Chapter - 3

CENTRAL ASIA AND CHINA'S GEOPOLITICAL LINKAGES IN MACKINDER'S HEARTLAND MODEL
3.1 Introduction
This Chapter analyses a geopolitical linkage between the Central Asia and the China from the Mackinder Heartland model. The chapter also attempts to use Spykman’s idea of the geographical factors - regional location and world location - conditioning the country’s foreign policy, to analyse the foreign policy of Central Asia towards China. Efforts have also been made to explain why the geopolitical perspective provides the best analytical leverage for understanding the strengthening ties between the Central Asian states and China.

Mackinder, in the last paragraph of his article, “The Geographical Pivot of the History” published in 1904, while describing the potential powers who can dominate the geographical pivot of the history, mentioned about China that can dominate the Heartland region. He wrote,

“In conclusion, it may be well expressly to point out that the substitution of some new control of the inland area for that of Russia would not tend to reduce the geographical significance of the pivot position. Were the Chinese, for instance, organized by the Japanese, to overthrow the Russian Empire and conquer its territory, they might constitute the yellow peril to the world’s freedom just because they would add an oceanic frontage to the resources of the great continent, and advantage as yet denied to the Russian tenant of the pivot region” (Mackinder 1904: 437).

The recent Chinese move into the Central Asian region through SCO and oil and gas pipeline networks with Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan are not merely to spread its influence in the Heartland but to dominate in whole of the Central Asian region and thus go beyond it. It indicates that foreign policies of China towards Central Asian region are driven by Mackinder’s theory. It has opened the alternate transit route other than Russian route for the export of Central Asian energy resources.

Before discussing the geopolitical linkages between Central Asia and China in detail, it is useful to define Mackinder’s Heartland region in its geographic and strategic dimensions.

3.2 Mackinder’s Concept of Heartland
3.2.1 Heartland: Geographical Demarcation
Mackinder has demarcated the geographical extent of the Heartland region in these
words:

"The northern edge of Asia is the inaccessible coast, beset with ice .... three of the largest rivers in the world, the Lena, Yenisei, and Obi, stream northward through Siberia to this coast,... That whole patch, extending right across from the icy, flat shore of Siberia to the torrid, steep coasts of Baluchistan and Persia, has been inaccessible to navigation from the ocean. Let us call this great region the Heartland of the Continent" (Mackinder 1919: 54-55).

In simple terms the geographical area of the Heartland is a huge area stretched from the present Volga River in the west to eastern Siberia in the east, and from the Himalayas and the associated mountains in the south to the ice bounded Arctic sea in the north. The distinguishing features of this Heartland area were that mountain barriers on the three sides and an ice-bound sea on the fourth side surrounded it. These geographic features make the region as a great natural fort. All the rivers in this landmass have interior or Arctic drainage system. So, this area was not accessible to sea power and was, therefore strategically secure. It means that the whole Heartland region has such a geographical characteristics that it is not connected to any water channel and thus beyond the reach of sea powers. This is Mackinder's huge landmass area of Heartland. Now the Heartland region is also described in strategic terms.

3.2.2 **Heartland: Strategically Defined**

Mackinder has defined Heartland in the strategic terms also. In his words:

"The Heartland, for the purposes of strategic thinking, includes the Baltic Sea, the navigable Middle and Lower Danube, the Black Sea, Asia Minor, Armenia, Persia, Tibet, and Mongolia. Within it, therefore, were Brandenburg-Prussia and Austria-Hungary, as well as Russia.... The Heartland is the region to which, under modern conditions, sea-power can be refused access, though the western part of it lies without the region of Arctic and Continental drainage" (Mackinder 1919: 78).

Mackinder strategically defined the Heartland, which is not accessible to sea power. Moreover, if certain sea part is included in Heartland like Baltic and Black sea, which gives the scope to penetrate by sea power, then the Heartland power is able to refuse the access of sea power by modern technology. It means that in strategic terms the Heartland region also encompass the adjacent areas to which Heartland region can control.
3.2.3 Heartland Theory

In 1919, Mackinder published a book entitled, ‘The Democratic Ideals and Reality’ in which he proposed extensions into his ‘pivot area’ of 1904 and renamed it as ‘Heartland’. Mackinder made important changes in his idea of the ‘pivot area’. The geographical scope of the pivot of history was expanded and given a new name—‘Heartland’. Mackinder summarize his global view of the world power in these words, “He, Who controls the East Europe controls the Heartland, He who controls the Heartland controls the World Island, He, who controls the World Island, controls the world” (Brzezinski 1997: 38). In this way Mackinder formulated his ideas of world domination. In his strategic thinking of Heartland region Tibet, Xinjiang and the present day Central Asian states also appears. So his ideas are helpful for our purpose of research enquiry. The super powers US, Russia, China and the neighbouring powers are trying to increase their influence in the Central Asian region.

3.2.4 Critical Evaluation of the Heartland Theory

Mackinder has said that Heartland is inaccessible to the Sea Power. But in the age of air power and Ballistic missiles no terrain in the earth is inaccessible. The presence of US military personnel in the heart of Heartland, i.e. in the present day Central Asian state of Kyrgyzstan at Manas air base is example of it. Likewise, thousands of foreign army personnel are present on the soil of Afghanistan. The striking capacity of air power and its uninterrupted mobility is also much more flexible than the oceanic surface. Moreover, Mackinder ideas were based on Mercator projection map which created false picture regarding the unlimited expanse of arctic ice separating North America from Eurasia. But, in reality North America and the Heartland region are situated face to face across the expansion of Arctic Sea by shortest air routes connecting the Russia to North America.

Mackinder believed that the development of Railway can produce great wonders in the Heartland region since it increase unity and mobility in the region. At that time Railway was there for 60 years that dominated the transportation in Western Europe but not developed in pivot area (Adhikari 1997). Mackinder had equated power potential with geographical area and location. But to some extent power potential also depends upon the human resources. Today, Russia an influential player in the Heartland region is facing with negative population growth. In future it will definitely
decide Russia’s global influence. On the other hand India and China due to their large human resources continuously increase their influence in the world arena. Further, with an area of 2.7 million square kilometers, Kazakhstan is the ninth-largest country in the world and is equivalent to the size of Western Europe. Locating in the Heartland region with the population of 16.2 million is not a powerful country in world affairs.

Mackinder has made over simplification of the history as a struggle of land power and sea power rivalry conditioned by the spatial distribution of land and sea power. At present, for increasing influence in the Central Asian region Russia, US, China, Iran, Turkey, India and Pakistan are in the race. Mackinder has overlooked the existence of another Heartland of Anglo-American world, which was all the time capable of occupying an important place in global affairs like Russia. Though he mentioned this Heartland as a part of midland basin in 1943 model, he failed to follow up the apparently consequences. Today, US with global reach is in true sense a world power. However, the concept of Heartland has its significance. After highlighting the enormous potential of Heartland area in 1904 and 1919 by Mackinder, Russia has realized it and made remarkable progress during Stalin period of 1923-1954. In this period Russia became the world power which can match with US and other European powers. Presently, the strategic location and economic importance of Central Asian region is attracting all the neighbouring and big powers to make their presence in the region. The importance of opening of the silk route and making Trans-Eurasian railway network across the Central Asian region is also realized by the concerning states. It highlights the importance of this Heartland region.

3.3 Central Asian Region as the Heart of the ‘Heartland’

The present day Central Asian region emerged as a separate geopolitical space after the disintegration of Soviet Union in 1991. And if we mark the Central Asian region in the Mackinder’s Heartland, it is clear from the map that the Central Asian region lies in the heart of the Heartland. In all the three models of the Heartland postulates by Mackinder in 1904, 1919 and 1943, the Central Asia always lies in the heart of the Heartland. It is visible in the map no. 3.1 shown below. It means the Central Asian region was very important for Mackinder to project world domination. Should this importance of Central Asia has been recognized by China as it is establishing itself as
super power in the world arena. Is China is making polices to do this? These are all our interest area of research. For this we have to first analyse the geopolitical setting of the China, its geopolitical needs and its linkages with the Central Asian region in geopolitical terms.

Map No. 3.1

Location of Central Asian Region in the Heart of All the Three Models of Mackinder's Heartland (1904, 1919, 1943)


3.4 Contemporary Geopolitical Treatment to the Heartland

3.4.1 Anglo-Russian Rivalry in the 19th Century

Due to the significant location of the Central Asian region with respect to world and region, it was always a battleground for great powers. Not going very past, the strategic significance of the Central Asian region is recognized from the 19th century struggle between Czarist Russia and British Empire established in India, termed as 'great game'. The 'great game' refers to the intense rivalry and competition for the control of Central Asia between the British and Russian Empires in the 19th century. The major region for the struggle between the two great powers was to gain strategic foothold in the region and getting trade concession.
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After the defeat of Czarist Russian Empire in the war of Crimea in 1854, the Russian empire's westward expansion came in halt. Then it started southward expansion and slowly it annexed all the present Central Asian states in 19th century. During the same time, British Empire in India had consolidated its position in India by getting decisive control over the Sindh and Punjab. The British Empire feared that the Russian empire will further moved southward and can reach Afghanistan and Punjab and Sindh province of the present day Pakistan. Hence, Russia will get warm water access in the Arabian Sea (Russia was a land power with no warm water access throughout the year). This will greatly undermine the security and commercial interest of British Empire worldwide. British also feared that they may lose India, whom they think their crown colony. On the other hand the Russian empire want some psychological compensation of the defeat of Crimean war in 1854 by putting pressure on British empire in this front. Apart from this security reasons, both powers wants to protect and advanced their trade interest in the region.

The Anglo-Russian rivalry ended in 1907, based on the “Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, an agreement relating to Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet.” From this time the Central Asian region was part of the Soviet Union and was closed with outside world. Any interaction with the Central Asian region comes through the way of Moscow.

3.4.2 Central Asian Region and Cold War Geopolitics

After the end of Second World War-II, rivalry started between the two post-war emerged powers, Soviet Union and United Stated. To check the spread of Communism, US followed a policy of “Containment of Communism” formulated by an American diplomat George F. Kennan. George Kennan, proposed a strategy of containment in an article in the July 1947 edition of Foreign Affairs magazine. In his article, Kennan proposed, “a long-term patient but firm and vigilant containment of Russian expansive tendencies” through “counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points.” This idea became the input for the development of the containment policy by the Truman administration. Truman administration identified two key components to the containment strategy; formation of regional alliances and providing economic and military assistance to other nations to prevent communist expansion. The policy of containment is to save the geographical space enclosing the Soviet Union from the expansion of communism.

