CHAPTER – IV
ROLE OF EXTERNAL POWERS IN SILK ROUTE REVIVAL

Revival of the Silk Route is beneficial not only for the independent states of the Central Asia, but also for some externals powers of the world. These external countries are interested in widening the scope of their economic activity and doing their business in new markets of Central Asia. The geography of the Silk Route has no limitations for increase the business and trade among the Central Asian countries and external countries.

The “International Symposium on Economic Development of Regions along the Euro-Asia Continental Bridge” took place in Beijing on May 7-9; 1996, with the participation of over 460 experts and diplomats from 36 countries\(^1\). This symposium was a part of an extraordinary foreign policy initiative of the Chinese government, to bring the nations of Europe and Asia together in a new sort of alliance for development. The immediate goal of that alliance is to build up an ultra-modern, integrated infrastructure for transport, energy and communication, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific, thereby providing the backbone for rapid economic development of the entire Eurasian landmass in the new millennium.

The transport corridor - known as the new Silk Route – will run from Central Asia through the Caucasus and Caspian across the Black Sea and then on to parts in Ukraine and the Mediterranean.\(^2\) The European Union wants the Silk Road of 21\(^{st}\) century or Super highway – to complement existing transport route to Europe, including the traditional and often heavily over loaded outlet Via Moscow. Eventually, the goal is to create a fully integrated transport network including upgraded highways, railroads, ports ferries that will make it easier for the Central

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Asian and Caucasus countries to trade not only each other but also with the Europeans.

The new Silk Route project was launched at a conference in Brussels in May, 1993 which brought together trade and transport ministers from the three Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) and the five Central Asian (Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) countries. The programme was named TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia). In December 1998, a high profile conference was held in Baku. The leaders and representatives of twelve international organizations and 34 countries, including Georgia, Azerbaijan, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Turkey, Armenia, China, Iran and Kazakhstan took part in this conference. By 1998, The EU had already spent $ 75 million on TRACECA projects, and was soliciting another $ 300 million in loans. Additional funds were pledged by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

To promote the Silk Route as a destination of cultural tourism, UNESCO and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) jointly launched a long term programme in 1994. Certain activities launched during the Silk Road project have been prolonged in the new UNESCO project "East – West Intercultural Dialogue in Central Asia ". A document edited by UNESCO office in Tashkent, "Rebuilding the Silk Roads: Cultural Tourism and Revival Heritage of Uzbekistan", describes about thirty restoration initiatives costing altogether some $ 40 million. Revival of the Silk Route includes various interests of external countries. These external powers have specific role in its revival –

4 ibid., p. 141.
7 (online web) www.unesco.in.ca. html page 1 of 2
4.1 Role of China

China’s present and near-future strategy considers the revival of the Silk Route as a primary regional strategic initiative. The land based transportation system - stretching along the traditional Silk Route - is of crucial significance to the consolidation of the Trans-Asian Axis and the key to Beijing’s global power posture and strategic security. China’s self-acknowledged naval inferiority reduces the strategic use of the Indian Ocean, and thus increases the importance of the land based lines of communications for the consolidation and enhancement of the Trans-Asian Axis. As an emerging superpower with rapidly expanding economy, China is seeking a path, to become a modern, industrialized nation state. Thousands of kilometers of new rail lines and highways are being built; vast energy and water projects have been launched. In 1999, Chinese officials and economists held one day seminar in four cities to apprise their people of the second Eurasian Land bridge. The title of the seminars was: ‘Asia – Europe Economic and Trade Relations in the 21st century and the second Eurasian land bridge.’ The objective of these meetings was to provide a progress report on the work that started from 1986.

China which has the advantage of sharing its borders with Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan has been following a policy of encouraging border trade between Xinjiang and its Central Asian neighbors. The direct rail link between Alma Ata and Urumchi, which was completed in mid – 1991 has facilitated the two way traffic across the international borders. Through these developments “Old Silk Route is actually in the process of revival.” The level of transportation has progressively increased on the Eurasian land bridge from Lianyungang Harbour to Europe. A project for the Eurasian land bridge has also begun in Northeast and Southeast China. China’s railway ministry has also organized five regularly scheduled trains from Kunming to Chengdu and xian to the Ala mountain pass.

