgyzstan provides excellent opportunities for the United States espionage and sabotage. The Kyrgyz government allowed United States military to use its facilities at Manas Air Base. These facilities include sophisticated electronic devices to monitor important Chinese missile and military sites in Xinjiang (Nichol, 2009). All this is a matter of concern for China in the strategic game of Central Asia and Afghanistan.

5.19 Divergence in Political Sphere

It is one of the main concerns of China to sustain secularized, semi-authoritarian and politically cordial regimes in the Central Asian Republics. That does not mean that she opposes democracy and democratic regimes in all forms but definitely the regimes that has anti-China perceptions. China is against of the religious and western oriented regimes that may decrease the influence of China in the region, something that is opposed to long term China's national interests (E. B. Rumer, Sokolsky, & Stronski, 2016). Religious regimes may inspire China's Muslims of Xinjiang for separation as its sparks are already present there.

China and United States have divergent opinions regarding the political development in Central Asia. China is not in favor of democratic evolution in the Central Asian states so long it

is not supporting its national interests. China is encouraging stability but does not want change in the Central Asian regimes when these changes steps towards the evolution of democracy and may threaten the security of the Central Asian region and china's interests, its influence in the central Asian states, governments or the role of radical elements in governing the Central Asian region's states (Friedberg, 2011).

China does not want any further color revolution taking place in the Central Asian region. She believes that these upheavals of color revolutions that took place during the period of 2003-2005 were fuelled from abroad, particularly by the United States as an obvious policy aiming to reduce China's influence in the Central Asian Republics by replacing the present China cordial regimes in the region. Reportedly, China thought resorting to force in order to obstruct such revolution in 2005 in Kyrgyzstan. Since then, China desired to have base there to obstruct such outbreaks in future (Dwivedi, 2006). China, in order to stabilize Central Asia and Afghanistan, has invested a lot of capital and resources. Similarly, Xinjiang, like other border areas of China has worked out its own development plane and Beijing has also invested a lot in the infrastructure development along its western borders in order to get local and regional cooperation and sustainable economic development in the Central Asian Republics and the areas adjacent as well as quick transportation system for its military if need arises (Olcott, 2005). The SCO is usually projected as an Anti-West and counterbalancing organization to US led North Atlantic Treaty Organization in the region (NATO).

5.20 US Greater Central Asia Project

The other point of divergence among them is regarding the US concept of "Greater Central Asia" (GCA). In order to mitigate the influence of China in the region, US initiated the concept of greater Central Asia. Its aim is to drag the region away from the influence of China, which has been integrated with China through SCO. This project was a big multipurpose and multifaceted aiming to bring CARs and Afghanistan closer together for the higher interests of economic and social development. The institute of Central Asia and Caucasus of the "University of John Hopkins" initiated this project in the year 2005 (Starr, 2005b). Frederick star while arguing on this project said that it represents the long term United States interests in the region, reflecting the fact that this region may be thought as a single unit based on their shared interests for the promotion, development of peace and security. The establishment of such an amalgamation of

the region's states for cooperation would deter extremist elements and would present a significant model for other Muslim countries conducive for the region's states and US (S. Blank, 2008). However, United States has failed in the realization of this project. This project is multipurpose in character. Its aims are security assistance, eradication of terrorism and extremism, control of drug trafficking, strengthening national institutions and economy of the region and integrating South East and Near East economically and politically, enhancing trade and infrastructure of transport, supporting democratization in the region (Tolipov, 2005).

The other aim behind the project has been the gaining of the confidence and trust of the people of Central Asia. This move of United States is against of the interests of China as well as Russia. Although United States is emphasizing that this project will not clash with China and Russia interests in the region. "Speaker of Russian Duma Boris Gryzlove" argued in SCO parliamentary representative meeting, that Russia is not willing to have another international organization in the region under the auspices of US. "Aleksandra Kniazher" while commenting on the GCA project said, "most of the western initiatives in the security sphere have an evident anti-China's and anti-Russia's dimensions. In this context, any project implying regional integration like GCA reflects only endeavors to fix by all means US influence in the region (Saidmuradov & Puseva, 2010).

China in order to counterbalance United States greater Central Asia project initiated One Belt One Road (OBOR) project to connect the region westward with the European countries and east ward with Asian countries. Work on this project is in progress. This will integrate central Asia with China and considerably increase its influence there and will decrease the influence of US. However, US is against this project as it would take Central Asia away from United States thereby diminishing its influence in the region. US is struggling its utmost to destabilize the region so that China's BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) project may not be materialized.

5.21 Political System/ present regimes

Promotion and strengthening of democracy is one of the prime interests of US in the region. United States signed five points strategic partnership with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in March 2002 (Schatz, 2006). These five points include United States pledge to establish open liberal and vibrant civil society, multi-party system, to ensure independence of media, to safeguard the Republic of Uzbekistan, its sovereignty and territorial integrity from any kind of

internal and external threats, to strengthen non-governmental structure and improvement of judicial system and finally, to establish functional democracy in the Republic of Uzbekistan and to maintain rule of law (Silova & Magno, 2004). As a neighboring country to Afghanistan, United States wanted to present Uzbekistan as model democracy for other states of the region (Davis, 2004).

During Andijan incident, United States criticized the Karimove administration for using force against the innocent civilians (Cooley, 2008b). While on the other hand, the governments of China and Russia were justifying use of force against civilian. This means that United States wanted to replace the Karimove regime while Russia and China wanted to maintain it (Hill & Jones, 2006). The present semi-authoritarian regimes in the region are tilted towards china and Russia and US want to replace it with US favorable regimes.

China wants to maintain semi-authoritarian regimes in the region to protect it from all kinds of external trends imported into the region through the use of SCO (Ambrosio, 2008). Here semi-authoritarian system means greater powers of the president and its power of nomination of some members of the executive council. It is noteworthy here that most of the presidents of the Central Asian Republics have greater discretionary power of nominating some members of the executive council (Cabinet) and other important political institutions. According to China and Russia, the authoritarian leaders had the capacity to adopt policies which may protect the regimes from all kinds of external influence and threats.

5.22 Divergence in Economic Sphere

United States and China had divergent interests regarding the extraction of oil and natural gas from the CARs and Caspian bed. Beijing's increasing demands of energy resources has fuelled substantial investment in the energy sector of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the construction of pipeline to transport these energy resources to mainland China (Wishnick, 2009). When the Caspian oil and natural gas are thoroughly on line, it was expected that Beijing would fight hard for lion share in these newly explored energy resources of the region. This along with distrust in China regarding the US military bases near its Western borders has the potential of creating imminent tension between China and US.

Beijing is trying its utmost for building more multilateral free trade areas and zones around Xinjiang including two in Pakistan and making Khorgos, the biggest trans-shipment

station in the Asian Continent. There are signs of Beijing's expansionist view based on its security and defense needs and requirements in Central Asia because of change in its threat perceptions (Harding, 1993). Beijing's investment in the energy sector and its aid to Central Asian Republics is a matter of concern for US.

United states want to establish liberal democracy, vibrant civil society and promotion of free market economy in the Central Asian region. China opposes all these moves of United States. She is of the opinion that under the garb of liberal democracy, US want to make interference in the internal affairs of the region (Talbot, 1997). China and Russia being socialist countries are against of free market economy in the region as it could be detrimental to its national interests.

5.23 China's Interests in Afghanistan its Convergence and Divergence with US

Afghanistan has immense importance in the strategic calculus of China. Afghanistan's geopolitics has four important aspects such as economic, political, strategic and geopolitical. In the fast changing international security environment Afghanistan needs a deep cooperation between China and Afghanistan (Walton, 2007). It has immense natural resources such as iron, copper, lithium, coal, and hydrocarbon. Geographically it provides a land route between east and west. It works as a land bridge between South Asia, China and Central Asia and Europe. It plays important part in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Garver, 2006). These and other significances of the region has made it a battle ground between big powers since long particularly after the withdrawal of Soviet Union from there.

The political, economic and trade relations between Afghanistan and China can be traced back to the era of Silk Road. In 1955 they established relations and were further strengthened under the treaty of economic and technical cooperation in 1964 (Ferdinand, 2016). Recently, the trade between them has immensely increased and Beijing has emerged as one of the major exporter to Afghanistan. Its trade has reached to \$7 billion exposing that Afghanistan is conducive for China's trade and business interests. Furthermore, China along with other donor countries has undertaken different mega projects of reconstruction in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has a lot of natural resources such as iron, copper, precious metals, marbles, gemstones, lithium, and taped hydrocarbons as well. The most important untapped metals are iron and copper. The total volume of copper resources is about 60 million metric tons. These

natural resources have made Afghanistan attractive for China. China is making considerable contributions in developing these natural resources and Afghanistan's infrastructure. Afghanistan has the world's 2nd largest copper deposits in its Logar Province (Lipow, 2012). These deposits are estimated to be worth \$1-3 trillion. Therefore, Metallurgical cooperation of China (MCC) and Jiangxi (JCCL) agreed to make investments of \$3.5 billion in Afghanistan. China has also interests in the hydrocarbons of Afghanistan. China has been the first foreign country to sign an oil exploration agreement with Afghanistan enabling Afghanistan to earn \$7 trillion in the next 25 years.

China's national petroleum company (CNPC) and Afghanistan's national oil and gas company "Watan" got the rights of three oil fields in the northwestern region of Afghanistan. They are exploring oil from the bed of Amu Darya in the northern Afghanistan. It is estimated that Amu Darya basin has about 87 million barrels crude oil deposits. Besides, northern Afghanistan is estimated to have 1.6 million barrels of crude oil and 16 million cubic feet of natural gas and 500 million barrels of liquid natural gas (LNG) reserves (Sharma, 2007). China, being interested in the hydrocarbon reserves for its growing industries, invested \$400 million on the oil exploration in the northwestern oil blocks of Afghanistan. Afghanistan's natural resources has been the bone of contention among the big powers particularly China and US since the withdrawal of Soviet Union from Afghanistan. It is generally perceived that China's economic aid to Afghanistan has been part and parcel to the bid making it uncompetitive for the rivals bid against China's companies. On the other hand, China has invested on making power plants and rails to the mines. In this way, it tries to get confidence of the public to the grass root level. It is worth mentioning here that US military troops risked their lives to control these natural resources of Afghanistan while china reaped the economic benefits. (Biddle, 2002) Thus this is the conflicting interests of the two big powers.

Afghanistan has a narrow boundary of 47 km with China. There is a narrow strip known as Wakhan corridor which has the capacity to connect China with Central Asia, Europe and Gulf countries through Afghanistan. It has been the desire of China to get access to Central Asia and Afghanistan through Wakhan corridor but due to civil war in Afghanistan followed by Taliban government there and later on the US military intervention in the region, she was not able to materialize this desire (Scobell, 2014)). This had made this region a bone of contention among the big powers particularly between China and United States.

It has been the long standing desire of Afghanistan to connect with China and it was the desire of China to connect with Afghanistan through Wakhan corridor about a 47 kilo meter long border is shared between the two. This corridor lies close to China's strategically important city Kashghar and its economic zone. China wants to connect this economic zone with Afghanistan, CARs, and Eurasia and gulf countries through this Wakhan corridor. It was also the desire of China to renovate and restore Kashghar as a launching pad to serve its lost position in the historical Silk Road (Jun.2011). It is regarded as a modern day Silk Road, a land bridge between Eurasia and China. The government of Afghanistan has asked China to open up Afghanistan-China narrow border; this route will definitely benefit Afghanistan. Therefore, it proposed the government of the People's Republic of China to build a land road and rail road through Wakhan corridor to Afghanistan to connect it with China and Central Asia (Kuhn, 2009). President Ashraf Ghani of Afghanistan during his visit to China in October 2014 proposed to the Chinese president, Xi Jinping that both China and Afghanistan should collectively strive to build a transport link along this narrow Wakhan strip (panda. 2014)

West, particularly, United States has been using the rhetoric "regional strategy" as a key to Afghanistan's future. China is actually implementing such an approach, anticipating readiness and the future in which China will have more impact on the region than United States and its allies. This deal is a way of getting a step inside the door. United States has an apprehension that if China materialized this corridor, it will have an upper hand in the region which will be detrimental to its international status. Therefore she is trying its utmost to obstruct it any way. China is, in fact, looking for higher scale investment in the region. This may involve infrastructure projects including rails and roads. In response to China's BRI, Hillary Clinton, former US Secretary of State harkens back to historical east-west link and suggests a long term investment in Afghanistan such as Beijing's new Eurasian land bridge that is under construction connecting Afghanistan to Central Asia, Europe and gulf countries through direct land routes of rails and roads under China's BRI, foretelling that Beijing is serious and capable about long term playing in Afghanistan's geopolitics (Hussain, 2017). The US is considered preventing China to materialize its designs in the region while Russia being an old power wants political and military influence besides a desire for route of access to adjacent regions.

Afghanistan is a war torn, fragile country adjacent to China's strategically important province Xinxiang. China is worried that the sparks of insecurity and the three evils of

extremism, terrorism and separatism prevailing in Afghanistan may not spill over to China and affects its national integrity (Wayne, 2007). To alleviate these evils China and Afghanistan collectively decided to develop strategic cooperation between these two countries to protect the national interests of both the sides, strengthening friendship and promote cooperation in financial, political, cultural and security sectors. They have agreed to support mutual issues of integrity and not to use the land against each other. The present government of China is willing to join hands to fight against the three evils of terrorism, extremism and separatism. Beijing is trying to ensure that East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), a Muslim separatist movement in Chinese province of Xinxiang may not get strength and power and may not benefit from the Taliban after the withdrawal of NATO forces from Afghanistan (Cabestan, 2010). The strategic cooperation between these two countries and China's major role in Afghanistan has been a matter of apprehension for United States.

Beijing does not support international community efforts in Afghanistan militarily but has been facilitating peace process by hosting and participating in the dialogues. However Beijing has serious concerns about the instability and insecurity of Afghanistan as it has the potential to affect the internal security of China. Its first concern is national security so China wants to ensure that Uyghur's of China may have more power and strength at in unstable Afghanistan (Ong, 2005). Two big objectives in this regard are discouraging unrest in the Uyghur population and to restrict east Turkistan Islamic movement (ETIM).

Afghanistan is strategically important country. It is located at the cross road of eastern and western world. It works as a land bridge between South Asia, China and Central Asia, Europe and Gulf courtiers. Besides, it has huge natural resources including hydrocarbons. It has huge market as it consumes more than it produces. So it is because of its importance that all the big powers are struggling to control it (Nathan, 2012). The US stationed its forces there so that China may not get access to Central Asian republics through Afghanistan as well as to the natural resources of Afghanistan. They are fighting for international status/ global power, and Afghanistan's geographic location, its market and the natural resources can play important role in this regard, resultantly they are competing for it and are counterbalancing each other.

Afghanistan has immense economic opportunities. It has market for the finished goods of big powers. It has huge amount of natural resources. Afghanistan has a lot of natural resources such as iron, copper, precious metals, marbles, gemstones, lithium, and taped hydrocarbons as well.

The most important untapped metals are iron and copper. The total volume of copper resources is about 60 million metric tons. These natural resources have made Afghanistan attractive for the big powers, Russia, China and United States (Broshears, 2005). Afghanistan has the world's 2nd largest copper deposits in its Logar Province. These deposits are estimated to be worth \$1-3 trillion. These natural resources along with strategic location have made this region a focus of big powers since long.

Though the US claimed that it had invaded Afghanistan for operation enduring peace and making it a stable land but careful observation of the US actions in Afghanistan have exposed it that it was ensuring creative instability for its enduring presence in Afghanistan to ensure its strategic interests in the region and beyond. Strategic competition among the US, Russia and China is affecting Afghanistan as battle ground and bleeding wound for their competing and diverging interests.

China's influence in Afghanistan is vied by friends and foes alike as it carefully exposes its geostrategic interests there. China would like to imitate its CARs and African success story in Afghanistan, which is well known. Afghanistan has been the center of geopolitical balance of power during the cold war period. China's policy of Afghanistan is marked by its insecurities of the three evils of terrorism, extremism and separatism in its Xinxiang province. Besides, China has invested a lot in procuring CARs energy resources. Afghanistan can play significant role in it. These concerns have formulated china's Afghanistan policy (Dhaka, 2013). However, the presence of Russia and United States in the region make the scenario competitive, where its peaceful rise may be challenged. All these concerns play significant role in China's Afghanistan policy. It remains to be seen what options partake in China's Afghanistan policy as China is struggling for sustainable presence in Afghanistan in the long run.

Conclusion

The nature of Beijing's historical presence in the region has been economic growth, territorial expansion and internal security and the eradication of separatism, extremism and terrorism. With the disintegration of Soviet Union, subsequent decline of Russian influence in the region, China established mutual relations with regions states based on the five principles of peaceful co-existence to get strong hold in the region. This resulted in the establishment of regional security organizations such as SCO and the promotion of China's "Grand Strategy" dragging the

attention of the observers of the Western World towards the region. China's national interests of security, stability, energy and economic development are driving its goal of decreasing United States influence in the region, so that it may have geo-strategic advantage over other powers in the Central Asian region.

Significance of the region for Beijing increased with the shift in power distribution in world power structure (International System), growth of its economy and rapid industrialization. China is regarded as the 2nd largest energy consumer in the globe while Central Asia has rich energy resources and other raw materials complementary for the economic growth, development and progress and prosperity of China. It is interested in the region's energy resources for the security of its energy supply for its industries and a large market for its finished goods. Prior to Central Asian energy resources, during Soviet Union period, China was mostly importing oil from the Middle East. The route of oil supply from M.E to China was passing through the Strait of Malacca, under the control of United States Navy and is prone to instability due to terrorism and sea pirates, a perceived rival of China in the world politics. In case of conflict and controversy between China and United States, this route may be blocked by United States, thereby obstructing energy supply and destroying the economy of China. This situation worried the Chinese decision makers and prepared a comprehensive policy regarding the energy resources of the region. Energy resources are not the only concern of China in Central Asia; it is also worried about the security of its Xinjiang, sharing border with some fragile and unstable Central Asian Republics. About 60% of the population of Xinjiang is composed of Uyghur Muslims. The same ethnic community also exists on the other side of the border in the CARs. China has an apprehension that in case of instability in the region, terrorists' organizations may instigate the Uyghur's of china for independence. So, China is supporting United States in its fight against terrorism. Politically, it wants to reduce the influence of US in the region by integration with the CARs through SCO, particularly after US military penetration in the region in 2001. China and United States' interests in the region are converging and diverging. Both of them are interested in diversifying the energy transportation routes and both are successful in the achievement of its objectives. China has constructed oil and gas pipeline from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to China respectively. United States has diversified energy transportation routes by the construction of Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) and Baku- Tbilisi- Erzurum (BTE). In this way both of them have put an end to Russian monopoly over the energy transportation routes. The other shared interest

in the region is the stability and security of Central Asian Republics. For the stability of the region, they are agreed to eradicate the three evils of separatism, extremism and terrorism. They are willing to remove all those factors which can play role in the instability of the region such as drug trafficking, arms trade, illegal trade, and nuclear non-proliferation. Convergence between them in the region is based on their mutual interests in the region. Besides these, some of their interests in the region are divergent, where its national interests in the region collide with each other. China does not like the military presence of United States in Central Asian region. It is regarded by Beijing as a potential and imminent threat to its security. China and United States are perceived enemies of each other on the bases of the difference in their outlook regarding world political structure. United States wants to preserve the present international system of uni-polarity while China is struggling to replace it with multi-polarity. This factor is dragging them away from each other and is trying to reduce the influence of each other in the geopolitics of Central Asia. The other factor of divergence in the region is regarding the political system and regimes. United States wants promotion of democracy and replacement of pro-Russian semi-authoritarian regimes in the region while China being a socialist state is not in favor of the development of democracy in the region. She wants to preserve semi-authoritarian regimes in the region which are regarded conducive for the national interests of china in the region. However, tensions in Central Asian region are not likely to mitigate China and US relationship. However a shift in their relationship may create confrontation in the region between United States and China. In future, the region states could play a decisive role in relationship of China and United States. It could further destabilize the fragile relationship between them. This is why the engagement of China in Central Asian region is much fruitful. Developing durable relationship and trust today, the imminent and future conflicts and tensions can be diverted. Strengthening relations with China as well as following practicable agenda of interaction with Beijing, US could easily achieve its important interests in the Central Asian region. This is a difficult but essential task if future tensions in the regional and global arena are to be avoided.

CHAPTER 6

UNITED STATES ECONOMIC, POLITICAL AND SECURITY INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA: ITS CONVERGENCE AND DIVERGENCE WITH RUSSIA

6.1 Introduction:

In the US strategic planning, Central Asian region has still considerable strategic significance. Its importance in the foreign policy of US can be ascertained from the following statement of Brzezinski Zbigniew, a US National Security Adviser “Central Asia is the axial super continent of the world. A Country that controlled Central Asia would have decisive dominance over East Asia and Western Europe, the two economically productive regions of the world. A glance at the World map suggests that a state having dominance in Central Asia would have influence in the Middle Eastern region and African continent. Central Asia is presently serving as the decisive geopolitical chessboard. It is no longer reasonable and sufficient to have one policy for Europe and another for Asia. The power distribution in the Central Asian region will be of decisive significance to United States and its world supremacy” (Brzezinski, 1997).

United State during the last decade has been an important actor of the “New Great Game” being fought on the Central Asian land. With the disintegration of Soviet Union, the bipolar international system of the Cold War period came to an end and United States declared itself as the sole super power, replacing the bipolarity with uni-polarity (Ikenberry et al., 2009). United States keeping in view the strategic importance of the region initiated playing vibrant role in the economic, political, and security sphere of the region. She was dragging herself towards Central Asian region and was taking all precautions for avoiding rivalry and confrontation with the regional powers and preventing any sort of political alliance that could challenge United States hegemonic position in the world. United State was struggling for the enhancement of political relations with the Central Asian Republics by establishing mutual relations with it and working for stability and security in the region. In such a situation, United States developed strategy for involvement in the energy sector of Central Asia. The primary objective of United States in the region was to take up initiatives in the Central Asian Republics for creating new sphere of influence in the region in order to have broader security system that may sustain its political and economic influence at regional and international level. For implementing its international

strategy in the Central Asian region, she was trying to lower down the influence of other actors in the regions' geopolitics; controlling economic, political and security affairs (Abilov, 2012).

United States policy regarding Central Asia has been described by Vassilidz Fouskas and Bulent Gökay in the following words. "As the only super power remaining after the dismantling of the Soviet Bloc, the United States is inserting itself into the strategic regions of Eurasia and anchoring United States geopolitical influence in these areas to prevent all real and potential competitions from challenging its global hegemony. The ultimate goal of United States strategy is to establish new sphere of influence and hence achieve a much strong and firmer system of security and control that can eliminate any obstacle that stand in the way of protecting its international status. The intensified drive to use United States military dominance to fortify and expand Washington's political and economic power over much of the world has required the reintegration of the post soviet space into the United States controlled world economy. The vast natural gas and hydrocarbon resources of Eurasia are the fuel that is feeding this powerful drive, which may lead to new military operations by the United States and its allies against local opponents as well as major regional powers such as China and Russia" (Fouskas & Gökay, 2005).

Central Asian region is important for United States because of its energy and security interests. In the energy sector, United States wants its hydrocarbon resources to lessen its dependence on the oil of Middle East. In the security sphere, it is important for United States' "War on Terror" in Afghanistan and adjoining areas (O. Z. Oktav, 2005). Some scholars perceive promotion of democracy, civil liberty, human rights, free and fair elections in the Central Asian states as the goals of United States in the region. Promotion of democracy is perceived to be a political tool that allows United States interference in the domestic political and economic affairs of the fragile Central Asian Republics for the achievement of the above mentioned national interests in the region (Weitz, 2006).