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At the beginning of the Cold War, the Soviets had established their sphere of control over portions of the Rimland. The Soviets established the Rimland as the key battleground of the Cold War: first, in Turkey, Greece and Iran, and then in Korean peninsula in 1950-1954, then in Indo-China and in Vietnam in 1960’s. To counter this United States formed mutual security agreements with forty-six nations, in between 1947 and 1960. These included agreements with most of the Rimland nations, as well as many nations in the outer crescent (McCormick 1998: 53). NATO in Western Europe (1949), SEATO in the South-East Asian region (1954), CENTO in the Middle East (1959) and also US reach agreement with Japan and South Korea, Australia and New Zealand to encircle the Soviet Union to further expansion of communism. Turkey, Iraq, Great Britain, Pakistan and Iran founded the Baghdad Pact in 1955. It was renamed as the Central Treaty Organization, or CENTO in 1959 after Iraq pulled out of the pact. It was formally dissolve in 1979. The main purpose of the Baghdad Pact was to prevent communist incursions and foster peace in the Middle East.

In 1979, Soviet Union attacked Afghanistan and had installed a communist government. This was beginning of a new cold war. Before it, from 1960’s and 1970’s was a period of relaxation of tensions between the two great powers. The Soviet government fought with the Afghan rebels and paid heavy loss in terms of military and economy. It was very hard for Soviet Union to fight a determined rebel force in hostile terrain, which were trained and supplied by the US. The Soviet decided to withdrawal in 1989 that resulted in the collapse of the communist government in Afghanistan, and plunged the country into a civil war. The impact of civil war in Afghanistan has a profound impact in the current geopolitical structure of the Central Asian region. The radical Taliban established itself in Afghanistan in 1996. This phenomenon is responsible for the development of radical groups in the Central Asian states. In 2001, America attacked Taliban and demolished the Taliban government from Afghanistan.

The US lead NATO forces are still fighting with Taliban and Al Qaeda forces in the south of the Afghanistan to totally wipe out the ultra forces from Afghanistan. The main supply line for the coalition forces is via Pakistan through Khyber passes. But the radical forces are getting stronger in the FATA area of the NWFP in Pakistan and may disrupt the supply line. The US is planning to open the Central Asian front for
the supply line once again. Earlier, it had used military bases in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to launch attacks in Afghanistan. So the geopolitical significance of the Central Asian region is again getting prominent. How much Russia and China is convinced once again by opening the supply route from the Central Asian side, is a matter to watch.

3.4.3 Brzezinski’s Strategic Thinking in the Eurasian Landmass

The Central Asian region was not a prominent region throughout the cold war, except the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan. It was the part of Soviet Union and remained under its control till 1991. In 1991, the disintegration of Soviet Union takes place and the Central Asian region became prominent in the world map as a separate entity. The region's importance was figure out by the American diplomat Zbigniew Brzezinski, while suggesting the geopolitical imperative for US in the Eurasian landmass, in the following words;

“Eurasia is home to most of the world’s politically assertive and dynamic states. All the historical pretenders to global power originated in Eurasia. The world’s most populous aspirants to regional hegemony, China and India, are in Eurasia, as are all the potential political or economic challengers to American primacy. After the United States, the next six largest economies and military spenders are there, as are all but one of the world’s overt nuclear powers, and all but one of the covert ones. Eurasia accounts for 75 percent of the world’s population, 60 percent of its GNP, and 75 percent of its energy resources. Collectively, Eurasia’s potential power overshadows even America’s power” (Brzezinski 1997: 50).

He also highlights China as a vital nation situated in the far east in making of US integrated and comprehensive strategy towards the Eurasian region. “In the Far East, China is likely to be increasingly pivotal, and the United States will not have a Eurasian strategy unless a Sino-American political consensus is nurtured” (Brzezinski 1997: 50). These lines illustrate how China is strategically linked with Central Asian region. Thus, the importance Central Asian region was realized by the neighbouring regional and global powers. They started interacting with the newly independent states to enhance their economic and security interest in the region.

3.5 Regional and Global Powers Operating in the Central Asian Region

Central Asian region was a zone of triangular contest between Britain, Russia and
China during the nineteenth century and early twentieth century, which has been romanticized as 'Great Game' (Warikoo 1995: 17). During the Soviet period the entire region was closed to external powers. After the collapse of the Soviet Union the Strategic importance of Central Asia became distinct. Today, the Central Asian region is vital to international security by virtue of its geographic position; and that those with access to it will play a critical role in the global stage. Due to the geographical proximity of Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, China, Russia and India with Central Asian region, these countries are going to play an important role in the geopolitics of this region.

In this subsection various regional and global powers' interest in Central Asia has been analysed. Part A contains the interest of global powers United States, Russia and NATO in Central Asian region and the possible threat perceptions by China in this region. As we are focusing in China's geopolitical linkages to Central Asian regions, it requires more detail descriptions about this issue. Hence, China is not included in this part of Global powers in Part A. It is separately discussed in the next subsection Part B contains the interest of regional powers Iran, Turkey, Pakistan and India towards the Central Asian region.

The US is a super power with global reach and Russia was a colonial power in the Central Asian region. NATO has come out with its image as it was in the cold war period. It is incorporating new role, i.e. to combat terrorism and maintaining peace and stability in the disturbed regions. It is seen in the case of NATO's presence in Afghanistan as peacemaker. China and USA has global interest in the terms of energy needs and trying to get strategic foothold worldwide. So, they want to increase their influence in geo-strategic and geo-economic important Central Asian region. They have increased their engagement with Central Asian region in military and economic field. Now, the five Central Asian countries are forced to balance their policies in relation to the three great powers in the region. The Central Asian states have to be especially careful in their foreign policy orientation, since there is a growing competition for power among Russia, China, and the United States. Interestingly, some Central experts also note that the Central Asian states can use their regional position and the strategic importance of the region for China, Russia, and the United States to their advantage. According to Sadri, China's "interest and presence in
Kazakhstan can be used to check the influence of Russia and the West (Sadri 1998: 22).

On the other side Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and India are influential regional power in their respective zones. They want to increase their influence in the region nearer to them. All these states are linked with Central Asian region on ethnic, cultural and religious lines. Therefore, their interest is to increase influence in these newly independent states.

3.6 PART (A): Global Powers
3.6.1 United States- Central Asia
The Central Asian states were part of the former Soviet Union and no world power can interact on it independently till 1991. Hence, US didn’t include the Central Asian countries as part of their foreign policy. However, after the withdrawal of Soviet power and emergence of independent Central Asian states in 1991, the region opened for interaction to world powers. US interests in Central Asia can be discussed in four particular ways: democracy, energy, security and strategic interests. In the initials years, US tried promoting democracy, then energy in the late 90’s (after the discovery of large amounts of oil and gas fields) and then security interest after September 11 terrorist attack.

According to Talbott (1997:13), “The US policy in Central Asian region had four dimensions immediately after the creation of CAS: promotion of democracy; creation of free market economy; sponsorship of peace and cooperation within and among the countries of the region and their integration with the larger international community.” After Independence, the CAS states were facing various challenges such as; ethnic clashes, border disputes, water sharing problem, fear of smaller countries against powerful regional countries, etc. Also, major fear in the region comes from the possible proliferation of nuclear weapons in the hands of the terrorist outfit operating in the region. So, the top priority of the US is to stop such proliferation and maintain political stability in the Central Asian region. Thus, US made Kazakhstan a party to the NPT and CTBT. Also, between 1991 and 1999, it provided the region with approximately 1.9 billion dollars under the policy of “Freedom Support Act” (Bhattay and Bronson 2000: 133). The US wanted to promote democracy and free market
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economy to serve its own interest in the Central Asian region. The motive was to integrate the new region with the larger world community since it was isolated during soviet communist rule. Thus, more or less US policy was to maintain political stability in the Central Asian region in the initial years of their independence.

There was a shift in US strategic interest in late 1994, when the US Department of Energy reported an estimation of potential Caspian Sea oil reserves, amounting to around 200 billion barrels (Patnaik 2002:8). The need to diversify US imports and break free from dependence on gulf supply made the US, to take active interest in the region. To get the Central Asian energy resources, US backed such pipeline routes through bypassing Russia and Iran. Such pipelines bypassing Iran and Russia are Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipelines and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline. By backing these pipelines, US want to check Russian monopoly in the field of export route. Further, US want to isolate Iran from the Central Asian energy field by urging that the respective states to build pipelines that bypass Iran. Really, the transport of Central Asian energy to the world market is the greatest challenge as they are landlocked country and lots of politics is going on. As the US does not have direct geographical border with the Central Asian region, US policy will only have a marginal effect on minimizing Russian, Iran or Chinese presence in the region. No matter how enlightened are the policies of US, the geography gives more leverage to Russia, Iran and China as they share land border with the Central Asian states. New pipelines linking Turkmenistan-China was open in December 2009 and Turkmenistan-Iran gas pipeline opened in January 2010.

Apart from it, US oil companies have been relatively successful in gaining access to Central Asian oil fields, especially in Kazakhstan, in exploration, refinery and marketing. Major US oil companies involved in oil and gas exploration in the Central Asian region are Chevron, ConocoPhilips, ExxonMobil (Yenikeyeff 2008). These multinational oil corporations are backed by the US. One of the energy related US policy objectives pointed by Ariel Cohen of the Conservative Heritage Foundation is to ensure access for US companies to energy, other natural resources and markets in the region (Zeb 2003-2004: 42). Central Asian states are also looking for diversification of energy resources. In this way, Central Asia-US relations are harmonious in the field of energy.
In the beginning of the 21st Century, the US interests in the Central Asian region get shifted to more on security issues. The incident of September 11, 2001, is the reason behind it. Now the most important interest appeared for the US, the defence of the US and Western world form the threat of Islamic terrorism. Also, US want to prevent the Central Asian region as a base for terrorist groups, such as radical Islamic forces, the Taliban or Al-Qaeda. It also aims at halting them from establishing training camps, bases of operations and preventing any attempts to subvert over Central Asian Governments (Zeb 2003-2004: 42). US attacked Afghanistan to uproot the Taliban forces from Afghanistan in 2001. The US needed Central Asian states cooperation to fight its war against terrorism. In order to get Central Asian states help, the US even ignored the Human Rights clause for its aid. US believed that the government in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in its target to curb Islamic fundamentalism, have resorted gross violation of human rights. And, before September 11, the US refused grant to these countries unless they improve their human right record. But, by 2002 since Uzbekistan become a ‘Strategic Partner’, human rights clause were ignored (Schatz 2002: 338).