China and other countries have already invested billions of dollars in the development of "the New Silk Road" and the projects connected with it. With the completion of two crucial "missing links" in the Eurasian rail system, two new transport corridors between China and Europe have been created. Modern communications – cables, new pipelines for crude oil and gas, as well as other rail and road projects are being completed. In China itself, the regions along the main railway lines in the directions of Europe are being transformed into development corridors.

The positive development for the New Silk Route opens the perspective for the Eurasian economic miracle based on large scale development of modern infrastructure. The construction of intercontinental infrastructure networks means the beginning of a new era of civilization. The conference in Beijing on "Economic Development of the Regions Along the Euro – Asia Continental Bridge" participated by the 460 experts and diplomats from 36 countries, made it clear, that the New Silk Road is no longer a mere vision for the future. Series of large scale infrastructure

\[1\] Jonathan Tennenbaum, n – 1, p. 6.
projects have begun to link China through Central Asia, Russia, Iran, and beyond, all the way to Europe.

The railway line, which begins at the port city of Lianyungang on China's west coast, traverses China in the northwestern direction, passing through Sinkiang into Kazakhstan. From there this rail runs via Moscow, Minsk, Warsaw and Berlin, all the way to the "Europort" at Rotterdam as the western terminus. This approximately 11,000 kilometers rail line was finally opened for traffic along its entire length.\textsuperscript{12}

Xinjiang, one of the five autonomous regions of the People's Republic of China (PRC), has the highest strategic importance. There are positive interactions - between Xinjiang's rapid techno-economic modernization and the revival of the Silk Route. In a highly volatile region Xinjiang appears, by sharp contrast, as a pole of stability and economic development. Xinjiang's recent history is marked by economic achievements. With a gross regional product per capita of 11,199 yuan (US$1,390) in 2004, Xinjiang ranks 13th among China's administrative entities.\textsuperscript{13}

The Lanzhou (in Gansu province) and Xinjiang railway reached Urumqi in 1962. By 2001, 3,000kms of railway lines were operating across the region. On the axis of the 10,900 km Eurasian land bridge from Lianyungang (north of Jiangsu province) to Rotterdam, Xinjiang is a centre of Eurasia. In 1949 Xinjiang had a road system of little more than 3,000kms; by 2001 the region's highways were extended to 80,000kms, including 428km of expressways. The highway running through the Taklamakan Desert (known by the local people as the \textit{shamo gonglu}, the Desert Highway) is the first one in the world built on shifting sands. The autonomous region currently has 11 airports, with international routes connecting Urumqi with Almaty, Tashkent, Moscow and Islamabad.

Xinjiang is also the corridor though which energy supplies from Kazakhstan can transit to serve the needs of fast-growing coastal China. China's first cross-border


\textsuperscript{13} \textit{China Statistical Yearbook}, 2005.
crude-oil pipeline was opened recently and it is pumping oil from Kazakhstan. The Sino-Kazakh pipeline will carry 10 million tons of crude oil a year from Atasu to Xinjiang's Alashankou. Constructed under a 50-50 percent joint venture between China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) and KazMunaiGaz, it is a strong symbol of Central Asia's integration by transnational projects - and China's Xinjiang is at the center of this new configuration. Three land ports- Karasu at the border with Tajikistan, Ushi at the border with Kyrgyzstan and Kanas in the Altay are opening in Xinjiang to stimulate the economy of neighboring countries and Xinjiang.

A new route will soon become one of the main axis of world trade. They have double-tracked 2,000 kilometers of the Chinese section of this route, electrified larger sections and built numerous parallel lines and branch lines.\textsuperscript{14} This transport route was opened between Europe and East Asia which is considerably shorter than the northern route via the Trans-Siberian railroad, and connects directly to the core regions of China.

China has a significant role in the revival of the Silk Route, because this is a terminus country of the new Silk Route. A new "southern route" has been created between China and Europe, running from China to Kazakhstan and then southward through Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Iran, than reaching Europe via Turkey and the Balkan countries.\textsuperscript{15}

The revival project of Silk Route and related infrastructure projects are seen by the leaders of China as a unique means, not only to develop positively oriented foreign policy, but also to solve some of the internal problems of the country. One big problem is the need of energy for their growing economy. Kazakhstan and China signed a declaration on closer cooperation on the 21\textsuperscript{st} century and a border demarcation communiqué after a visit of Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev to

\textsuperscript{14} Jonathan Tennenbaum, n-1, p.30.

