



India's Connecting Policy towards Central Asian States in Contemporary Global Politics

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Abstract: *This paper Examine with its advantageous location as a gateway between Europe and Asia, Central Asia has enormous opportunities for expansion, commerce, and investment. Commodities like crude oil, natural gas, cotton, gold, copper, aluminium, and iron ore are abundant in this region. This region's also growing on oil, natural gas and hydrocarbon resources have led to new rivalries between foreign countries. In addition to securing a stable and expanded neighbourhood policy of India towards Afghanistan and Central Asian states, India seeks to establish a presence in the area due to its vast energy and hydrocarbon reserves. In addition to India is focusing more and more of its strategic interests in East Asia, Africa and other Central Asian Countries as a dependable supply of natural gas and oil. However, the Economic perspective India and Central Asia's relation are very crucial to any bilateral, trilateral, or multilateral collaboration in the platform of SCO. In this Perspective New Delhi hopes to actively participate in the security arrangements and regional cooperation in Central Asia through its expanded "Connecting Central Asia Policy". On the eye of ongoing contemporary global Politics like the issues of Afghanistan and Russia-Ukraine, India's aspirations to bridge the geopolitical gap with Central Asia have been overshadowed by crises such as global inflation, food hunger, and strategic worries, even with the receptiveness of the governments of Central Asia since the summit. In the backdrop of globalization, this article aims to emphasize the necessity of India's comprehensive strategy partnership towards Central Asia states within a neo-liberal framework.*

Key Words: *Central Asia, Russia, China, SCO, Afghanistan, Global Politics.*

1. INTRODUCTION:

From the India's historical Silk Road strategy, which allowed people, ideas, and products to travel, is the source of its connections with Central Asian states from the Ancient period to modern era. Although communication between the two was impeded by the disintegration of the Silk Road, efforts to re-establish ties between New Delhi and Central Asia are underway. The Central Asian countries have also been searching for suitable partners for the past ten years, especially in the fields of security and the economy. However to fighting against terrorism and radicalization, stopping illegal commerce, and looking into potential economic collaboration are goals that both parties have in common platform. In this scenario India's long-standing ties to the area provide both parties the ideal chance to build on their current collaboration and discover fresh, creative approaches to make it better in future.

Following the independence of five Central Asian States Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan in the 1990s, India was confronted with the dual problems of adapting to the new post-Cold War international order and implementing internal economic reform. In this period India's relations with the area have grown slowly in the subsequent decades, despite the country's many benefits under the new Economy policy. These include being among the first to offer diplomatic recognition to newly independent countries and being the only non-communist nation with a diplomatic presence in the economic reforms. Furthermore, as India adapted to the post-Cold War world order, and to restructured its foreign policy to strengthening more focus on interaction with Central Asian states and the rest of its expanded neighbourhood.

As India's economy expanded through the "Neighbouringhood First Policy" focussing on East Asia, Africa and some other specific Areas specially in economic, energy, Science and Technology and necessitating diversification of supplies outside of the Gulf region. India trying to reduce its dependency on pipeline routes via Russia, Central Asia attempted to deliver energy to rapidly developing Asian nations like China and India in the Present Scenario. However,



the absence of connection between India and Central Asian Countries has hampered oil and gas diplomacy, with any proposed routes facing on significant financial, political, and security obstacles. In this presence, India's military collaboration with the area has mainly consisted of military instruction and training exercise through the bilateral to multi lateral relations. However in this scenario India have trying to strengthening its military colleges, infrastructure support has been given to military training institutions in the area, and field hospitals have been established. In the presence of 2011 India and Kyrgyzstan held their first-ever combined military exercise, **Khanjar**¹ in Central Asia. Another great milestone for India-Central Asia relation For example, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) supported Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline was initially suggested in the mid-1990s, and all four parties signed a formal intergovernmental agreement in 2010. The pipeline has been delayed for a long time. Since then, the unrest in Afghanistan and the mistrust between India and Pakistan have caused to irregularity and stable.

However, another most important deal was the **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)** agreed by Russia, Iran, and India in 2000. It was subsequently confirmed and went into force in 2002. In addition to providing connection between India and Central Asia via Iran, its main objective is the transportation of products from Iran and the Caspian Sea to Russia and Northern Europe. As a result of this chance, the Central Asian nations of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan have joined the INSTC over the years. But the ongoing has been sluggish situation, apart from the customary issues related to safety and resource limitations, the political polarization in Central Asia and Afghanistan, as well as the conflict between Iran and the US, have created additional challenges. In 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi became the first Indian head of state to visit all five Central Asian countries. During this Visit more strengthened the India's "**Connect Central Asia Policy**" has been more advanced and more vibrant especially in the areas of energy, communication, and defence partner as well as Collaboration partner.

On the Global Politics of 21st century this region's shifting geopolitics, notably the development of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and the challenges to the region's external security, are to blame for this heightened attention. India's unfulfilled commercial interests in the area and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects have combined to pushing India to become more aggressive and exploring new economic opportunities in global politics. In this scenario while the actual fighting is restricted to a small area of Central Europe and Central Asia, the geopolitical and geo-economics fallout has affected people all over the world. Starting with the acute global shortages of food, fuel, and fertilizers, the conflict has caused crippling inflation, especially in poorer nations.