The existing of porous border between the Central Asia and Afghanistan made Central Asian region vulnerable to the spill over of Islamic fundamentalism. Central Asia for their interest agreed to help the US in its fight against terrorism. A stable Afghanistan is in their interest. For this Central Asian region played an important role in the US fight against terrorism. To make more effective control over the Afghanistan, US established two military base in Central Asian region in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. The US military has stationed 3000 US personal in Kyrgyzstan and 1000 in Uzbekistan to operate out of local air bases (Mayner 2002: 122). Moreover, Uzbekistan, allowed air bases, military station troops, airplanes and helicopters for the US. The US in return, after September 11, provided Uzbekistan, 25 million dollars for weapons and other military purchase. Then, in January 2002, Washington announced another package of 100 million dollars, out of the 4 billion dollars, the Congress has allocated for fighting terrorism (Luong and Weinthal 2002: 62). In 2006 the military base in Uzbekistan was closed and now US has one military base in Mamas in Kyrgyzstan.

The US also improved its diplomatic ties in the region and Central Asian region
benefited from it. The Islamic fundamental groups in Central Asian Republics received a severe blow after the US crackdown on the Taliban and Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan. The IMU (Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan) also received a severe blow when the US included in its list of terrorist organisation in the year 2000 (Schatz 2002: 337). The IMU also suffered heavy losses during the US war against war against terrorism.

The supply line from the Pakistan side to the US and NATO forces are getting worse as the condition in NWFP and FATA area not favourable. Even, on June 9, 2010, gunmen attacked NATO convey near the Pakistan capital Islamabad killing at least seven people and setting ablaze 20 trucks, destroying millions of dollars of equipment (BBC News, 2010b). The trucks were carrying supplies to alliance troops in Afghanistan. This demonstrates the vulnerability of supply line from Pakistani side. In this respect the importance of Central Asian region again realised by the US. The US needs the Central Asian front to be opened for the smooth supply for the US, NATO and ally forces in Afghanistan.

Moreover, the US has strategic interest in the Central Asian region. Due to geographical location of the Central Asian region close to Russia, China and Iran, the region became significant for long term US interest. The strategic importance of Central Asian region is pointed out by many American strategic thinkers. Zbigniew Brzezinski citing American strategic interest in the Central Asian region and Trans-Caucasian region commented, "Ever Since the continent started interacting politically some five hundred years ago; Eurasia has been the centre of world power. In different ways, at different times, the peoples inhabiting Eurasia- though mostly those from the western European periphery-penetrated and dominated the world's other region as individual Eurasian states attained the special status and enjoyed the privileges of being the world's premier powers" (Brzezinski 1997: 50).

US realises the strategic importance of the Central Asian region in world domination. The military bases of US in the Uzbekistan (military base closed in 2006) and Kyrgyzstan established in the wake of 'War Against Terror' is remarkable in Eurasian and global history. The US wants to retain in any cost the Central Asian military bases in Manas in Kyrgyzstan. Never before had a great, non-Eurasian, power been able to
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project its military at such volume so easily into the Heartland. This capacity, and resulting presence, has the potential to significantly alter the geo-strategic calculus of Central Asia as well as the calculus of Russia and China. The strategic calculation is certainly going to change as Ariel Cohen spell out the policy objectives of US in Central Asia region. He said that deny any country or a group of countries, such as Russia and China to establish new sphere of influence in the region and hence US continue to presence her influence (Zeb 2003-2004: 42). Earlier, US were not too keen on asserting its influence in the region, acknowledging it as Russia’s sphere of influence.

There has been a tendency to view American engagement in the Central Asian states in zero-sum terms, whereby any gain for the US automatically meant a lose for Russia and China. So, the Russian and Chinese efforts are to limit American political, economic and military involvement in the Central Asian region (Kumar 2002: 3416). Russia and China trying to counter American presence in the Central Asian region as the influence massively increased after September 11, 2001. The presence of NATO soldiers in its west parts generating security risks for Russia. So Russia does not want to make it southern border i.e. Central Asia vulnerable to US, NATO or any power. China too is bothering about its border security in western front. Hence, Russia and China are continuously opposing the military presence of US in the Central Asian region. Through the SCO, they have taking the confidence of Central Asian states to close the military base. US blames the Russian and Chinese pressure works behind the closer of its military base in Uzbekistan in 2006.

To protect above mentioned US interest, the US has adopted multi-prong strategies to engage Central Asian by promoting democracy and human rights, market reform, countering drug trafficking and Islamic fundamentalism, pouring aid assistance to strengthen security and bring them under NATO PfP umbrella. Brzezinski pronounced integrated and comprehensive strategy for America towards Eurasian landmass and suggested short, medium and long-term policies for US to hold its supremacy in the region. In his grand strategy, he mentioned Europe as America essential geopolitical bridgehead in Eurasia. In the Far East, the United States will not have a Eurasian strategy unless a Sino-American political consensus is nurtured. Brzezinski, while suggesting policy guidelines for US towards Eurasian region
comments, "Eurasia is the world's axial super-continent. A power that dominated Eurasia would exercise decisive influence over two of the world's three most economically productive regions, Western Europe and East Asia. What happens with the distribution of power on the Eurasian landmass will be of decisive importance to America's global primacy and historical legacy" (Brzezinski 1997: 50). US is going to present in the Central Asian region as long as the Afghanistan crisis remain unresolved.

3.6.2 Russia - Central Asia

Central Asia lies in the traditional sphere of influence of Russia. Although they have announced independence, though these states still have all kind of connection with Russia, like water network, electricity grids, and transportation system and oil and gas pipelines. Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism share the common grounds for the co-operation. Russians are natural protector of the region, although few countries sought the withdrawal of Russian troops, but simultaneously they all are engaging it in military and security co-operation. Russia, as of now offers the best export routes to market in the west for Central Asian exports, such as oil and natural gas. It is still perceived as ultimate protector of the region from external aggression and internal extremist, such as Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

Russia's long-term interest in Central Asia region can be defined as:

- Maintaining political and economic stability in this region. It would be in Russia's interest to prevent escalation of inter-state and internal conflicts.

- Safeguarding economic interest in the region.

- The preservation of the various contacts between Russia and the Central Asian countries and the prevention of vacuum that could possibly be filled by forces hostile to Russia.

- Ensuring Central Asia's ecological security. The countries of the Central Asia have been witness to some of the greatest environmental disasters, especially in the Aral and Caspian seas. Air pollution is also a major and growing concern in this region. These environmental problems increase the tension in
this region and are causes of worry for Russia.

- To prevent the divisive forces, especially of Islamic Fundamentalism, gaining a foothold in Central Asia. Russia a specific geo-political interest in Central Asia, that is “to prevent the explosive charge of Islamic extremism from penetrating into Russia”.

- The prevention of the spread of drug-trafficking and arms smuggling.

- The prevention of disruptions of communication lines crossing Russia and access to new transport arteries and to oil and gas pipelines oriented towards far abroad. Russia is interested in having access to transport routes through Central Asia to the world market. It wants to retain control over the supply of metals and strategic raw materials from the region. Russia has the greater interest in the oil and gas complex of Central Asia.

- And, lastly ensuring the security of the Russian population living in the region.

In the post-Independence phase, Moscow tried to develop close relationship with Europe and USA and also tried to identify with west rather than east. It argued that the solution to the current problems facing Russia could be solved only with the help of the west and European countries. Hence it is futile to maintain close relationship with the Central Asian states, which is a backward region. After 1994, Russian approach towards Central Asia marked a departure from the earlier policy of identifying with west and declining stress on Central Asian states. Some of the development in the mid-nineties threatened the long-term security and geo-strategic interest of Russia and promoted it to seek closer integration with Central Asia. There were several factors responsible for the change in Russian perspective towards Central Asia. During this period, dangerous developments were taking place in the Republic of Tajikistan bordering Afghanistan. Another development that took place during this period was the emergence of radical Islamic groups that partly added and abetted by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and from various radical Islamic groups in Afghanistan i.e. the emergence of Taliban. The foreign policy makers realised that they have to contain these developments otherwise it can threaten the unity and integrity of Russia as it lies very close to Central Asia states.
Russia also fears a geopolitical threat to its historically influenced Central Asia from the USA, China and the Islamic militancy and fundamentalism from the South. Since NATO’s expansion has made Russia’s western border vulnerable, its security critically depends on a strategic depth that can be provided by the ‘near abroad’. Also NATO comes in Central Asia under NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) Programmes with Central Asian Countries. In any case it can’t afford to have a vulnerable southern and eastern border.

Russia under Putin and his successor is in the process of re-establishing and consolidating its position in the CIS, particularly in Central Asia. Under Putin’s leadership Russian policy in Central Asia became even more assertive. Russia followed two-pronged strategy in dealing with Central Asian states. Firstly, Putin sought to pursue a more consistent strategy in building political and economic linkages between Russia and Central Asia that can promote broader geopolitical objectives. Secondly, in 2000 Russia signed a bilateral military agreement with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In May 2003, the Collective Security Treaty (1992) was transformed into the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), which helped Russia to regain foothold in Central Asia. The Collective Security Treaty (CST) was signed in 1992 by CIS members, including Russia and Central Asian states except Turkmenistan, to provide security structure in the former Soviet political space. The CST lost Uzbekistan, Georgia and Azerbaijan, by the time it formed CSTO.

