Chapter - 6

CONCLUSION
The chapter seeks to analyse the major findings of the research work and recommendations for policy makers to enhance the geopolitical linkages between Central Asian region and China for greater stability and peace in the region. Besides, there remain other potential research areas, which require scholarly attention to put the whole things in perspective. Any study cannot be complete without mentioning the limits and challenges to undertake such a research, and in the case of Central Asia it becomes all the more important to highlight hurdles during the course. It is but true that without an adequate knowledge of Russian, a scholar will remain deprived of authoritative studies by indigenous scholars. That language becomes such a big obstacle was faced during the scholar’s field visit to Kazakhstan in April-May 2009. A majority of scholars and experts in the country understood only Russian. Nonetheless, the new genre of scholars, who assisted the scholar during the visit, showed a keen interest in learning the English language. Russian remains the lingua franca of the region especially in the context of the historical ties with Moscow and there is no indication of its diminishing importance. However, for the purpose of this research study, fluency in Russian language acted as a barrier and curtailed greater access to quality research material.

In this work the relation between Central Asia and China has been analysed from the perspective of geopolitics. A study can be undertaken on the relation between two states/variables from the perspectives of security, economic, cultural, historical, and social et al. But, the present work analysed the relation between these two entities only from a geopolitical perspective. Geopolitical perspective allows us to bring the geographical point of view in exploring relations between states/variables. It implies that how the geographical location of the two entities affects the relations between them. This is the main perspective through which the relation between Central Asian region and China is analysed in the thesis.

At the beginning of the thesis few objectives have been made for the systemic enquiry of the research. It’s relevant to revisit those objectives here to ensure whether we have achieved them or not. The first objective was made to analyse the geographical and geopolitical links between the Central Asia region and China. In this connection the regional and global interests operating in Central Asia that threaten the security of Central Asia and China’s western flanks are identified to understand the real
geopolitical design of the region. Another objective is to study and assess the Central Asia - China relations, both in geo-political and geo-economic terms in reciprocity.

To start with the first objective it has been found that Central Asian region and China is geographic neighbour. The three Central Asian states - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan – shares borders with China western front. The physical proximity between the two entities has many implications in their relations. In the current international milieu, the relations between Asia and Europe are changing, with the international community taking more interest in the Asian region especially after the end of Cold War. The economic growth of South - East Asian countries, South Korea and Japan, and the rise of India and China, has attracted western and European states towards Asian region. The initiative of CICA, Asia-Europe meeting, and SCO is a remarkable step in the direction of and propagating regional peace to the whole world. In this connection the emerging engagement between Central Asian region and China has taken place.

After seceding from the USSR in 1991, the Central Asian states are looking towards Asian neighbours particularly China to exploit the geopolitical advantage that China can provide to the states of Central Asian region. On the other hand, China is also looking to take the geopolitical advantage in the region in comparison with other interested powers. The geopolitical linkages between Central Asian region and China can be explained in various issues. The main issue are: Islamic extremism and separatism, regime changes in the name of democratic movements, security threat arising from the presence of foreign military forces, trade and energy links, transportation linkages.

**Convergent Issues Between Central Asia and China**

In Central Asia, the rise of Islamic extremism as a powerful destabilising force is threatening the peace and stability of the region. In the initial years of independence of the Central Asian states, Islamic forces tried to spread their influence in the region and wanted to establish Islamic states in the region. The main religious extremist forces that want to establish Islamic states are IMU and HT. But, the Central Asian states are secular states and believe in separation of religion and politics. Though, all the Central Asian states have Muslims in yet they want to fight and demolish such
forces that strive to establish a religious fundamentalist state in the Central Asian region.

China is also facing similar problem of separatism in its XUAR region bordering the Central Asia. The ethnic Uighurs are demanding separate and independent homeland as 'East-Turkistan.' So, it is in the common interest for both Central Asian states and China to cooperate and coordinate in rein in such forces. Both parties have taken serious efforts in this direction and have made curbing terrorism, separatism and religious extremism as part of the main objectives of SCO.

It requires greater cooperation in the age of global terrorism. As the situation in neighbouring Afghanistan is getting worse and the radical forces of Taliban militia still remain undefeated, Central Asian states and China have to take necessary measures to avoid the further spread of radical forces in their territories. China views Central Asian region in the wider context of Eurasia and is very much interested in the stability and prosperity of the region. The rise of the Taliban, Al Qaeda, and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan could destabilise the region and subsequently, undermine the security of both the region and China's frontier areas. They have to make appropriate measures to stop the radical forces in Afghanistan to make links with the radical forces operating in their territories.