In the month of March, 1997 Clinton administration National Security Advisor "Sandy Berger" recognized this area as a basic goal of the United States external policy, then in July, 1997 "Strobe Talbot", the Deputy Secretary of state asserted "through active involvement in the Central Asian Republics in the hydrocarbon and security sector, the United States is giving a vivid gesture to the world around that she would give priority to the increasing United States

leverage in the region at the cost of safeguarding the United States partnership with Russia”(Laumulin, 2007).

Central Asian Republics got independence from Soviet Union, as a result of the disintegration of it in 1991 and simultaneously United States recognized the independence of all these five republics and established diplomatic relations with it(MacFarlane, 2004).

United States before that had only indirect and informal relations with these states. It had no value in the United States foreign policy for several years till United States war on terror in Afghanistan in the year 2001.

The internal instability and chaos in the Central Asian Republics (CARs) has been complicated due to foreign intrigues and conspiracies particularly of the big powers Russia, China and the United States. They are always busy in playing their own tricks of the game in the geopolitics of Central Asia. The big powers are trying their level best to have influence in the region by getting strong foothold and controlling the routes of oil and natural gas flow. Control over these energy reserves and its transportation routes out of Central Asian region is becoming one of the important issue in the 21st century international politics (Wishnick, 2002).

6.2 Initial Foreign Policy of United States Regarding Central Asian Republics

The basic objectives of the initial foreign policy of United States in the Central Asian region soon after the independence of Central Asian Republics has been economic and political reforms such as promotion of liberal democracy, freedom of speech, minority and human rights and civil liberties and free market economy(Bush, 2002). However, the incident of September 11 attacks has brought abrupt changes in it, putting aside political and economic reforms. Since then, the foreign policy objectives of United States in the region have been security and energy resources. US initial interactions begin with “Programme for Peace” in 1994. The aim of this programme was democratization and promotion of liberal values and free market economy in the post Soviet states of Central Asia. Military-to-military approach of cooperation was developed for engagement with the regional states. The focus of US initial foreign policy in the region along with market reforms, democratization has been legal reforms, health care and under “Freedom Support Programme” housing at the cost of \$1.9 billion dollar from 1992 to 1999(Bronson & Bhatti, 2000).

Threats of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, control of drug trafficking, eradication of terrorism and fundamentalism in all forms and manifestation were the key security concerns of United States in the Central Asian region. Uzbekistan has been the focus of its attention for stability in 1996 due to its rich energy resources such as Oil, Gas, Uranium and Gold (Bertsch, Craft, Jones, & Beck, 2000). Commercial engagements of the regional and international powers such as China, Russia and Turkey increased the importance of the region for United States.

6.3 United States Perceptions of Central Asian Region in the Post Cold War Era (1991-2001)

Second World War brought shifts in international power structure. Before it, the international structure was multi-polar as United States, Russia, Britain, France, Italy, Germany and Japan were equal with respect to power, therefore, had equal say in international politics. As a result of the Second World War, this international system was replaced with bipolarity whereby the two countries, Russia and United States, were controlling the international politics and world order. Since 1949, a sort of diplomatic war started between these two powers in order to dominate each other. This is commonly known as Cold War in international affairs. However, this came to an end with the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 (Keep, 1995). As a result of it, the federating units of Soviet Union, including Central Asian Republics, got independence.

These republics have been described as a “Eurasia Balkans” an area of power vacuum. Due to uncertainties in the region, both United States and international community are facing difficulties there. There are challenges to United States interests in the region from Islamic extremists and fundamentalists (Brzezinski, 1997). However, the region offers opportunities for the economic uplift of the United States. Certainly, the value of this region is matchless. In this period, United States was not much engaged in the region but it heavily engaged in it after she initiated war against terrorism in 2001. Its main purpose was not combating terrorism in central Asia but penetration into it as all other strategies of US met with failure such as promotion of democracy, through which it could have entered into the region’s geopolitics.

The best projection of United States policy related to this region is the “Freedom Support Programme” established by Bush administration in October, 1992. According to this act, the long term objectives of the United States in the Central Asian Republics have been the support for the

establishment of free market economy and democratic reforms being under taken in Russia and the other Central Asian states(Shain, 1994). In pursuance of this act Russia and the Central Asian Republics would receive United States financial assistance in the areas where United States interests exists. This act has been a major source of financial assistance to Russia and Central Asian Republics. It can be assumed that this act is a corner stone of United States policy regarding Central Asian Republics. United States policy towards Central Asian region can be studied and analyzed by dividing it into three categories.

6.4 Russia and the Newly Independent States;

First category; the ultimate goals of United States in Russia and newly independent states are;

- Enhancing United States national security objectives through the development of democracy and free market economy in Russia and newly independent states of Central Asia.
- Creation of business and investment opportunities for United States in the region and increasing opportunities through friendship among the people of central Asia(Oliker & Shlapak, 2006).

According to United States government “Freedom Support Act” is providing flexible structure for constructively influencing the events that may transform Russia and broader Eurasia.

“Freedom Support Act” is supposed to:

- Mobilizing the congress, executive branch and the private sector for favoring and supporting democracy and free market economy in Russia and Eurasia.
- Integrating efforts comprehensively for addressing political and security problems and sharing economic opportunities created due to collapse of Soviet Union and responsibilities to that effect with the world community.
- To show flexibility in the Cold War sanctions and restrictions that till date are hamstringing the United States government in providing help and assistance and is impeding it from developing trading relations with Russia and the Central Asian Republics (Nichol, 2002).

Due to rapidly changing geopolitical situation of these newly independent states, United States has taken some basic initiatives:

- US sponsored their entry into the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

- She got Turkish support for counterbalancing Iranian influence in the region.
- Due to threat from Iranian backed Islamic extremists and fundamentalists the United States government insisted President George .William. Bush for the approval of freedom support act in 1992. This act is suggesting policies for the financial assistance of newly independent states and strengthening United States relations with it.
- Clinton regime insisted on making closer and well coordinated relations with newly independent states (Nichol, 2000)

Second Category; United States Policy towards Central Asia as a whole

United States policy goals in the Central Asian sphere are;

- Ensuring regional stability
- Promotion of democracy
- Establishment of free market economy
- Realization of denuclearization in the non-Russian states
- Promoting free trade and transport facilities in the whole Eurasian
- Development of human rights standards(E. Rumer, 2006)

An important policy of United States in Central Asia is to obstruct radical regimes and groups that attempts to block the way of progress of United States policy objectives. The aim of United States is integration of Central Asian states with international community so that they may shoulder responsibility for security and discourage anti-western passions and orientations that may threaten regional as well as international peace and stability(Bush, 2009).

Third Category; Individual Central Asian Republics

United States foreign policy for Central Asian states is reflecting variant characteristics of these states. United States interests in the Republic of Kazakhstan include removal of nuclear weapons, provision of security for other related nuclear materials. She has also economic, trade and business interests, interests in hydrocarbon and natural gas exploration development in the Republics of Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan. Besides that, she has concerns about human rights violations and promotion of civil liberties in Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan(Cohen, 2006).

Since 1990s, the interests of United States in the Central Asian Republics are increasing year by year. Ambassador of United States, Steven Sestanovichin, in April, 1998 asserted that US has a

great role in the assistance of integration of Central Asian states and the Caucasus region states peacefully with the international community. United States these interests in the region are vital and strategic(Hastedt, 2017). He again asserted in March, 1999 that the vital goals of United States in the region are securing independence, sovereignty and physical integrity of the Central Asian states. United States is pursuing these goals by strengthening democracy, free market economy, liberal values and cooperation with in the region states regarding the construction of East-West pipeline, defense and integration of these states with Euro-Atlantic community and responsible security policies regarding nuclear non-proliferation, counter terrorism and anti-narcotics.

United States government adopted “Silk Road Strategy Act” in March, 1999. This act revised United States policy regarding Central Asian and Caucasus region

- Promotion and strengthening of independence, establishment and promotion of democracy, insurance of the sovereignty of states and development of human standards.
- Promotion of pluralism, tolerance, understanding, countering racism and anti-western sentiments. Assisting regional states in the resolution of regional and internal conflicts, eradication of obstacles in the way of trade across the borders.
- Development of cordial relations and economic cooperation among the Central Asian region states.
- Establishment of market oriented principles and practices.
- Provision of assistance in the development of infrastructure essential for transportation , communications, education, health, energy and trade and other commercial engagements in East–West direction and building sound international relations and trade between Central Asian Republics and free market economies of Euro-Atlantic region.
- Getting support and favor for United States trade and business interests in the Central Asian region(Wishnick, 2002).

No doubt, this act was basically aimed at the creation of suitable business environment conducive for United States. However, in pursuance of new “Silk Road” initiatives United States provided financial assistance for conflict resolution, economic development, humanitarian requirements, transport as well as transportation routes (Oil and Gas pipeline) for energy resources, border security, creation of civil society and democratic reforms.

6.5 United States Policy regarding Central Asia after War against Terrorism (2002-2015)

United States is a remote area from Central Asian region. The incident of 9th September, 2001 has brought the United States and Central Asian region closer to each other permanently. During this period, the prime objectives of the United States in the region were eradication of the conditions that breed terrorism, suggesting United States Quasi-permanent interests in the region. Eradication of the elements of terrorism has been at the priority list of United States policy in the Central Asian Republics.

- Removal of destructive forces from the Central Asian region. United States does not allow Central Asian Republics to become sanctuary for extremism and terrorism. United States has increased counter terrorism, military and security cooperation with the five Central Asian republics after the war against terrorism in Afghanistan (Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan).
- Integrating efforts to assist the Central Asian Republics for its stability, prosperity and integrating community and economy(Kennedy & Lucas, 2005).

The policy is based on the logic that stability, security and prosperity in the Central Asian Republics is complementary for economic and democratic reforms, promotion of human rights standards, rule of law, commitment to integrate their efforts to solve inter-regional problems(Peyrouse et al., 2012). Due to these factors, US relationships with the Central Asian states (CARs) include diplomatic engagements such as;

- Insisting on social, political and economic reforms.
- Respect for human rights.
- Encouraging promotion of independent media, pluralism and development of dynamic civil society.

Diversifying world energy supplies, stabilizing international energy markets through exporting the energy resources of Central Asian region, this in turn would reduce the dependence of world consumers on any single energy source. Assistant Secretary of states for Central Asian and Caucasus affairs, A. Elizabeth Jones in a statement to new committee asserted that United States policy for Central Asia must include cooperation in energy, security and stability of these states

through economic and political reforms. He offered the following vision for the Central Asian region's states;

- Central Asian region should become stable, prosperous and peaceful region.
- Individual Central Asian Republics would markedly speed up their political and economic reforms, respect for human rights standards and the creation of dynamic civil society.
- The states of the said region will integrate with international economy through East-West corridor of integration and cooperation leading from Beijing, Kabul through Caucasus to the Mediterranean region(Wishnick, 2004).

The September 11 incident highlighted the prime interest of United States in the Central Asian Republics as cooperation in security, stability of the region and energy. Presently, United States is using every tool at her disposal to achieve the above mentioned objectives.

6.6 United States Interests in Central Asia

The basis of United States relations with Central Asian Republics is concerned with Central Asian oil and natural gas reserves, its geo-strategic location, and eradication of drug, smuggling, extremism and the infrastructure of weapons of mass destruction and the remnant of Soviet Union. Before 9/11, the foreign policy of United States was in favor of a plan to construct an oil transportation pipeline from Baku via Georgia to an Eastern Mediterranean sea Port of Turkey. This pipeline project if materialized may also transport oil from other friendly countries of Central Asia. This was later on materialized in the shape of BTC and BTE pipelines which are operational(Abazov, 2008).

However, it gained spontaneous importance bringing Central Asia into different focuses of United States as the US deployed its military forces and established bases of operations in the Central Asian region. She has got success in establishing its military bases in the Central Asian region under the pre-text of counter terrorism, deploying its troops in thousands in Afghanistan and Central Asia Republics of Kirghizstan and Uzbekistan(Beehner, 2005). The United States soldiers' presence on post Soviet Union region has emphatically changed the power distribution structure in the region.

United States is struggling to close the door of Cold War victory against Moscow, and is containing China's influence in the Central Asian region. In order to give effect to it, Big oil

companies such as Texaco, Chevron, Exxon Mobil and British Petroleum has already invested \$ 30 Billion in new production fields in the Central Asian Republics (Kleveman, 2004).

The United States pursuance of hydrocarbon interests in the Central Asian region did not materialized during Bush regime. However, it materialized (to a limited extent) during Clinton administration who was himself pursuing hydrocarbon and its transportation pipeline diplomacy with Central Asian leaders(Talbott, 1997). Most of the experts are of the opinion that United States is in Central Asia for hydrocarbon and natural gas and in Afghanistan to get oil and gas pipeline route(Amineh, 2003). “Operation Enduring Freedom” against terrorists is used just as a pretext to get military penetration into Central Asia and Afghanistan.

Presently much is at risk in the Central Asian region for the Washington and its European allies. United States needs diversification of its energy supplies, maintaining its military presence there and bringing changes in the regional socio-political environment to meet its long term objectives in the Central Asian region by promoting democracy, liberal values and free market values in the region (Khan, 2002).It has a series of competing objectives in the Central Asian Republics ranging from the significance of ethno-religious composition vast natural resources of oil, natural gas, Coal and Uranium. These elements are playing active and significant role in the United States world strategy in view of its nearness to nuclear power China, Russia, Pakistan, India and the perceived one, Iran.

As a result of Orange revolution in Ukraine in 2004, Viktor Yushchenko, and a pro-European came to government with the support of United States against Viktor Yanukovich, a pro-Russian. This was followed by US sponsored Tulips revolution in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and as a result Askar Aakayev was ousted(O. Roy, 2007). The opposition leader, KurmanbekBakiev came to power and worked hard to get rid of the Soviet Union period authoritarian system. However, he failed in delivering due to bribery and corruption. Corruption and nepotism was far greater than the previous administration. Besides this, he was facing a lot of other problems such as economic crises and conflicts between different tribes. The central government was unstable and was engulfed in corruption and lacked resolve. These situations did not allow the central government to focus on foreign policy priorities.

In order to have good relation with both the East and the West, Bakieve allowed both United States and Russia stationing its troops in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan(Kayumov & Omelchenko, 2014). Russia established its bases in Kant in 2003 and United States at Manas in 2001.Bakieve

administration announced in 2003 that Manas air base would be vacated soon. He argued that some economic consideration and negative public opinion towards it were behind this decision. However, despite Moscow continued pressure he took back the decision and allowed the continuation of US bases there but on renewed terms and condition.

He was ousted from the government as a result of the revolt in March 2010. Roza Otunbayeva, an opposition leader formed in interim administration. This revolt escalated into Civil War in Kyrgyzstan, was the outcome of some internal factors(Nichol, 2004). The masses rose against the Kyrgyz government due to acute exasperation. It is also regarded as the implementation of Kremlin plan, backed by Vladimir Putin, the Russian Prime minister to put an end to Color Revolutions in the region particularly in Georgia and Ukraine, which is threatening Russian hegemony over the Central Asian region. Russia at once recognized the interim government under Otunbayeva and projected its goodwill by offering \$ 150 million credit. The uprising of Kyrgyzstan had an increased probability of reversing with severe political agitation throughout the region, there by justifying, US policy makers to keep troops in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan as an instrument for the achievement of US strategic objectives and interests in Central Asia(Gullette, 2010).The US had wide and varied interests in the geopolitics of the region which can broadly be divided into political, economic and security interests.

6.7 Political Interests

The dismantling of Soviet Union and the independence of Central Asian states surprised United States. Initially, the Central Asian Republics were considered of little importance and interests to United States but it soon became the stage of international competition for the monopoly over the rich energy resources and influence in the region(İşeri, 2009).

The natural resources of Central Asia are considered as the bone of contention and a source of competition among the big powers Russia, China and United States. Access to these energy resources of Central Asia, although of undisputable importance, is not the only reason that led Washington to intervene in the geopolitics of Central Asia, but in fact, United States wanted to control energy resources and its transportation routes. It should be considered as a mean for the achievement and preservation of global dominance and not as a final objective. It means that access to the region's hydrocarbon resources is not an end in itself rather it is a mean to an

end(Brzezinski, 1997). It is used as a mean for the achievement of other political objectives in the world in general and Central Asian Republics in particular.

The foreign policy of United States regarding the Central Asian Republics is much influenced by Zbigniew Brzezinski concept of “Grand Chessboard” hence it is oriented for the protection of its hegemony from any outside challenge. Vassilis Fouskas & Bulent Gokay, in their book, “The New American Imperialism”, describes the situation as follows, “as the sole super power remaining after the dissolution of the Soviet union, Washington is inserting itself into Central Asian region and fixing geo-political influence in the region, preventing all real and potential competitors from challenging its international hegemony (Fouskas & Gökay, 2005).

The United States intention to dominate the world is crystal clear; therefore, strengthening her influence in the Central Asian region is essential for fulfilling her intention. This has been made clear by the United States project of New American Century (PNAC). This project is based on the draft proposed by Paul Wolfowitz, United State’s Secretary of Defense who defended that no nation in the world should be allowed to challenge United States hegemony(İşeri, 2009). This without any doubt refers to Russia and China, the two regional powers of Central Asia.

Politically, United States has focused on the democratization of the Central Asian Republics. In order to put it into effect, Washington passed the “Freedom Support Act” on October 24, 1992. The main focus of this Act was democratization of the region and establishment of free market economy. It also directed attention towards security and humanitarian issues as well(Bronson & Bhatti, 2000).

United States wants to diminish Russians influence and China involvement in the Central Asian Republics. She wants to create an opportunity for the Central Asian Republics to get access to the international market. The other interest is controlling the hydrocarbon resources and gas supply pipelines and to have an environment conducive to anti-monopoly over the energy resources of Central Asia. Along with, it wants to promote and establish Western style of democracy in the region (Wishnick, 2009). It has a desire to promote bilateral relation with the Central Asian Republics in order to achieve its objective in the region. The most important objective of it in Central Asia is the creation of greater Central Asia, through integration of CARs, Afghanistan being a hub of this central Asian integration(Starr, 2005a).

After 9/11 incident and United States attack on Afghanistan most of the American decision makers are agreed that it should pursue its objectives of democratization of the region,

establishment of free trade, open market economy and integration of the Central Asian Republics economically with the Western World and the promotion of responsible security policies(Oliker & Shlapak, 2006). In the same way, David Fried writes that security, energy and regional economic integration and cooperation should be the prime objectives of United States foreign policy in the Central Asian Republics(Fried, 2005).

For having firm grip over the Central Asian region, US proposed “New Silk Road Strategy”. In order to realize it, the government of United States identified some high priority projects of infrastructure including a railway line from Afghanistan to Tajikistan through Turkmenistan, a regional network of electricity and 1735 km long Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI) gas pipeline which would bypass Russian territory(Kim & Indeo, 2013). However, these projects are still waiting to be materialized. According to United States, this project would provide transit revenue for Pakistan and Afghanistan. She also hopes that this project would stop the rival Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline(Cabestan, 2011). Its main aim is to diversify Central Asian supply routes to put an end to Russian monopoly over it and liberate Central Asian Republics from the clutches of Russia by providing independence to them.

Strategically, Central Asian Republics are vital for US war against terrorism due to its closeness to Afghanistan. The potential of extremism are emanating from this region. Broadly speaking, US can project its strength from the Central Asian region into Persian Gulf, Africa, the Middle East and mainland of Asia. Therefore, military basis in Central Asia will remain one of the prime strategic interests of Washington in the Central Asian region. In the same way, Russia and China will definitely oppose the presence of the United States in the said region. United States is committed to encourage Central Asian Republics to take steps for democratization and liberalization of economy. United States is greatly interested in the promotion of democratic policies in the Central Asian Republics. With the passage of time, this will enable them for good governance, open societies and free market economy (S. Blank, 2007). Lorne Craner, Assistant Secretary of state for democracy, labor and human rights, writes that the basic objectives of the United States in Central Asian Republics is the promotion of democratic, stable and independent Central Asian states.

United state is interested in the hydrocarbon resources of the region not just she wants to diversify its energy resources but to open the Central Asia’s vast energy resources to international consumers; this will help the Central Asian region in maintaining their

independence from the imperialistic clutches of Moscow and up to some level from China. Washington wants to open Central Asian energy resources to the international market to sell its energy reserves at international market rate. In this way, they could limit the energy resources price maneuvering authority of Russia. China and Russia want the exact opposite of that, maintaining monopoly on the part of Russia over the exportation of hydrocarbon and natural gas of Central Asia (S. J. Blank, 2007). The United States must continue to divert Russia and China struggles that may undermine the political and economic sovereignty of the Central Asian Republics.

The prime political objectives of United States in the Central Asian region's geo-politics to take away the Republics from Russian and China influence. Therefore, United States is trying to obstruct the reconstitution of Russia's influence in the region and denying Beijing's approach to the hydrocarbon and other energy resources and the Central Asian masses. The United States is encouraging the region's states for the establishment of new ties and synergies with the Western world and the nations situated at the South like Pakistan, India and Afghanistan. It is because of this that United States assistant secretary of state for Central and South Asian affairs, Richard Boucher put forward the idea to develop a power grid from the non-utilized potential of hydro-power in the Republic of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and natural gas based power stations in Uzbekistan with initial connections with Kabul, Delhi and Islamabad later on.

Promotion and strengthening of democracy has also been one of the important political objectives of US in Central Asia and a source of rhetoric against Russia tyranny, undermining the authority of Russia (Heyneman, 2000). United States is interested to promote moderation, enlightenment and secularization in the newly independent Central Asian Republics.

United States wants to counter the China's influence in the Central Asian region and to compete for the energy resources there as China owns immense of Central Asia's energy assets. It has purchased in 2005 "Petro Kazakhstan Oil Company" and has signed many pipeline agreements with the Central Asian region states (Cohen, 2006). It wants to create free market economy in the region to counterbalance Russia's geo-strategic ambitions, investment and acquisition of assets in natural gas and oil and planning to promote new oil and gas pipeline through Pakistan to Turkey and Caspian sea region's states avoiding Iranian and Russian territory at all costs. United States realized that it could minimize Russian and Iranian influence if she is able to construct oil and gas pipeline bypassing those states, Russia and Iran. Its best example is the United States

BTC and BTE pipeline stretching from Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan to Ceyhan Turkey bypassing Russia and Iran (Baran & Smith, 2007). She has actively supported and still supporting the European Union in getting access to Central Asian gas through Southern gas corridor, particularly United States encouraged Azerbaijan to ensure gas to Nabucco pipeline. From this, it can be deduced that she wants to diversify Central Asian energy resources so that it may not be in the clutches of either Russia or China alone. It also supported Trans Anatolia Natural gas Pipeline Project(TANAP) initiated by Azerbaijan to transport its energy resources to international market through Turkey(Cornell, 2004).

This has been clearly remarked by Winston Churchill long before on June 17th, 1914, while presenting a bill proposed that the British government Oil Companies investment should rely on no one quality, on no one process, on no one country, on no one route and on no one field must we be dependent. Safety and certainty in oil lie in variety and variety alone (Ronald, 1982). The vast energy resources of Central Asian region, like other big powers, are of great importance to the United States. Therefore, she has focused on the vast natural resources of Central Asia and ensuring a diversity of long term Western energy reserves (Olcott, 2005).

Before 9/11 incident, United State interests in Central Asia revolved round three broad themes, police, economic, security and energy. In 1997, the Deputy Secretary of States, Talbot stated that their support of the region's states has four objectives, promotion of democracy, creation of free market economy, the establishment of peace and cooperation among the Central Asian Republics and its integration with international community(Talbott, 1997). The intentions of all these objectives have been removal of the communists' imprints from central Asian society.

6.8 US Interests in Central Asian Energy Resources

6.8.1 Evolution of the Concept of Energy Security

Energy security concept is an international concern and its evolution can be traced back to 1970s. During this period, the world oil supply disturbed, fashioning foreign policies of the world states, particularly the big few. This energy security concern gradually vanished at the restoration of confidence on oil supply during 1990s. Energy security became an integral part of the foreign policies of the big powers, particularly of the US, Russia and China since the advent of 21st century (Afridi, Yousufi, & Ahmad, 2015).Regional as well as social distortions disturb the

Middle East energy supply and world terrorism threatened the whole energy supply chain. Other minor conflicts concerning energy resources producing countries like Nigeria and Venezuela also contributed to the apprehensions towards the security of energy supply.