However, a new geopolitical situation emerged in the Central Asian region after 11 September 2001, terrorist attacks in the United States. Russia along with other Central Asian countries condemned the terrorist attack and agreed to provide all sort of assistance to the US led forces. In order to hunt down the terrorist, responsible for terrorist attack in New York, the US chose Central Asia as its military base due to its close proximity to Afghanistan. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan gave military base facility to the US led anti-terrorist forces. Thus, Russia wants to regain its status of a prominent power in every aspect of politics, economic, trade, culture and security field in the region. By cooperating with China, it is determined to oppose the US presence in the region. The formation of SCO is a remarkable progress in this direction.
3.6.3 NATO - Central Asia

NATO has been involved in the Central Asia through the Partnership for Peace ( PfP) programme. All of the Central Asian states except Tajikistan are linked with NATO through the PfP programme. The PfP programme was agreed in Brussels in January 1994 in order to expand political and military cooperation between NATO and the newly independent states of the Soviet Union, as well as all interested member of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Basically, PfP was designed to establish cooperative military relation between the members of the partnership through consultation; joint operation with NATO-led peacekeeping and humanitarian mission; encourage transparency in defence planning and budgeting; and training military personal. The inclusion of the Central Asian states in the PfP programme formalized their relation with NATO, and provided a mechanism for regional security cooperation, and established a basis for combined action. Currently, the NATO alliance is pursuing the following strategic aims in Central Asia: support of the local regime striving to switch to democracy through Individual Partnership Action Plan ( IPAP); increased regional cooperation in the security sphere; setting up an effective system designed to oppose potential threats such as international national terrorism, drug trafficking, illicit trade in arms, and other types of organized crime, religious extremism, etc. (Shaymergenov 2005: 56).

In 1994, the programme’s first year, Central Asian governments did not participate in any NATO supported activity. But later on, they took part in different operations. In September 1997, military exercise for the first time took place in the thereof the Central Asian Republics- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan-under the PfP Programme with the participation of troops from the USA, Turkey and other western countries (Bakshi 2001: 172). Kazakhstan was praised by NATO for its participation in Iraq, sending and maintaining a small contingent of its peacekeeping battalion (KAZBAT) despite the worsening of the security environment within Iraq and other nations choosing to withdraw their forces (McDermott 2004: 3). However, Central Asian participation is showing signs of decline.

This change is been driven by a change in the security calculation of the Central Asian leaders, rather than by any strategic rethinking by NATO. For example, in private discussions Central Asian military official have given the impression that they
have concluded that bilateral agreements with the United States and Turkey offer more political and Operational benefits than do PiP Programme. Another reason was that of the developments in the Afghanistan i.e. the rise of Taliban, in late 1997's. Taliban fighters had swept across Afghanistan to the bank of Amu Dariya, which severs as a border between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. Their arrival coincided with an upsurge in domestic terrorism within several of Central Asian states, notably Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. This development led the need for Central Asian security guarantees more precise and Russian support more necessary as Russia has demonstrated the will and ability to act forcefully against Islamic extremist. Downgrading involvement with NATO is a low cost way of pleasing Moscow (Bhattay and Bronson 2000: 133).

The expansion of NATO presence in Central Asia posses some challenges also for the NATO. Local crisis could drag NATO into situation that it might prefer to avoid. The Centrasbat II exercises in Uzbekistan in 1998 demonstrate this (Bhattay and Bronson 2000: 133). The US wanted to hold the exercise in northern Tashkent district, where vulnerable industrial and nuclear power facilities were located, to practice the wake of a natural or industrial disaster (Bhattay and Bronson: 2000: 133). But the Uzbek authorities, however, argued for Farghanna valley, on the Tajik-Uzbek border where there is repeated ethnic clashes and also opposition movement against president Islam Karimov. In this case Uzbek officials cleared viewed the exercise as an opportunity to sustain the regions opposition groups.

Local conflict could easily draw Russia and NATO into an unwanted confrontation if circumstances arose which led to NATO powers and Russia supporting different groups. Another reason is that non-NATO states such as Iran and China have established interest in the region, which could lead NATO expansion in this region, into conflict with this countries it never intend to confront. Beijing, for instance, viewed Centrasbat as inimical to Chinese interest: a senior policy planner at a Beijing foreign policy think-tank has argued that NATO move eastwards was an example of Christian expansion which was threatening to China and which could lead eventually to the clash of civilization (Bhattay and Bronson 2000: 133).

The competing economic and political interest of NATO members could undermine
alliance cohesion. Turkey and US are developing bilateral relations, while encouraging greater NATO involvement, the European states, however, have different priorities. In some points the US and European NATO members acquired divergent views of the Central Asian states. While, US was guided by its geopolitical considerations, the European NATO members, for their part, the main trade partners of Russia, Kazakhstan, and other CIS countries, have their own, mainly trade and economic interests there.

 PfP was the first step in the direction in the expansion of NATO, which Russia could not predict at the right time. It reluctantly joined PfP. Through PfP programmes, US lead NATO can conduct military exercise, with not only European counties but with the former Central Asian Countries of Soviet Union also. Later on, Russia realizes the threat coming from PfP, which was bringing the Former Soviet republics more close to US. The Russian leadership could not oppose the expansion proposal with full vigour because of the economic and military weakness of the country. Russia wanted NATO to acknowledge a special strategic partnership, closer than that provided under the PfP. But Russia did not get that much role that it wanted. In August 2003, NATO has on an epoch-making mission with its taking over the peacekeeping mission in Kabul, it was first operation outside the Europe since it was established 54 years ago (Gathani 2003).

This can raise the security concern of Russia and China in this region. Russia tried to establish to a new strategic partnership with China to neutralize the West effect. Russia and China, along Central Asian states formed Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to promote peace and stability in the region. It seems that the presence of three security providing structure- NATO, CSTO and SCO- in Central Asian region, will make the geopolitical design of the region more complex.

3.7 PART (B): Regional Powers

3.7.1 India- Central Asia

The Central Asian region was traditionally accepted as India’s “extended neighbourhood”. For India, Central Asia is the immediate and strategic neighbourhood (Sinha 2004: 7). The subjects of India - Central Asia relation were not new one. Close of historical and cultural has always linked the two regions. India’s
Chapter 3: Central Asia and China's Geopolitical Linkages in Mackinder's Heartland Model

growing interest in Central Asia is not confined merely the linked threat of terrorism, separatism, and drug trafficking and incitement of civil violence. India also has deep and long standing strategic economic interest in the region. In this section India’s interest in the region is defined in three dimensions. Firstly, India’s strategic and security interest, then India’s energy strategies and finally, India’s economic interest relating to trade and investments.

The emergence of predominantly Muslim but in fact, multi-religious Central Asian Republics, has added a new dimension to the geopolitics of the countries located in its immediate neighbourhood. Central Asia shares borders with Afghanistan, which is a major sources of religious extremism in the region, Given the Kashmir angle, India has a vital interest in the security and political stability in this region. India cannot be walled off from the political developments, which takes place in the Central Asian region. Any advance by Islamic extremist groups in Central Asian Republics invigorates similar elements active in Kashmir. For India, the Kashmir issue pertains not to four million Muslims living in Kashmir valley alone but 130 million Muslim elsewhere in India (Roy 2001: 2275). Any instability in Afghanistan has had direct negative implication for India and Central Asian states. Therefore for India, the geo-strategic importance of Central Asian republics is immense.

Previously, the instability and civil war in Afghanistan had not only brought the spectra of the cold war close to India’s doorstep, but also made the entire Afghanistan-Pakistan region volatile. The intense militarization and nuclearisation of Pakistan, the phenomenal spread of sophisticated small arms and light weapon, and the growth of narcotics manufacture and trafficking, directly linked to the conflict in Afghanistan, had immense implication for the regional balance of power in South Asia (Stobdan 1998: 109). The key factor in this context is that the Pakistan views Afghanistan and Central Asia as a subordinate to its rivalry with India. The political and military leadership of Pakistan had for long considered, Afghanistan and Central Asia as a territorial enticement to realize the quest of ‘strategic depth’ for Pakistan, primarily for its military rivalry with India (Stobdan 1998: 109). The fluid situation in Central Asia offered an irresistible opportunity for Pakistan to strengthen anti-Indian programme and enlist Central Asian support for its regional policies. So for India to develop good political relations with the Central Asian countries will have a profound
significance in cutting the depth of Pakistani strategic defence and checking Pakistan from behind. Thus India’s long term strategic interest in forging closer cooperating with the Central Asian states should be obvious.

Terrorism is gaining prominence in the range of non-traditional threats in India and Central Asia. India is facing cross-border terrorism in Jammu-Kashmir bordering Pakistan and Central Asia in Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. In 1998, it was stated by Uzbekistan foreign minister, Abdualaziz Kamilov, that fundamentalist Islamic organisation were training up to 400 young Uzbeks and guerrillas at camps in Afghanistan, Pakistan with the task of carrying out terrorist attacks and destabilising the countries by overthrowing the governments (Roy 2001: 2277). So India’s interest is to help Central Asian states to curb terrorism so that it can help in the Indian frontier bordering Central Asian region.

The potential for comparative economic advantage for the two regions, India and Central Asia is vast. Central Asia is a huge consumer market, hungry for a range of goods and services, which India can provide. Both India and Central Asia have economic complementarities in terms of resources, manpower and markets. The size of the current bilateral trade is insignificant: two way trades add up to just 130 million dollar (Bhaumic 2004: 338). In 2000, Indian imports from the region added up to only 41 million dollar, while exports were worth of 85 million dollar (Bhaumic 2004: 338). A major portion of this trade is confined to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Indian economic cooperation is possible through joint ventures in banking, insurance, agriculture, information technology and the pharmaceutical industry. For example certain Indian commodities, tea and drugs, pharmaceuticals and fine chemicals have established a foot holds in the Central Asian market. There is a tremendous potential for business opportunities in Central Asian region and the Indian familiarly with the region and past contacts during Soviet era would work in favour. Sometimes non-availability of hard currency and lack of conversion facilities services make hurdles in this way.

Central Asian large gas and oil reserves and Indian rising demand for energy sources also suggested a naturally complementary relationship. India wants to diversify its sources of energy resources. This concern is even more important because the energy
flow from the Persian Gulf is subjected to periodical recurring crisis threats of oil cut-off. That's why India cannot accept excessive dependence upon that. The joint Working group on energy with Turkmenistan has already been set up. ONGC Videsh is currently negotiating on exploration block on the Caspian Sea offshore, south-west of the Kazakhstan and participating in the two discovered fields in Kazakhstan (Jatar 2004: 316).

