India is one of the countries in the New Great Game in Central Asian energy resources, symbolizing her entry into the region primarily for its vast oil and gas reserves. While United States, Russia, China etc. are collectively benefiting from the vast energy resources of Central Asia and strengthening strategic footprints, similarly India must not lose its grips in utilizing the same resources and opportunities in the region.

The Central Asian republics especially the republics of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, having vast reserves of oil and natural gas, could be of great sources of India’s hydrocarbon requirements. Kazakhstan is major oil producer country in the region and Turkmenistan is largest natural gas producing republic. By cooperating in energy sector with these republics, India as well the Central Asian republics would be mutually benefited. While India will be able to meet its energy supplies, the Central Asian republics especially Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan get an access as well as transit routes to the South Asian markets. Apart from this, Memorandum of Understanding like on uranium trade between India and Kazakhstan and India’s stakes in Kazakh oil and gas fields could boost India’s energy trade with the region. Till now, India has acquired 25 percent stakes in Satpayev block, 15 percent in Alibekmola oil field and 10 percent in Kurmangazy field in Kazakhstan and also signed a MoU for the supply of uranium with Kazatomprom. With Turkmenistan, the TAPI pipeline is a major cooperative measure for India.

India looks forward to the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline project. The project itself is a great expectation for India’s energy sector. However, the transportation route for the pipeline is proving relatively difficult. Political factors, instability and the safety as well security related

165
issues remain the major hurdles. If, in future, the pipeline turn out to be operational and successful then the relations between India and Pakistan could also improve. The Central Asian region could also become peaceful and stable which is affected by the instability in Afghanistan. India can help in stabilizing turmoil in Afghanistan and Pakistan by cooperating on security related issues.

Iran is an alternative route both by sea and rail for the Central Asian states for trade with other countries. Whereas for India Iran is a gateway to Central Asia. Its Bander Abbas and Chahbar ports can prove to be beneficial and important for India’s energy trade with the Central Asian republics in future. For example, India can bypass Pakistan, an unstable region for TAPI, by importing hydrocarbons from Central Asia via Iran. Iran’s friendly and good relations with CARs and Russia will help India in maintaining good relations with Iran and to prevent the Pakistan influence in the region.

Afghanistan may possibly not a hydrocarbon rich country, even though it is important for India. It is a bridge between Central Asia and South Asia. India should help in stabilizing the turbulent conditions in Afghanistan.

The issues like drug trafficking and expansion of Islamic fundamentalism could be a danger for the security of India as well as to the Central Asian republics. The foreign agencies can support and give assistance to these organizations. Any kind of attempts by Islamic fundamentalist forces to regroup in the region will have fallout for India and the region itself. India needs to formulate and implement a clear and comprehensive policy in this regard in Central Asian countries.

China is also a factor which could hamper India’s security as well its interests in CARs. Pakistan is encouraging Islamic tendencies in Central Asia while China is involving economically in the region. Both of these countries are looking for a way to increase their influence in to the region. If it happens, India could face a combined security threat from Pakistan, China in the Central Asian countries. There is no direct threat to India from the Central Asian
Region, but, in future, the fundamentalist forces in this region could join hands with the extremists operating in India and Muslim countries in the world. India strictly needs to keep this fact in to consideration and it should consider the stability and security of the CARs as a main concern.

India can help Central Asian republics in fighting terrorism by joining joint working groups to counter terrorism which needs regular meetings, intelligence sharing and effective mechanism. It should also actively participate in the regional organizations in which the republics of Central Asia are members. With deep cooperation and mutual aid India and Central Asian republics can solve mutual threats to their security. High level visits, strategic and military cooperation, cooperation in energy sector, scientific and technological and informational exchanges etc. could increase India’s influence in the Central Asian region.

**Recommendations and Suggestions**

- The information gap is one of the crucial hindrances in establishing beneficial cooperation between India, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. There is a vital need to bridge the gaps in awareness between these countries.

- India should read more accurately Kazakh and Turkmen strategies and policies in oil and gas industry development.

- India should concentrate on enlarging its economic profile in the Central Asian region especially in the republics of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan by using the multi-vector policies of the CARs.

- India should increase its investments in these republics with an aim to construct a feasible infrastructure in order to get an access to the resources in these republics. It could also set up refineries in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to process crude oil and gas.
• Economic and strategic interests in Central Asia should be at top priority for India. India should welcome friendly countries interested to work with her.

• India should try to improve her relations with Pakistan which is a major hitch for her trade across Eurasia.

• India should look at the prospect of setting up links with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan via China as it is another alternate overland route from India to Central Asia. It is possible when India has good relations with China.

• India should improve her relations with China because the improved relations can open new vistas of cooperation between India, Central Asia and China.

• The competition will continue in the republics of Central Asia for its hydrocarbon reserves. Therefore, India needs to increase her presence in the region’s energy sector with more investments.

• India should encourage democratic and secular values in the region for the suppression of Islamic fundamentalism. India’s know-how of democracy besides its dealings of elections could be shared for continuing and steady conversion of CARs to more open and autonomous society.

• The US may leave Afghanistan in 2014 which could affect the stability and security of the region as the religious fundamentalism will increase massively.

• India should assist to the Central Asian republics to fight against fundamentalist forces and not to permit them to form groups. If this happens, then India will have to face additional stress of cross border terrorism.
• India should increase her association in Afghanistan which can decrease Pakistan’s influence in Central Asian republics (especially in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan) who is the main supporter of fundamentalism in CARs and Afghanistan.

• India’s role in road construction and infrastructural development will make Afghanistan less dependable on Pakistan and more on Iran and CARs. This may be helpful in future requirements in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

• Pakistan’s help to Afghan rebellions could have negative impact in the CARs and Xinjiang in China. However, this factor can be used to weaken China and Pakistan relations.

• Iran is an important country for India in terms of energy imports and for viable passage to Central Asian republics. India should not be hindered by United State’s hostility to Iran. India should oppose it by its practiced diplomacy.

The cooperation and connectivity with the Central Asian republics, especially Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan is possible only through a cooperative approach as against the competitive one. India has the potential to increase her presence and influence in the Central Asian region. She needs to use her diplomatic policies which could help her in the development of cooperation in many areas with CARs.