2. Central Asia as the Geopolitical Heart of SCO

India as an energy power in Asian Continent, in this perspective India's Energy politics is a crucial weapon in the twenty-first century that affects national geopolitics and geo-economics strategy. In this scenario China and India have turned to Central Asia as a substitute energy supply in recent years. The Central Asian oil and natural gas industry is expected to grow as a result of the growing demand for natural gas. Together, the member nations of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)² have own over 25% of global oil reserves, more than 50% of global gas reserves, 35% of global coal reserves, and almost 50% of global known uranium depositors on the survey report. After that the oil and natural gas sector in Central Asia is seeing significant expansion due to discoveries of oil and gas in nations like Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Russia, the US, China, the EU, Japan, India, Iran, and Turkey are all major players in Central Asian energy geopolitics. China has been a largely in charge of the region's energy politics in recent years, with major players like Gazprom controlling the excavation and to establish storage technologies¹.

In addition to China's interest in this region to stems from a number of factors, including the desire to overcome the physical barriers presented by the Malacca Straits, diversify its oil imports to maintain a steady supply, and lessen its reliance on the Middle East countries. In this perspective China has strategically interacted with Central Asia over the years, despite the region's also physical distance, and has contributed significantly to the geopolitics of the regions while skilfully manipulating Russia's perceptions towards Central Asian States. Its careful approach and gradual advancement have further enlarged its position in Central Asian energy matters and it resulted in the development of cooperation organizations like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Moscow was instrumental in creating the SCO Energy Club in order to guarantee a market for these goods. The SCO Energy Club, dominated by Moscow, is very focused on natural gas, clean and in-demand fossil fuels.

This club wants to build pipelines that cross nations inside and outside the SCO in order to establish supply routes for the vast natural gas reserves. In order to help the SCO become an energy-self-sufficient system in the near

¹The **Khanjar** is a military exercise between India and Kyrgyzstan. This exercise purposes to improve combat readiness, interoperability, and strategic understanding between the two nations. The goal of the Khanjar exercises is to improve bilateral ties in a number of areas between Kyrgyzstan and India.

² The **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**, It was first known as the Shanghai Five on April 26, 1996. There are now 14 conversation partners and 4 guest attendance entries in the SCO, in addition to the 9 member nations and 3 observers.



future, the regional-Eurasian level of the SCO Energy Club seeks to harmonize energy plans and promote collaboration between hydrocarbon-producing and consuming nations within the area.

3. India's Relation with Central Asia via Connecting Policy

In the present Scenario for India, Central Asia holds immense strategic and financial significance. Furthermore, there are significant historical and cultural ties in the area. Considering that this area is part of India's wider neighbourhood policy, After the Prime Minister Modi travelled to all five of Central Asia's nations in 2015. India soon introduced the **"Connect Central Asia Policy"**, a comprehensive strategy with elements related to politics, economy, security, and culture. India now has three multilateral connections with the Central Asian nations. Leaders of the government convene to deliberate on matters and devise a comprehensive strategy to be implemented. On January 27, 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi virtually met with the presidents of Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan to discuss the First India-Central Summit. At the conclusion of the meeting, the leaders adopted a detailed Joint Declaration that outlined their shared vision for a lasting and all-encompassing cooperation between India and Central Asia. This document is also referred to as the Delhi Declaration Summitⁱⁱ.

There were two significant decisions made at the summit. Firstly, the leaders spoke again about how much they supported an inclusive, really representative government in a safe, secure, and peaceful Afghanistan. Regarding connectivity, the leaders decided to employ the Shahid Beheshti Terminal at the Chabahar Port to ease commerce between India and the landlocked Central Asian nations. Second, the leaders decided to create an India-Central Asia Secretariat in New Delhi, hold regular meetings of foreign ministers, trade ministers, culture ministers, and secretaries of the Security Council to lay the groundwork for the summit meetings, and institutionalize the summit mechanism by holding it every two years. This Meeting are held at the **"National Security Agency (NSA)"** level to have targeted discussions about security problems. These started shortly after the Taliban issues, assisted by Pakistan's ISI and army, took control of Afghanistan. The first meeting was held on November 10, 2021. India's national Security advisor Ajit Doval, the NSA of India, called it, and the NSAs of Russia, Iran, and Central Asian nations also participated. This discussion centred on Afghanistan and emphasized how important it is to have effective governance there to protect the fundamental rights of minorities, women, and children as well as to fight terrorism in all of its forms and manifestations, including financing it, destroying terrorist infrastructure, and preventing radicalization.

Furthermore, India talks about Central Asian issues at both bilateral and SCO meetings. On July 4, 2023, India played host to the SCO summit, which was entered on the sustainable development of Central Asian states. During their fourth Security Dialogue in August 2023, India and Kazakhstan talked about regional and bilateral problems. On this prospective Central Asia wanted to become a security from his border area.