In order to ensure and enhance reliability of energy supply and its availability at a reasonable rate, energy resources consumer's states always try to diversify its energy supply ensuring alternative energy resources, used as a tool for prevention and the minimization of the impact of oil disruption and to enhance their bargaining power. The energy consumer states will support the discovery and emergence of new producing region to diversify supply of energy, leading to higher competition among producing regions in a global market less vulnerable to disruptions and unreasonable prices(Cohen, 2006). Diversification of energy supply is the important tool in the hands of consumer countries to secure the availability of enough energy resources at a reasonable price in a manner sustainable.

6.8.2 Interests in Central Asian energy resources

The involvement of United States in Central Asian geo-politics can be traced back to early 1990s, when its National Energy Companies got interested in the exploration of new energy resources (Oil and Natural gas) in the region (Stegen & Kuszniir, 2015b).Its prime objective in Central Asia is the security of energy. United States wants to get free access to the oil and natural gas reserves of the Central Asian Republics. United States in order to ensure it, is striving to sustain the independence and economic development of the region's states. So that it may not depend on any other neighboring regional power particularly Russia and China. It is strengthening bilateral and multilateral political and military cooperation with the Central Asian Republics.

Energy security has always been one of the basic priorities determining the US strategy for maintaining its hegemony in international affairs. Due to this, US is always following a policy of diversification of its energy resources supplies to minimize its dependence on the Middle East energy resources (Correlje & Van der Linde, 2006). To have safe energy supply for its European allies and to put an end to Russian monopoly on central energy supply route and to minimize its role in its price mechanism in international market

After the disintegration of Soviet Union United States started perceiving the region as one of the basic area for its international demands particularly of energy resources. However, it is worthy to

mention that the main energy supplies of United States are coming from Canada and Gulf of Mexico. Its pursuance of energy policy in the Central Asian region is because of the energy security for European Union allies, the most important economic and political partner of it in the international politics (Gallis, 2006). Jeff Smith asserts “Washington understands well that a Europe beholden to Russia for light and heat is more inclined to follow Moscow’s lead when United States and Russian interests collide” (Stegen, 2011). European Union is one of the big energy importers. It consumes about 80 percent of oil and 75 percent natural gas of the world (Kim & Blank, 2015). The Middle East region states and Russian Federation are the main energy suppliers of the European Union. Statistics projects that by the year 2007 European Union will be consuming about 30 percent of its oil and 50 percent natural gas supplies from the Russian federation. Besides, most of the Eastern European states completely depend on the Russian natural gas exports for the ensuing two decades, Middle East states and Russian Federation will be the big European Union energy suppliers (Baran, 2007). So, US want to influence the energy rich-central Asian states to have an alternate to Middle East energy supplies for its European allies so that it may not go into the fold of Russia completely. In such a situation, US would be left alone in international politics thereby losing its international status. This is what prompted US in the geopolitics of Central Asia. According to European Commission, “By 2030, because of growing energy demands and declining domestic production, Europe will rely on imports for two thirds of its energy needs. Dependence on imported oil will remain extremely high, reaching 94 percent in 2030. Dependence on imported gas will rise to 84 percent in 2030, and imports of solid fuels are projected to reach 59 percent in 2030” (Lupu, 2006).

It is evident that the energy resources of Central Asian region are big but it is not easily accessible. The United States interests, in this sense, in the Central Asian region are viewed as more political than economic. She wants to lessen European states dependence on Russian and Middle East energy resources, as a first priority and ensure transportation of Central Asian hydrocarbon resources to the market of Europe bypassing Iranian and Russian territory. United States Secretary for Energy, Bill Richardson pointed out in the year 1998 that, “this is about United States energy security which depends on diversifying the energy resources worldwide. We are to drag these newly independent Central Asian Republics towards the West. We would like to see them rely on Western commercial and political interests rather than going another way” (Shaffer, 2011). Generally speaking, the United States policy in the Central Asian region is

a part of her international policy to enhance its regional influence to maintain its super power status in the 21st century.

The engagements of United States and other Western countries energy companies in the energy sector of Central Asian region started in the initial days of 1990, just after the disintegration of Soviet Union. Chevron, an energy company, signed first agreement with the Republic of Kazakhstan in 1993 for the purpose of exploration of big oil fields of the Republic of Kazakhstan (Nikolaev, 2011). Tengiz, another US energy company took initiatives for increasing its influence in the energy producing Central Asian Republics, particularly the Republic of Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. This was followed by “Deal of Century” between Western oil companies and the government of Azerbaijan in September, 1994 for the purpose of exploration and exploitation of three joint offshore oil fields known as; Azeri-Chirag-Gunshli (Cohen, 2006).

6.8.3 Politics of Energy Transportation Routes

The increasing demands of hydrocarbon resources (Oil and Gas) motivated United States to redesign its policy for exploitation, exploration and investment in the Central Asian Republics energy sector. The subsequent engagements of other regional and international powers, particularly Moscow and Beijing added to the importance of the region for United States. Russian monopoly over the energy transportation routes from Central Asia to international market further consolidated the efforts of United States for the diversification of hydrocarbon supply pipeline routes. The focus of energy diversification policy is on the increase of exploration and transportation of untapped energy resources into international market to lower down the energy prices (M. A. Peterson, 2005). It means that market forces will determine its prices because energy supply routes diversification will increase competition in international market. In this the prices of energy resources will be lowered down. In order to fulfill the objectives contained in the strategy, United States invested billion dollars on the construction of several energy resources transportation pipelines from Central Asian Republics towards “Black Sea” bypassing Iran and Russia (Rywkin, 2006).

The exploration and exploitation of hydrocarbon resources was facing with a complex problem due to the transportation of energy resources from the land locked area, the Central Asian Republics. Due to the dismantling of Soviet Union, Russian Federation was still controlling the

energy transportation routes to the international market. Following this United States started the following alternative energy transportation routes in order to put an end to Russian monopoly over the Central Asian energy resources transportation routes. In this regard, United States signed an agreement of the construction of alternative energy transportation routes of “Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan”, (BTC) and Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum (BTE) which officially became operational in the year 2005. This was an important step to counterbalance Moscow strategy in the Central Asian region. Ex- president of United States, George William Bush described the completion of this energy transportation route as a great achievement, opening a new chapter in the development of Central Asian energy sector (İşeri, 2009). This move of United States was followed by the construction of 692 Kilo Meters long Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum, transporting natural gas of Azerbaijan to European market.

The construction of energy transportation pipeline from Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan towards south through Afghanistan Pakistan via India (TAPI), serves the purpose of the diversification supply routes. US and energy producing Central Asian Republics are planning to construct “Central Asian Oil Pipeline” (CAOP) to open up energy export to deep water Gawadar port of Pakistan (Cohen, 2006).

Besides this, Western oil and natural gas companies proposed Trans-Caspian natural gas and oil transportation pipeline to transport the oil of the Republic of Kazakhstan and natural gas of Turkmenistan to Azerbaijan via European market. The United States also supported Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan and India (TAPI) gas pipeline as an instrument of reducing Russian and Chinese monopoly in the energy transportation routes of the Central Asian region. Nabuco natural gas transportation route is another US supported proposal, which is considered a continuation of the South Caucasus transportation pipeline for bringing the Central Asian natural gas to the international market (Ericson, 2009).

Before the shift in Uzbekistan and US relations “Foreign Direct Investment” in the region has been limited to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. According to US state department report, Uzbekistan has received from US approximately \$500 million foreign direct investment from United States specialized oil and gas companies of Baker Hughes and Texaco.

Similarly, Kazakhstan has received US foreign direct investment of \$30.7 million equal to 67 percent of its total FDI since 1993 (Mankoff, 2013). However, US foreign direct investment in

Central Asia lowered down due to its estrangement with Uzbekistan over Andijan incident of 2005.

Another important basic objective of US in the energy sector of the region is the exclusion of Tehran from participating in exploration, and transportation of energy resources of oil and gas, which is the sole member of the “Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries” (OPEC) that is located at the border of Central Asia. Iran is regarded, commercially most suitable route for the transporting Central Asian hydrocarbon resources to the international market, during the construction of “Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan” (BTC) United States straight away rejected to pass it through the territory of Iran. United States feared that in this way Iran would become powerful regional actor, posing perceived military, security threat to counterbalance United States partner, Turkey (Ö. Z. Oktav, 2016). She is planning to diversify Central Asian energy supply route to have safe energy supply for its European allies so that they may not go into the fold of Russia completely for energy and to put an end to Russian monopoly on Central Asian energy supply route. In this way it could block Cold War victory against Russia so that it may not rise again to challenge US international status.

United States support of Afghanistan with the aim of its stability and eradication of Al-Qaeda and public support has some significant relations with the strategy of energy diversification. The Republics of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan has considerable hydro-power energy resources. These energy resources can be supplied to energy hungry Pakistan and India as well as Afghanistan, US provided \$41.4 million along with immense foreign direct investment from the “Asian Development Bank” for the development of hydro-power generation (Rywkin, 2006). In this way, it provided an opportunity for the stability of Afghanistan and enhancement of Pakistan’s political support against terrorism and a source of hydro-energy for India.

6.9 Security Interests

Central Asian region is playing important role in the United States and its ally’s security and military policy. Due to its importance, US, since 1990 wish to increase political and military cooperation with them, within the framework of “Partnership for Peace” programme of United States and with its European partners. Under this programme, Central Asian Republics initiated collective operations with “North Atlantic Treaty Organization” for humanitarian and peacekeeping mission along with other functions (A. Jaffe & Manning, 2001). This aimed to

have intimate military and security cooperation with the region's states, particularly with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan because of its energy agreements with them. Resultantly, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) asserted its intention of maintaining energy deposits and its transportation pipeline. Then in the year, 1998, Central Asian region was announced to be an integral part of United States military responsibilities (Marlène Laruelle & Peyrouse, 2009).

During 1990, the primary United States security concern in the region has been the safety of biological, chemical, and Nuclear Weapons of former Soviet Union. Following the successful agreement of cooperative threat reduction with the Republic of Kazakhstan, US signed the same agreement with the Republic of Uzbekistan. In the mentioned period, United States had focused on long term security concerns in the region. Thus, it focused on multi-generation vibrant, dynamic civil society having less potential for state failure, terrorism, extremism and terrorism (Olcott, 2005). The aim of the creation of civil society, development of democratic and good governance, helping them in the development of energy sector has been removal of the causes of extremism in the region.

However, the 9/11 incident brought changes in the US interests in the region. Following this incident she increased her role in the security sector of the region by establishing military basis in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan as a preliminary step for operation in Afghanistan. In this way, short term United States security concerns in Central Asia took dominance over all other interests in the Central Asia. Both, US and Central Asia states particularly Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan had shared interests in the eradication of Taliban regime from Afghanistan. "Assistant Secretary of State", Elizabeth Jones, has mentioned the following long term US interests in the region, prevention of the spread of terrorism, reforming Central Asia politically and economically, security, transportation and development of the energy reserves of Caspian region(MacFarlane, 2004).

The broader and long term interests of United States in the Central Asia have been kept continued but after the war on terror, their priority has been shifted. The interests of United States in the Central Asian region revolve round three broader categories of security, political and economic reforms, and the energy resources. In the security field, its aim is to fight against the perceived threat of terrorism emanating from Central Asia. Political and economic reforms are concerned with the promotion and development of liberal values, nourishment of Western democracy and liberal free market economy.

6.10 The Impacts of 9/11 Incident on the Geopolitics of Central Asia

The incident of September, 11, in which terrorists attacked the United States Pentagon and World Trade Center, has brought abrupt changes in the United States security policy regarding Central Asian region. It enhanced the value of Central Asian Republics not only for United States but also for the world at large. It became its foreign policy priority not only with respect to energy but also with respect security concerns. It drew attention of the world following the incident of 9/11 because of its nearness to Afghanistan. Following this incident, the government of George William Bush attached great importance to anti-terrorism rather than the financial issues. At once, it started deployment of its forces in the Central Asian region states, particularly the Central Asian Republics, providing important and vital bases for military intelligence operations (Burns, 2007). In fact, US was in search of an excuse to counterbalance the China's domination in the energy sector of the region and to have check on regional developments. The geo-strategic importance of the Central Asian region for the United States war against terrorism in Afghanistan has been described by Canady Chuffrin as such;

“There are some areas in the world that experience such a profound and lasting impact of the 9/11 incidents as the Central Asian region. As a result of the US led war against terrorism in the wake of these incidents by a military campaign directed against the Taliban government and Al-Qaeda networks in neighboring Afghanistan, the Central Asian region, was greatly influenced by it, each of them to a different limits”(Zachariassen, Paffenholz, Çuhadar, & Ross, 2016).

Following the incident of September, 11 Central Asian Republics got substantial military aid from the United States. This was about \$ 74 million only in 2002. The Republic of Uzbekistan got \$12 million while the Republic of Kazakhstan received \$11.6 million. In return, these states ensured the United States access to transport and fighter plane to their air space. United States and its allied forces (NATO) received air bases in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Manas and Khanabad airports respectively (O'Lear, 2004). Establishment of military bases in these republics was meant to enable United States military strikes against the terrorists' elements in Afghanistan. These bases are located at a short distance from china. Through these bases it can check regional developments, can mobilize CARs against china and Russia and can easily strike china's strategic assets located in Xinxiang and energy production sights there.

The Republic of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan are playing important role in the United States led war against terrorism (Operation Enduring Freedom) in the region of Afghanistan. These

Republics are supplying the fuel required by the United States central command. The United States along with NATO forces do not pay any kind of tariffs and taxes for the fuel they are consuming for the war against terrorism, particularly, the Republic of Turkmenistan. According to “Defense Logistics Agency” “fuel is exempted from domestic tariffs and taxes because of these states participation in the US programme “Partnership for Peace” signed by the Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in the year 1994 (Abilov, 2012). Following the incident of 9/11 and the subsequent war against terrorism, United States government has paid much attention towards the Central Asian Republics. Its policy has changed towards a comprehensive approach to the Central Asian region states, covering military assistance, addressing security concerns, highlighting economic and political reforms, promotion of human rights standards and evolution/strengthening of democracy is an important part of bulwarks against regional instability (MacFarlane, 2004).

United States engagements in Central Asia are shaped by its geo-political and geo-strategic objectives in the Central Asian Republics. It in order to ensure safety of fissile material signed an agreement of “Cooperative Threat Reduction” in the last month of 1993. Removing the Soviet Union period nuclear weapons and the prevention of proliferation of fissile materials was the most important security concerns of US and its allies in 1990s (Wishnick, 2004). The 9/11 incident followed by United States war against terrorism increased the strategic significance of Central Asian region for Washington, who has to depend on the local military basis of the Central Asian Republics to fight against terrorists organizations. For the achievement of this objective, United States has signed different agreements with Central Asian Republics for stationing her military troops and war equipments(Wishnick, 2002).

The United States government fears that civil crises in the region after the dissolution of Soviet Union would create power vacuum that may be filled by Islamic extremists/fundamentalist. Due to this, she is backing and supporting the semi-authoritarian regimes of the region (Ostrowski, 2009). This is a wrong concept because all the color revolutions such as Tulip Revolution and Rose Revolution was the conspiracy of US to over through the pro-Russian semi-authoritarian regimes in the region and to replace it US friendly regimes .United States is asserting liberalization and reforms in democracy to protect them from terrorists’ attacks and other extremists’ activities (Raphael & Stokes, 2014).

Its penetration into the region militarily is not a good omen for Moscow and Beijing. This was initially accepted by China and Russia as a necessary evil, to eradicate terrorism. However uncertainty regarding the duration of war on terror and suspicions regarding United States real objectives has raised several questions in the minds of Russians and Chinese, feeling her prolonged stay in the Central Asian Republics may threaten their interests in the region, considered by them as their backyard(Rashid, 2008). The exposition of United States military capabilities in the joint exercises with Central Asian Republics finally led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to announce closing of United States bases in 2005. Besides military training and cooperation, the United States is also pursuing a policy to promote autonomy of former Soviet Union states by offering them financial aid and forming new regional organization like GUAAM to integrate them economically and politically with the West(MacFarlane, 2004). United States wants to guard against Islamic militancy by supporting dialogue between the present regimes and secular opposition factions.

The 9/11 incident brought abrupt changes in the United States national interests in the Central Asian Republics. Since then, she pays special attention towards the improvement of security and domestic reforms in the region, preventing them from becoming sanctuary of terrorism and extremism. Therefore, it took steps essential for the prevention of terrorism and terrorists' regime or factions illegally acquiring the technology of Soviet Union for the preparation of Weapons of Mass Destructions (WMD)(Tyler, 1992).

The other important security interest of United States in the Central Asian Republics is the eradication of nuclear arsenals that remained in the Republic of Kazakhstan after the disintegration of Soviet Union. United States gave aid to strengthen its export and control the nuclear technology and other related materials preventing its move towards Iran for the acquisition of nuclear technology and war heads(Wishnick, 2002).

As a consequence, the Central Asian region has been a chessboard for the big powers, Russia, China and United States after the disintegration of Soviet Union and subsequent terrorists attack on the "World Trade Center" and "Pentagon" in the year 2001, turning the geopolitical significance of the entire Central Asian region, thereby allowing the United States to establish military bases in the region(Cox, 2002). It has been the ambition of United States to have substantial political, economic and military presence in the Central Asian Republics enabling her

to obstruct any state, posing threat to its national interests in the region and its international status.

6.11 United States Strategies in Central Asia to Achieve its Objectives

To achieve its policy objectives in the Central Asian region, United States is pursuing a strategy of reducing Moscow and Beijing influence there so that they may not be able to have enough power at the behest of CARs strategic location and economic opportunities to challenge US international status. United States is establishing cordial relations with the regional government of Central Asian Republics and building public confidence. United States in order to reduce Moscow and Beijing monopoly and influence in Central Asia is using diversified strategies and techniques. US can achieve its objectives by increasing regional cooperation, promoting trade and economic activities and the establishment of oil and gas pipeline network leading from Central Asian region to international market to put an end to Russian monopoly in energy transportation routes and China increasing domination in the energy sector of the region (Starr, 2005a). This could be used for the achievement of two objectives: to increase trade and economic activities and convey the energy resources of Central Asia to the western world bypassing Russia and Iran.

United States is trying to achieve its objectives of the containment of Russia and China influence in the region through strengthening regional integration and its integration with the western world economically, politically and socially. Unilaterally, the Central Asian region states cannot play active and decisive role as long as their economy is not linked to the international market, through different economic activities. In this way, the Russian exploitation of the natural resources of Central Asia could be minimized. For the US strategies to be successful there, it is essential that the regional states may consider United States projects beneficial for them, rather than thinking to be detrimental. United States, as policy objectives, is suggesting to the Central Asian Republics to initiate the following reforms; to conduct free and fair election for the promotion of democracy in the region. She is encouraging the Central Asian Republics to make judicial reforms in their judicial system and encourage Civil rights projects(Oliker & Shlapak, 2006).in this way US wants to overthrow semi-authoritarian pro-Russian regimes in CARs, which are favorable for Russia and china for the realization of their national interests in the region. US is not sincere in its efforts for the promotion of real democracy in the region as she is

well aware that real democracy creates consciousness and awareness in the masses so they pursue their own national interests then the interests of any external state.

Central Asian region's importance enhanced after 9/11 incident and the subsequent US war against terrorism. This war against terrorism provided avenues for the region's states to have voice in international politics (Jonson, 2006). After that incident United States objectives in Central Asia turned to eliminate human trafficking, control drug trafficking and narcotics, illegal arm sale, religious extremism, fundamentalism and terrorism. In order to achieve these geopolitical interests, United States concentrated on three Central Asian Republics, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It is because these three states are sharing borders with the regional economic giant, China and Russia. In these, strategically important Central Asian Republics, United States wants to contain Russia's and China's strategic and political influence there (Kurečić, 2010). Tajikistan is Central Asian Republics' entrance from the Southern side. The movement of drug, weapons, human trafficking and ideas related to extremism are coming from that side. Due to its importance, the United States is paying greater attention towards it for the achievement of its desirable results in Afghanistan. Tajikistan plays important role with respect to "New Great Game" due to its important and significant geographic and strategic location (Jonson, 2006).

The prime objectives of United States in Central Asia are eradication of the three evils and containment of China and Russia's influence in the region. For that purpose, the containment of Russia monopoly over the oil and gas pipeline sector is regarded essential by US policy circles, United States has established its military basis in the Central Asian Republics on the pretext of counter terrorism movement and by its presence in the region she wants to exploit the oil and gas transportation routes and communication links of the Central Asian States. Its interests in Central Asia received a severe setback when the Central Asian Republics demanded withdrawal of its forces and the vacation of its basis located in Central Asia. This step was taken first by the Republic of Uzbekistan government when the United States opposed State operation against rebels in Andijan (Khan, 2002).

In order to achieve the objectives outlined in its energy strategy for Central Asian region, United States took the following steps.

- It purchased "Petro Kazakhstan Oil Company" in 2005, a big step towards the achievement of its energy objectives in the Central Asia region.

- Purchased China's "International Trust Corporation" in 2006.
- Signed many agreements of pipeline with Central Asian states.

United States is supporting all those projects which increases and diversifies non-Russian energy supply routes for Central Asian hydrocarbon resources and natural gas. It is trying its utmost to increase and further strengthen its relations with the region's states and increasing trade and security relations with them. For the achievement of its long term objectives in Central Asian region, she is encouraging good governance, modern institutions and high scale legislative reforms(Nichol, 2010b). She is taking all those measure through which it can increase its influence in the region and decreases the influence of its rivals by making firm bases in the region. She has adopted and is encouraging to adopt nonsense approach towards all those governments with which United States is presently not on good terms, allowing for engagement to tackle with prime national interests and priorities like energy security and the international war against terrorism.

6.12 United States New Silk Road Strategy in Central Asia

In order to maintain its existence in the region and contain Moscow and Beijing influence, the US proposed new "Silk Road" strategy after its withdrawal from Afghanistan. This strategy according to it, would enhance regional economic cooperation in transportation routes between South and Central Asia thereby enhancing stability in the region (Kim & Indeo, 2013). US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, announced this strategy in 2011. United States in order to meet with its interests and objectives in the region want to increase the regional cooperation in commerce, hydrocarbon, gas and its transportation sector to enhance regional development and stability in the region(Fatima & Zafar, 2014). According to US, this strategy will integrate Central Asia with Western market and will help the region's states in its economic growth and stability and will decrease its dependence on regional powers Russia and China.

The old "Silk Road" was connecting Asia with Europe. For several years, it served as land route for conducting trade and maintaining relationships among different regions of Asia, Europe and Africa (Vassort-Rousset, 2003). A lot of smaller routes are emerging from this historic Road. However, it lost its importance and significance after the advancement of technology and development of maritime routes with changing geopolitical environment. The importance of this historical route has been reviewed

The “New Silk Road” project proposed by United States is important in improving regional cooperation and in the present geo-political scenario of the region. It will provide an opportunity to the regions states to benefit from the diversified trade opportunities. Besides this, it will also attract investment in energy and transportation sector of the Central Asian Republics. According to United States, this will provide Central Asian Republics an opportunity of playing active role in the geopolitics of the region by integrating it into Western market(Diener, 2015). The aim of United States by this project is regional integration, cooperation and provision of better trade facilities for the Central Asian Republics. In this way, trade and other economic activities will be enhanced by attracting investment in the region(Venancio, 2018). This will also connect Central Asia with international markets. Different small routes emerging from this new “Silk Road” would enhance the importance of the Central Asian region states in the world economy, allowing it to play active role in the global politics. One of the vital aspects of this new Silk Road strategy proposed by United States is to contain the influence and role of Russia and China in Central Asia by dragging it towards west away from Asia(Marlene Laruelle, 2015). Two projects of this strategy are immensely important.

1. Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India natural gas pipeline, transporting Turkmen natural gas to these three countries. It is expected to be functional in 2017(Abbas, 2012).
2. The other project is CASA-1000. This project is concerned with hydro-power sector. Under this project hydro-power from the Republic of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan would be transported to Afghanistan and Pakistan(Zimmerman, 2015).

6.13 United States Convergence with Russia

United States and Russia leader of Soviet Union had been considered as traditional enemy since the end of Second World War in 1945. It disintegrated in 1991 as a conspiracy of United States and its allies by creating internal dissension and economic instability. So convergences among them in the geopolitics of the region are very little as compared to its divergences. Despite the long standing traditional enmity between them, their interests in Central Asian region must not be considered as zero-sum. Both of them along with Central Asian Republics are interested in the eradication of terrorism, Islamic extremism, fighting against drug and human trafficking, trading illegal arms and ammunition, economic development and stability of the region. Besides this

they have interest in the redevelopment of the region politically, economically and socially(S. J. Blank, 2007). However, coordinating their efforts for bringing positive change is still facing a lot of obstacles to be removed. Any coordinated effort on the part of Russia and United States may be thought by Central Asian Republics as a challenge to their sovereignty and independent status.

6.14 Convergence in Economic Sphere

There is rare convergence between United States and Russia in the economic sector of Central Asia. However, economic stability in the region may be in the advantage of both of them along with CARs. Russia is the leading trading partner of Central Asian Republics since long. The increased economic activity and economic development would bring stability in the region. United States can materialize its interests in the Central Asian Republics only when there is economic stability in the region, same is the case with Russia(Weitz, 2006). Economic stability is the base of development and security in the region. Moreover, the increased stability in the region would decrease extremism and pouring it out of Central Asian region, contributing to the United States efforts for democratization of Central Asian Republics (Carlson, 2007). Development of free market economy in central Asian region would have added advantage for strengthening economic reforms and liberalization of economy in Russia itself (Kim & Indeo, 2013).

6.15 Convergence in Security Sphere

Security is another area of potential for cooperation between Moscow, Washington and the states of the region. The threat of extremism, terrorism and separatism is the security concern for Russia and United States in the Central Asian region. As long as it is not eliminated from the region; they would not be able to achieve their foreign policy objectives. Since 9/11, extremism and terrorism has increased in the Central Asian region. Russia thought the subsequent war of United States against terrorism is due to their growing concern about ethnic separatism, nationalism and Islamic extremism in their concerned territories(Klimenko, 2011).

United States is not the only external player having concern regarding the potential future rise of Islamic extremism in the Central Asian region; Russia along with United States has its own

concern about its security as it is being faced with terrorism on its own land, particularly the North Caucasus region (Nopens, 2014). Furthermore, Russia considers the present political environment as threat of terrorism emanating from Central Asia as a consequence of instability emerging from the war torn Afghanistan (Jim Nichol, 2014). When United States launched operation against Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan following the 9/11 incident, Russia warmly welcomed it because Russia could benefit from such move of the United States. At that time, Russia had limited security presence in the Central Asian region due to its dilapidated economic conditions as compared to the security demands of the Central Asian Republics during early 1990 (Cenic, 2014). Russia being a communist state is against of religion in all forms and manifestation. So it is against of religious extremism leading to terrorism in the Central Asian region.

Russia fears that the forces of instability such as terrorism, separatism and extremism prevailing in CARs may spill over to it and will destabilize it. Due to these concerns, it would like to cooperate with any move initiated by any state directed against these forces of instability. They, United States and Russia, are cooperating with the Central Asian states in sharing intelligence and coordination through Russian-led SCO and “North Atlantic Treaty Organization” led by United States (NATO). This may prove to be good effort for addressing the security concerns in the Central Asian Republics (Wishnick, 2009). Russia and United States have great interests in the energy resources of Central Asia. These energy resources can be explored and developed only when there is a peace and stability in the region. So for the stability and security of the region pluralism of security mechanism may be beneficial and it mostly depends on the relation of big powers in Central Asia.

6.16 Drug Trafficking

Drug trafficking is another security issue in Central Asian Republics. The revenue generated from drug trafficking usually goes into wrong and illegal hands particularly of extremists, terrorists and separatists. George tenet, CIA Director in the Select Committee of Senate, emphasized over the relation between terrorism and drugs in 2001 and said, “The threat of drug trafficking is the mainspring for other threats to the security in the region. The Taliban government in Afghanistan, permitted Osama bin laden along with other terrorists to operate from its territory, encouraged and profited from drug trafficking. Some Islamic extremists think

it to be a weapon which could be used against the Western World and a means of income to finance their operations. Russia and United States are increasingly worried about the activities of the Islamic movement of Uzbekistan, an extremists/ fundamentalist group whose yearly incursion into Uzbekistan have become more bloodier and more severe with each passing year” (Weinstein, 2007). So they are individually and collectively striving to eradicate drug trafficking from the region to weaken the hands of terrorist, extremists and separatists.

6.17 Nuclear Non- Proliferation and Weapons of Mass Destruction

United States and Russia is against of nuclear proliferation in the Central Asian Republics. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, the nuclear weapons were owned by the republic of Kazakhstan. US, Russia and China collectively opposed it and in a several rounds of talks with Kazakhstan compelled it to hand over nuclear weapons to Russia and nuclear issue was tied to economic development of the region’s states(S. Blank, 1995). Without achieving economic development up to certain limits, no state of the region would be allowed to have nuclear weapons. They are against of nuclearised Central Asia because it is not in the interest of either of them. In fact, it will provide the Republics complete sovereignty from the outside world including Russia and United States. It will also reduce space for Russia, US maneuvering in the region, particularly in its energy sector(Tyler, 1992).

6.18 United States Divergences with Russia

Moscow is of the opinion that secondary actors like India, Pakistan, Turkey, Afghanistan and Iran lack adequate means to challenge its interests and displace its superiority in the Central Asian Republics while United States penetration and her subsequent influence in the region after the incident of 9/11 may challenge its interests in the region. Broadly speaking, United States and Russian Federation relations have been tense since long but there is no denying the fact that still they had some practical grounds of cooperation in the geo-politics of Central Asian Republics over the issue of terrorism, extremism, separatism, stability and economic development. Most of their divergences are related to political and economic developments particularly the developments in energy sector of the region.

6.19 Divergence in Security Sphere

The geo-economic and geopolitical significance of Central Asian states play an important role in drawing the focus of the big powers, particularly Russia, China and United States, towards it. Since the independence of CARs in 1991 the big powers are competing for power, striving to have influence in the region and imposing their political will over it. The availability of rich hydrocarbon and gas reserves in the region enhanced the strategic significance of the region; thereby creating economic and political tussle among the big players of international politics, Russia, China and United States. However, this competition reached a new phase after the incident of 9/11. Since then, United States decided for increasing military penetration into the region and started promoting military cooperation with the young independent states of Central Asia (Marlene Laruelle & Peyrouse, 2012).

This attempt of United States was taken by Russia as a direct attack on its political, economic and security interests in the region as the gain of one state is the loss of its rivals. The intensification of economic, political, security and energy interests of Russia, China and United States has changed it to be the core of “New Great Game” (Koolae & Imani-Kalesar, 2010). Russia is not happy with US military bases in the Central Asian Republics, since then it has also increased its military troops and established military bases in the region to counterbalance US in the region. Once the NATO was ordered by the SCO member states to vacate the bases in the region but it were provided again on renewed terms and conditions. It shows SCO member states unwillingness at NATO forces stationing on the Central Asian land as it may pose threat to Russia and China interests in the region and may diminish its influence in the region.

Divergence in Political Sphere

6.20 Promotion of Democracy and Present Regimes

One of the prime objectives of Washington in the region is the promotion of liberal democracy and the change of present semi-authoritarian pro-Russian regimes in the region. It perceives the development of democracy to be inevitable for the stability of Central Asia. The present regimes in the region are dominated by pro-Russian. US want to replace these pro-Russian regimes through political reforms, with democratically elected governments to have greater space for maneuvering in the domestic affairs of the Central Asian Republics. However, the increased

pressure and influence of United States for economic and democratic reforms in the region may cause the rise of domestic dissension and divide in the Central Asian Republics.

Acting Secretary of State, Strobe Talbot in 1997 stated, “if political and economic reforms failed, if domestic and external conflict grows, the region could be changed into a sanctuary of extremism and terrorism, a battle ground for war”(Bertsch et al., 2000). United States initial interactions begin with “Programme for Peace” in 1994. The aim of this programme was establishment of democracy and democratic and liberal values, free market economy in the Central Asian Republics by integrating it with the international market(Foster, 2006). These measures are not liked by China and Russia as through these measures US wanted to remove communists’ values from the region’s states.

United States in order to through down the present quasi-democratic, semi-authoritarian pro-Russian regimes supported color revolution in the Central Asian region such as “Tulip Revolution” in the Republic of Kyrgyzstan in March 2005, unrest in Andijan (Uzbekistan) in the same year, “Rose Revolution” in Georgia in 2003, “Orange Revolution” in Ukraine in 2004. It is said that US supported all these moves in order to replace the present semi-authoritarian pro-Russian regimes to US friendly regimes in the region by providing funds and training to non-governmental organizations. On the other side, Russia supported the government of the Republic of Uzbekistan during Andijan incident. As a result of these incidents, Uzbekistan blamed United States for its undue interference in its domestic affairs worsening their relations dramatically. The direct outcome of this was US withdrawal from Uzbekistan being in the absolute interest of Russia (Qoraboyev, 2010).the fact of the matter is that US and Russia has nothing to do with the political system in the region. They are worried about its inclination and favour. They are presently tilted towards Russia and China more than towards US. Therefore, US want to replace them with US friendly regimes through its popular rhetoric establishment of liberal democracy, promotion of liberal values and free market economy.

6.21 US Greater Central Asia Project and Russia Interests

The other point of divergence among them is regarding the US concept of “Greater Central Asia” (GCA). In order to mitigate the influence of Russia in the region, United States proposed the concept of “Greater Central Asia”. The aim of this project was to drag the region away from the influence of Russia, which has integrated with it economically and politically through CSTO and

SCO and EEC. This project was big multipurpose and multifaceted aiming to bring CARs and Afghanistan closer together for the higher interests of economic and social development(J. W. Peterson, 2017).

The institute of Central Asia and Caucasus of the “University of John Hopkins” initiated this project in the year 2005. Frederick Star while arguing on this project said that it represents the long term United States interests in the region, reflecting the fact that Central Asian region states should be regarded as a single unit based on their shared interests for the promotion, development and peace(Tulepbergenova, 2009). The establishment of such an amalgamation of the region’s states for cooperation would deter extremist elements and would present a significant model for other Muslim countries conducive for the region’s states and US(McGlinchey, 2005).

This project is multipurpose in character. Its aims has been security assistance, eradication of terrorism and extremism, control of drug trafficking, strengthening national institutions and economy of the region and integrating CARs economically and politically, enhancing trade and infrastructure of transport, supporting democratization in the region (Tolipov, 2005).This move of United States is against of the interests of China as well as Russia. Although the US is emphasizing that this project will not clash with China and Russia interests in the region. “Speaker of Russian Duma Boris Gryzlove” argued in the SCO parliamentary representative meeting, that Russia is not willing to have another international organization in the region under the auspices of US. “Aleksandra Kniazher” while commenting on the GCA project said, “most of the western initiatives in the security sphere have an evident anti-China’s and anti-Russia’s dimensions. In this context any project implying regional integration like GCA reflects only endeavors to fix by all means US influence in the region”(Kniazhev, 2007). Through this project US wanted to drag the region’s states away from Russia’s influence by making it independent economically and politically by integrating with themselves and linking it with international market through rail and road.

About transit routes of gas and oil if Moscow follows co-operative interactions with the United States in the Central Asian region, it will enhance its economic and political integration with the Western world. However, if it challenges it and pursues its old imperialistic designs, Moscow will definitely become hostile against it, as well as the whole Western world. The hydrocarbon and gas reserves of the region are important for Western geostrategic and economic interests in

the present age. They have the potential to ensure prosperity and economic development strengthened by reasonably low oil prices. Along with, these energy resources are a key to ensuring revenues and, with them, the sovereignty of the Newly Independent States(Canfield, 1992). The revenue generated by oil can support both economic and democratic development in the Central Asian Republics, fostering the independence and freedom of countries which serve in turn as an obstacle to potential Russian imperial expansion, a big campaign to have influence in the Russian “Near Abroad” would be a setback for U.S. interests.

In order to counter this prospect, the United States and the West need to convince the Russians to approach the oil question of Eurasia as an economic, not geopolitical, opportunity. The United States should reassure Russia that its companies will be included in future economic ventures in the region. Russian companies alone do not have the technological and financial resources to develop the hydrocarbon reserves of Central Asia(Starr, 2007). They will need Western oil companies to do that. For getting wealthier, Russia needs American and Western help, however, for fostering peace and stability in Central Asia, America needs Russian help. A temporary accommodation can be reached only if Moscow accepts that the principles of open markets economy, promotion of democracy, and the state sovereignty take precedence over the outdated geopolitical practices of the past century(Cohen, 2006). This has been the US perspectives regarding CARs energy sector. US want to diversify its energy supply routes to put an end to Russian monopoly and its role in its price determination in international energy market. Therefore, Russia is unwilling to support US greater Central Asia initiative.

The Central Asian Republics governments are strengthening military relations with the United States under the auspices of Northern Distribution Network (NDN) United States was allowed to strengthen its military relations with the Central Asian Republics, obtaining military facilities in Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan and maintaining the Manas Air Base in the states of Kyrgyzstan presenting a serious challenge to Russian interests and influence in the Central Asian security sector.

6.22 US Interests in Afghanistan its Convergence and Divergence with Russia

Afghanistan has an important geostrategic location and plays the role as a bridge among South Asia, Central Asia and Middle East. It has immense economic opportunities in the shape of market and natural resources (Hiebert, 2011). These two factors, its geostrategic location and its

economic opportunities have made it the hub of power politics among the big powers particularly Russia china and United States. After Soviet Union withdrawal from Afghanistan as a result of its disintegration it became a center of attraction for the big powers. The US wants to have presence with the influence in the region to ensure its strategic interests (Rashid, 2002). It is also interested to extract its natural resources so that its competitors in international politics i.e. Russia and China may not get advantage of it to reach to transitory status while on the other hand Russia and China want to keep the region away from United States so that it may not consolidate its international status further.

The US attacked Afghanistan on the pretext that culprits of 9/11 attacks were present in Afghanistan and Afghanistan could be used as launching pad by Al-Qaeda to carry out attacks on the US or against the US interests. Regional scholar came with different interpretation of the US attack in Afghanistan. An interpretation argues that the US attack was aimed at destroying the Islamic government of Taliban to crush the re-emergence of Islamic Sharia Law and Islamic economic system against democracy and capitalist system (Klass, 1987). The other theory argues that the US wanted to have presence in the area to counter Russia, China and destabilize regional countries to halt the expansion of markets. The latter interpretation seems more close to the reality which has been unfolded during two decades of the US presence in Afghanistan authenticated by the recent expose of the US policy towards Russia and China.

Although, substantial security, political and economic progress has been made in Afghanistan, much is left to be achieved in the time to come as per the US narrative while the regional scholars believe that the US has done nothing to leave a stable and sustainable government in Afghanistan with the ability to exercise writ on its territory. This conflict is no longer acceptable in the public perception. In this regard, US policy in Afghanistan aims protecting the integrity of Afghanistan, mitigating the threat of terrorism, instability and conflict in the region. September 9/11 incident prompted US military operation in Afghanistan intended to eliminate Al-Qaeda and its supporters to prevent any future act of transnational terrorism (Kim, 2013). As a result United States and its allies' military operation, the core of Al-Qaeda has been eradicated. The extremist ideology embodied by Al-Qaeda persists across and there are fears that the Taliban insurgency may not reestablish a sanctuary for transnational terrorism such as the self proclaimed Islamic state in Afghanistan and regional terrorists groups such as Lashkar-e- Taiba which has the potential of provoking major crises involving local nuclear powers such as Pakistan and India.

Explicitly, eliminating the possibility of such a sanctuary permanently is the core objective of US engagement in Afghanistan in the immediate aftermath of September 11 incident (Atal, 2005). This pretext had originally mandated the fighting against Taliban in Afghanistan but complete success on this front proved elusive. Regional powers doubt these claims and consider it the US bid for preventing the expansion of markets and containing Russia and China.

Afghanistan has poor infrastructure, weaknesses in the state capacity and the intensity of insurgency exacerbate the situation further. The US objective has also been the stability of Afghanistan through rapid economic development and reforming governance. Protection of the integrity of Afghanistan to end the hostilities with Taliban on acceptable terms has been one of the objectives of US in Afghanistan. This has been the narrative of the west, while china thinks that United States is in Afghanistan to usurp its economic opportunities and restrict the access of china to it, to block china access to Europe, and Middle East (swanstrom, 2005). She further perceives that United States has nothing to do with terrorism and instability in the region. Geographically, Afghanistan has the potential to work as a bridge for transportation of oil and natural gas from Central Asia to South Asia. The US has been working on a pipeline project to transport natural gas from Turkmen republic through Afghanistan to Pakistan and India. When Taliban were ruling Kabul two consortiums vied for the rights to take on the project, Unocal an American company and Bidas, an Argentinean company. United States supported Unocal. It has been negotiating with Taliban government since 1997 for the realization of said energy pipeline. US saw the Taliban government in Afghanistan as a source of stability for the said gas pipeline to pass through Afghanistan (Collins, 2003). It required that the Taliban may form the government based on national unity to secure working environment. While Bidas an Argentinean company was thinking on the other line. It was negotiating with different tribes separately (Foster, 2008). However, US negotiation with Taliban failed in august 2001 and the US in order to oust Taliban regime in Afghanistan entered there militarily on the pretext of 9/11 incident and ousted Taliban with the help of northern alliance. The fact of the matter is that she was not sincere in its mission and just wanted to ensure the world that she is not there to obstruct the way to get access to CARs energy resources, its economic opportunities and to get access to European and Middle East market.

US has been supporting this pipeline project for the objectives of, besides economic benefits, putting an end to Russian monopoly over Central Asian energy transportation routes and to

minimize its role in the price mechanism of energy resources in international energy market, so that it may not restore its lost position to challenge US international status, to strengthen the hands of its strategic partner in South Asia, India, to make it a regional giant.

The realization of the said pipeline project may prove beneficial for the economic development of Afghanistan. It can give huge revenue to Afghanistan (Cohen, 2006). This is why China also supports this pipeline project.

Afghanistan has immense economic opportunities. It has a market for the finished goods of big powers. It has huge amount of natural resources. Afghanistan has a lot of natural resources such as iron, copper, precious metals, marbles, gemstones, lithium, and untapped hydrocarbons as well. The most important untapped metals are iron and copper (Bhandari, 2013). Though the US is exploiting the natural resources in Afghanistan but the main objectives seem strategic.

Even scholars in the West believe that the US “operation enduring peace” in Afghanistan was actually “operation enduring presence”. Akram Zaki former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan said that the US was ensuring “creative instability” in Afghanistan (Mahesar, 2018).

Russian and China have been observing the US role in Afghanistan, settling conflicts with the neighbors’ and ensuring strengthened security in the neighborhood (Hill, 2013). Around after a decade of the US presence in Afghanistan, Russia and China started calling for withdrawal of the US forces and *raison d’être* of prolonged presence in Afghanistan / region.

China has been dealing with Taliban through Pakistan even before 9/11 to ensure security of Xinjiang. Recently, Russia and China established direct links with Taliban for facilitating peace process and ensure the US withdrawal (Roy, 2018). Russia and China participated in talks and even hosted these in China and Russia.

The first and the foremost interest of Russia and China is immediate withdrawal of the US forces from Afghanistan. China and Russia want to ensure secure neighborhood in Afghanistan purged from extremism and terrorism. Russia and China have consensus over opposition to the US troops’ presence in Afghanistan and both seem ready to take burden of stabilizing government and financing Afghan forces. However, economic interests also lure the two powers towards Afghanistan.

Conclusion

Initially, United States was not much interested in the Central Asian region when it was in the control of Soviet Union and even before. However, it recognized the independence of Central

Asian Republics soon after its liberation from Soviet Union in 1991 and established diplomatic relations with it.

Initially, the US relations with it were just formal, but the growing demands of energy resources, growing Russia, China influence in the region and the war against terrorism enhanced its relations with Central Asian's states. The disintegration of Soviet Union created power vacuum in the region, the big powers in order to fill this gap rushed towards it. In this way, a sort of strategic competition ensued in the region called "New Great Game". The hydrocarbon resources are usually regarded as the bone of contention among the big powers. US is interested in the energy resources of the region under its energy security policy, to have uninterrupted supply of energy for its European allies and to diversify its transportation routes to put an end to Russian monopoly over it and its price mechanism, so that it may not challenge the US hegemonic status in the world politics.

Its other concern related to the region is world security and peace. This region along with Afghanistan and adjoining areas, regarded as a sanctuary of the three evils of terrorism, extremism and fundamentalism which may threaten the world security. Besides that she wants promotion of democracy and human rights, eradication of drug trafficking and smuggling. Russia is partner of US in its move against terrorism in order to have Stable Central Asia, so that these dangerous elements may not spill over to Russian territory.

The US concerns in the region can be divided into three broader categories political, economic and security. In the economic sphere, US want to have greater share in the Central Asian energy resources under its energy security strategy. Presently, United States depends on Middle East for its energy resources. These energy resources of the Middle East are decreasing day by day while its consumption is increasing. The other factor of energy security is the vulnerability of the Middle Eastern region to terrorism and Arab uprising which may cause disruption in oil supply to US and its European allies. Due to this situation, the US is in search of energy security to maintain its super power status in the world. Central Asian energy resources are the best alternative of the Middle East energy resources. Diversification of energy supply routes is another important politico-strategic objective of United States in the Central Asian region. This region is land locked and has no access to sea. For energy transportation, it has to depend on any third country. During Soviet Union period, Central Asian oil and gas were transported to international market through a pipeline passing through Russian territory. In this way, Russia

monopolized energy supply routes even after the disintegration of Soviet Union. It means that Russia had monopoly over the energy transportation routes and was playing active role in the price determination of these energy resources in the international market. United States wants to diversify the Central Asian energy transportation routes to put an end to Russian monopoly over it and to open it to international market. In this way, it could mitigate the influence of Russia in the region, restricting its role in the oil and gas price mechanism in international market leaving it to be decided by market forces.

However, United States has been successful in this mission of diversification of energy transportation routes, by the construction of Baku Tbilisi Ceyhan (BTC) and Baku Tbilisi Erzurum (BTE) as well as Nabucco pipeline from Central Asia to Europe. US is also supporting TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) pipeline in opposition to proposed IPI (Iran-Pakistan-India) pipeline. Besides it wants to reform the whole Central Asian society politically, economically and socially. Politically, it wants democratization and integration of the whole Central Asian society through “Greater Central Asian Project” (GCAP) with the western world. She also wants the replacement of the present pro-Russian regimes with western oriented democratic regimes. In order to overthrow the present regimes, it supported color revolution in the region such as Tulip, Rose and Orange revolutions. Economically, it wants free market and liberalization of the economy and socially wants the region to be educated, enlightened and free of corruption. In the security sphere, it wants stability of the region through eradication of the three evils of extremism, separatism and terrorism. For the stability of the region and security objectives, US is against of arms trade, drug trafficking, smuggling of illegal goods, usually the revenue obtained out of it goes to illegal, wrong hands and may be utilized for terrorists, extremists and separatists activities. In political sphere, US wants in opposition to Russian interests, democratization and replacement of the present pro-Russian regimes in the region with Western oriented democratic regimes.