The Tulip Revolution in Kyrgyzstan, the violent uprising in Andijan in Uzbekistan and again regime change in Kyrgyzstan in April 2010 awakens the ruling regimes in Central Asian states. The ruling regimes in Central Asian states see these colour revolutions as a threat to their authority. They allege the involvement of western powers particularly US behind these colour revolutions. These democratic revolutions also have negative impact on Xinjiang. This will certainly undermine Chinese authority in Xinjiang. So, both parties are cooperating with each other in this matter. China has supported the Uzbek action to suppress violent uprising in Andijan. Central Asian states have also disbanded the activities of Uighur in their soil.

**Regional Institutional Framework and Linkages**

In the various parts of previous chapters the importance of SCO has been highlighted as a major regional organisation, which can work as a wonder to maintain peace and
stability in the Central Asian region. SCO has announced the joint struggle against terrorism, separatism, and religious extremism as its main objectives. Perhaps the presence of SCO deterred the advancement of Taliban forces in late 1990’s and it couldn’t spread into Central Asian region. In SCO there is cooperation between two major force Russia and China. Also, Belarus is a dialogue partner and Iran, Pakistan, India, and Mongolia have observer status in SCO. It is because of the presence of SCO that US has not adopted aggressive military policy in the Central Asian region. Otherwise, to support the war in Afghanistan US could have established large scale bases in Central Asian region. The West also postulates SCO as anti-western alliance. It means the weight of SCO is recognised by international community. However, Russia, China and the Central Asian states largely agree that SCO does not represent any anti-western alliance intended to challenge US and NATO forces in the region.

But there are some weaknesses in the SCO, which is visible when the crisis occurs in the Central Asian region. The case of recent ethnic conflict in Kyrgyzstan in June 2010, greatly undermine the role of SCO as a regional organisation established to fight religious extremism, fundamentalism and separatism in the region. The joint efforts in ethnic conflicts are not the aim of SCO charter but this type of ethnic conflict makes favourable grounds for the terrorist and radical forces to gain foothold. They can take the advantage of fragile situation to spread their activities. Moreover, they can also mould the youth brain to take revenge and nurture extremist ideas in their mind. This will seriously harm the stability of the region. The seriousness of the ethnic conflict can be understand from the fact that in this ethnic conflict between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz in the southern city of Osh, Jalalabad and its nearby region, approximately 230 peoples died and thousands of ethnic Uzbek fled to Uzbekistan as refugee. It is one of the principles of SCO to respect territorial integrity and not intervene in the internal affairs of any states. But, if this type of mass scale ethnic conflict occurs and the interim government of Kyrgyzstan ask for the international intervention and no assistance was provided, at least the SCO has to mange and develop some kind of mechanism to handle the issue. Otherwise, the credibility of SCO as a regional organisation with aim of establishing stability in the Central Asian region will go down.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

The race for energy has made Central Asia into a field for a new ‘great game’ in the context of 21st century. Shares, influence and control over the natural resources of oil and gas are at stake. At present, the exploration of oil keeping in view of the world production of oil and its demand may not be economically viable in the region. However, with the increasing demand for oil in the world market in the future, it would become profitable to explore new fields so as to reduce dependence on the West Asia or Persian Gulf oil. As the demand for oil and gas expands, the competition among interested states will also increase. This competition will have far reaching strategic implications, as the development of Central Asian energy resources will reduce the dependence of major industrialised countries on the Gulf oil.

In this competition the national interests of Central Asian states now make them look beyond Russia. The Central Asian states meet to resolve the problem of outlets if they are ever to be independent in a more than formal sense. In order to secure alternative outlets to foreign markets, plans for new pipelines were drawn up and discussed – to the east (China), to the south (Iran and Afghanistan), to the west (Turkey and Caucasus).

In this setting the geopolitical relation in the field of energy is nearly perfect between Central Asian region and China. The Central Asian states have surplus energy resources particularly natural gas and they would like to earn foreign currency by exporting it. But the biggest obstruction for these countries is their landlocked nature. Their earlier integration with the former Soviet Union, these states are depended on Russia to transit their exports. But, after independence Central Asian states are exploring alternate routes to lessen their dependence on Russian route. The Russian monopoly in the export route makes them amenable to Moscow’s dictates including in foreign policy.