As Central Asian states are landlocked and India is not contiguous with these states, it will have to find new ways to get access to Central Asia oil and gas reserves. The shortest physical rout is via Pakistan and Afghanistan. Another one is through Chinese Xinjiang. But neither of these routes is safe. So India exploited it's growing relation with Iran to develop a land-sea corridor that could be used to contact India to Central Asia and beyond into Russia. This corridor includes rail and road links between Turkmenistan and Iran and it connects it to the port of Bandar Abbas in the Persian Gulf. The matter of utilizing this transit facility in Iran, for India's trade Central Asian Republics is being taken up for consideration by New Delhi. Even Iran and a number of Central Asian states have realized the importance of this transit facility and work on it has intensified in recent times.

So it is important for India to ensure that this region does not enter into any hostile combination against it. India also needs to carefully watch any strategic gain to Pakistan in this region. India should focus on a positive engagement with Central Asia based on economic ties. Recently, India has made its strategic presence in the Central Asian region by establishing an airbase at Ayni in Tajikistan. The airbase at Ayni (also known as Farkhor), is six miles north-east of Dushanbe, Tajikistan’s capital. The new airbase will be operated under a trilateral joint agreement with Russia and Tajikistan. The airbase, which had been shattered since 1985, was instrumental in the Soviet campaign in Afghanistan. The airbase is a first for India - its first foreign base and first in Central Asia (Daly 2007). This development will certainly be not welcomed by both Pakistan and China.

As the competing strategic interest among external power in Central Asia continues, India's attitudes and interest generally converged with those of Iran and Russia. India and Central Asia have good relationship during Soviet era though it was indirect at
that time. In the absence of peaceful and stable Afghanistan and in the face of the hostile attitude of Pakistan, India has been left with no option but to seek the Iranian help in finding access to Central Asia. Terrorism is another subject where India and Russian interest converge, in context of Central Asia. All these parties are facing serious problems by the cross border terrorism and Islamic extremist movements, Russia in Chechnya, India in Kashmir and Uzbekistan by the IMU forces. One more problem related to terrorism and one that confronts India Russia and Central Asian states is that of drug trafficking. An intense drug trade and arms smuggle in Central Asia pose major threats to stability in Central Asia. Central Asian region also remains highly vulnerable to the smuggling of fissile material for Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). All these concerns are common for India Russia and Central Asia. Generally Russia has a good relationship with India and regarding security interests in Central Asia, India’s interest is not against it.

India and China are in competition with each other to gain major oil fields in the Central Asian region. In 2005, China outbid India to acquire PetroKazakh, Kazakhstan’s leading oil producers. Regarding India's observer status in the SCO initially China opposed it. India was given as observer status only when China brought Pakistan in the SCO grouping. It seems that China is going to provide tough competition to India in both trade and energy field. And also India's presence in Ayni airbase and its strengthening cooperation with US, is threatening China with the fear of strategic encirclement.

3.7.2 Pakistan- Central Asia

The emergence of Central Asian states in 1991, in Pakistan’s perception, was a historic opportunity to enhance political and economic cooperation in the Central Asian geopolitical space. Hence, it increased its ties with these countries after 1990 with great hope. A strong relation with the Central Asian countries, in Pakistan’s view, can re-link the two vital Muslim regions. It can offer Pakistan’s strategic depth and raise expectation of a widened economic and cultural community that would be to its advantage. In political- strategic terms, Pakistan aims at developing the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) countries as a counterweight against India at the regional level. Official documents of Pakistan on Central Asia stress that, “Our relationship with Central Asian states can provide Pakistan the strategic depth that we
Pakistan wishes to seek the support of the Central Asian states on such regional issue as Kashmir and Afghanistan (Amin 1994: 219). But, the Pakistani move in Central Asian region to get 'strategic depth' didn't get much support from Central Asian side. So far, India has good relations with the Central Asian states.

Pakistan sees Islam as an important factor to strengthen its relation with Central Asian states and holds that it is the only neighbouring power to share the Sunni Islamic faith. Immediately, after the creation of Central Asian states, Pakistan stepped in to the Central Asian region by presenting itself as a powerful, modern, Islamic country with strong historical and cultural links with the region. However, the initial advantage was lost when it moved to control Kabul with a puppet regime of Taliban. Ghufran, in his study is little more cautious as he comments, "Islam is an important linkage between Pakistan and Central Asian Republics. Facts prove that it not a decisive factor in their relations. Economic considerations presently overshadow the religious dimension in their relationship" (Ghufran 1995: 261). On return from three-week visit to Central Asian region, a medium level delegation headed by Sarder Asif Ahmad Ali, the then minister of Economic Affairs, pronounced, "It is foolish to talk of Islamic revivalism in Central Asia. The Central Asian Republics are not interested in Islam. They are enlightened people and will not compromise on the free market, secularism and democracy (Dietl 1997: 138). The Central Asian states and Afghanistan are today strongly opposed to the radical Islam.

The Pakistani idea of religious ties with Central Asia states also did not get support from its close ally China. China considers Pakistan’s support of Islamic regime in the Central Asian states, as security threat. China having large number of Muslim populations inhabiting the Central Asian Borders considers it a threat to its security as they are gaining support from Pakistan. Pakistan’s connection with the religious extremist and separatist group worries China. Uzbekistan accused three Pakistani organisations - Mezb-e-Harkat-e- Jihad (MHJ), Devas-Ul-Ershad (DUE) and Islamic Ulema Society (IUS) of clandestinely training hundreds of Central Asian at various centres in Pakistan, with the task of carrying out terrorist attacks, and de-establishing the countries by overthrowing the government. Thus, the Chinese interest in the Central Asian region is to have a secular Central Asia as its western neighbourhood.
China fears that the Pakistani support to Islamic extremism to the separatist group of Xinjiang region would be more difficult to handle. Pakistan is a close ally of China, but when it comes to the issue XUAR, China strongly opposes Pakistan’s role in training and supply of arms to Uyghur separatists.

When Pakistan did not succeed to bolster its relations with Central Asian states by focusing on religious factors, it shifted to enhance economic interests. In these follow ups, Pakistan has discovered a number of potential economic cooperation areas between the two regions. The Central Asian states can supply oil, gas, electricity and minerals such as cooper; iron, chromium and lead to Pakistan while Pakistan in return, can supply textiles, cement, medicines, shoes, machinery and telecommunication equipments (Amin 1994: 221).

Also, Pakistan logically portrayed itself as the natural trade route for Central Asian states to reach world markets. Pakistan also wants closing their trade and economic dependence on Russia. The major advantage Pakistan offers to the landlocked Central Asian states is its shortest route to and the port facilities at Karachi in the Arabian Sea. Thus, Pakistan is also developing a new Seaport at Gwadar in Baluchistan. There are other proposals from Pakistan to build links with Central Asia through Afghanistan. The Pakistan finance minister, Sartaj Azizi, advocated 480 km railway link between Chaman (Pakistan) and Kuska (Afghanistan) passing through Kandahar and Herat (Afghanistan), linking Karachi to rest of the Central Asian states (Amin 1994: 223). Thus, Pakistan is advocating that these transit facilities will replace the existing Russian route and enable the Central Asian states to handle their export to Africa, the Middle East, the South East Asia and other countries. Feasibility studies for such a project are being conducted by Pakistan and Central Asian states.

But, there are hurdles and constraints in enhancing the economic cooperation and transit communication. The major problem for Pakistan to establish a strong relationship with Central Asia region is geographic in nature. While only several miles away from Tajikistan across the Wakhan Corridor, it is separated from the region by Afghanistan (Cornell 2004: 163). The economic limitation like lack of adequate financial resources in Pakistan also matters. The existing law and order problem in Afghanistan would definitely make difficult for Pakistan to have a land
trade route with Central Asia. The other external factors, like the presence of Iran, Turkey, Russia and Western power may also hinder the process of overland linkage with the Central Asian states.

Currently, Pakistan is the frontline state in the global war against terrorism in Afghanistan by providing transit route to supply equipments to NATO and US forces in Afghanistan. The shipments are delivered to Karachi port and then reach Afghanistan through Khyber Pass. But, this supply line is getting insecure as there are regular attacks by extremists forces on the NATO conveys. The conditions in NWFP and FATA of Pakistan through which the transportation destined to NATO forces is really getting worsened in recent times. This will seriously undermine the strategic importance of Pakistan in this global war against terrorism in Afghanistan. If the conditions in Afghanistan don’t improve, it will definitely affect Pakistan’s desire of making good relations with the Central Asian region. All these elaborate the Pakistan’s interest and hindrance in Central Asia region to reinforce its relation.

3.7.3 Iran- Central Asia

Iran has many advantages in comparison to other regional powers to gear up in the Central Asian region. Iran shares geographical boundary for a good length with Turkmenistan and Caspian Sea with Kazakhstan. Its ethnic and linguistic affinities with the Central Asian region give Iran an upper hand to make strong bonds with Central Asian state. In the initial year of Central Asian independence, Iran attempted to play religious card by projecting itself as the core of an Islamic world and value system. But the initial enthusiasm, however, calmed down as Saudis and Pakistan entered in a big way in this conflict and Iran’s brand of Shia radicalism found less favour in the Sunni dominated Central Asian region. Thus, the religious card turned out be a disadvantage for Iran in the Central Asian region. As a Shiite Muslim state, Iran cannot become an effective force in that area, the predominant portion of the Muslim population belong to the Sunni Sect (Ahrari 1996: 48). However, according to Ahrari (1996: 47), “The ethnic and linguistic commonality between Iran and Tajikistan can also become a powerful basis of cooperation, as the Tajikis are culturally Iranian rather than Turkic and speak an eastern dialect of Farsi (Persian).”

In the cultural sphere there are deep rooted historical ties between Iran and Central
Asian countries. For centuries, Central Asia, as a part of the greater Khorasan was one of the two pillars of the Islamic civilization, the other being in Baghdad (Sajjadpour 1994: 199). But in contemporary world common economic and security interest make more favourable grounds for cooperation within the states. So, Iran changed it priorities.