In the energy sector, Russia wants to maintain its traditional monopoly over Central Asian energy transportation route while on the other hand United States desire to diversify energy transportation route thereby reducing Russian influence in the region and its role in the determination of the prices of energy resources. Central Asian Republics are presently integrated with Russia through CSTO and with China through SCO. US want to get CARs out of the clutches of these regional powers. For the achievement of this objective it has proposed the idea

of “Greater Central Asia”. According to US if CARs wants to be really independent and stable, they should group together under the idea of greater Central Asia. In order to affect this objective in the region, the US is striving for the stability of the region through financial aid, direct foreign investment, loan and necessary training. All this does not mean that all of the interests of US and Russia clash with each other in the region, there are some areas where its interests are converging. United States and Russia has been traditional enemies since long, particularly after the Second World War. It is an accepted fact that nothing is permanent in international politics except national interests.

The shared national interests of US and Russia have temporarily brought them closer to each other in the Central Asian geopolitics. Their shared interests are eradication of the three evils of separatism, extremism and terrorism, stability and development of the region, arms trade, drug trafficking, smuggling, nuclear non proliferation, promotion of education, establishment of corruption free society etc. these are commonly regarded as the elements of instability obstructing the achievements of the national interests of United States and Russia. Relation among both of them has been tense since long particularly after Second World War. This was followed by Cold war between them. However, it was decided in favor of US, when Soviet Union was disintegrated and the energy rich Central Asian Republics got independence. The impacts of this rivalry could be observed even today in their interaction in the Central Asian region related to energy resources transportation, central Asian republics integration with international community, US greater central Asia project, and political systems in the region.

CHAPTER 7

RUSSIA AND CHINA'S STRATEGIES TO COPE WITH US INTERESTS IN CENTRAL ASIA

7.1 Introduction

Weak economic status and the post Cold War international system have brought Russia and China closer to each other in the international politics in general and in the geopolitics of Central Asia in particular. The US military penetration into the region in 2001 on the pretext of 9/11 incident further brought them closer to each other. Russia and China are against of unipolar international system, dominated by single power, as they view it to be detrimental to international peace and security. They want to replace it with multipolar international system, conducive for international peace and security. They have shared strategic interests in the region these shared interests have made them strategic partners in the geopolitics of the region.

Influence in Central Asia is important for all the great powers, (Russia-China and US), particularly its energy resources. Energy resources have intimate relation with economic development of the states and its power. The power of states depends on economic development and so its military capabilities.

This region is important for US to maintain its super power status and to preserve the prevailing post Cold War world order at the behest of CARs economic opportunities. On the other hand, it is essential for Russia and China to achieve the status of a transition states to replace the post Cold War unipolar international system with multipolar international system (Dorian, 2006). This has led them towards a fierce competition in the region. For dominating each other in the Central Asian region, they are using different strategies to counterbalance each other in the geopolitics of the region. Russia and China are using collective and unilateral strategies to tickle with US interests in the region.

7.2 Russia's Strategies to cope with US Interests in the geopolitics of the region

Russia due to its historical links with the Central Asian Republics is thought to be playing defensively against the powers eroding her power and influence in the geo-politics of Central Asian region. Russia is using all the tools of diplomacy and strategic competition for maintaining and strengthening its presence and increasing its influence in the Central Asian region. It has invested a lot in resources and ideas since early 1990 to create at least a part of cohesion characterizing Soviet Union dominated Central Asia and to strengthen political, economic and security integration with the region states so that it may remain in its sphere of influence(Collins, 2009).

Russia has been an important and integral part of all the regional structures of the Central Asia Republics. The important among these structures are Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS) formed in 1991, for bringing all the former Soviet Republics of the Central Asian region under its influence, away from the influence of any other big power particularly US, its arch rival in international politics in general and in the geopolitics of Central Asia in particular.

Besides this other regional organizations have also been formed under the supervision of Russia as well as China. In 2002, CSTO was created in order to respond to new security threats challenging the region after the incident of 9/11 and US military penetration into Central Asia. The aim of this organization has been to better equip the Central Asian Republics against terrorism, border tension and external threats so that it may not depend on US and its European allies for security. This organization works as Russian watchdog in the Central Asian region and may interfere for curtailing internal disturbances and destabilizing the prevailing regime and any kind of external aggression(Swanström, 2011). Under its auspices, Russia has deployed its forces in the Central Asian Republics and in this way it has maintained soviet period influence in the Central Asian region.

On the economic side, Russia has also been playing active role in creating Russia centered regional arrangements like Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) established in 2000 and the “Single Economic Space” in 2003. The “Custom Union” among Russia, Kazakhstan and Belarus, not completely Central Asian centered, became active in 2010 and is fast attracting the interests of Tajikistan. The long term objectives of these steps is the re-creation of a wider free trade space for the member states, covering all that was once under Eurasian Union, introduced by Putin, the Russian president, in 2012. That, in the long run, brought major economic benefits

to Russia. So in this way US interest of integrating Central Asia economically with the West could not materialize.

Along with these regional instruments, Russia has formed a number of strong bilateral alliances; most of these have been there since the soviet period. Majority of the Central Asian energy resources flow to international market through the Russia controlled pipelines. Russia's national companies particularly "Gozprom" have got considerable shares in the energy sector of the region in opposition to US policy of energy diversification. It did not leave any space for US maneuvering in the energy sector of the region. US prime interests in the region are energy supply routes diversification and to have continuous energy supply for its European allies so that they may not go into the fold of Russia for energy completely as the Middle East energy resources are diminishing with each passing day.

To the disadvantage of US interests, Russian diasporas present in the region's states and the Russian language application on a large scale in the political and economic circle have provided Russia with immense leverage in the CARs(Ziegler, 2006). To put hurdles in the way of US influence in the region Russia is further propagating Russian language in the business and political circle of CARs as its people are mostly familiar with Russian language.

One of the goals of Russia's foreign policy in Central Asia has been the limited role and influence of the United States in the Central Asian region. Russia in order to achieve this, along with other goals, has adopted multi-pronged approach consisting of the creation of cooperative economic mechanism and institution along with economic and political pressure like price manipulation in the oil and natural gas transaction(Gorenburg, 2011). However, presently its role in the energy transportation and its price manipulation has been minimized after US and China diversification of energy transportation routes but its economic cooperation strategy has been successful for tackling with US interests in the region, leaving little space for its influence.

Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) is playing active role in this regard. It has established many organizations to facilitate greater cooperation among the post soviet states; it established Eurasian Economic Community in 2000 for the promotion of a single market(Dragneva & Wolczuk, 2012). Presently, it includes Kazakhstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan as well as Belarus. The purpose of this organization was the development of protective institutional frame work, providing security for domestic political regimes and limiting United States influence(Pająk, Kamińska, & Kvilinskyi, 2017).

The next organization created for counterbalancing United States interests in the region, is a Custom Union among Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan formed in the year 2010 which was later on transformed into Common Economic Space in the year 2012 for the sake of further economic integration in the region. In the mid of 2014, this organization was further transformed into Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and it is proposed that in 2025 this would be made a single market for free movement of goods, capital, services and labor as well.

Russia has been taking all these steps that the Central Asian Republics may not go into the fold of United States for making up its economic deficiencies(Kusznir, 2015a). While US want to economically and politically integrate it with the West. However, its success in this regard is still awaited. The reason behind that is Russia and China opposition to it and Central Asian Republics trust and confidence on Russia and China.

Russia has also formed “Collective Security Treaty Organization” with Central Asian Republics in order to have the Central Asian states within its security fold so that they may not depend on US and its allies for security. Under this treaty, its member states have been restricted from making any bilateral or multilateral treaty with outside state contrary to the will of other member state or if it is against of the interests of any member state.

Russia has been main supplier of military apparatus to the Central Asian Republics reciprocally Central Asian Republics are cooperating with it through more than sixty bilateral agreements including defense and cooperation in military technical services (Wilk, 2014). They have presently decided in favor of the construction of a regional air defense system. In this way, Russia wants to drag Central Asian Republics further away from the influence of US. Along with it, Russia and the Central Asian Republics are the members of SCO. Through it Russia and China have tightened its grip on the region’s states so that it may not go into the US fold for security and economic development(Rousseau, 2011).

7.2.1 Financial and Military Aid to Central Asian Republics

Another strategy employed by Russia to have place in the hearts of Central Asian Republics and its people is its financial and military aid to it. Central Asian Republics are economically weak so they may be easily tempted by any economically powerful state by offering aid and loan. Due to this, Russia in order to keep Central Asian Republics in its sphere of influence is advancing financial and military aid to it, particularly to those states who are economically weak so that

they may not go to the opposite pole, the perceived enemy of Russia, the United States, under the auspices of Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS) and Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsianEC).

The gross amount of humanitarian aid provided by Russia to the Central Asian Republics has been estimated at \$ 25 million. This was aimed at economic reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged buildings in the region. In this way by providing financial help, Russia was trying to increase its own influence at the cost of United States influence in the region soon after the disintegration of Soviet Union (Oliphant, 2013).

Central Asian region is playing a buffer zone role in the security sphere of Russia by protecting it from the potential threat from Middle East as well as Afghanistan (Abilov, 2012). Due to this security factor, Russia has been struggling to have greater influence in the Central Asian region through the creation of exalted security cooperation with the Central Asian Republics under the auspices of Russia led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and China led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). In this way it has considerably reduced US influence in the region.

Russian Federation has signed several security agreements with the Central Asian Republics so that she may deploy her military forces in the region and get military bases for itself there to counterbalance US, its traditional enemy, in the region. As a result of these agreements, approximately, fourteen thousand Russian troops have been deployed in the Central Asian Republics of Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, Armenia, Georgia, Belarus and Moldova (Bhatty, 2008).

Besides this she has asserted the regional states through SCO to vacate the United States military bases from their respective region. She also offered aid package to the Republics of Kyrgyzstan for the withdrawal of United States forces and simultaneously started increasing its own military presence in the Central Asian region (J. M. Smith, 2009). In such a state of affairs, a specialist in Eurasian and Russian affairs, Nichol Jim, wrote, "During a meeting held on 3rd February, 2009 in Moscow with Russian president Dmitri Medvedev, Kyrgyz president, Kurman bek Bakiyev announced that the United States Manas air base would be closed for US. Bakiyev claimed that United States compensation for use of the base had been inadequate and that the Kyrgyz Republic wanted the base to be closed. At the meeting, Medvedev had offered a \$1.7 billion loan

to Kyrgyzstan for building a dam and hydro-electric power station and a \$300 million loan and a \$150 million grant for budget stabilization.

Russia also agreed to cancel a \$180 million debt owed by Kyrgyzstan in exchange for some properties. Many observers suggested that the assistance was a *Quid Pro Quo* (reciprocal) for Kyrgyzstan's agreement to close the US base"(Nichol, 2010b). As a result of this meeting, the agreement between the Republics of Kyrgyzstan and United States for the use of an air base at Manas was cancelled resultantly United States was ordered to vacate the base within the coming six months(Nichol, 2010b). By doing so, Russia achieved her basic objective of increasing her military presence in its "Near Abroad", thereby decreasing US influence in the CARs. However, the same was provided to it again on renewed terms and conditions, since then it has deployed its forces in the region. It reminded US that she is not the only powerful player in the region's geopolitics but there are other players as well which can challenge its interests in the region.

The present situation for Central Asian Republics is twofold, on one side they are concerned with security threats emanating from Afghanistan and Islamic extremism. On the other side, this region is a hub of economic opportunities inviting competition among the big powers Russia, China and United States. When United States after the incident of 9/11 projected its interests in the Central Asian region in the shape of stationing its troops in the region, Russia also activated its role in the region(Jim Nichol, 2014). This competition became obvious in the case of Kyrgyzstan with the establishment of air bases first by United States and later on by Russian Federation. The Republic of Kyrgyzstan first allowed United States to establish air base in the year 2001. Along with it, she also signed an agreement with Russian Federation in 2003 for the establishment of air base there. With the establishment of air bases by both Russia and United States a fierce competition ensued between them.

In such a situation of fierce strategic competition, Russia wanted and still wants to push back United States from the Central Asian region particularly from Kyrgyzstan by offering it millions dollars in the shape of loans and grants so that Central Asian region may not go into the fold of United States completely and to diminish United states influence in the region(Becker, 2004).

7.2.2 Regional Integration through Bilateral and Multilateral Organizations

During the initial ten years since independence of Central Asian Republics, Moscow's politico-strategic interest in the region has been maintaining its "near abroad" under its military,

economic and political influence through bilateral and multilateral organizations such as CSTO in security sphere and Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO) in economic sphere and community of independent states (CIS) in political sphere. Initially, Russia had thought CARs to be an economic burden but the subsequent events such as Tajik Civil War of 1992-1997, instability in Afghanistan, terrorism and extremism posing threats to the stability of Russia and the Central Asian region, pushing it towards the implementation of integrationist policies in the Central Asian region(Indeo, 1998).

Along with imposition of economic and political will on the Central Asian Republics through bilateral and multilateral organizations and agreements, the basic interests of Russia in the region have been the maintenance of its status of regional power. In order to achieve these objectives after the disintegration of Soviet Union Russia made multilateral and bilateral cooperative relations with the Central Asian Republics. To keep the region within her sphere of influence, Russia tried to create new regional and international organizations such as CSTO, CIS, and EEC. Russian Federation has undertaken a number of regional initiatives for strengthening its influence in the Central Asian Republics at the expense of the influence of United States. These initiatives include Common Wealth of Independent (CIS) states initiated in 1991, Collective Security Treaty Organization initiated in 2002, after US penetration into the region, and the Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) in the same year for economic integration(Bedeski & Swanström, 2012).

Initially, Russia welcomed United States security presence in the Central Asian region because at that time, Russia was economically not in a position to meet the increasing demands of the Central Asian Republics. When Putin took over the reign of the government in 2000, he tried to reverse the trend by reasserting Russian influence in the region in the security sphere through CSTO and deployed its forces in the region. In order to meet with this end, Russia made bilateral and multilateral organizations like Collective Security Treaty Organization and SCO, being led by China. Among these three organizations, Collective Security Treaty Organization is a Russian led and sponsored collective defense organization, is the most immediate, direct and obvious tool for coordinating Russia's security response to a spillover of terrorists, extremists and separatists, smuggling and drugs from Central Asian States(Kassenova, 2014).

Islamic extremism has been an important rationale for Russia to seek larger regional security role to boost Russia sponsored organizations in the region. Along with it, Russia maintained bilateral

relations with each Central Asian Republic and for the most it was done to counter increasing United States presence in the region, particularly after 9/11 incident and US penetration into the region. In order to further tackle with US interests in the region, collective security arrangements were further strengthened.

7.2.3 Establishment and Strengthening Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO)

Collective Security Treaty Organization also known as “New Warsaw Pact” originated from Collective Security Treaty (CST) formed in 1992 among Russia, Armenia and some Central Asian Republics. After about a decade the member states of collective security treaty, keeping in view the changing geopolitical situation in the region, decided to expand the scope of this organization in 2003. Accordingly, it was transformed into presently known Collective Security Treaty Organization by the inclusion of new members and new objectives having its own secretariat, budget and planning for military affairs(Mowchan, 2009). The main objective of strengthening CSTO has not been provision of security to CARs; rather it has been mitigation of US influence in the region, after US military penetration into CARs in 2001, so that they may not depend on US for its security.

Article three of the charter of CSTO explains the aims and objectives of this organization. These include collective defense, territorial integrity, insurance of independence and sovereignty of the member states, strengthening regional and international peace and security. However, it was declared that for the achievement of these objectives the member states would prefer political measures rather than military. Nicolay Bardyuzha, the Secretary General of this organization said “the aims of the organization is to prevent the acts of terrorism, resolving military, border and other local issues, eradication of drug trafficking. Besides that, it may be assigned any specific task such as protection of energy transportation pipeline”(Nichol, 2010a). In this way, it guaranteed security to the weak Central Asian Republics so no vacuum was left for United States there. However, later on US penetrated into the region under the pretext of countering terrorism but it could not be successful in the achievement of its interests in the region. It is all because of Central Asian Republics trust and confidence on Russia due to its long historical legacy with it. Moscow since 2005, is struggling greatly for putting the organization on militarized instructions. In the Security Council meeting of Collective Security Treaty Organization held in June, 2005, it was decided that military component would be based on instructions. It was also decided to

promote collective system of air defense and quick deployment force. Military economic cooperation commission of the Collective Security Treaty Organization was instructed for building close cooperation among the member states military industries(Frost, 2009). In this way, it further dragged Central Asia away from the US influence. The logic behind this re-adjustment in collective security structure was the creation of collective military structure for the region's states, so that it may protect its members from any kind of external and internal threats and aggression. In this way CARs would not be compelled to depend on US for security and peace in the region.

Furthermore, in 2009, Collective Security Treaty Organization members agreed on building, "Air Assault Collective Operational Reaction Force" to further strengthen its grip on the region. In 2010 the secretary general of Collective Security Treaty Organization, NicolayBordyuzha said, "There are two rapid reaction forces of the organization. One is composed of 20000 special operation forces aiming to protect Eurasian borders and undertaking international mission. The other consists of 4000 troops, focused on defending Central Asia from the terrorist threat from Afghanistan and protecting energy resources of the region"(Nichol, 2010a).

Besides the mentioned aims of the organizations, some political analysts see this organization militarization as a direct step against United States interests in the region. This is vividly expressed in a "New Military Doctrine of Russia 2007" where North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and United States were described as the big and imminent threat to Russian Federation and other regional states. Generally speaking, Russia's aim of the militarization of Collective Security Treaty Organization was the creation of new military organization just like Warsaw Pact and making it an effective tool of security to counterbalance the influence of outside states particularly United States, keeping the Central Asian region states away from the influence of US-led NATO that is playing crucial role in the region after the incident of September 11.

Russia asserted that she will take every step essential for the promotion of Collective Security Treaty Organization for making it an important tool for the security and stability of the Central Asian states and to ensure the capabilities of the member states for taking collective actions and changing Collective Security Treaty Organization into a Central Asian institution ensuring stability and security in the region(Pop, 2009).

7.2.4 Russia's Strategy of a "Balance" Foreign Policy

Russia in order to counterbalance United States interests in the region adopted a "balance" foreign policy on the suggestion of Primakov, the then Foreign Minister of Russia, at the end of 1992. By following this policy, she made bilateral and multilateral relations with neighboring regional states such as China, India and Japan. During the reign of President Boris Yeltsin, Russia signed strategic partnership with China in order to deter with United States interests in Central Asian Republics. This declaration was commonly perceived to be a declaration for counterbalancing US in the region (Donaldson & Noguee, 2014). Under the auspices of this strategic partnership, both Russia and China repeatedly declared that they were in favor of multipolar world, disfavoring unipolar international system, being detrimental to international peace and security. Russia signed similar partnership treaties with India and Japan as well. In 1998, a dramatic change occurred in the "balance" policy of Russia when Primakov during his visit to Delhi emphasized over the building of a triangle based on the strategic partnership of Russia, India and China mainly as a counterbalancing measure to US (Akihiro, 2007).

7.3 China's Strategies to Cope with United States Interests in Central Asia

After the disintegration of Soviet Union, China developed strong and cordial relations with Central Asian states so that another big player of world politics may not control it absolutely. This process of strengthening relationship started with negotiations regarding border demarcation, demilitarization of the border areas leading to cooperation in counter terrorism in the area of security and developing economic ties with Central Asian states. China gives immense importance to this evolution of relationship with Central Asian States. This could be observed clearly when China held its first joint military exercises with Kyrgyzstan in August 2002, followed by multi-days exercises of SCO in the Republic of Kazakhstan and in August 2003 in China.

China has been self sufficient in energy for several years since independence in 1949. However, with the growth of its economy as well as population the demand for energy resources also increased. In the year 1993 the demand of energy, particularly oil and natural gas, increased than the domestic supply could support. This made China an importer of oil and natural gas and within two decades she became one of the world largest energy consumers and by the year 2012

she had to import about 57% of oil. If this trend continued China would have to import 66% of its oil by the year 2012. This situation worried the Chinese authorities and initiated numerous strategies. Besides it renovate China's interests in the region.

China has not been happy with the prevailing post cold war international order emerged at the disintegration of USSR in 1991, dominated by US. Since then china is competing with US in international politics in general and in the geopolitics of CARs to replace the said system at the behest of CARs economic opportunities while US wants to maintain and strengthen it. So they are struggling to counterbalance each other in the geopolitics of the region. China is using multiple strategies and techniques to counterbalance US interests in the region.

7.3.1 Alternate Energy Transportation Routes

Domestically, the government of China encouraged natural gas and oil production and exploration, conservation of energy and the renewable energy promotions and internationally she focused on securing energy supply Chain and transit routes(Smith Stegen, 2015). Mostly, China oil and natural gas imports from African continent and Middle East region are passing through sea route of Malacca strait, an area controlled by its perceived rival (United States) which may obstruct this sea transportation route in case of conflict between China and United States or its ally in the pacific. Resultantly, the Strait of Malacca has become a strategic weakness for Beijing. In order to cope with this situation, the Malacca dilemma, China is increasing its blue water naval capacity and capabilities, besides this it has focused on the construction of pipeline through Iran, Pakistan and Myanmar(Blumenthal, 2008).

To further secure energy supply, China has increased its engagement in the Caspian and Central Asian Republics in opposition to US energy interests in the region, keeping away Russia and China from the Central Asian energy resources(Smith Stegen, 2015). For achieving firm control over the Central Asian energy resources, she invested a lot in the energy sector of the region. Due to this, it has complete dominance in the energy sector of the region. In this way it has been counterbalancing US interests and so influence in the energy sector of CARs.

7.3.2 Integration with Central Asian Republics through Bilateral and Multilateral Organization.

Integration between two or more states in any field, whether political, economic, and security, play effective role in bringing them closer to each other. China in order to bring CARs closer to itself created security, economic cooperative mechanism between china and CARs.

China's increased security and economic cooperation with the Central Asian Republics is one of the Beijing's strategies to enhance its influence thereby counterbalancing the influence of the US in the geopolitics of Central Asia. This increased security cooperation and integration bilaterally and multilaterally could further the influence and national objectives of China in the region. Multilateralism has got immense importance in the security and foreign policy of China towards Central Asia. SCO is one of the multilateral organizations at the disposal of China that may stabilize the region and increase the influence of China in the Central Asian region. The influences of China and US in the region, according to neo-realism, are inversely proportional to each other, when the influence of one increases the influence of other decreases.

Overlapping its national-specific commercial investments, China like Russia, has developed multilateral institutions such as the "Shanghai Five" established in 1996 as a result of cooperation agreements among China, Russia, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. It was later on transformed into SCO when US made military penetration into the CARs in 2001. Analysts are of the opinion that SCO has helped China in reducing the influence of her perceived rival, the United States, in the Central Asian region (Thrassy Marketos, 2009). After independence, CARs were worried about its internal and external security. They were economically weak and politically inexperienced. They were not properly trained in foreign policy and diplomacy. To relieve CARs of these apprehensions China and Russia along with CARs Shanghai Five in 1996 which was later on transformed in SCO in 2001. The aim of this initiative has been that CARs may not go towards west for security and stability.

Looking into Chinese foreign policy in the Central Asian region strategically, it seems that this region works as a laboratory for the foreign policy of China. She has coined an innovative form of international organization (SCO) that is absolutely different from its counterpart North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Beijing seems to change SCO into a quasi-military alliance that would enable her to veto United Nations (UN) and United States (US) intervention

in the Central Asian region and carrying out its own security measures focusing on internal issues rather than international issues and classic security threats(Godement, 2011).

Increased multilateralism has been the new strategy of China in the Central Asian region. Expectedly, multilateral security cooperation will increase with the passage of time and would create a security structure for avoiding United States (US) undue and unwanted participation and interference in the internal affairs of Central Asian Republics (CARs)(Jiechi, 2013).

7.3.3 New Silk Road Project (US) versus New Silk Road Economic Corridor (China)

US announced New Silk Road strategy after its withdrawal from Afghanistan for maintaining its presence in the region and containing China and Russia influence. This, according to US, would increase economic cooperation and develop cooperation in communication links between south and Central Asia, providing stability to the region. This project was announced by Hillary Clinton, Secretary of States in 2011.