The Second India-Central Asia NSAs summit was held on October 17, 2023, within the backdrop mentioned above. Three main topics were covered at this conference. It began by going over ways to improve collaboration in the areas of digital infrastructure, rare earths, people-to-people interactions, and cyber securityⁱⁱⁱ. In an effort to draw in private investment, the Indian NSA suggested creating an India-Central Asia Rare Earths Forum. In order to help these nations establish independent, real-time digital payment systems that meet their requirements, India also offered to donate free digital payment technologies. India made the decision to collaborate closely with Central Asian nations on cyber security, and it gave assistance in establishing a safe cyber-ecosystem as a means of defending against online attacks. India's NSA invited the leaders of the Central Asian nation's cyber security agencies to discuss India's experiences and to tackle the global issues on Asian continents.

In this regarding, Mr.Doval requested that the nations of Central Asia make use of Iran's Chabahar port and its terminals, which are run by an Indian company, for marine commerce. He bemoaned the deliberate intention of one nation to deny land connection between the CARs and India. This was a subdued criticism of the Pakistani policies. Additionally, he emphasized that the connection initiatives needed to be inclusive, transparent, and collaborative. All nations' sovereignty and territorial integrity must be respected by such endeavours. In addition, they have to follow environmental guidelines and avoid piling up debt. These comments were interpreted as an oblique jab at China, whose **"Belt and Road Initiative"** lacks transparency and consultation. The BRI is sometimes viewed as debt-trap diplomacy in the Contemporary Global Politics^{iv}.

4. India Central Asia Relation Perspective on Global Forums

On the perspective of 21st century, another scope of the SCO has expanded to include economic growth, energy security, and other newly developing non-traditional security problems. As part of SCO's efforts to broaden its focus beyond countering extremism, separatism, and terrorism issues in the contemporary global politics and its relevance on 21st century. In this race Russia, Afghanistan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, China, Mongolia, India, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Sri



Lanka are among the members of the club, which was founded in 2013 as a non-governmental consultative body to examine the region's energy policy^v. Its goal is to facilitate dialogue on energy-related matters between corporate leaders, scientists, and high-ranking government officials from the member nations. The club was created to give energy producers, consumers, and transit nations a forum to discuss issues and problems that they have in common platform. The emerging Notable non-member nations that played significant roles in energy transit to markets like China, Japan, Europe, Korea, and India included Mongolia, Belarus, Iran, Afghanistan, and Four Asian Tigers (South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore) as the emerging key players in the future^{vi}.

The world energy market is changing, with production centres moving westward and demand growing eastward to coincide with the territory of the SCO member nations. It is anticipated that the SCO Energy Club will contribute to the stabilization of the world energy supply chain, favourable energy price negotiations, and the advancement of research into more affordable and environmentally friendly energy options for the member nations. But given the quickly evolving global energy scene particularly in light of the Russia-Ukraine conflict at the Energy Club must work to better coordinate member energy programs and booster the more vibrant of the SCO member nations on energy politics in international market.

The energy politics is more vibrant and stable in the recent years nevertheless to faces issues related to its relative young and nonbinding character. While it may act as a counterbalance to OPEC³ in terms of setting the regional energy agenda, the Energy Club may provide a useful platform for promoting strong energy cooperation in the future. In the era of global politics is expected to become increasingly influential in the area as long as the fossil fuel sector continues to dominate the energy politics, even if the energy politics is changing to counter towards world politics the Central Asian states playing as the key role on the Global politics in future.

5. CONCLUSION :

In the era of 21st century India's approach to the area has been shaped by US and Russian ambitions and has been subordinate to its policies regarding China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Although India's objectives will remain impacted by Afghanistan's instability, New Delhi is also reworking its own "**Connecting Central Asia policy**", as seen by its aggressive actions. In this perspective India's geostrategic, economic, and security interests in Central Asia can be furthered by utilizing the SCO as a global platform. Now it's time to take action from the North to South, an area that has long been disregarded since India places too much emphasis on its immediate neighbourhood policy and occasionally towards the East to West. The area can open up new markets, assist to stabilize the situation in Afghanistan, and provide most of India's energy requirements.

As a continuation of India's recent aggressive approach to the area, the Central Asian republics anticipate further collaboration with South Asia. India can should use both soft and hard power tools to capitalize on the momentum it has to increase its influence in the region. Beyond the diplomatic exchanges and high-level conversations, India's biggest obstacle is finding a way to China's massive financial resources and the China-Pakistan axis in order to expand its influence in Central Asian states. Now that the Taliban are back in Kabul, things are more difficult for India's strategy interest in Central Asia and Afghanistan. After that the imposition of economic sanctions has limited India's ability to strengthen its ties with Russia and Iran. In the era of Global Politics Central Asia attempting to mitigate the economic and geopolitical consequences of conflict between Russia and Ukraine, New Delhi will need to explore alternative channels of communication to expand its strategic interest towards Central Asia to East Asia.

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³ The **Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries** facilitates to cooperation amongst the top oil-producing nations. It was established in Baghdad on September 14, 1960. Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Libya, Nigeria, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Republic of Congo, Angola, Ecuador, and Venezuela are the 14 member countries of OPEC as of 2019.



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End Notes

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