Further, they will not get better price and dependent totally on the mercy of Russian government on the issue of price. So they really want to explore other routes. The diversification of exports has now become the question of the foreign policy preferences for the Central Asian states. In this direction they have to please all the great powers and not neglect any one of it. They have to strike a balance between the different power interests in the region. In this direction new routes have taken shape.
in the form of BTC pipeline, Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline, two Turkmenistan-Iran gas pipelines, and Kazakhstan-China oil pipeline. As we have seen in the case of Turkmenistan-China pipeline these exports are extremely helpful in the way of diversification of export routes.

On the other side energy hungry Chinese economy and its proximity with the Central Asian region gives it an opportunity to leverage their energy resources. The two pipelines, Turkmenistan-China gas pipelines and Kazakhstan-China oil pipeline are remarkable landmarks in the way of Central Asian states energy diversification strategy. China is a market differs from the Iran and Russia, which are energy surplus state. And, if the energy resources are to be exported from Iranian and Russian route then they have to pay transit fee for it. But this is not in the case of Central Asian – China pipeline. China is the immediate market for Central Asian energy resources.

From the Chinese perspective, these pipelines are necessary for the diversification of energy imports and consequently secure ‘energy security.’ These pipelines are also safe in comparison to seaborne imports. There is some security problem in Strait of Hormuz, the Gulf of Aden and the Strait of Malacca through which Chinese oil import tankers transit. It directly imports oil and gas from Central Asian region and there is no transit state in-between them. Hence, less security concern for China. Also, Central Asian states are surplus of energy resources and friendly state so they can serve as a reliable source of energy.

In the previous chapter we found that the Chinese are becoming major trade partner for all the Central Asian states. Russia remains the largest trade partner but the share of China is increasing year after year. For Central Asian states the Chinese manufactured products are good as well as cheap. For China the Central Asian markets are promising one. In the field of natural resources and raw materials the Central Asian states are very rich. The Chinese growing economy needs natural resources and raw material of Central Asian states to sustain its economic growth. They are complimentary in this field.

At the same time, there has been a considerable development in the border trade between Xinjiang and the five Central Asian states and in economic and technical
collaboration between Xinjiang-based companies and these states. The trade between China and Central Asia is no longer confined to Xinjiang; it now also embraces other parts of northwest China, the interior of China and the coastal regions. However, the development of economic collaboration between China and Central Asia is still in its early stages.

It is an extremely fruitful idea to revive the old Silk route in the form of New Silk Road. By reviving and developing new transportation linkages between the Central Asian region and China, it will forge a stronger relationship between them. The main advantage that Central Asian states will have is that they will be well connected with emerging and developed East and South-east economies. This will greatly help Central Asian states to lessen the Russian dependence on imports of consumer’s products. On the other side, China will have a large market for its manufactured products. The needs of both the entities are complementary in nature and the geography also provides necessary support for this mutual beneficial links. So it’s essential for both the party to develop well transportation infrastructure and get the benefits it generate. Further, the revival of New Silk road gives the Central Asian states to establish its relations to other direction.

It is likely that sooner or later the Central Asian states will understand the importance of economic integration amongst themselves and cooperation with China, in order to hasten the pace of their own development and make an effective entrance into the global economic area. Only then will overland transport routes across the Central Asian region and the interior provinces of China in the form New Silk Road will play a role in the global economy.

**International Players in the Central Asian Region**

Previously, we have identified the interests of major global and regional power operating in Central Asian region. In common the interest can be grouped under some common points. They are energy, security, strategic and economic. US have a strategic interest in war against terror in Afghanistan and energy field. Russia wants to continue a dominating force in the region while China has security, strategic, energy and economic interest in the region. China is making all its efforts to serve its interest in the region. NATO is also present in the Central Asian region by engaging Central
Asian states under partnership for peace programme.

On the other hand the neighbouring regional powers Turkey, Iran, Pakistan and India are also taking active interest energy and economic field. Turkey project itself as a role model of political structure as secular democratic state in front of Central Asian states. It uses its cultural and historical ties with the region. Iran has the best offer to export the energy resources of Central Asian region. Pakistan considerations of Central Asian region as strategic depth against India have not much significance as Central Asian states have good relations with India. India has energy and economic interest in the region. But, its policy towards Central Asian states is not much effective as Chinese policy in the region.