\textsuperscript{15} Dr. Etibar Najafov, \textit{The Restoration of the Silk Road As a Factor of Modernization}, (Baku: Slavik University Press, 1998), p.3.
China, on 24th November, 1999.\textsuperscript{16} The communiqué declared that the demarcation of the 1,700 km border between the both countries was over.

That both China and Kazakhstan have been drawing up an economic cooperation programme for the period until 2010. Nazarbaev revealed at a news conference in Beijing after talks with his counterpart, Jiang Zemin.\textsuperscript{17} China reaffirmed its commitments under a project to lay an oil pipeline from western Kazakhstan to western China. The pipeline will be 3,000 kms long, have a minimum annual capacity of 20 million tones and cost between 3bn and 3.5bn dollars to build.\textsuperscript{18} The project is based on a deal which was signed by Nazarbaev and Jiang in 1997. The Chinese President Jiang Zemin confirmed that his country is interested in developing an Asian security mechanism (cooperation and Conference-Building Measures in Asia).\textsuperscript{19}

At a press conference in Washington on December 22, 1998, Yushuning, Chinese Minister-Counsellor for press affairs, said that China has invited the U.S. business community in the Chinese market in building the second Eurasian land bridge. He stated that the Chinese side has provided the U.S. with three lists. “The first two lists comprise 28 projects worth about $ 20 billion.”\textsuperscript{20}

The third list comprised 25 sectors, areas for cooperation between the two sides in the period from 1998 through 2005. The value of these projects is estimated at $ 600 billion”.\textsuperscript{21} And, finally, “China’s Minister Yushuning, told the U.S. side that during this period, from 1998 through 2005, China will import equipments, technologies and products worth U.S. $ 1.5 billion”.\textsuperscript{22} Within China, the New Silk Route is expected to serve several purposes:-

\textsuperscript{16} BBC, SWB, SU/3702 G/1, 26 November, 1999.
\textsuperscript{17} BBC, SWB, SU/3703 G/1, 27 November, 1999.
\textsuperscript{18} BBC, SWB, SU/3702 G/1, 26 November, 1999.
\textsuperscript{19} BBC, SWB, SU/3703 G/1, 27 November, 1999.
\textsuperscript{20} Ramtanu Maitra, n-8, p.181.
\textsuperscript{21} ibid., p. 181.
\textsuperscript{22} ibid., p. 181.
• Enhancing exchange with nations and regions located along the New Silk Route. This will involve closer contact with nations on various aspects of development along the route from China to Europe.

• Cooperation in resources development along the lines of New Silk Route, the large area with rich resources has remained relatively backward, but provides vast scope for development.

• Devoting major efforts within China to develop and equalize economic development along the new Silk Route. Foreign countries have been invited to participation in this effort.

The corridor will be outstanding characterized by the integration of the East and the West, two way development, mutual promotion, and common development.

4.2 Russia’s Role

Russia, the successor to the Soviet Union has significant role in building of the New Silk Route. Russia is destined by geography and history to play a unique role in the development of the Eurasian super continent. The construction of famous Trans-Siberian Railroad created the first link between Europe and Asia. The northern Eurasian route, together with its rail connection southward to the areas of the Black Sea, Caspian Sea, Central Asia and China has been central to entire economic and political history of Russia over the last hundred years.

Russian energy company Gazprom is paying close attention to the vast natural and oil reserves of Central Asia. Gazprom represents Russian state interests and owns huge assets in Central Asia. Turkmenistan provides Russia with cheap natural gas, which is later sold to the rest of the world at international market prices. Turkmenistan, which possesses vast reserves of natural gas, claims it could continue to supply cheap gas to Russia under the terms of its agreement with Gazprom, and simultaneously take part in the Trans-Caspian project. This proposed pipeline would carry natural gas from Central Asia and Azerbaijan though Georgia to Ukraine and on to the rest of Europe. The viability of the project depends on how much it can attract the interest and investment of European countries.
Russia underwent through economic crisis. The supply of agricultural machinery and fertilizers has been essentially cut off in recent years. Over 50% of the food consumption of 148 million Russians is imported from the outside. A large part of the income from oil, gas and other primary materials has not even stayed inside the country, but has instead flowed into the West.

