PREFACE

The proposed study has focused on the term "power rivalry" as a competition between Russia and US for establishing control over the vast natural resources of Central Asia, which has drawn global attention after getting independence since 1991. The 'premature' independence of Central Asian republics in the Post Soviet disintegration phase; the emergence of terrorist outfits like Al-Qaeda and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the region, all are the matters of pressing concern for Russia, because it would not like to leave her traditional sphere of influence unwatched. Any happening in Central Asia may have its serious repercussions in Russia. This is more so in an age of globalisation of economy and terror, when geography is not a factor to check the terrorist attack as it happened in September 11, 2001 in US. Thus, the present study focuses on the rivalry between both the adversaries in Central Asia from 1991 to 2005. This period has its importance in the study because; Central Asian republics have come under global attention since the year 1991. America started focusing its attention on this region due to its geopolitical importance. During this period, Russia was not able to contain the influence of any external and regional actors in its traditional sphere of influence due to its own economic limitations. On the other hand, the newly independent states of Central Asia started diversifying their trade relations with external and regional actors, such as US, China, India, Iran and Turkey. All these powers have stakes in the vast hydrocarbon resources of Central Asia. They started struggling to establish control over this region for satisfying their geopolitical interests. However, the situation was changed, when America started its direct engagement in Central Asia after September 11, 2001 incident. Initially, Russia supported US presence in it's 'near abroad', but it did not want the US presence in Central Asia. Thus, Moscow started reasserting in Central Asia along with China; the emerging regional power. Russia under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin started strengthening its relations with Central Asia at bilateral and multilateral levels. It aligned with China under the banner of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to thwart the influence of Washington. Russia also started restructuring of Collective Treaty Organization (CSTO), which was neglected during the period of President Boris Yeltsin. Due to Moscow's successful diplomacy, these newly independent republics started reviving their relations with the former. On the other hand, the US policy to promote democracy and market economy in Central Asia resulted in regime changes. Thus, these states started following suspicious attitude towards America. The Central Asian state such
as Uzbekistan gave time limit to the US allied forces to withdraw from its base and finally it was closed. Currently, the role of Shanghai Cooperation Organization is growing at the advent of US in Central Asia. All the Central Asian republics except Turkmenistan are the members of this organization. Now, these states are formulating their independent policies to extract maximum benefit from this great rivalry.

Based on the above analysis, the present study hypothesises that Russia is able to maintain its foothold in Central Asia due to shared security concerns such as Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism with the states of this region. In order to establish control over the vast natural resources of Central Asia, the US has focused on maintaining political stability and regional harmony in this region. In this power rivalry, both Russia and China are cooperating under the banner of Shanghai Cooperation Organization in order to contain the influence of US in Central Asia. The Central Asian republics have maintained a balanced approach towards Russia and US for getting military and economic assistance.

Here, the study is mainly focused on some objectives like;
To critically evaluate the geopolitics and geostrategic importance of Central Asia with respect to Russia and US,
To analyze the role and strategy of Russia and US in the post Soviet Central Asia,
To study the impact of “power rivalry” between Russia and US on Central Asian states,
To critically examine the role of other regional powers in this major power rivalry,
To analyze the importance of the existing regional security structures in this major power rivalry in Central Asia.

The present study is divided into six chapters and the important contents of the chapters are the following:

Chapter 1 has been termed as “Introduction” and it takes an overview of historical background of Russia-US Relations. It has analyzed the geopolitical importance of Central Asia in “new great game” phase through classical and modern theories of geopolitics.

Chapter 2 deals with Russia’s policy towards Central Asia during the periods of Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin. It analyzes Russia’s policy towards it’s ‘near abroad’ on the advent of US in Central Asia. It has focused on Russia’s pragmatic foreign policy towards Central Asia at both bilateral and multilateral levels. Finally, it assesses the prospects for improved cooperation between Russia and Central Asia in the future.
Chapter 3 deals with the US policy towards Central Asia in this great rivalry. The first section deals with the evolution of America’s policy towards Russia’s traditional sphere of influence. It deals with US-Central bilateral security cooperation after the September 11, 2001 incident. The role of US-led NATO has been analyzed in the regional security issues of Central Asia and Caspian region. It focuses on the impact of US presence in Central Asia on regional actors of this region. Finally, it assesses the prospects for the US-Central Asia relations after the disintegration of Soviet Union.

Chapter 4 gives an overview of the importance of regional powers such as China, India, Iran and Turkey in “new great game” phase. It analyzes the policies of these powers towards Central Asia in Russia-US rivalry.

Chapter 5 deals with Russia-US rivalry in Central Asia during the period between 1991 and 2005. As there are regional security issues such as Islamic fundamentalism, terrorism that the two major powers face in Central Asia, it discusses their strategies and cooperation at both bilateral and multilateral levels. Here, the roles of multilateral organizations such as CIS, CSTO, SCO and NATO have been analyzed. It also assesses the roles of other regional powers in Central Asian geopolitics. Finally, it discusses the impact of this rivalry on Central Asian republics.

Chapter 6 is the “conclusion” of the thesis. It is a sum up of what this thesis is all about. It analyzes the nature of Russia-US relations in terms of Central Asian geopolitics. It analyzes “Russia-US Rivalry in Central Asia, 1991-2005” and finally, it provides a discussion of the study’s findings and their implications. At times, the conclusion has reflected briefly on future direction and one’s modest evaluation of the Russia-US competition over the vast natural resources of Central Asia.

The proposed study has applied historical, descriptive and analytical methods. It includes extensive study of both primary and secondary sources. The analysis of joint declarations, documents, and speeches and treaties involving Central Asian states have helped in the research. The secondary sources include selected books, articles, press clippings, etc. on the subject.