Iran changed its emphasis to economic cooperation with Central Asian region. The assertiveness of the newly independent states and the development of oil and gas production in the Caspian areas obliged Iran to adopt a more creative policy towards Central Asia (Efegil and Stone 2001: 353). The area of cooperation of prime concern for Iran and Central Asia are those of transport and communication. Central Asian states have long been entirely dependent on Russia for channels of communication with the outside world. If Central Asian states have to establish true independence from Russia, then they have to diversify their outlets in a high priority. Equally, for Iran, Central Asia represents the key to potential market in Europe and the Far East. At the economic level, Iran looks to the region as an important market for Iranian made consumer goods. Also Iran’s relatively well-developed oil and other industry can provide technical assistance to these republics.

On the other side, land locked Central Asian states look to Iran as a natural linkage and gateway to the high seas. Iran’s geographic location gives it a unique advantage of being able to offer these new states direct and relatively easy access to warm water ports. It offers the shortest route for Central Asia energy export. But, the US sanctions on Iran dismantled this option for the Central Asian states. Some efforts from the Central Asian side tried to cash this option. For example, despite US disapproval, Turkmenistan opted for Iranian route to export its natural gas to Europe and both countries signed an agreement in 1995 to construct a gas pipeline between Korpeji (Turkmenistan) and Kurt Kuly (Iran) (Patnaik 2002: 6). This pipeline was put into operation in 1997 and is now only the export pipeline of Turkmenistan that is not dependent on Russia (Patnaik 2002: 6). On January 2010, the second Turkmenistan-Iran gas pipeline started pumping oil to Iran.

Another, important determinant of Iran’s policy towards the Central Asia is related to political and security consideration. Seeing an opportunities to expand its influence in
the region and Trans-Caucasus, Iran set out to fulfil what it saw as its natural geopolitical role of providing a bridge between the outside world (Efegil and Stone 2001: 353). Since 1991 Iran has had to deal with a volatile security environment to the north. Almost overnight, the numbers of its neighbours increased from one to three on land (i.e. Armenia, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan) and from one to four on Caspian Sea. Iran got closer to the trouble spots of the intense ethnic conflict in the Caucasus. The security dimension of Iran’s relationship with Central Asian states is even more significant because of the instability and fluidity of the political situation in Central Asia. The pain staking process of nation building, the legitimacy crisis, rapid social and economic transformation, decolonization, ethnic diversity, border disputes and a catalogue of other issues are sources of instability in the post Soviet Republics (Sajjadpour 1994: 198). The instability may invite foreign interventions in this region. As we see in the case of Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the US has made military foundation in Central Asian states to launch attacks in Afghanistan. For this, by no means, Iran is prepared.

The enhancement of U.S presence in the region in the wake of 9/11 has increased security challenges for Iran. Moreover, US accused Iran of being an “axis of evil” together with North Korea. The strong U.S. military presence in Afghanistan and the stationing of U.S forces in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan have critically increased Iranian perception of strategic encirclement. Iran fears that it might be the target of a pre-emptive US military strike aimed at neutralizing Iran’s nuclear assets. So Iran is seeking alliance with China, Russia and SCO members against the US. China and Russia are also not in favour of imposing ban on Iran for not fully cooperating in the issue of making nuclear weapons for economic reasons. Iran is a major source of energy import for China. Russia has heavily invested in Iran's civil nuclear energy.

On the other hand, the Central Asian states have overcome some of their understating about Iran, and are eager to explore the economic and logistic advantages that a close relationship with Iran could offer. On January 6th, 2010 the 182-kilometer Turkmen-Iranian pipeline started modestly with the pumping of 8 billion cubic meters (bcm) of Turkmen gas (Bhadrakumar 2010). But its annual capacity is 20bcm, and that would meet the energy requirements of Iran’s Caspian region and enable Tehran to free its
own gas production in the southern fields for export. The mutual interest is perfect: Ashgabat gets an assured market next door; northern Iran can consume without fear of winter shortages; Tehran can generate more surpluses for exports; Turkmenistan can seek transportation routes to the world market via Iran; and Iran can aspire to take advantage of its excellent geographical location as a hub for the Turkmen exports (Bhadra Kumar 2010). These pipeline links will enhance Iran's position in Turkmenistan and thereafter in Central Asian States. It will open up opportunities for other Central Asian States to think about the possibilities of new outlets for the international market.

3.7.4 Turkey-Central Asia

Turkish policies in the five Central Asian states are formed by cultural and historical legacies as well as modern political and economic realities. With the emergence of independent states in Central Asia, Turkey made vigorous attempt to project itself as their role model. The major components of its identity, which Turkey thinks that should be adopted by the Central Asian states, are Islam, democracy, free market and pro-western orientation. In president Demirel's words, "Turkey had proved that Islam, Democracy, Human Rights and Market Economy could go together hand in hand" (Aydin 1996: 162). Even the Turkish role in Central Asian region has been favoured by the west. The West put forward Turkey as Muslim, yet a secular democratic, as a counterweight against the Islamic fundamentalist forces. The West fears that the vacuum left by the collapse of communism could lead to an emergence of Islamic Fundamentalism among the Muslim republics of Central Asia. The present Central Asian leaders are trying to avoid the question of place of religion (Islam) and ethnicity (Turkish) in their identity. Instead, they are focusing primarily on the future of their economic relations with other states also. Also, Turkey has categorically declared that its relationship with new Central Asian states would be based only on, respect for independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, non interference in the internal affairs and equal rights and common benefits.

Turkey's common ethnic, linguistic and cultural unity with the Turkic-speaking people of Central Asia provides the basis of cultural cooperation between the Turkey and Central Asia. Some cultural and educational projects undertaken by Turkey, covers the establishment of Eurasia Television Network system that broadcast from
Ankara to Central Asia through satellite (Sayari, 1994:184). Turkey initiated training Programmes for the Uzbeks, Turkmen's and others for specialization in various government institutions such as foreign services and central banking, emerging private sector enterprises and the military (Sayari 1994 183).

Turkey expected to gain major economic benefits from the developments of closer ties with the Central Asian states. The area in which Turkey is keen to develop its cooperation with the Central Asian states are production and transportation of agricultural products, building of light industrial complex, the search for minerals and food industries. Turkey also discussed the possibility of providing military training to Central Asia, actively advocated building oil pipelines trough Turkey, to market Central Asian energy and encouraged the adoption of Turkish, i.e. Latin, alphabet for all the Turkic languages of Central Asia (Aydin 1996: 163). Central Asian leaders were also impressed by Turkey's market oriented economic policies and expected to receive technical know-how, managerial expertise and financial aid from Turkey, as well as establishing a secure route for distribution of their product to the west.

Turkey has also taken a measured approach towards promoting political reforms in the Central Asian region. For example, during the 2005 crisis in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, the Turkish government called on all parties to uphold both civil liberties and public order. Moreover, the Central Asian leaders tended to view Turkey's activities more favourably than those of other Western countries, seen as more directly promoting Eurasia's coloured revolutions. Turks have also provided substantial advice, observers, and other assistance to Central Asian elections (Weitz 2006: 5).

Turkey is also interested in providing guaranteed access to vital energy resources and oil and gas transport routes. Turkey has strongly advocated the construction of Baku-Ceyhan pipelines to bring out the energy resources from Central Asian states. It has enormous support from the US. Turkey's support of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline is also related to its deeply felt environmental concerns regarding the passage of oil tankers through the Turkish narrow straits of Bosphorus and Dardanelles as well as the small Sea of Marmara. All the tankers pass from these states after loading from the Novorossiysk port of Russia. The BTC pipeline was completed in 2005. The
successful implementation of the BTC paved the way for new projects aimed at transporting Central Asian oil and (especially) natural gas towards Europe through Turkey, making Turkey a geopolitical pivot in the energy game for western powers.

For Russia, Turkish penetration into the Central Asian region, which Moscow considers its natural sphere of influence, constitute a sharp strategic and security challenge. Initially, Russia welcomed Turkish role in Central Asia, a secular democratic political model, to counterweight against Iranian dominated pan-Islamism. But later on Russian changed their policy as Turkey moved more aggressively in the Central Asian region. Russia fears that Turkey might become an undeclared agent of the west in the region to reduce the Russian influence. It is clear from Turkey’s alignment with the US and NATO during the entire cold war period. Turkey is a member of NATO.

Apart from Russian security anxiety, the debate over new pipelines route for the export of oil and gas from the Caspian Sea has become the focal point for the strategic competition. Turkey’s intense engagement in the competition of over exploitation of Caspian energy and its transportation through Baku-Ceyhan pipeline to western markets is seen as a threat to Russian monopoly of transportation and revenue loss. Turkey’s support of this alternate pipeline will bypass Russia.

Turkey too could promote Western interests in the region. For example, opposition from Russia, China, and other SCO governments presently prevents Washington from obtaining formal membership or observer status in the SCO. In contrast, SCO members might allow Turkey to join because of its long-standing ties to Central Asia, dramatically improved relations with Russia, and growing contacts with China (Weitz 2006: 6). Turkey’s entry into the SCO would make Ankara the only member of both the SCO and NATO, reaffirming its role as a geopolitical bridge. It also could help prevent the SCO transformation into an anti-American bloc. This will be a great relief for the United State’s hegemonic interest in the Central Asian region.

It is well-known that the Central Asian region is surrounded by Great powers like China and Russia, and regional powers like Iran, Pakistan, and India, who desire to influence the area. Turkey may not be the largest, richest, or closest power to the
region, but its historical and ethnic connections to Central Asian regions may contribute significantly to influence the region.

### 3.8 China as a Potential Power in the Heartland Region

China is a huge continental-sized landmass situated in central, south, and east Asia. It is bordered by Mongolia and Russia to the north; North Korea to the north-east; Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand to the south; and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Nepal, India, Burma, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to the west and south-west. To the east, it accesses the Pacific Ocean via the Sea of Japan, Korea Bay, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and South China Sea.

It is currently effectively contained on land by the other regional powers: Russia in the north; India in the West; the Indo-Chinese countries to the south. The south is the weakest land barrier to Chinese expansion, but China surely remembers its difficult war with Vietnam a few decades ago (Sempa 2009). And at the eastern and south-eastern pacific coast, the strong presence of US navy checks it to advance in that direction. The only potential area where China can increase its influence is its north-western side towards Central Asian region.