In order to meet its interest, the US in the region want to increase regional cooperation in commerce, energy and its transportation to enhance regional stability. In this way US want to get the confidence and trust of the Central Asian Republics and its people. In order to counterbalance the US initiative of “New Silk Road”, China initiated the “New Silk Road Economic Corridor”. During the visit of Xi Jinpings to Astana in 2013, a more ambitious initiative than SCO was announced, the launching of New Silk Road economic corridor connecting East, West and South Asia(Szczudlik-Tatar, 2013). The Silk Road project would be more comprehensive and compact than the Russian “Eurasian Union” and the United States “ Greater Central Asia Project” enabling the flow of energy resources and other raw materials and goods simultaneously Westward and Eastward with China being the hub of it (Stegen & Kusznr, 2015b).

The relations between China and Central Asian Republics are very old. It can be dated back to the period when Silk Road was being used as cultural, commercial and military link among the Chinese empire, Europe and the Middle East. The disintegration of Soviet Union marked the beginning of Chinese involvement in the geo-politics of Central Asia. China’s strategies in the geo-politics of the region are opposite to that of Russia. China contrary to Russia cannot depend on a strong regional integration of the Central Asian States. China’s military, infrastructural and cultural presence in the Central Asian Republics is not well rooted like that of Russia. Distrust of a certain degree is present among the Central Asian Republics towards China, because of the

century long Sino-Soviet distrust, fears regarding hegemony of the strong, powerful and the populous neighboring China is present in the mind of CARs(Swanström, 2011).

These factors have far reaching impacts on the strategy of China towards Central Asia, compelling China to adopt nuanced strategies regarding the Central Asian region, an approach that runs along the good neighborliness, an integral part of China's post Cold War diplomacy.

Central Asia provides to China a transit and communication route for its needs of energy resources, a rapidly developing and growing market providing opportunities of exports and investment and a base for alliances to counter the influence of the west, particularly United States in the region. China in order to tackle with these problems and issues has strengthened its bilateral relations with the Central Asian Republics, providing the country with a lot of gains in the commercial and economic sphere.

The pivot of China's strategy in Central Asia after the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 has been the integration of Xinxiang with Central Asia and mainland China. She exposed its strategy through increased investment in the construction of infrastructure particularly in its energy sector and management and controlling minority ethnic cultural and religious practices. The foreign policy of China regarding Central Asian region states reflects the pre-eminence of the goal of integrating its Xinxiang province, emphasizing the establishment of economic, political and infra-structure connections with Central Asian Republics particularly Kirgizstan, and Kazakhstan. The aim of this process has been the state's efforts for strengthening, integrating, security of Xinxiang and getting advantage of the increased political and economic opportunities created by the vacuum Soviet Union left in 1991(Odgaard, 2007). The disintegration of Soviet Union offered China an opportunity to fully exploit the geo-political location of Xinxiang to enhance China's economic and political influence in the Central Asian region(Becquelin, 2000).

The disintegration of Soviet Union also coincided with Beijing economic reforms programme having great impact on states policy for Xinxiang. The underpinning of this strategy was the integration of economic and political measure aiming to integrate Xinxiang with Central Asia as well as domestic economy(Clarke, 2003).

The major factor in this strategy was the exploitation of the Central Asian energy resources particularly oil and natural gas. The economic development of Xinxiang has important implications not only for domestic economic development but its foreign policy and international

relations. Increasing energy consumption has made Beijing dependent on the crude oil of the Middle East(Mackerras, 2004). The resultant strategic vulnerability pursued from this increasing energy consumption has compelled Beijing on the one side to reshape its petroleum industry and on the other hand to diversify its energy supplies(Clarke, 2008).

It resulted in the increasing efforts for its domestic oil and natural gas resources particularly in Tarin Basin of Xinxiang and restructuring of Beijing's energy security policy in Central Asian Republics. This double ended strategy of 2001 was partially successful as China's effort for the integration of Xinxiang with Central Asian Republics has enhanced the connectivity between these two areas, thereby decreasing the chances of the spread of Islamic radicalism and Afghan movements like Islamic movement of Uzbekistan and the Taliban into the Xinxiang province(Christoflensen, 1993). This process of integration increased the competition among the external powers for strategic benefits and the energy resources of Central Asia. The economic development of Xinjiang at the behest of its integration with CARs economically increased china influence in the region and added to china economy and so increased its capabilities. It has been a matter of apprehension for US as its arch rival; the increase of China influence in the region means the decrease of the influence of its rivals in the region.

Since the mid of 2000, China has been exploiting the energy resources generated by its rapidly growing economy, to invest in Central Asian Republics, developing strong economic ties with Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. On the side of multilateral policies, China has developed pragmatic attitude trying to build a sort of soft regionalism, that is less security centered and more openly multilateral then the Russian model.

The SCO established in 2001 is thought to be the Chinese answer to the Russian Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Originally, the objectives of SCO have been the containment of terrorism, ethnic separatism and religious extremism, the three evils. But in the recent summit of SCO planning for economic, commercial cooperation, energy security and cultural exchanges have also been considered. China being aware of its weak military presence in the region as compared to Russia and US, China is using its economic resources to get medium and long term advantages in the region. China instead of creating regional integration is pursuing practical and functional approach for the achievement of its desired goals such as provision of stability to its province of Xinxiang, situated at the border of Central Asia, securing continuous energy flow and control of United States penetration into the Central Asian region.

China in order to achieve these goals has so far not resorted to direct confrontation either with Russia or the United States. Instead it has directed most of its energies to bypass the regional hegemony through a well thought policy of alliances with Central Asian Republics.

The other technique used by China as well as Russia to counterbalance United States in Central Asian region is integrating with Central Asian Republics through regional organization like SCO. The initial focus of SCO was resolving border issues among the member states particularly China and Russia, counter terrorism and separatism in the region. But changes occurred in its perception in 2005 when United States established military bases in Central Asian Republics. The perceived threat of United States presence in the Central Asian Republics has geared larger cooperation between Moscow and Beijing. Instead of isolated resistance to United States movements in the Central Asian region, Russia and China along with Central Asian Republics formed SCO to offer united obstruction to United States interests in the region with the help and cooperation of other neighboring friendly countries. The two big players of new great game and international politics solved their border issues under the auspices of SCO and laid foundation for greater cooperation and integration of the national oil companies and the sector of banking. R China and Russia have come closer to each other to challenge United States hegemony on the issues of non- interference in the domestic affairs of other states as well as mutual respect for other nations sovereignty and the establishment of multi-polarity and its role in resolving international and regional conflicts.

China and Russia offer similar economic and security packages designed to preserve the status quo and to discourage market economies and democratic reforms in the CARs. Fearing future threats of color revolution in the Central Asian Republics Central Asian states are desirous to receive this message from china and Russia. During July 5th 2005 summit of SCO, Russia and China were successful in encouraging SCO members to act collectively to limit United States influence and its access to Central Asian region and its energy resources. The SCO summit of 5th July 2005 sought limiting United States presence in the Central Asian Republics of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan changing their support from United States towards Russia and China in order to prevent their national sovereignty from United States interference. At the end of the summit, a joint declaration was issued reflecting Central Asian regions states viewing it to be in their own interests to fill themselves along with Russia and China the power vacuum created by the fall of Soviet Union in 1991, which they believe would ensure the

strength and longevity of the Central Asian regimes(Hopkirk, 1994). The joint statement of SCO included the rejection of monopolizing and dominating the international affairs and world politics and insisted on non-interference in the domestic affairs of sovereign and independent states and withdrawal of US from the region.

The member states of SCO urged US to declare a timetable of its withdrawal from Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan's bases in the Central Asian region established to support United States war on terrorism and operation in Afghanistan. These incidents and instances symbolize the reviving of the traditional great game among the big powers Russia, China and United States(Wolfe, 2005).This has been described by Peter Hopkirk as beginning of the "New Great Game". Zbigniew Brzezinski named it as the emergence of a "Grand Chess Board"(Brzezinski, 1997). It may be called as the beginning of the final clash of civilizations as has been described by Samuel Huntington(S. Huntington, 1996). After the clash the prevailing world order and international system will be replaced with New World Order and international system. It means that unipolarity will be replaced with multipolarity. It is believed that energy resources of Central Asian region will play decisive role in this clash and subsequently establishment of New World Order and new international system(S. P. Huntington, 1996). It means that new great game refers to competition for international status. US is defending the status while china and Russia are struggling to bring changes in it. CARs geographic location and strategic location and its economic opportunities can [lay effective role in it. This the main driving force behind the big power competition and their convergence and divergence in the geopolitics of CARs,

China strategy in Central Asia has been defined by the 9/11 incident and its implications for international politics and the United States subsequent political and military penetration into the Central Asian region. The implications of this process of United States penetration has been an opposition to China's position and influence in the Central Asian region. United States military penetration into the Central Asian Republics is thought to be one of the negative consequences of the war on terror. Since 1991 United States engagement in the Central Asian affairs has undermined up to certain degree while China's influence and its foreign policy efforts in the Central Asian Republics has been playing active and important role in the geopolitics of the region and in determining and establishing the functions of SCO. United States penetration into the Central Asian region has great impacts on Beijing bilateral relations with the Central Asian states, compelling them to choice either for China or United States. However, United States has

focused on the eradication of terrorism and extremism, giving a chance to Beijing to frame its efforts against ethnic separatism with reference to the United States goals and objectives of the war on terror. Nevertheless, United States power projection in CARs is a big threat to Beijing's long term policy for the integrity of Xinjiang and its economic development. United States stationing troops in the Central Asian Republics after the incident of 9/11 had great impact on the China's strategy and position in Xinjiang. The most immediate of these developments was the China's reinforcement of long held perception of causal links to ethnic minority opposition to the role of China in the Central Asian region states.

7.3.4 Increased Investment in the Central Asian Oil and Natural gas

China in pursuance of its energy policy in the Central Asian region has invested million dollars in its energy sector of oil and gas and its exploration and transportation. It has made several agreements with Central Asian Republics individually and collectively for the energy transportation pipeline, oil and gas sectors development and exploration so that US may not be able to get access to it by offering its services(Walsh, 1993). Central Asian Republics are economically and technologically backward so they need financial assistance/foreign investment and technological services to explore and develop its energy resources. China has made huge investment in the energy sector of the region so that it may not resort to US for that (Buckley et al., 2007). China is always not happy with any other power intervention and influence in the region because Central Asia and China are complimentary to each other. Central Asia provides huge market for the finished goods of China and reciprocally China provides a market for the raw materials of the region states. This is why China is struggling to counterbalance US in the region through different strategies so that it may not get influence there.

7.3.5 Strengthening Shanghai Cooperation Organization to cope with US interests in the Region

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a China led regional security organization. Its members are China, Russia, and the four Central Asian Republics except Turkmenistan. This organization has been formed after the disintegration of Soviet Union and revised after United States penetration into Central Asian Republics in 2001. It is a sign of China-Russia

rapprochements, emerged out of the “Shanghai Five” formed by Russia and China and the three Central Asian Republics except Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan established in 1996. The basic aim of it was the solution of several long standing soviet period border issues among the member states. With the admission of the Republic of Uzbekistan in 2001 and the changing geopolitical realities “Shanghai Five” established in 1996, was transformed into Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (Rozoff, 2009). The main purpose of SCO is to drag Central Asian Republics into their sphere of influence and preventing them from joining United States led Western alliance, “North Atlantic Treaty Organization” (NATO), for security purposes (Germanovich, 2008). The other objectives of the creation of this organization was the provision of stability and security to the member states, eradication of the three evils of terrorism, separatism and extremism, illegal weapons trade and drug trafficking (Strachota, 2002).

The Central Asian Republics were initially unstable economically, politically and with respect to security. The needed help of any of the three big powers Russia, China and United States. The three big powers were struggling among themselves to have influence in the Central Asian region taking advantage of the weaknesses of the Central Asian republics. China in order to increase its own influence and counter weight the influence of United States formed and is strengthening SCO in order to have complete grip over Central Asian Republics and its energy resources. China is trying to present itself as a good neighbor by the application of “SCO”.

The member states of the “SCO” in a special summit held in April, 1996 signed an agreement, “treaty on deepening military trust in border regions”. The aim of this agreement was the creation of military guarantee for the member states border regions. This treaty was soon followed by another treaty known as “Treaty on Reduction of Military Forces in the Border Regions” signed in April 1997. The aim of this treaty was the reduction of traditional military settlements and its activities within no man common borders (Weitz, 2008).

Just like strengthening “Collective Security Treaty Organization”, after the NATO and United States started strengthening its position in the Central Asian region under the pretext of war on terrorism in Afghanistan and adjoining areas, China along with Russia started strengthening “SCO” by involving it in the affairs of regional security and military structure for the sake of counterbalancing United States position in the Central Asian region.

During the SCO Summit held in 2002 and 2003 in Petersburg and Moscow respectively, the members present adopted a charter, the primary legal document of the organization and established SCO secretariat and regional anti-terrorist center, headquarter in Beijing and Bishkek respectively (G. Chufrin, 2004). This was followed by a “Peace Mission 2007” started in August 2007. This was a major military exercise involving about 6500 soldiers and eighty Air Craft’s, among it 1600 soldiers from China and 2000 soldiers from Russia and the rest from Central Asian Republics.

United States penetration into the Central Asian region on the plea of fighting against terrorism was disliked by both Russia and China on the bases of their mutual interests in the region. Both of them are not in favor of United States and its allies influence in their neighboring region and on the bases of their shared interests wanted the constriction of its influence in the Central Asian region. Leonid Ivashov, the head of international military cooperation expressed, “under conditions of NATO expansion, there is real threat to national security of Russia. Hence I am convinced that only “SCO” could become a real counter weight to NATO expansion. In future, in order to strengthen it, what the SCO needs to do is to admit Iran, India and Pakistan as its permanent members” (Tugsbilguun, 2008).

With the declaration of “SCO” of United States and NATO forces withdrawal from Central Asian region on July, 5, 2005 this organization got immense importance in international politics. It declared that, “we are supporting and shall continue to support the efforts by the international coalition, conducting anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan. Today, we are noticing the positive dynamics of stabilizing internal political situation in Afghanistan. A number of “SCO” member states provided their ground infrastructure for temporary stationing of military contingents of some states, members of the coalition as well as their territory and air space for military transit in the interests of the anti-terrorists operation. Considering the completion of the active military stage of anti-terrorist operation in Afghanistan, the member states of SCO consider it necessary that respective members of the anti-terrorists coalition set a final timeline for their temporary use of the above mentioned objects of infrastructure and stay of their military contingents on the territory of the “SCO” member states” (Abilov, 2012). Ariel Cohen and John, J. Tracik while analyzing this declaration of SCO said, “The anti-American axis has already begun to work” (Cohen & Tkacik, 2005). Chairman of Joint Chief of Staff, Richard Myers proclaimed that

through this act both China and Russia are trying to encourage the fragile Central Asian Republics to weaken their military relations with the United States(Weitz, 2008).

Most of the scholars are of the opinion that this declaration of SCO would encourage the host states of United States bases, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to vacate their territory from the military forces of United States and its allied forces. The SCO is an important instrument in the hand of China, through which it can ensure its security concerns and achieve its national interests in the region. The main goals of China by establishing SCO is the accomplishment of the following goals, diversifying its energy supply, stability of its Xinjiang province and projecting its hegemony in the Central Asian region(C. Lin, 2011).

China's participation in the SCO increased the role of China in the security affairs of the region, strengthening its security and military relations with the Central Asian region states(G. I. Chufrin, 2001).

7.3.6 China's "Grand Strategy" in the Central Asian Region

With the decline of Russia's influence in the Central Asian region after the disintegration of Soviet Union, United States hegemonic aspiration in the world affairs, particularly in Central Asian affairs brought shifts in China's foreign policy regarding Central Asian states. China had to face the pressure of the United States on the issue of Taiwan, economic reforms and human rights abuses. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, United State became the sole super power, having comprehensive strength, military capabilities, political and economic stability as well as technological expertise (Burles, 1999). By the use of these capabilities properly, it could influence the international affairs. After its successful military operation "Desert Storm" China came to know the reality of US power and a potential threat to its interests in the region. China in order to counterbalance it in the regional and international affairs promoted "multi-polar strategy" in the year 1996, focusing on foreign and regional policies to enhance itself as a strong and responsible player in the world politics as well as regional politics, maintaining bilateral relations with regional countries and other states of the world (Foot, 2006).

China is against of unipolar international system and views multipolar international structure more conducive for weaker and smaller states as it facilitates balance of power in international structure, empowering the weaker states to decide in favor of the national interests of China in the regional and international politics. Hu Jintao, the president of China and Vladimir Putin, the

president of Russian Federation in a joint statement in June, 2005 stated that “the countries of the region should renounce striving for monopoly and domination in the regional and international affairs and attempts to divide nation’s leaders and those being ruled” (Medeiros, 2009). This joint statement of Chinese and Russian president directly targeted the United States as the sole super power of the world, providing further momentum in the quest of China’s of limiting United States influence in the Central Asian and international affairs. In order to tackle with it China proposed Grand Strategy.

The development of China’s Grand Strategy can be traced back to its five principles of co-existence with India. These principles are peaceful coexistence, mutual benefit and equality, non aggression and non-interference in the domestic affairs of other state, respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty. These five principles became the underpinning of China and Central Asian states bilateral relations soon after the independence of Central Asian Republics in 1991, as a result of the disintegration of Soviet Union.

China’s Grand Strategy initiated with settling border and security issues and strengthening economic ties with neighboring states. Multi-lateral relations between China, Russia and Central Asian states began under it in 1996 with the establishment of shanghai five, which was later on re-organized into SCO in 2001 with the inclusion of Uzbekistan, after US military penetration into Central Asian region. It solved all border and security issues among the member states bringing them further closer to each other in the economic, political and security sphere. It became the pillar of trust and confidence among the member states. The main objectives of this re-organized SCO are promotion of mutual trust and confidence, friendly-relations and good-neighborliness among members, development of conducive cooperation in economic and political affairs, transportation, energy, education, culture, environment and technology, collective efforts for the maintenance of regional stability, peace and security, creation of new world political order based on the features of justice, democracy and rationality(M. A. Peterson, 2005). In this way, the period of stability went ahead of security.

This multilateral mechanism provided China an opportunity of security and means for engagement in the Central Asian region, thereby reducing the influence of United States in the Central Asian region (Hawkins & Lowe, 2006).

After the incident of 9/11 United States increased its activities in the region under the plea of fighting against terrorism, the SCO members supported this move of US. They shifted their

support when US attacked on Iraq, Russia and China even voted against it in the UN Security Council. It provided an opportunity to China for increasing its influence in the security sphere of the region by establishing, “Regional Anti-terrorism Structure” in Uzbekistan and Tashkent in 2004 for the coordination of their efforts against the three evils of extremism, separatism and terrorism. Here also US initiated movement was replaced with regional security system (Hawkins & Love, 2006). Due to this, some Western observers claimed this organization to be “NATO of the East”.

7.3.7 Financial Assistance to Central Asian Republics

One of the strategies of China to increase its influence in the region and keep the region away from its competitors in the region, particularly United States is the provision of loan and financial assistance to Central Asian Republics (CARs). China has increased its military aid to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, most affected by internal crises. China announced, in September, 2014, that Beijing would provide 100 million RMB (Ren Men Bi) financial aid (Fattibene, 2015). Chang Yangquan, China’s defense minister promised in April, 2014 hundreds millions financial assistance for the purchase of uniforms and military training of Tajikistan’s police (Lain, 2014). Similar initiatives are going on in all other Central Asian Republics. Besides financial assistance, loan and grants it invested a lot in the energy sector of the region. The huge investment in the energy sector has made it the dominant power in the oil and gas sector of the region. In this way it considerably reduced the influence the influence of its arch rival, US, in the CARs.

Conclusion

Since the disintegration of Soviet Union and the end of Cold War, the subsequent change in international power structure, the relations between Russia-China and United States has dramatically changed. Strategic rivalry can be observed in their interactions in the world politics in general and in Central Asian geopolitics in particular. They are constantly trying, since then, to counterbalance each other in the world politics in general and in Central Asian geopolitics in particular.

Russia and China are against of the prevailing post Cold-War international system. This common world view brings Russia- China closer to each other in the geopolitics of Central Asia in

opposition to US. They view the prevailing international system of unipolarity, dominated by US, detrimental to world peace and security. They want to replace it with multipolarity which, according to them, is conducive for international peace and security. To achieve this objective, they are struggling collectively and individually to counter weight US interests in the world in general and in Central Asia in particular. Central Asian region plays important role in this regard. It is rich in energy resources and geographically connecting East and West through land route. Economic development and energy resources are interrelated. Without sufficient energy supply economic development is not possible. It is regarded as the life blood of every state. It would not be useless to say that it runs the states. It is said that the future international structure and world order depends on Central Asian region and its energy resources. These factors have dragged the big powers towards Central Asian region. They want to have influence in the region. Russia and China want to have influence in the region to break the Status Quo and US want to have influence there to maintain its super power status and restricting Russia and China from getting transitory states status.

The influence of Russia-China and US in the Central Asian region is inversely proportional to each other. When the influence of Russia-China in the region is increasing, it is inversely influencing the US and vice versa. In order to decrease the influence of each other, they are using different strategies. For counterbalancing, US interests in the region, Russia and China are using different strategies. The first strategy of Russia and China for tackling with US interests in the region is regional integration. US wants to integrate it with the West economically, politically and with respect to security, economically she wants free market economy and politically promotion of liberal western democracy. While Russia and China are against of it, they don't want its economic integration with the West. They are against of Western democracy because according to Russia and China, it is used by US as a political tool for interference in the domestic affairs of the region state. In order to counterbalance these interests of US in the region, they (Russia, China) are using different strategies and skills of diplomacy. Russia and China in order to prevent it from going into US fold formed regional organizations, political, economic and security. These organizations include CSTO led by Russia, SCO led by China, Eurasian economic community, (EEC) Common Wealth of Independent States (CIS). Central Asian Republics are mostly weak economically, politically and with respect to security. In order to fulfill these deficiencies, the region states depend on external powers. These organization

guarantee security to the region states and financial assistance as well. In this way they prevented it from going into the fold of US.

It is because of these measures that US has not been able to integrate it with the west, politically, economically and with respect to security. The charter of CSTO declares that no member state would make any treaty or sign an agreement with any outside state which is against of the interests of any member states. In this, the wings of Central Asian Republics has been clipped other strategies adopted by them include financial assistance, foreign direct investment so that it may not depend on US for its financial needs and economic development. These states are giving huge amount in financial assistant to these states. Besides that they have invested a lot in different sectors of the region, particularly in the energy and military sector. In this way, they have taken the region away from US influence. China in order to integrate it eastward has taken the initiative of one belt one road. This will connect it with the three big continents of the world. This is an opposition to US greater Central Asia project. This project is aimed to connect the region with West, dragging it away from Russia and China. Russia is also supporting One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative of China. This is regarded beneficial for the economic development of the region.

CHAPTER 8

CENTRAL ASIAN REPUBLICS STRATEGIES FOR THE MAXIMIZATION OF ITS INTERESTS IN GEO-POLITICS OF THE REGION

8.1 Introduction:

The strategies of Central Asian Republics for the maximization of its interests in the region are difficult to identify as they are intermingling. Diversified legacies and the perceptions of soviet domination, ethical and cultural differences, domestic and territorial factors makes it complicated to identify coherent trends in the policies and strategies of the Central Asian Republics. These differences along with pressure from the two powerful neighboring states, Russia and China have obstructed them to create regional structure that could challenge the influence of United States in the region. In this way, the Central Asian Republics have failed to form a regional working forum for the realization of their national objectives in the region.