The active interests of the various regional and global powers pull Central Asian states towards different directions. Due to the war in Afghanistan, US realises the importance of Central Asian states. The importance of Central Asian states further increase for US because the supply route to IASF, NATE and US forces in Afghanistan from Pakistani side is vulnerable to pro-Taliban forces. But, Russia and China doesn’t want to see US forces in their backyard region. The US air base in Manas is example of super power rivalry. The Kyrgyzstan first passed a resolution in parliament to close the base and give six month time but later on again allowed to use it. This incident destabilizes the Kyrgyzstan. Likewise, in the case of US-Uzbekistan relations, in the initials years of US attack on Afghanistan, Uzbekistan signed strategic partnership with US but after Andijan (2005) violence it returns back from such partnership. These events destabilize the Central Asian region and gives opportunities to super power to influence the region and subsequently undermine the independence of their external conduct.

Among the many alternative pipeline routes for Central Asian states, Iran offers the most economic route but its relations with US dismantle any significant progress in this direction. To reduce the dependence on Russian routes, Central Asian states agreed to participate in BTC pipeline. The alternate pipelines routes are decided more or less by the power politics among the super powers rather than the Central Asian states.
Prior to September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the World trade Centre there were no military forces deployed in the region other than from Russia. Russia has troops and bases in Central Asia in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan (at Kant), and in Kazakhstan, where they are based at the Baikonur Cosmodrome (Russia's space forces) and at the Saryshagan military firing range (Zhussip 2008). But after 2001 the Central Asian states have allowed US military forces to station in their soil to fight against global terrorism in Afghanistan. The US has used airbases in Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan. In 2005 the airbase at Karshi-Khanabad in Uzbekistan was closed. But the US air base is continued at Manas in Kyrgyzstan as a transit centre. Initially, the US military bases were welcomed by the Central Asian states and Russia and China. But later on Russia and China opposed the presence of US military in Central Asian soil. They assume that the US military presence in Central Asian region will become a permanent feature and hamper their security interests including Central Asian states as well. The Central Asian states also believe that in the course of colour revolution and the democratic changes the US military can be used to support the revolutionaries. Hence, they oppose the permanent stationing of US military in Central Asian soil. The closing of US military base in Uzbekistan is an example.

Chinese Policy Initiatives
Chinese policy initiatives towards Central Asian region accelerated in the aftermath of launching of the ‘Western Development Campaign’ in 2001. This policy initiative undoubtedly driven in large part by economic considerations but strategic and security interests also play an important part. The Chinese move in the west seems to be a long-term strategy to help secure its far western borders and extend its sphere of influence into Central Asia. The ‘Western Development Campaign’ has policy implications on regional as well as an international security level.

Chinese policy towards Central Asian region is based on pragmatism and is based on geo-economic factors. China is more interested in energy and economics of the Central Asian states. It has shown a strong will to exploit the energy resources of Central Asian states. The construction of Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline completed ahead of target date. It took very hard work and technical expertise to complete the project. But, Chinese active interest and strategy to gain ‘energy security’ drive it to complete in proper time. Its active policy in the infrastructure development in
Xinjiang and interest in the revival of Silk Road is part of its strategy to accelerate business and trade with Central Asian region. A number of land ports and border posts are established on both sides to enhance the trade between Central Asia states and China.

In the security issues China is watchful and had a policy of wait and see. It opposes the presence of the US military in the region along with Russia. And, it also uses SCO forum to oppose the US military presence. China is successful in getting the support of Central Asian states in the matter of Uighur activities in their soil. Through SCO, China is successful in getting the cooperation of Central Asian states and Russia to oppose terrorism, separatism and religious extremism.

Overall, China’s engagement with Central Asia region can be sum up in the words of Umarov and Pashkhun (2006: 4) into four broad and overlapping categories. First, China recognises the strategic importance of Central Asia and its potential impact on global events. Second, on the economic side, China understands the important role Central Asia can play in its future economic development, especially as a supplier of vital energy resources. Third, China has a security and political interest in making sure the individual nations of Central Asia develop in a way that does not threaten China, such as the establishment of extremist governments. Lastly, China recognises that a multilateral approach to cooperation, in addition to stable bilateral relations, can help both China and the region as a whole to achieve their shared interests.

Central Asian Policy towards China

Central Asian states are land locked and situated in between two great powers Russia and China and other regional powers. Thus, the location of the Central Asian region limits its foreign policy conduct and forced itself to adopt friendly behaviour with both Russia and China. They seek as much benefit from cooperation and competition between Russia and China. Central Asian states are successful in diversifying its export route and market towards China by constructing Kazakhstan-China oil pipeline and Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline. Through SCO they are also in a position to sit with Russia and China in same status and negotiate with them in equal terms. In brief, Central Asian states are positive about China with their relations.
Policy Suggestions/ Recommendation

Following the major findings of the research work some suggestion can be made for taking better advantage of their geopolitical linkages to Central Asian states and China. It will certainly lead to greater stability in the Central Asian region.