#### 3.8.1 China’s Geopolitical Setting and Its Links with the Central Asian Region

To influence the Central Asian region, the advantage of China is that the China shares a long border with the three Central Asian States i.e. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Even if we look at the geographic and strategic location of the China, it is clear that its western border in the side of Central Asian states are the only continuous land area where China can go through. This will be clear by having a look to the China’s political map. China has traditionally referred to itself as Zhongguo, meaning “Central Kingdom”, a term that implies an ethnocentric bias towards itself and superior attitude towards the rest of the world (Veeck et al. 2007: 77). Throughout much of its history, China clearly perceived itself located at the centre of the world, wherein its relation with other states and especially those on its immediate periphery. This was the view of China when it little knew about the rest world except the periphery regions. This traditional view to project the outside world changed after the European penetration especially after the opium war in 1939-1942 (Veeck et al.
China has taken much interest in the peripheral territories to claim territorial sovereignty in the frontier regions. At present, China is well aware of its location and possible threats related to its geopolitical setting. The geopolitical location is here analysed in two dimensions, external and internal. Both dimensions are significant to understand the geopolitical needs of China.

**Map No. 3.2**

**China and Its Neighbouring Countries**

The external setting of China is like this. To the east are the South and East-China Seas i.e. the pacific coast. To the north-east is Siberian region of Russia and Korean peninsula. In the north Mongolia is situated. In the north-west lies mountainous Central Asian border of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Kazakhstan. To the south-west are great Himalayas Mountains bordering India, Nepal and Bhutan. In the south-east, there is Indo-China region bordering Myanmar, Laos and Vietnam.

The major threat for China related to its external setting arises in from two directions
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in current political scenario; one is from the pacific coast side and another from the north-west side. Otherwise, China is secure from all other directions given the fact that the geographical conditions favours it and its relative strength is more in comparison to the states situated in those directions. The heavy US military presence in the pacific area poses threat to China in those directions. US military are present in the South Korea and Japan. Philippines is a close ally of US and Taiwan is also backed by US. China must prevent attacks from the sea. The second threat to China comes from north-west direction. The Central Asian states do not pose any threat to China. But from the powers that are establish their military bases in the Central Asian region, and moving eastward can put serious challenge to China. In this aspect, the role of Central Asian region is important for the strategic security of China. It is in China’s interest to check any foreign military power to establish military bases in the strategically important region of Central Asian region.

The internal geopolitical setting of China is described like this. Internally, China must be divided into two parts: the Chinese Heartland and the non-Chinese buffer regions surrounding it. The Chinese Heartland is populated by the majority Han Chinese population and the outer buffer regions are populated by non-Han population. It is important to notice that more than a billion people live in this area. The Chinese Heartland is situated in the basins of two major rivers the-Yellow River in the north and the Yangtze in the south, and it’s China’s agricultural region, becoming the land of farmers and merchants. The surrounding areas are the land of nomads and horsemen (Friedman 2008a).

A ring of non-Han regions surround this Heartland. They are Tibet, XUAR, Inner-Mongolia and Manchurian region. These are the buffer regions that historically have been under Chinese rule when China was strong and have broken away when China was weak. Friedman (2008a) pointed out the importance of these non-Han regions to China commenting that apart from providing the buffer, possessions of these regions also provided defensible border to China. From the point of internal geopolitical setting the Heartland China is strategically secured state when it controls the buffer region of Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and Manchuria.
Till now, we have discussed the internal and external setting of China and the possible threats arising from that geopolitical setting in the above paragraph. Now the question arises how China will secure itself from the threat. George Friedman (2008a) has pointed out three geopolitical imperatives for China. They are; Maintain internal unity in the Han Chinese regions; Maintain control of the buffer regions; protect the coast from foreign encroachment.

The first geopolitical imperative is to Maintain Internal Unity within the Chinese Heartland. The great danger in China arises from the internal division caused by the economic prosperity within the Heartland of Han Chinese nation after the opening of Chinese economics to the world in 1978. The Heartland of China consists of two parts, one is the affluent coastal part and another is the poor interior regions of the Chinese Heartland but not the buffer regions of China. In simple terms, the basic geopolitical issues to maintain internal unity can be understood in this way. For China to develop it must engage in international trade. If it does that, it must use its coastal
cities as an interface with the world. When that happens, the coastal cities and the surrounding region become increasingly wealthy. Subsequently, the influence of foreigners over this region increases and the interests of foreigners and the coastal Chinese converge and begin competing with the interests of the central government. And, if the central government weakens, the peripheral regions will spin off, and China will then be vulnerable to foreigners taking advantage of Chinese weakness.

Historically, land trade has not posed a problem for China. The Silk Road allowed foreign influences to come into China and the resulting wealth created a degree of instability but overall it could be managed. But, the dynamics of industrialisation changed both the geography of Chinese trade and its consequences. In the mid-19th century, when Europe, led by the British, forced the Chinese government to give trading concessions to the British, it opened a new chapter in Chinese history. For the first time, the Pacific coast was the interface with the world, not Central Asian region (Friedman 2008a). But, for China to prosper in the age of globalization, it has to engage in international trade which a largely based on sea routes. Hence, China is constantly challenged by the problem of how to avoid this outcome while engaging in international trade.

To resolve this issue, the role of Central Asian region has become significant. If the trade towards pacific direction is the main factor creating disparity between the Han Chinese region, then by creating new trade direction towards the western region i.e. towards Central Asian region through XUAR would be used to balance this, so that the people living in the interior side of the Han Chinese region also get chance to prosper and make political counterweight to coastal parts. This will be helpful in strengthening the central government. For this, the revival of the Great Silk route is very important. In addition, this will be helpful to integrate the western region to the Chinese Heartland. This economic integration can stimulate development in these region and be instrumental helpful to neutralize separatist feeling. China has made serious effort in this direction by launching Great Western Development Programme started in January 2000. In this way, Central Asian region is geopolitically linked and is important for China.

The Second geopolitical imperative is to control the Buffer Region. After the
establishment of PRC in 1949, it moved quickly to full and sovereign control of its outlying territories such as Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia and all of Manchuria. Mao consolidated the buffer regions of Tibet, Xinjiang, and Inner Mongolia and strengthened the security of Han Chinese region. Controlling Tibet meant that from Indian side any power could not move across the Himalayas and establish a secure base of operations on the Tibetan Plateau. Inner Mongolia and Manchuria buffered China from Russian side, while Xinjiang make buffered form the Central Asian side. The distances, the poor transportation and the lack of resources meant that any invasion would run into massive logistical problems, well before it reached Han China's populated regions, and become bogged down. Hence, buffer region presents a great secure area which is very hard to move across to reach mainland China.

These buffer regions represent the foundation of the national security of China. Hence, the XUAR become important for Chinese national security and any separatist idea in Xinjiang is not tolerated by China. Moreover, the security of bordering Central Asian states is important to maintain buffer status of the Xinjiang region. Even it is important to maintain political and economic stability in the Central Asian region and to protect this region from falling under hostile forces. The recent political instability in the bordering state of Kyrgyzstan in April 2010 is a setback for Chinese policy makers to maintain political stability in this region.

The third geopolitical imperative of China is to protect the coast side. In the present situation, no power has the interest or forces to try to invade mainland China, and hope to win. So, invasion is not a meaningful threat. The vulnerability to coastal belt is economic in nature. Deng Xiaoping has opened the Chinese economy in 1978 to outside world and believed that China still can maintain a strong central government. If the Central authority weakens, the buffer region of the Han China may drift away, creating security problem to the Chinese Heartland. So, the economic dimension was as important as military dimension to protect the territorial integrity of China. And in this age of economic globalisation where economic matters have great values, it is important for China to look Chinese geopolitical security from this angle. Presently, Chinese have become highly dependent on seaborne trade and the heavy presence of US navy in the pacific region can blockade China's ports. Therefore, China's primary military interest is to make such a blockade impossible. This can be again more
difficult if it could be encircled by the US on the Central Asian part. So the Chinese have fundamental interest to pull out the US forces in the Central Asian region. It is also equally important to revive trade routes passing through Central Asian region to diversify trading option in the crisis time.

3.8.2 Central Asia and China: Borders Contiguity

To secure border and maintain territorial integrity is nation’s top priority. In the western front, China shares a long border with Central Asian region. There is border contiguity between China and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. To protect its border, China has come up with agreements with all the three former Soviet republics. So far there is no border dispute. But after the September 11, incident, the presence of foreign powers especially US in the soil of Central Asian region pose fears to China’s border security. The American forces have military presence in Kyrgyzstan at Manas air base.

Map No. 3.4

Xinjiang and It’s Central Asian Borderlands

3.8.3 Location (Regional and World) of Central Asia and China

Central Asian region is landlocked. It is situated between to great powers China and Russia. These two geographical realities possess a limited option in their foreign policy conduct. The disadvantage of landlocked states and region as well is that they have inadequate means of communications for international trade. And we know that sea is main means of international trade they have to make good relations with the next door neighbours to reach sea ports. Also, Central Asia’s regional location (weak states between stronger states) forces them to seek good relations with their strong immediate neighbours (Russia and China).

The influence of geographical location on countries’ foreign policy is explained and analysed in detail by Spykman. Spykman argues that location of any state in the world map influences the external policy of the state. Central Asian region is not an exception. Spykman identifies location as the most important factors influencing countries’ foreign policies. Spykman’s concept of location is two-fold and can be summarized in the following statement:

“The location of a state may be described from the point of view of world location, that is with reference to the land masses and oceans of the world as a whole, or from the point of view of regional location, that is with reference to the territory of other states and immediate surroundings” (Spykman 1938a: 29).

In terms of world location, the most favoured location is the one close to the oceans and the least favoured location is that of total landlocked. According to Spykman, landlocked countries are disadvantaged because “their security problem is defined exclusively in terms of land defence, and therefore in terms of immediate neighbours” (Spykman 1938b: 214).

In comparison to world location, regional location has a more immediate conditioning effect on a country’s foreign policy (Spykman 1938b: 213). Regional location is best understood in terms of neighbouring countries’ relative strength. There are three types of regional locations: “the strong state between two weak neighbours, the relation of approximate equality, and the weak state between two strong states” (Spykman, 1938b: 225). It is obvious that the position of the strong state between two weak states is the most favoured one for any state. “A location between states of power equal to
its own is a difficult position for a state, since it is in constant danger from a joint attack should its neighbours form an alliance" (Spykman 1938b: 226). Finally, a location of a weak state between two strong states (position of a buffer state) is probably the most constraining one. Spykman argues that a buffer state is forced to pursue a neutral foreign policy.