All this does not mean that the Central Asian states have not tried or trying to design and pursue policies and strategies for the maximization of their interests. The Central Asian Republics have tried to integrate themselves into a single whole for the maximization of their own interests. However, Central Asian Republics, attempts for integration and cooperation, outside the Russian and China orbit, were failed attempt and short lived experiments. After a year when Russia joined this organization of Central Asian Republics, integration in 2004, this organization was merged with Russia-led Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEc). Since then Russia and China influence and growing presence in the region have defeated any initiative of this sort. However, from the foreign policies of the Central Asian Republics the following strategies may be ascertained whereby these states have tried to maximize their profits. The first one among them is multi-vector approach.

8.2 Multi-Vector Approach:

The evolution of the foreign policies of Central Asian Republics in the past twenty years is very interesting particularly in the environment of big power competition in the region. At the time of the disintegration of Soviet Union the political leadership of the Central Asian Republics had no knowledge regarding the conditions of international market, making it difficult for them to shake

up the yoke of Russia and opening the states of the region for external investment and technical assistance (Olcott, 2004). Slowly and gradually, they threw up the Russian yoke and started playing active role in the geopolitics of the region.

Central Asian Republics strategies for the maximization of its own profits in the environment of geopolitical and energy competition among the big powers Russia, China and US in the region can be observed from its foreign policies. Its foreign policies are usually dictated by its economic status and geographic location. Kazakhstan contrary to other Central Asian Republics has 6848 Kilo Meters long border with Russian Federation in the North and in the East it has 1533 kilo Meters border with Peoples Republic of China. Besides this it is the big trading partner of China and Russia. Other Central Asian Republics depends on Kazakhstan for the transportation of its energy resources and raw material to international market(Peyrouse, 2007). The government of Kazakhstan as it has no access to sea, provided an opportunity to Russian oil and gas companies for the exploration and transportation of its energy resources to international market, so Russian energy transportation route was adopted in 1990(Ipek, 2007a) so it got complete monopoly over central Asian energy transportation route, providing an opportunity to Russia to have greater space for maneuvering in the prices of energy resources in international market(Peyrouse, 2007).

Central Asian Republics due to lack of finances and technology initiated the “Inclusion Strategy” of not favoring either of the big powers in the energy competition in order to diversify energy transportation routes and financial aid (Raiser & Dobronogov, 2006). During his first visit to US, the president of Kazakhstan, Nazarbayev, explained the “strategy of inclusion” in the year 1992.He said that the foreign policy of Kazakhstan is determined by the geographical location of the country. He also emphasized on good and friendly relations with China and Russia as a countries of priority. He was well aware, that there was no other way for Central Asian region states economic independence, progress and development then to follow a multi-vector approach (Ipek, 2007b).

This policy means not offending with any big power in energy competition of the region. They do not want any single state domination in the region so that they may have an opportunity to get benefit from those states involved in the “New Great Game” of the region. The Central Asian Republics in order to maximize their interests in the region have followed and are following multi-vector approach in their relations with big powers involved in the geopolitics of Central Asia(S. Blank, 2012). The behavior of Central Asian Republics has been described by many

analysts as having the characteristics of multi-vector approach. Multi- vector approach has been used in different senses by different scholars like neutrality (Rights & Cohen). In another sense it means the foreign policy of Central Asian Republics concerning its powerful neighbors that has among other objectives to avoid offending any of the big and powerful state involved in the geo-politics of Central Asia (Pomfret, 2008). This term “multi-vector approach” has also been used how the Central Asian states are balancing the interests of the big powers in the geo-politics of the Central Asian region, particularly using their relations with powers for balancing and counter balancing with other big powers (Stegen & Kuszniir, 2015a).

In a more technical sense multi-vector approach is a way for example Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan in order to counter balance Russia’s dominant role in the Central Asian region in general and Central Asian Republics in particular have intentionally and purposefully developed competing affiliations and relations: they both have developed energy relations with Beijing and for military cooperation Kazakhstan has developed relations with US led NATO. In this way (multi-vector approach) the Central Asian Republics are trying to maximize their interests and minimize the chances of Central Asia being dominated by any one big power (O. Roy, 2007).

In a more technical sense multi-vector approach is a way that increases the Central Asian Republics power of maneuvering and bargaining for the maximization of their national interests (Kubicek, 2013). Multi-vector approach is providing Central Asian Republics several options for dealing with China, Russia and United States. This strategy has helped the Republics of Kazakhstan to attract larger and powerful foreign investors towards its energy resources (Hanks, 2009). In a similar way, multi-vector approach has been used to facilitate diversification of the routes of oil and natural gas (İpek, 2007). Central Asian Republics are in favor of US projects such as “Greater Central Asia” and “New Silk Road Strategy” initiated by United States. Along with it they are favoring china initiated project of One Belt One Road (OBOR) connecting it with the three big continents of the world.

In fact the external intervention is not the only factor of the failure of organization of Central Asian cooperation. Rivalries between the Central Asian region states such as between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan due to the distribution of water resources and border control since 1992, obstructs the struggle for the creation of a third block between the two regional powers. Because this each Central Asian state has designed its own foreign policy as an attempt to get maximum advantage without prejudicing state sovereignty.

The Republic of Uzbekistan has comparatively strong local military base in the region, has maintained its alliances with considerable pragmatism. It has maintained close relations with Russia but besides that it has preserved opt-out-right in the Collective Security Treaty Organization. It allowed United States forces to use military bases from 2001 to 2005. It cancelled its important deals with China for the construction of Central Asian gas pipeline in 2007. The Republic of Kazakhstan, the emerging economy in the region has also developed a multi-vector/dimensional foreign policy, bending towards China but as a cultural legacy to Russia as well.

Russia offered greater economic aid to Kyrgyzstan; it at once threatened to close down United States military basis situated in Kyrgyzstan. But United States offered triple annual rent for the Manas military base in Kyrgyzstan, amounting to \$60 million. Thereafter, Kyrgyzstan legalized United States use of Manas air base. It is because of Central Asian Republics, multi-vector approach that no big powers Russia, china and US could dominate it. As result china has economic dominance, Russia has dominance in political field while US has just commercial presence there.

8.3 Playing Big Powers against Each Other

Central Asian Republics are fishing in the troubled water, playing big powers against each other with the help of different tactics in order to maximize their own interests. Regional powers like Russia and China are trying to secure their interests with the help and cooperation of Central Asian Republics. While on the other hand Central Asian Republics are playing one power against the other to maximize their own interests. They may also increase their power of bargaining in the geopolitics of the region by playing the main players of the great game against each other. Central Asian Republics (CARs) are actively trying and employing strategies to prevent domination of Central Asia by any regional or international power.

Regarding Moscow's economic weaknesses and geopolitical issues, the Central Asian Republics presidents has designed a multi-dimensional policy to strengthen political commercial and energy relations with other geopolitical powers such as China and United States reducing traditional links with Russia to maximize their economic and strategic interests. Central Asia; The struggle for the oil of Central Asia is a multifaceted phenomenon, involving economic, geopolitical, and security interests not only of the big powers Russian, Chinese, United States but

also other neighbors like Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. Apparently the United States is planning to be in this oil world for the long haul and China moving to expand its influence using Pakistan and Iran. Russia is attempting to retain its military presence in the region to protect its own assets and interests. Beijing, Moscow in collaboration with their Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Washington in collaboration with North Atlantic Treaty Organization are once again using Central Asia. In the contemporary version of the game, Washington approaches each Central Asian state bilaterally, offering extraordinary incentives to get their support for the operations in Afghanistan thereby undermining the consensus put forth at the recent SCO's summit. While, Russia and China are trying their level best to get favor for SCO policies by offering incentives and support to the present governments and showing willingness to cooperate other regional players in sharing the spoils of the game. However, manipulative moves being undertaken by both camps indicate that states hosting the game will continue to swing their support from China and Russia to the United States., and back again, so long as they keep their hold on power.

Pakistan merits special place in both the camps because of the contiguity of geographical boundaries through Afghanistan and Iran, its strategically most suited location with shortest land route to hot waters, and commonality of Islamic belief and culture. It is up to Pakistan to play its cards with vision and statesmanship. However, Pakistan must underscore three points in its policy formulation. Firstly, it must understand that friends in international affairs keep on changing but neighbors remain permanent. Secondly, it must apprehend that the reinforcement of Islam in the Central Asian states will strengthen the positioning of Pakistan in the region Thirdly, Pakistan must believe that there is no real commonality of interests between the United States and Pakistan, therefore, it should not facilitate any United States effort where Iran is left out of the race. Pakistan attempts to weaken Iran's hold on Central Asia would not only threaten the proposed gas pipeline from Iran-Turkmenistan via Pakistan to India, but also strengthen India partnership with Iran on strategic grounds. Foregoing in view, Pakistan needs to build a long-term strategy to play a role and derive geo-strategic and geo-political benefits from the Central Asian region.

Central Asian Republics like that Shanghai Cooperation may include both Russia and China so that Central Asian region may not be dominated by any single regional power. Despite the possible establishment of China-Russia condominium China's balancing capabilities as well as

presence in the region is reducing the fear of external domination and subordination, providing the Central Asian states an opportunity for more maneuvering. Contrary to that another cause of SCO's popularity among Central Asian Republics is that this organization (SCO) provides them an opportunity for multilaterally managing China's growing presence in the Central Asian region, backstopped by Moscow, rather than deal with the China's colossus directly on a mutual and bilateral basis. Most of the leaders of Central Asian Republics think people's republics of China less an alternative as a big power patron to Moscow than a supplementary partner that could help them in reducing Moscow dominance in the Central Asian region and furthering economic well being and development (Weitz, 2011).

When United States after the incident of 9/11 projected its interests in the Central Asian region in the shape of stationing its troops in the region, Russia also activated its role in the region (Jim Nichol, 2014). This competition became obvious in the case of Kyrgyzstan with the establishment of air bases first by United States and later on by Russian Federation. The Republic of Kyrgyzstan first allowed United States to establish air base in the year 2001. Along with it she also signed an agreement with Russian Federation in 2003 for the establishment of air base there. With the establishment of air bases by both Russia and United States a fierce competition ensued between them.

8.4 Policy of Regional Integration

Initially Central Asian Republics tried to integrate among themselves through Central Asian Cooperation Organization (CACO). However, it failed due to economic problems, tense relation, rivalry and competition among some Central Asian Republics. Later on, it was merged with Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) (Bobokulov, 2006). Russia looks Custom Union and Eurasian Economic Union as apolitical project while Central Asian Republics look it as a way for maximizing their economic interests rather than a super dream of creating super state (Linn, 2012). Some of the Central Asian region states view the Eurasian Economic Union as a Russian attempt to re-establish Soviet Union (Bordachev, 2015). While other perceived Eurasian Economic Union as a threat to its national sovereignty. On the proposal of Kazakh governments some important points were included in the operating principles of Eurasian Economic Union such as, that the Eurasian Economic Union should have an economic character and not to struggle for furthering political integration. The Eurasian Economic Union may work with no

interference in the political system of the Eurasian Economic Union's member states(Kusznir, 2015b).In the modern day politics, there is no alternative for the economically weaker states than to integrate with the powerful state, regional or international, for economic development and security(Aris, 2011b). Central Asian Republics being weak economically joined SCO led by China as a penance for financial problems and CSTO led by Russia to have security from any kind of internal and external threat and aggression.

8.5 Balancing and Counterbalancing

The present situation for Central Asian Republics is twofold, on one side they are concerned regarding security threats emanating from Afghanistan and Islamic extremism. On the other side, this region is a hub of economic opportunities via competition among the big powers Russia, China and United States. When United States after the incident of 9/11 projected its interests in the Central Asian region in the shape of stationing its troops in the region Russia also activated its role in the region(Jim Nichol, 2014).

This competition became obvious in the case of Kyrgyzstan with the establishment of air bases first by United States and later on by Russian federation. The republic of Kyrgyzstan first allowed United States to establish air base in the year 2001. Along with it she also signed an agreement with Russian federation in 2003 for the establishment of air base there. In this way the Kyrgyz republic tried to play the big powers against each other for the maximization of their own interests. With the establishment of air bases by both Russia and United States a fierce competition ensued between them. This way, balancing and counter balancing, is usually followed by all the Central Asian Republics. This in fact shows that the Republic of Kyrgyzstan like all other Central Asian Republics does not want to lose any one of the big powers Russia, United States and China(Ferguson, 2012). She wants to maintain cordial relations with all these powers so that she may get advantage from all of them as each big power has some advantage for Central Asian states. Big powers have immense of economic advantages for Central Asian Republics. Kyrgyzstan wanted to play the big powers against each other so the region may not be monopolized by any one of the big powers.

In such situation of fierce competition Russia wanted and still wants to push back United States from the Central Asian region particularly from Kyrgyzstan by offering it millions dollars in the shape of loans and grants. But the Republic of Kyrgyzstan tactically decided to keep both Russia

and United States on its soil keeping in view their relative advantages. This strategy was adopted by Kyrgyz Republic because of its important strategic location which she does not want to lose to any one of the big powers (Cenic, 2014).

When United States after the incident of 9/11 projected its interests in the Central Asian region in the shape of stationing its troops in the region, Russia also activated its role in the region (Jim Nichol, 2014). This competition became obvious in the case of Kyrgyzstan with the establishment of air bases first by United States and later on by Russian Federation. The Republic of Kyrgyzstan first allowed United States to establish air base in the year 2001. Along with it she also signed an agreement with Russian Federation in 2003 for the establishment of air base there. With the establishment of air bases by both Russia and United States a fierce competition ensued between them providing a wider space to Kyrgyzstan for maneuvering.

8.6 Diversification of Energy Supply Routes

Central Asian Republics does not want that it may be dominated by any single state. In order to gain much from its energy resources and to have sovereignty in the energy sector, it wants to diversify its energy supply routes. This is way they can have greater space for maneuvering in the international market so greater profits. Central Asian Republics has been a part of Soviet Union till its disintegration in 1991(Dorian, 2006).During this period and even after its independence from Soviet Union, Russia has complete monopoly over Central Asian Republics, energy resources and its transportation routes. This region is land locked and for access into international market it has to depend on any third country so Central Asian Republics had no alternative to transport its energy resources through Russia owned pipeline passing through Russian territory via international market (Jonson, 1998). In this way, Russia had greater space for maneuvering in the Central Asian gas and oil sector. Its diversification by China by the construction of oil pipeline from Kazakhstan (Atlasu-Alashanko) and gas pipeline from Uzbekistan, Russia monopoly over it was put to an end(S. Blank, 2012). They are in favor of Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan and India gas pipeline in order to put an end to single state domination in the energy sector of the region.

Conclusion

Central Asian Republics are not the passive spectators as they were during the “Great Game” of Nineteenth Century. Now they have got the skills of statesmanship and diplomacy. They know well how to use the prevailing geopolitical scenario for the maximization of its profits and achieve of their national interests. They are using different strategies to maximize its profits in the geopolitics of the region. They are following multi-vector approach to have favor and cordial relations with each power involved in the completion and not to offend any one of them. Another strategy adopted for the maximization of its profits is regional integration. It may be internal and external. Internally they have tried to integrate through central Asian cooperation organization (CACO). On the internal front, however, it failed due to economic problems and rivalries and competition among the Central Asian Republics. While on the external front, they have been successful by integrating with regional powers Russia and China through CSTO, CIS, EEC and SCO respectively. Along with regional integration they are always using the strategy of playing big powers against each other and balancing and counter balancing. They are the members of SCO led by China but they do not want that it may dominate the region politically, economically and unilaterally. So, in orders to counter balance it, they have joined CSTO led by Russia and other economic organization sponsored by it. They have experienced the monopoly of one state over Central Asian energy and transportation routes. So it wanted to diversify them to have greater space for maneuvering at the price determination in international market. The one state monopoly may diminish its sovereignty in the energy sector. All these strategies have collectively contributed in the maximization of its profits in the geopolitical competition of the region. Because of these strategies, it can be seen that in Central Asia, Russia has political dominance while economically, China has dominance there while US has just commercial presence.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

Along with projecting the significance of Central Asia and Afghanistan in international politics, this research dissertation has analyzed the conflicts, interests and cooperation among Russia, China and US in the geopolitics of the region. Central Asia and Afghanistan has been the traditional land route connecting East with the West. Besides, it has huge energy resources of oil, gas, hydropower and Uranium, market and raw material. This along with its geographic and strategic location has made it focal point of big powers competition. It's geo-economic, geo-political and geo-strategic value has enhanced its importance for the big powers, particularly after the disintegration of Soviet Union making it conducive for enhancement of power and capabilities of the three big powers: Russia, China and the US.

With the disintegration of Soviet Union and subsequent decrease in Russia's influence in the region, some new international actors such as US, China, Turkey, India and European Union, with new aims and objectives entered into the geopolitical tussle for the region's energy resources, its transportation routes, raw materials and market. This competition among the three big players of international politics is commonly known as the "New Great Game". This research dissertation has explored the interests of big powers Russia, China and the US in the region and the convergence and divergence of their interests and what gamble is being played by these powers for the realization of their national interests in the region.

The geopolitical developments in the region such as US military penetration into the region, correspondingly, Russia military penetration into the region and Russia and China transforming of Shanghai Five into SCO and their strategic partnership, China Belt and Road initiatives and US Greater Central Asia project and the growing competition among the big three for the region's energy resources foretells that new "Great Game" is a reality and it will continue for a foreseeable future owing to growing energy demands of the region.

Russia, China and the US are playing active role in the economic, political and security affairs of the region to maximize their interests at the expense of each other. Beside political and commercial presence of China and the US, Russia is still regarded as the major actor of the geopolitics of the region due to its historical relations with the region's states. It considers this

region as a buffer zone against all kinds of external threats. Therefore, she wants to keep this region in its sphere of influence at all cost and to deter the influence of US so that she might not be able to challenge its interests in the region. Russian interests in the region are:

Russians Interests in the Region

- To safeguard Russian territory from the factors of destabilization, potentially coming from unstable and fragile CARs and Afghanistan and to protect Russian Diaspora in the region.
- To have firm control over the natural and energy resources of the region and its transportation routes and its price mechanism.
- To limit and counterbalance US influence in the Central Asian region and Afghanistan. And to withdraw NATO forces from the region.
- To control Central Asian and Afghanistan's market for its finished goods and getting access to the region's raw materials.
- To get access to South Asian and East Asian market through Central Asia and Afghanistan's land route.
- To protect semi-authoritarian regimes of the Central Asian Republics.

China's Interests in the Central Asia region

China was not much interested in the Central Asian Region and Afghanistan so long she was self-sufficient in energy resources. With increase in its population and rapidly growing industries, its energy demands increased which could not be satisfied by domestic energy resources. So she diverted its attention towards energy rich CARs.

The disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991 brought changes in international power structure and bipolarity was replaced with uni-polarity dominated by US making China conscious about its own survival as she thinks this system to be harmful for international peace and security due to lack of any central authority. Further, she has been in favor of a balance in international power structure which was disturbed by post Cold War uni-polarity.

US military penetration into the region further alarmed her as she thought that US influence in the region would further enhance and strengthen its international status there by endangering china's existence and its rapid rise in international politics. The gain of one state is the loss of its rivals, is the popular assertion of neo-realism so the increase of US influence will reduce China and Russia influence in the region. These and other factors renovated its interests in the region. The interests of China in Central Asia and Afghanistan are:

- To keep Central Asia and Afghanistan within its sphere of influence so that it may not go into the fold of its rivals.
- To have the region's natural and energy resources for its rapidly growing industry and population
- To diversify the region's energy supply routes to have cheap and continuous energy supply and to put an end to one state monopoly over it.
- To keep Central Asia and Afghanistan away from US influence so that it may not be able to challenge its interests in the region and consolidate further its international status.
- To provide stability to the Central Asia and Afghanistan because without stability it is not possible for it to materialize its interests in the region.
- To control the forces of instability in the region such as drug trafficking, smuggling, illiteracy, separatism, terrorism and extremism etc so that it may not pass over into China, particularly its Xingjian province adjacent to CARs and Afghanistan.
- To get access to the market of Central Asia and Afghanistan for its finished goods and raw material for its industries.
- To get access to western world through Central Asia and Afghanistan's land route

United States' Interests in the Region

Initially US was not much interested in the Central Asian region, but when she observed that China is rapidly gaining influence in the region and as a result rising economically and politically, created an apprehension in US policy circle that China might not get enough power at the behest of CARs and Afghanistan's economic opportunities to challenge US international status. This has been the main driving force behind US interests in the region. US interests in the region are:

- To get access to the natural resources of the CARs and Afghanistan and to have continuous energy supply for its European allies from Central Asian region so that they may not go to the fold of Russia for energy.
- To diversify Central Asian energy supply routes to put an end to Russian monopoly over it and minimize its role in its price mechanism in international market.
- To increase its political leverage in the region and to mitigate Russia and China influence there.
- To be present in the region militarily so that Russia may not get access to South Asian and East Asian market and to obstruct china access to Europe and Middle East through Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics. By presence in the region US may obstruct SCO member's integration.
- To prevent the Central Asian region and Afghanistan from becoming a sanctuary for extremists elements.
- To get control over Central Asian and Afghanistan's market for its finished goods.
- To bring stability to the region through removing the forces of instability such as drug trafficking, smuggling, poverty and illiteracy etc
- To integrate Central Asia and Afghanistan with the West politically, economically and culturally.

Russia's Convergence with China in the geopolitics of Central Asia

The relations between Russia and China have been tense for several decades. They have even gone to war several times due to ideological, border and illegal immigration issues (Nkova, Elena & Petreski, and Drage. (2015). However, the shifts in international power structure after the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991, weak economic status on the part of Russia, complex interdependence between them and China's ambition for international status, US military penetration into the region and China's Belt and Road Initiative brought them closer in the geopolitics of CARs and Afghanistan. They entered into bilateral and multilateral agreements and resolved most of their bilateral issues. Resultantly, Moscow-Beijing relations in the Central Asian and Afghanistan's geopolitics witnessed extraordinary improvement in the last twenty years. From the military conflict situation during the Cold War, they have reached to the

situation of strategic partnership and have developed good neighbor's relation under a "Peace Treaty" concluded in 2001.

Their policies in the region are reflecting their intentions regarding mutual relations and the world politics at large. To counterbalance US in the region they formed Shanghai Five in 1996 which was later on transformed into SCO after US military penetration into the region, allowing its member states to check US conflicting interests in the region.

They have been emphasizing the issues of security and stability in the region and the need of collective action under the auspices of SCO so that the elements of insecurity and instability may not spell over to Russia and China. They have focused on the common objectives in the region such as the new challenges faced by CARs, Afghanistan and the SCO as an international organization in the fast changing international political environment and US military penetration into the region under the pretext of 9/11 incident and its possible effects on the region. One of the factors which brought them closer in the geopolitics of the region in the post Cold War era, has their common world view and their opposition to uni-polar international power structure. So they want multi-polar world and thinking uni-polar world to be opposed to the stability and peace of the world. So long the world was multi-polar and then bipolar, China kept calm but when the world order changed with the disintegration of one of the super powers replacing the bi-polarity with uni-polarity with US as the world superpower, the relations between Russia-China dramatically changed. The change in the international system activated China in international politics. Russia on the other side in order to get back its lost position, protect pro-Russian semi-authoritarian governments in the region and to counter balance US in the region, joined hands with the emerging economic giant China.

Russia being economically weak has been in search of a strong ally in the region which may help it in counterbalancing the US in CARs and Afghanistan. It observed in China the capabilities which may constrict the US influence in the region implying that Russia and China have shared interests of counter balancing US in the region and changing the prevailing international system.

The other factor which brings them further closer to each other is the authoritarian nature of their government. They do not believe in democracy and want to maintain semi-authoritarian style of governments in the CARs as they are more favorable to Russia and China then to US. This feature of governance in the region has united China and Russia in regional international politics.