- The multi-vector foreign policy adopted by Kazakhstan is a very good move and should be adopted by all other Central Asian states. It will help the Central Asian states to avoid making the Central Asian region a theatre of great powers.

- To handle the problem of Islamic extremism the Central Asian states have to cooperate and coordinate between them and with Russia, China and US. Additional campaigns should be launched to crack down on drug-trafficking, arms-smuggling, illegal immigration and other cross-border crimes.

- To solve the problem of separatist forces in Xinjiang, the Chinese government have to adopt multiple strategies. First, from the base it has to speed up the inclusive socio economic developments in the Xinjiang region. Second, the links between the extremists' forces in Xinjiang from the Central Asian side is to be cut down by making strategic relations between the three bordering states of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Third, from the international community side world opinion is to be build on China to adopt such polices which preserve the cultural and religious autonomy besides maintaining unity and territorial integrity of the Chinese state.

- The SCO have to be made functional in the direction of maintaining peace and stability in the region and if necessary and the affected country ask for intervention, SCO have to opt for it. If large scale ethnic violence occur in small states like Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan and they are not able to control it who else will guarantee the stability of the Central Asian region. The SCO Regional Anti-terrorism Structure should be quickly consolidated to work more efficiently.

- In the energy field both entity has to develop mutual understanding that there is mutual benefit to develop pipelines towards China. At the same time China should not heavily reliant on Central Asian region for energy security. It has to continuously try to other sources like African and Latin America states.

- Finally, the maintenance of regional security and stability is a precondition
and a guarantee to the facilitation of regional economic and cultural cooperation. Economic and cultural cooperation can in turn constitute a solid basis for political and security cooperation throughout the region.

Further Area of Research

Based on the research work few unexplored areas are identified which need further detailed research. They are:

- The informal border trade between Central Asian states and China and it implication to their overall economic relations.
- The transport linkages across the Central Asian states and Xinjiang and its impact on Central Asia-China relations.
- The role of western countries involvements in the colour revolutions in Central Asian region.
- The war on terror in Afghanistan and it effect on the security and stability in the Central Asian region.

Epilogue

Central Asia has no access to the great oceans, and its communications with world markets relate to inland transport and energy routes. This makes countries of the Central Asian region dependent upon stability of their relationship with adjacent states as well as on security of communications. As stated in the earlier chapters the exploration of geopolitical linkages between Central Asian region and China has a wider implication for Russia, US and the neighbouring states of Central Asian states. If the opportunity is realized and utilized by Central Asian and China then it has profound impact upon the Eurasian landmass. Russia fears of losing its grip on Central Asian region which it considers an area of traditional sphere of influence. The US believes that the Chinese advancement in Central Asian region will greatly enhance Chinese power in world stage. After it China will be in better position to challenge the US dominance in world arena. The opening of Chinese front and the revival of New Silk Road for Central Asian states will give more opportunity to the neighbouring countries to have deeper reach in Central Asian region. This will make Central Asian states free to conduct external relations. The Central Asian region which is a hinterland to rest of the world will be open for greater interaction with the
world community.

The opening of the Kazakhstan-China oil pipeline, Turkmenistan-China gas pipeline and Turkmenistan-Iran gas pipeline has redrawn the energy map on Central Asia and Caspian region. Now, Turkmenistan has committed its entire gas exports to China, Russia and Iran. It has no urgent need of the pipelines that the US and the EU have been advancing. It has been successful in diversifying its exports route and markets. Nevertheless, the estranged relationship between Washington and Tehran decimate all virtues of this route. The US policy of containment of Iran has cost high for US energy companies operation in the Caspian Sea region. At the same time Russia realising her losing grip over Central Asian and Trans-Caucasus states try to get maximum stake in the pipeline construction.

Central Asian region and China are undoubtedly linked with each other in geopolitical terms. Whether it is energy, trade, security or suppressing the extremist forces, both will greatly benefit if they realises geopolitical realities stated in the earlier chapters. To conclude, the present research work surely elaborates some relevant analysis which can be used by Central Asian states and China to strengthen their position in world stage. By re-visiting the geopolitical linkages between Central Asian region and China, this work enables us to better understand the issue and plan for the balance that the Heartland demands in today's circumstances.