At a seminar hosted in April 1996 by Leonid Abalkin, Russia’s most famous economist and one of the fathers of economic reforms, La Rouche reiterated his call for cooperation between United States, Russia and China, together with other nations, to force a reorganization of the international financial system and launch an economic recovery centered on development of Eurasian infrastructure corridors.

Russia as a positive bridge between East and West is an important factor in the revival of Silk Route. In fact, Russia in the late nineteenth century was called “The Empire of Railroads”. By the beginning of World War I, Russia’s railroad network was over 72,000 kilometers long, second only to the United States. Railroad development in Russia facilitated the industrial, mining and agricultural development; settlement of population, and economic growth. A large part of the Eurasian railroad existing today dates back to the period of Russian rail-building.

Building up a dense infrastructure development corridor along the Trans-Siberian Railroad (and a certain parallel east-west routes, including Baikal- Amur Mainline) is today the key to the economic future of Siberia and Russia. “Trans-Siberian Corridor” is a crucial element in any economic recovery programme for Russia and at the same time a crucial element in the entire Eurasian system of development corridors. Russia will complete the electrification of the Trans-Siberian Railway from Moscow to Vladivostok in 2002. It will be fully electrified for the first time in the history of the railway transport.

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23 Jonathan Tennenbaum, n-1,p.163.
24 R. Hrair Dekmejian and Hovann J. Simonian, n-3, p.44.
26 Jonathan Tennenbaum, n-1, p.168.
The electrification of the Trans-Siberian Railway is a major project of the 21st century. An agreement has been reached on restoring railway connection between the Democratic People's Republic of North Korea and the Republic of South Korea. The Trans-Siberian railway will stretch to the port of Pusan, South Korea, and will become the most important transport bridge linking Europe and Asia. The construction of tunnels and bridges to link the continent with Japan via Sakhalin will start soon. Railways Ministry of Russia believes that a railway connecting Tokyo with London will become reality in the first decade of the 21st Century.

The Sakhalin project is of strategic importance for Russia as a bridge connecting East and West. The tunnel when built will enable the open passenger and freight railway traffic to Tokyo from Amsterdam. From Japan to Sakhalin, the tunnel, which is intended not only for railway transport, but for gas and oil pipeline as well, will be built by Japan.

In preparation for the "Iron Silk Road" era, the Russian government will also push for the involvement of the Organization for Collaboration of Railways (OSJD), a railway cooperation body. The OSJD, founded in 1956 on the initiative of the former Soviet Union, has 27 member countries, including China, North Korea and Yugoslavia. The Russian Railway Ministry intends to rebuild 930 kilometers of Trans-Korean railway line in North Korea from Khasan station to the border with South Korea, and the Trans Korean railway will be connected to the Trans-Siberian line. At present, the delivery of cargo from South Korea to Western Europe through the Suez Canal takes 40-45 days, but the new transport corridor will reduce the container delivery time to 10 – 12 days and the tariff for the owner of the container being reduced by nearby 400 dollars.
Russian First Deputy Minister for Railways, Aleksandra Misharin detected that Russia will have a railway outlet to South Asia via Iran. He said that Iran was now building a railway spur to one of its Caspian ports. When it is ready, Russian trains will be ferried from Astrakhan to this Iranian port, whence they will proceed to Pakistan, India and other countries via Iran. This Transport Corridor, is not only of the Russia’s interests, but of the European countries too, which will able then to carry their goods to South Asia and vice – versa much quicker and cheaper. Today, they have to ship them via the Suez Cannel, Mishrin stated.

4.3 Interests of Japan

The technical feasibility exists to massively upgrade the role of Russia in New Silk Route through Trans-Siberian Corridor and to stimulate the development of the entire eastern Siberian and Far Eastern region of Russia, by establishing direct land connection to Japan and the United States.

These revolutionary projects in trade and development to the entire Pacific region will be the centre of the world economy in the 21st century. The first project involves first extending the Baikal – Amur Mainline, via a short tunnel connection to the island of Sakhalin. The projects was fully planned, and some digging even begun in the 1940s and 1950s. The connection to Japan would be provided by a north – south railroad on Sakhalin, together with a 50 kilometers undersea tunnel to Japan’s Hokkaido Island. The rail connection from Hokkaido to Japan’s biggest island, Honshu, is already provided by the 54 km Seikan Tunnel, the longest in the world.