“In any case, such a state will be forced to adopt a very special foreign policy. Its own security depends on the security, which its neighbors derive from its continued existence. This means that such a state is forced to pursue a precarious policy of neutrality. Any variation which leaves the impression that the bond with one neighbour is becoming stronger may tempt the other neighbor to replace the security obtained from the existence of an independent buffer with a security obtained from actual occupation of the buffer territory” (Spykman 1938b: 227).

It is important that Spykman’s idea about the conditioning factors (world location, and regional location) should not be analysed in isolation from each other at least in the case of Central Asian region. On the contrary, by interacting with one another, each factor can either reinforce or counteract another. The most favoured combination of the factors allows much flexibility and advantage in conducting foreign policies; and vice versa, the least favoured combination significantly constrains foreign policy choices for state. In this respect Central Asian region is least favoured. This is because from the point of world location, it is landlocked and from regional location point of view, it is situated between two great powers (Russia and China) and in between stronger regional power like Turkey and Iran. Thus, Central Asian states, world location i.e. landlockedness makes these states more dependent on their immediate neighbours for economic and military security; and subsequently leads to follow multidimensional foreign policy. On the other hand the regional location, i.e. weak states between stronger states, force Central Asian states to seek good relations with their strong immediate neighbour China and Russia.

These can be observed in the foreign policy of different Central Asian States. Kazakhstan has adopted multi-vector foreign policy approach. Likewise, Uzbekistan has tried to maintain balance between US and Russia. Kyrgyzstan has military bases of US and Russia. Turkmenistan seems neutral towards all powers. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have oil and gas pipeline network with China. It allows these two states
to balance their oil and gas export to Russia.

3.8.3.1 World Location

In terms of world location, defined with reference to the land masses and oceans, the Central Asian states are landlocked countries, which is the least favoured location. The most obvious disadvantage of a landlocked location is that it has no direct access to international markets. And as all of us know that economic development remains one of the state’s and region’s top priorities, besides the prerequisite goal of maintaining national sovereignty and political stability, the Central Asian region’s landlocked nature significantly make out hurdle in its economic development. For example, the oil-rich Kazakhstan’s and gas-rich Turkmenistan’s economic prosperity is not guaranteed, given that both countries are not independent energy exporters. Because, of the landlocked location, both the states have to rely on neighbouring state’s pipeline network to bring out the energy resources into international market.

Previously, the Central Asian states were part of the Soviet Union and integrated with its economic system and all the transportation routes pass through Russia. Road, railways, oil, and pipelines pass through Russian route. But, now as Central Asian states are independent countries, they have to look for new trading partners and trade routes. Moreover, in the absence of direct and cheap access to the sea, transportation costs can be very high for the landlocked Central Asian countries, because land transport is costlier than the sea transport. These states have to invest heavily to build advanced physical infrastructure systems to effectively transport their goods (most importantly, oil, gas, and mineral resources) to foreign markets. In this context, Central Asian countries will depend upon the goodwill of the neighbouring countries. They are forced to make good relations with neighbouring states.

In Kazakhstan’s case, the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbaev, has openly recognized the problem of landlockedness and its constraining effect on Kazakhstan’s foreign policy. He explicitly stated that it is because of Kazakhstan’s “landlocked status and inadequate means of communications” (Tokaev 2004: 135), which impede international trade, “it was of vital importance to maintain mutually beneficial and friendly ties, based on full trust, with the next-door neighbours, first of all Russia and China” (Tokaev 2004:135).
3.8.3.2 Regional Location

In terms of regional location measured in neighbouring countries' relative strength, the Central Asian states position as buffer states between much stronger Russia and China is the most constraining one. Spykman argues that weak states surrounded by stronger states are forced to pursue a neutral foreign policy because their own security depends on the security, which their neighbours derive from their continued existence (Sadri 1998: 227). The Central Asian states’ increased interaction and bonding with one powerful neighbour (Russia or China) may ‘cause’ feelings of anxiety, fear, suspicion, insecurity, and threat on the part of another big neighbour. It is the region’s location between the East and the West and the major powers’ perception of the strategic significance of the Central Asian region in the geopolitical game that greatly magnifies Central Asia’s importance in the contemporary international system.

China is a great power located in the eastern part of the Central Asian region. It can connect the region to economic power of the East and South-East Asian countries. Even it can serve as an alternate route to export its energy resources. China can also serve as a sea outlet to the landlocked Central Asian states. On the other hand, Russia’s importance cannot be under valued. The large Russian population living in Central Asian states, the oil and gas pipeline towards Russian direction as the main export route, the Russian military bases in Central Asian soil, Russia is still the main trading partner. Thus, the Central Asian states cannot ignore any of these two states. At the same time, the immediate presence of the world’s great powers and the increasing strategic importance of the Central Asian region for Russia, China and the United States perhaps provide the greatest constraint on Central Asia’s foreign policy and the Central Asian state’s relatively small size and landlockedness further reinforce Central Asia’s disadvantageous regional position.

3.8.4 China – Xinjiang - Central Asian Region (Geopolitical Space Between Central Asian Region and China)

The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR) is located in north-western China. It is the largest political subdivision of China. It covers an area of 1.66 million square kilometres that accounts for more than one sixth of China's total territory. It borders eight countries such as Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Pakistan,
Mongolia, India and Afghanistan (Official website of the XUAR). The geopolitical position of Xinjiang is very important for China. In the past, Xinjiang served as the key controlling section of the well-known Silk Road, while now it is an unavoidable part of the railway leading to the second Eurasia Continental Bridge. China can contact to the West through this transition zone. The two important obstacles to communicate between China and the West are first the 5,000 kilometres Taklamakan Desert, and the second one is the Great Wall of China that stretches along the entire length of the China border. Thus, Xinjiang is the only Chinese territory beyond the desert and the Great Wall, making it China's window to the West. Xinjiang forms the westernmost point of Chinese territory, and were used by the Chinese as a buffer zone against the Soviet threat during the Cold War. Xinjiang is thus of great interest to China for its own security and makes it indispensable to China.

The landscape of XUAR is very important for China while analysing the geopolitical linkages between China and Central Asia. As Xinjiang has geographical contiguity with Central Asia, there is inter-state presence of ethnic groups in Xinjiang and Central Asia states. This creates problems of separatism in Xinjiang more complex. At present, there are two opposite forces operating in XUAR. First, taking Beijing as a focal point, the centripetal force of Chinese government, pull the Xinjiang region to hold it. XUAR is part of China and the centripetal force pulls it towards the Beijing central authority for administrative and law and order purpose. This force is to protect the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Chinese state. But, at the same time, the centrifugal forces drift away the XUAR away from the Beijing Central authority. The people of XUAR are closely related to the people of Central Asian countries by culture and history. Turkic language and Islamic faith draw them towards relatives in Kazakhstan and other former Soviet republics of the region (French 2004). These centrifugal forces resulted as separatist idea in the minds of Uyghur minorities living in the XUAR. So, to neutralize this centrifugal force which creates separatists idea in the XUAR, it is necessary for China to maintain good relations with Central Asian neighbours, so that Central Asian countries will not support the separatist idea and also not harbour the separatist groups in their territory.
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Figure 3.1
Centripetal and Centrifugal Forces operating in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China

Separatist movement is also going on in Tibet but for our purpose, the case of XUAR is important as it lies in between Central Asia region and China. Also, the geopolitical space of XUAR between China and Central Asian region holds China’s nuclear test facilities and countries largest oil resources. In this way China’s has close geopolitical linkages between Central Asian regions to protect the XUAR.

To handle the problem of Uyghur separatism, the help of Central Asian states is significant. Also, since China is importing oil from Kazakhstan and planning more import from the Central Asian region that has to be transported through Xinjiang, the current instability there could be disastrous. A pipeline could be an attractive target for the separatist, with the aim of disrupting the economic development and to create social tension. This could mean that China will have to resolve the Uyghur problem in Xinjiang before security for a pipeline is guaranteed.

Thus, the integration of Xinjiang is important for China to not only serve core internal function, but also it is seen to contribute China’s strategic position in international affairs. To allow the opening of interaction of Xinjiang with Central Asian region, China grants significant security, economic and strategic benefits that serve two
purposes: the consolidation of China’s control of Xinjiang and the expansion of China’s power in Central Asia, which contribute to China’s quest for a ‘peaceful rise’ to great power status. China can use the geopolitically important position of Xinjiang to develop it as an avenue through which to expand China’s influence. Central Asia presents fewer obstacles, both in terms of competing powers and strategic concerns for the expansion of China’s political, economic, strategic and military influence than any other region (Clarke 2008: 94). Xinjiang become, in the words of the veteran China Communist Party leaders in Xinjiang, Wang Enmao, a “Eurasian Continental Bridge” connecting the regions economy with that of Central Asia through the development of direct trade relations with neighbouring Central Asian states, increasing state’s investment in infrastructure projects and fully developing and exploiting Xinjiang’s oil and gas resources (Clarke 2008: 96).

The geographical location of Xinjiang is such that China may also use economically developed XUAR and its geo-strategic position as a launching pad to establish important linkages not only with Central Asia, but also with South Asia, particularly Pakistan and Iran. In this respect the Karakorum Highway between XUAR and Pakistan, is significant. Also China is developing a deep seaport i.e. Gwadar port in Baluchistan province of Pakistan to make its presence in the Arabian Sea. This route may also serve alternate route for the Central Asian States to reach seaports for trade and commerce. Thus, the geopolitical space of Xinjiang in between Central Asia and China is a very important area for both the countries.

China is very much aware of the power struggle going on in the geopolitical space of Central Asian region. The Central Asian states too are aware of their landlocked locations and trying to lessen their Russian dependence for energy and trade export by cooperating with all the neighbouring countries. The next Chapters 4&5 will respectively sketch out the security and economic threat perceptions and potential opportunity for Central Asian states and China which arise from the ongoing power struggle. Also their strategy to tackle the threat is discussed.