The US is following liberalism in international politics. Promotion of democracy, liberal values and free market economy are some of the important elements of it. It asserts that two democratic states cannot go into war against each other so promotion of democracy is regarded essential for peace in the world so US want to establish it in CARs. While on the other side, China and Russia is of the opinion that US assertion for promotion of democracy, free market economy and liberal values in the region want to have avenue for interference in the domestic affairs of the region's states for its own vested interests. So the shared strategic interests of mitigation of US influence in the region have been the main driving force behind Russia and China convergence in the geopolitics of CARs and Afghanistan. It can be said that Russia and China has convergence in the strategic, political and security field while most of their economic interests in the region are divergent.

Russia divergence with China in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan

Cooperation between Russia and China does not mean that there is no conflict between them in the geopolitics of the region. There are certain areas where their interests collide with each other such as, the energy resources and its transportation routes and trade and economic opportunities in the region. This region has been a part of Soviet Union till its disintegration in 1991. During this period, its energy resources were transported to international markets through a pipelines passing through the present Russian territory and was earning huge revenue from it. This practice continued even after its disintegration. In this way, Russia had got complete monopoly over the CARs energy resources and its transportation routes. Energy supply route diversification by China through the construction of oil pipeline from Kazakhstan to China and gas pipeline from Turkmenistan to China deteriorated their relations covertly as it put an end to Russian monopoly over its transportation and its role in price mechanism in international market. Russia was not happy with this move of China but it kept calm, for the sake of some strategic interests in the region, as it was not possible for it to tackle with US, its arch rival, in the geopolitics of the region.

China's increased investment in the energy sector of the region is a matter of apprehension for Russia. Beijing political strategy in region is guided by four important factors; to get lion share in the energy resources of the region with the help of profitable long lasting economic ties with

the region's states, physical integrity of the PRC, security of its national borders and promotion of regional stability.

Initially, Central Asian market was dominated by Russia but soon it was replaced by China. The increasing trade volume between China and CARs is another matter of apprehension for Russia. The trade volume between China and CARs reached \$465 million in 1992 and \$7.7 billion in the year 2004. Trade volume between China and Central Asia states is increasing day by day. China surpassed Russia in trade with Central Asian states in 2009. Russia's trade with the region was \$22 billion in 2010 while China Central Asia was \$29 billion. The increasing trade volume and investment of China in the region contributed much for the rise of China as a big trading partner of Central Asian region states. In 2009, the largest total trading volume among the CARs has been between Kazakhstan and China amounting to \$13.8 billion.

Getting access to the region's hydrocarbons and gas resources has been the first priority of China. Beijing has invested significantly in the infrastructure of energy, its production, drilling and refining the region's hydrocarbon resources followed by energy resources transportation pipelines of oil and gas to mainland China, bypassing Moscow, to satisfy its ever growing energy demands. Diversification of energy resources transportation routes and strengthening regional economic cooperation are the two efficient tools to counter Russia's monopoly over the region's energy resources.

TAPI pipeline project is backed by China. The aim of this project is to transport Turkmen gas through Afghanistan and Pakistan to India. This has been the potent instance how Beijing is trying to mitigate Russians influence in the region's energy sector. China's CNPC has entered into bilateral agreements of energy with Central Asian states, including construction of rails and roads. With its help, the government of China wants, opening the gate for the transportation of agricultural and other finished goods from Beijing to CARs and Afghanistan. It means that Beijing's economic integration with the region's state is not an end in itself rather a means to strategic ends.

The focus of Beijing is on the region's market for its finished goods. Contrary to Moscow, Beijing is inclined to use SCO in arguing with the West and politically prefers to keep low profile. Moscow is not happy with China's increased economic engagements in the region particularly its efforts for maximum influence in the Central Asian energy resources and diversification of its supply routes but prefers not to demonstrate its unwillingness. Politically,

China wants to interact with Russia on the basis of equality. Moreover, China is also disgruntled by Moscow's reluctance to invite Beijing to be member of regional economic arrangements such as EEC. However, it rather prefers to keep its feelings hidden for the achievement of some strategic interests. Moscow would like to see SCO as the basis of future Eurasian security and economic cooperation block from Europe to Pacific under its auspices.

Regional stability and security are the other important interests of China in the region. In order to meet with this end, Beijing is promoting cooperation for combating the three evils: extremism, separatism and terrorism. Particularly, it has preoccupation with the prevention of extremist and separatist movements spreading towards its province of Xinjiang. The rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the South Asian, Central Asian states and Afghanistan is dangerous for Beijing, because it has the real potential threatening regional stability. This situation resulted in the establishment of SCO which according to China may be used as an instrument for the development of military and economic cooperation and for fighting against terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism. It is capable of increasing Beijing's economic and political interests in the region and Russia being its main pillar wanted to isolate it by restoring control over all the former Soviet Union Republics through CIS and CSTO. Apparently, it seems that China and Russia has convergence under the umbrella of SCO, but there is wide gap between theory and practice. China is interested in its involvement in economic activities, its economic integration with the region's states while Russia want it to be a political and security forum which may enhance its political leverage abroad. Shortly, China wants it to be an economic forum while Russia wants it to be a political forum.

China wants to have free trade space in the region under the auspices of SCO. Russia being aware of the economic superiority of China is unwilling to have such an economic structure in the region. Russia thinks such an economic arrangement in the region is detrimental to its economy as Russia is not able to compete with China's low cost products. Furthermore, Russia fears that in case of US economic decline China at the behest of CARs and Afghanistan's economic opportunities will be in a position to dominate the international scene. This has created uncertainty and ambiguity in the relations of Russia and China in the geopolitics of the region. This is why it is said that conflict in cooperation and cooperation in conflict will go together in the mutual relations of Russia and China in the geopolitics of the region and international politics.

Counter terrorism war and the need of insurance of regional stability is not seen in China as expedient and necessary steps to secure regional stability. After 9/11 incident, the US-led war against terrorism saw it stationing troops permanently in the CARs and Afghanistan. This move of US instigated China to take anti-US position through the SCO. It was clear to China that by doing so, the US wanted to impose its economic and political influence in the region. In future Beijing is expected to counterbalance the US competing claims in geopolitics of the region and to mitigate the ancient concept of Central Asian region to be an exclusive domain of Russia under Tsars, Soviet Union and post-soviet Russia.

It can be concluded that most of the economic interests of Russia and China in the geopolitics of the region are divergent. Their convergence is limited to security and strategic interests in the region.

China's Convergence with US in the geopolitics of Central Asian region

China and US are arch rivals in international politics. They are constantly trying to counterbalance each other in regional and international politics. They have been grappling with each other for international status since the end of Cold War. But all this does not mean that there is no area of convergence between them in the geopolitics of the region.

China and the US share common concerns regarding security and stability of CARs and Afghanistan as it is conducive for the achievement of their interests in the region. They want to remove the common forces of instability from the region such as extremism, separatism, terrorism, poverty, lack of education, smuggling and drug trafficking. China supported US initiative of war against terrorism after 9/11 incident. China wants the removal of the three evils so that it may not transfer to its fragile province of Xinjiang. US on the other hand, want to remove it from the region to make the region's states economically and politically stable so that they may not depend either on China or Russia. Drug trafficking and smuggling is an important cause of the instability in the region. China and the US are actively involved in the eradication of these evils. China is sharing intelligence services with the US for the eradication of the three evils. Drug trafficking is an accepted threat to China's security and SCO is trying to design activities to counter it.

Another collective concern of China and US has been nuclear non-proliferation in the region. It is one of the prime objectives of SCO in the CARs. The left over nuclear weapons of soviet

period were owned by Kazakhstan. In a several rounds of talks China, Russia and US were able to convince it to give up nuclear weapons and handed it over to Russia.

They want to diversify Central Asian energy supply routes to put an end to Russian monopoly over its transportation routes and its role in its price mechanism in international market. This is why US supports Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. China wants diversification of energy supply routes in order to have safe and continuous energy supply for its rapidly growing industries and huge population. While US wants its diversification to put an end to Russian monopoly over it and have continuous energy supply for its European allies so that in case of disruption of Middle Eastern energy supply, it may not go into the hands of Russia completely. It means that China wants Central Asian energy for their domestic uses while US wants to use it as a strategic means to keep the European allies intact with it.

China's Divergence with US in the geopolitics of Central Asia

China being arch rival of US in international and regional politics has mostly divergent interests in the geopolitics of CARs and Afghanistan. They are constantly competing with each other for international status so they are counterbalancing each other in the geopolitics of Central Asian region and Afghanistan.

China is constantly opposing US influence in any sector of the region. This is why she is against the US military presence in Central Asia and Afghanistan and its influence there. US under the pretext of 9/11 incident, stationed its forces at Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan not only to provide logistics for its war in Afghanistan against terrorism but also to keep vigilant eyes on the regional developments and the rise of China. China along with Russia under the auspices of SCO, wants to oust NATO forces from the region because it may challenge their interests in Central Asia and Afghanistan anytime.

China is a socialist country. It regards free market economy and Western liberal democracy against of its political ideology. Therefore, it tries to obstruct every move of US for the promotion of democracy and free market economy in the region. Promotion of Western democracy is one of the international strategies of the US to get influence and interfere in the domestic affairs of the regions states. While China, like Russia want to have the prevailing semi-authoritarian political systems in the region's states which are considered to be in the advantage of Russia and China. Through this system, China can better pursue its interests in the region.

Mostly, the present regimes in the region's states are pro-Russian semi-authoritarian. Russia explicitly while China implicitly wants to preserve it. US want to transform this semi-authoritarian system into Western democracy to mitigate the influence of Russia and China.

China and the US are competing for Central Asian and Afghanistan's market for its finished goods and raw materials.

US is not happy with China's increasing trade volume with CARs and Afghanistan as, according to US, it may boast China's economy and its military capabilities. This may threaten US international status. However, presently, China has dominance in the Central Asian and Afghanistan's market. Besides that US has an apprehension about China's increased investment in the region particularly in its energy sector. Most of their strategic, political and economic interests in the region are divergent with the exception of security and stability in the region which is in the advantage of both.

US Convergence with Russia in the geopolitics of Central Asia

US and Russia has been traditional enemies since long. At the end of 2nd WW, the international power structure was shifted from multi-polarity to bipolarity dominated by Russia and United States. Since then, Cold War started between them which came to an end with the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991.

Russia is struggling to drag US away from the region to reduce its influence in the region, while US is struggling to get influence in the region under the pretext of security, investment, loan and grants. Further, she wants to lock up cold war victory against Russia so that it may not raise to its lost position at the behest of CARs economic opportunities to challenge US international status. Due to this, convergence between them in the geopolitics of CAR is rare. However, it would be denying the fact to say that there is no convergence between them.

Their interests converges in all those areas where their interests are shared such as stability of the region, eradication of the three evils of terrorism, extremism and separatism, eradication of drug trafficking and smuggling as they may obstruct the achievements of their national interests in the region. It may create hurdles in the way of materializing their interests in the region.

US Divergence with Russia in the geopolitics of the region

US and Russia has been traditional rivals in international politics since the end of 2nd WW. CARs have been a part of USSR. Russia regards this region to be its near abroad so wants to keep it in its sphere of influence. While US wants to lock up cold war victory against Russia. US divergence with Russia is based on its perception that no state might get enough power to challenge its international status particularly Russia and China. US fears that Russia might not get enough power at the behest of CARs and Afghanistan's economic opportunities and its geographic and strategic location and its market and raw materials to challenge US international status. These perceptions have made most of their interests conflicting and divergent in the geopolitics of CARs and Afghanistan.

The 9/11 incident changed the US political priorities in the world politics. The war against terrorism was envisaged by US political leadership as a necessary step to ensure its supremacy not only in the Asian continent but throughout the post soviet space. The Bush doctrine enshrined in "National Security Strategy" clearly expressed the need to renew US foreign policy to tackle with the perceived threat of Al-Qaeda and to oust Taliban government in Afghanistan as it was regarded a hurdle in its strategy of energy diversification. In order to meet with this end, US deployed troops in Afghanistan and CARs and signed bilateral agreements with the region's states. Accordingly, US got access to and established military bases in the Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. Simultaneously, Russia also deployed military forces in the Central Asian Republics to counterbalance US in the region

Besides, it obtained a right of flying over its territory for transportation of logistics to Manas air base and from Tajikistan, its airport for temporary use at Dushanbe. For the exchange of information, it signed agreements with all CARs except Turkmenistan. In pursuance of this strategy, in the beginning US relied on other regional powers such as Russia and China, as these powers were also having concerns about terrorists and jihadist networks threatening its national integrity, regional stability and security.

During Soviet Union period, Russia had monopoly over Central Asian energy transportation routes. It maintained this tradition even after its disintegration. US was able to get energy supply from Azerbaijan through BTC and BTE to Ceyhan port of Turkey and is supporting Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan- to put an end to Russian monopoly over it and its role in its price mechanism.

US penetrated militarily into CARs under the pretext of 9/11 incident. Apparently its aim has been the eradication of terrorism from CARs and Afghanistan, but inherently its purpose has been the obstruction of regional integration and keeping vigilant eyes on the regional development and the raise of Russia and China so that they may not reach to the level of transition states at the behest of CARs and Afghanistan's economic opportunities, that may challenge her interests in the region and its international status. Russia and China is against of US presence in the region so they, under the auspices of SCO want to oust it from the region. Under pressure from Russia and China, the SCO announced that US should vacate their bases in the CARs.

Reciprocally, Russia also established its military bases in the region to counterbalance US military penetration into the region, so that CARs may not depend on US for security and on the pretext of security US may not increase its influence in the region and consolidate further its international status.

Another factor of conflict between Russia and US has been US perception of the two interrelated terms of free market economy and liberal democracy. US want promotion of Western democracy and free market economy in the region. In this way, it can oust pro-Russian authoritarian regimes from the region replacing it with western democracy. Russia on the other side, wants to maintain the pro-Russian semi-authoritarian regimes in the region in order to better safeguard its interests in the region. US through western democracy, free market economy and liberal values want to washout the region of communist's values and to replace it with capitalist's values. These values, in present situations, are more in the advantage of US then Russia.

The post WW 2nd has brought abrupt changes in international structure and so in the US- Russia relations. Since then, Cold War started between them for dominance in the world. However, this came to an end in 1991 with the disintegration of Soviet Union. In this way, traditional enmity ensued between them, because Russia thought disintegration of Soviet Union to be the conspiracy of the US. Resultantly, they have very limited cooperation in the geopolitics of the region. It has far reaching impacts on their relations in the geopolitics of the region.

Russia and China strategies to cope with US interests in the region

Complex interdependence, weak economic status and the shift in international system at the end of Cold War brought Russia and China closer in the region. Since then they are designing

different strategies to cope with US interests there. They are constantly trying to counterbalance US in the geo-politics of the region. The strategies which they have adopted to counterbalance US in the region are regional integration, increased foreign direct investment, financial assistance, loan and grants and infrastructure development etc.

To keep the region away from US influence, Russia and China integrated with CARs and Afghanistan through different economic, political and security organizations. Russia has integrated CARs economically through EEU and Custom Union and with respect to security through CSTO while politically through CIS. These structures have dragged the region towards Russia away from the influence of US. It has been written in the charter of CSTO that no member state would make any treaty with any state which is against of the interests of any other member state and attack on member state would be considered against all. In this way, it restricted the member states to go into the fold of US. They integrated with Afghanistan along with CARs through SCO.

China in order to drag the region further away from US influence did integrated CARs through SCO. In fact, after independence, CARs were economically weak and unstable. They could be easily tempted by any state by offering economic assistance and security services. Russia and China made arrangements for all these problems of CARs so there was no need to depend on the US for that. It was under the auspices of SCO that in 2005 US was ordered to vacate its bases in the CARs region.

Besides, they got the confidence and trust of the people and governments of the CARs through increased investments, financial assistance, loan and grants. Russia and China are trying their level best to counterbalance every initiative of the US in Central Asia.

To counterbalance US Greater Central Asia Project in the region, China took belt and road initiative to connect CARs with international market through rail and road. Due to these counter measures of China, the US has not been able to achieve its national interests in the region.

CARs Strategies for the Maximization of its Interests in the Geopolitics of the Region

CARs have been a part of Soviet Union for about seventy years so they could not develop the skills of statesmanship. During the “Great Game” between Russian and British Empire they were just silent spectators. However, after independence from Soviet Union in 1991, they acquired some tactics and diplomatic skills to deal with the outside world for the maximization of its

profits. These tactics include; multi-vector approach, playing the big powers against each other, regional integration, balancing and counterbalancing and diversification of energy supply routes.

Recommendations for Russia

- Russia should not believe just in lip services. It should be practical in creating and strengthening interdependence among Central Asian Republics and Russia.
- This region has been an exclusive property of Russia without any other state being a partner in it till 1991. Now that two other international giants US and China have come to this battlefield. In such a situation, Russia should try to drag this region towards its sphere of influence without having collision with either of them.
- China is a regional economic giant so Russia should adjust its economic interests with China to get maximum advantages in the Central Asia and Afghanistan.
- Constriction of US influence in the region is in the advantage of Russia and China. So, Russia should coordinate with China in its economic, military, political and cultural matters so that Russia may achieve its interests of US constriction in the region.
- Russia should play role in the long standing dictatorship or aristocratic governments in the region to make them more popular enabling the people to consciously decide that their interests are more concerned with Russia and China than with US.

Policy Suggestion for China

- Although China is playing its role in the Central Asian region and Afghanistan carefully but in order to achieve its objectives in a better way, it should avoid the policy of collision either with Russia or US.
- China has economic superiority over US and Russia. On the basis of it, she is doing huge investment on belt and road initiative in the three big continents of the world (Asia, Europe and Africa). In all these initiatives, she should give immense importance to Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan to have them in confidence.
- Central Asia and Afghanistan is important for China on three grounds. Firstly, this region has huge amount of natural and energy resources required by China immensely so that it may fuel its ongoing development and domestic needs. Secondly, this is a region which

will provide it a shortest land route to Europe through One Belt One Road (OBOR). This will have an importance for China in the coming few decades. Thirdly, this is a fragile land where along with China, Russia and US are also struggling for the achievements of their national objectives. The unrestricted influence of Russia and US may be harmful for the national interests of China in the region.

- China in order to get firm basis in the region should help the Central Asian Republics in the solution of their domestic problems and develop bilateral relation to the public level.
- China should invest in the region by utilizing its huge economic assets making it certain to include Russia as a participant in it so that it may move towards the development of local solution of domestic problems peacefully to avoid any third force, including US, interference in these countries.

Policy Suggestions for US

- The US is competing with China in every matter around the world. Although she selected South East Asia in the neighbor of China to pressurize it. This area was called by US as “Asia Pivot” but Central Asia is, however, more important for US in several aspects. US for the achievements of its national interests in the region should take practical steps for taking the region’s states and its people into confidence.
- US along with Afghanistan should pay attention towards CARs so that they may have besides Russia and China, the support of any third force.
- US should play role in the promotion of real democracy, respect for human rights, and democratic traditions so that the people of Central Asian republics may not entangle in the dictatorial temperament forces and be deprived of their due rights.
- It should avoid thinking of getting access to the Central Asian energy resources for itself Europe and India but acting upon market principles, the other players may also be given access to it so that the monopoly of Russia and China may not deprive the other world from it.
- As she has brought NATO allies to the battlefield against Russia and Afghanistan similarly, it should share with them the Central Asian economic benefits and play role in providing equal share in all economic opportunities present in the region so that Europe

situated in its neighbor may get benefited out of it and put an end to Russian monopoly over it.

- United States should try to expand its influence in the Central Asia and Afghanistan and to keep vigilant eyes on the balance of power there.

Recommendations for CARs

- The semi authoritarian or autocratic style democracies are hijacked easily by the international powers for serving their interests even against the wishes, whims and interests of their masses or the interest of the region at large therefore; there is dire need for the middle class role in the national politics and the state policies.
- Things would improve for the people as well as states of Central Asia as soon as rulers and policy circle there realize that CARs must be engaged with all neighboring and friendly countries in such a way that those may not be exploited and hijacked or used as sandwiches between the great powers in their game of interests better known as “the Great Game”.
- Researchers, academics, intellectuals and media need to play proactive role for mass awareness about the game going in the region for the use of their land and resources by the great powers just for accumulation of further power at the expense of the fate of Central Asian people.

Recommendations for Afghanistan

- Afghanistan needs to balance its relations with the US, Russia and China.
- Division of Afghan government and Taliban is providing room to the external powers to play their interests at the cost of Afghan’s interests which needs understanding by Afghan government.
- Afghan government need to focus on improving its economy which would help establish the self sustaining government free from foreign funding.
- Afghanistan needs to join SCO as a permanent member to tackle the problems of terrorism, extremism and separatism.

- Giving balanced room to Russia and China by Afghan government would help Afghanistan escape the current conflict.

Recommendations for Pakistan

- It must understand firmly that friends in international politics are always changing but the neighbors are always permanent.
- It must also understand that reinforcement of Islamic ideology in the Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan would strengthen the position of Pakistan in the region.
- It must understand that there is no real commonality of interests between Pakistan and US. Therefore, it should not favor any of the US efforts where Iran is left out of the game so that Pakistan may materialize Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline
- It must understand that neither of the three powers will be in a position to control the region completely so it must follow multi-vector policy and keep option wide open for itself. It may have cordial relation with all the three big powers.

Research Findings

- New Great Game is a reality and it will continue for a foreseeable future owing to importance of energy and their abundance in the region.
- Influence in Central Asian and Afghanistan is necessary for US to maintain its hegemonic power status. On the other hand, it is important for China and Russia for their emerging economic as well as political emergence.
- Energy resources of CARs and Afghanistan are not the only concern of the big powers in the region they also offers a huge market for their finished goods and raw materials for their industries.
- China's engagement in Central Asia and Afghanistan is intended to maximize its national power at the behest of its energy resources, its huge market and raw materials.
- Weak economic status, complex interdependence and the prevailing post cold war international order and strategic competition, the US hegemony have brought Russia and China closer to each other in the geopolitics of Central Asia.

- US divergence with Russia and China in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan is based on its perception that they might not get enough power at the behest of central Asian energy resources and Afghanistan's strategic location, huge market, raw materials and its geographic and strategic location to challenge US international status.
- The interest of Russia and US in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Afghanistan has mostly divergent characteristics except stability in the region.
- US interests in the region seem to be more strategic than economic while Chinese interests are more economic than strategic. Russia's Political, economic and security interests in Central Asia are equally important.
- The only shared interest among the three big powers is the stability of the region, eradication of the three evils of extremism, separatism and terrorism.
- China has also divergent interests with the US in Central Asia and Afghanistan except eradication of factors of instability.
- Presently, Russia has political dominance; China has dominance in the economic sector while US has commercial as well as military presence in the region. The US has also been able to cultivate the patron status for introducing and strengthening democracy in the region.
- In future, cooperation in competition and competition in cooperation could be seen among the big powers: Russia, China, and United States in the geopolitics of the region.
- In case any of the three big powers dominates the region completely, it would be in position to bring drastic changes in the international system.
- Central Asian Republics are now conscious about their interests in the region. They are using different strategies for the realization of their interests in the region such as multi-vector approach, diversification of energy supply routes, balancing and counterbalancing the big powers and playing the big powers against each other.
- It seems that the Central Asia and Afghanistan's geopolitics is playing a role to divide the world again into two blocks. This time into SCO and NATO block.
- Russia and China will cooperate with each other in the geopolitics of the region so long they are interdependent.

- The relationships among Russia, China and United States would determine the stability of the region. Common agreement on any best mechanism to meet with regional security issues would work as a central determinant for the stability of the Central Asian region.
- According to the geopolitical reality of Central Asia and Afghanistan, it can be asserted that for the stability of the region pluralism of security mechanism is necessary.
- Neither of the big powers: Russia, China and United States will be in position to control Central Asian region absolutely.
- The big powers will not resort to hot war in the region because that would obstruct the achievement of their national interests in the region.

Recommendations for further Research

- Sino-US Competition in CARs after launch of BRI
- Sino-Russian Role in Central Asia after Launch of BRI
- BRI's Role in Integration of Central Asia with the region
- Military Relations of Central Asia with China
- Central Asian Military and Economic Relation with Russia: An Analysis of Proportion

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