Second project is the land connection to the United States would be achieved by an approximately 85-kilometers tunnel across the Bering Strait to Alaska. This project requires the construction of major railways on both sides: A Bering Strait Connector from Yakutsk to the Bering Strait on the Russian side, and a much needed railroad from northern Alaska to British Columbia on the North American side. This

34 BBC SWB SUW/0683 WA/18, 23 March, 2001.
36 Jonathan Tennenbaum, n-1, p.172.
great project would be a crucial step toward linking the railroad networks of Europe, Africa, Asia, and North and South America, into a continuous global system—a world railroad network. In this respect, the revival of the historical Silk Road will give considerable impetus to the expansion of cooperation between countries in Europe, the Caucasus and Asia.

4.4 Role of Iran

Because of its strategic and sensitive location, various trade caravans have been passing through Iran since time immemorial, it being an important part of the Ancient Silk Route. This role has assumed more importance since the collapse of the Soviet Union, independence of Central Asian countries and revival of the famous Silk Route. This is because the land-locked countries in Central Asia and the Caucasus can be connected to the Persian Gulf and open seas via Iran or to Europe via Turkey, making use of the reliable railway network of the country for export and import of goods.

With the breakup of the Soviet Union and the formation of the new republics, good opportunities became available for the Islamic Republic of Iran, which became the hub of global economy and political relations of Central Asia and Caucasus. This role of linking hub has its roots in Iran’s geographical location, as well as its pragmatic foreign policy. All Central Asian Republics, except Georgia, are land-locked, and should pass through Iran for direct and indirect economic connections with the rest of the world. Most countries realize that economic ties with the republics of Central Asia and Caucasus have no alternative but to use the land and air routes of Iran. Iran has its borders with Central Asian republics, and its land and sea routes are linked to Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Russia.

Independence of the new Republics brought about great cooperative relationship with the Islamic Republic of Iran. In addition to geographical contiguousness with the Central Asian countries and the Caucasus, the two sides have many things in common, including shared faith, history and culture. Iran welcomed the independence of the Republics by embarking on an all-out and relentless effort to expand mutually beneficial and reinforcing political, commercial, economic, cultural,
tourist, oil, and maritime relations. Iran also welcomed the joining of these states to the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) as new members, and proposed the establishment of the Caspian Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (CSECO), comprising Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.37

One of the chief branches of the Silk Route traversed western China, than followed the oasis route (Khotan, Kashgar, Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv) across southern Central Asia into northern Iran, and thence westward on the Black Sea or the Mediterranean Sea.38 The advent of railway gave new importance to this terrestrial links. The concept of recreating the Silk Road has acquired a potency far beyond its economic significance: it has become a symbol of rebirth for the entire region.39

Iran signed a series of bilateral agreements with Turkmenistan in 1994 regarding railway lines, freight transport, custom arrangements and border trade. Despite United States disapproval, Turkmenistan opted for the Iranian route to export its natural gas to Europe and both countries signed an agreement in 1995 to construct a gas pipeline between Korpeje (Turkmenistan) and Kurt Kuly (Iran).

The opening in May 1996 of the rail link between Iran’s great north eastern city of Mashad and Turkmenistan’s rail junction of Tejend briefly attracted world attention, with romantic allusions to revival of the historic Silk Route. Iran’s president at the time, Ali Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, presided over the inauguration ceremony along with eleven heads of neighboring countries and dignitaries from over fifty countries. Ambitious plans were announced to set up a well-equipped free-trade zone in the Iranian border town of Sarakhs, across the "Bridge of Friendship" from Turkmenistan’s twin town of Serakhs.

38 K. Warikoo, n - 9, p.251.
39 The UNESCO Programme ‘Integral Study of the Silk Road’ launched in 1988, acted as a catalyst not only by reviving and publishing the concept of the “Silk Road”, but also by giving it practical support in the form of the expeditions and conferences that were organized throughout the region. (online web) www.unesco.worldpaper.com
Iran's capabilities are limited to undertake large scale investment in mega projects. Main problem of Iran is its isolation from the international community. Besides these problems, Iran has expressed its appreciation for the cooperation of China in constructing segments of railway networks to make possible the first running of a train from Lianyungang harbor to Tashkent in November 1995. The geopolitical advantage of Iran and its position as a regional and continental linking bridge make significant role in the restoration of Silk Route. The linkage of its railway system with the railway network of Russia and Central Asian Republics has been a realistic approach. Construction of the 300 kilometers long Mashhad – Sarakhs – Tejend railway, which complements the 700 kilometers long Bafq – Bander Abbas railroad, has materialized. This railway network was inaugurated on 14 May, 1996, before the head of states and dignitaries of more than 32 countries. This grand project which was described by ESCAP (UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) as the Iron Silk Route, was finished by the experts of Iran with the help of Turkmenistan.

Mr. Broujerdi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran said that Iran has now constructed the missing link in the Euro – Asian railway network. With the operation of Bafq – Bander Abbas railway, Lianyngang port on east China will be connected to Bander Abbas at the Persian Gulf via the cities of Urumqi, Almaty, Tashkent, Sarkhs, Mashhad, and Tehran. This project provides access to the open seas for land locked Central Asian nations, on one side, and linking the railroad to Rotterdam via Tekran, Istambul and Europe, on the other side.

A new project of railway of 2,750 kilometers being implemented, now is outlined below:

"Bander Abbas – Tehran – 1,500 kilometers
Tehran – Mashhad – 950 kilometers

40 Ramtanu Maitra, n – 8, p.183.
42 The speech presented by Mr. Broujerdi, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran, On May 7,1997, (online web) www.muza.com.kg/silkroad
Implementation of this project is of international economic significance and can provide the best and safest transportation and transit routes to the CIS states, particularly in Central Asia and China. Starting in Xian, China, this route will revive the historical Silk Route, that has been called the East – West bridge. Linking with the new Silk Route land connections from Central Asia, to China and the Pacific Coast in north and east, and subsequent connection of sea routes from the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean to ports in Canton, Shanghai, and Lianyungang via the Malacca Strait, will create a new cycle of exchange of raw materials, finished products, and technology between west and South Asia.

The revival of the Silk Road will enhance the advantageous position of Iran in Euro – Asian trade. The road network from Central Asia to China and the shipping lanes from Indian Ocean to Pacific herald a prosperous future and greater friendly and fraternal relationship among nations of the region. It will create new export opportunities for countries around the wider periphery, by providing the options of shorter, more direct linkages.

4.5 Role of Turkey

The unique geographical location of turkey leads her to act not only as a springboard for regional markets but also to serve as a bridge between the East and West in the heart of Eurasia. Turkey’s location on the center of huge potential markets can be used as a base of operations to launch projects in the region stretching from the Adriatic Sea to the Great Wall of China.44 Turkey attaches great importance to developing relations with her neighbors. Turkey supports both politically and economically the efforts of Central Asian countries to consolidate their sovereignty and independence and to facilitate their transition into market oriented – economies.

43 Jonathan Tennenbaum, n – 1, p.48.
Turkey, in its endeavor to complement the efforts for the revival of the Silk Route, has contracted for the construction of the Eastern Black Sea Road, which will upgrade the link between the TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia) corridor and the Pan – European transport network. Furthermore, implementation of projects for the Bosporus railway tunnel and the Kars – Tbilisi railway are underway. The coordination of these two projects will help in creating an unbroken link between Asia and Europe via Turkey. Central Asia and the Transcaucasus are important for Turkey’s interests in terms of oil and gas and trade prospects in general. On the strategic level, the area provides an opportunity to strengthen Turkey’s influence and prestige at the expense of Russia and, to a lesser extent, Iran.

4.6 Role of Pakistan

The emergence of six independent Muslim states, five in Central Asia and one in Caucasus attracted the attention of Muslim state of Pakistan to a large extent. Pakistan has been active on fomenting anti – communist wave among the Central Asian Republics bordering Afghanistan. Pakistan wants to be the linchpin in the strategic chain which includes Afghanistan, Central Asia, the Middle East and China. As a geographical contiguous country, Pakistan provides access to India and the Arabian Sea. Pakistan is potential importer of Central Asian Caspian oil and gas, considering its large population and lack of energy resources.

Pakistan hoped to compensate for its strategic weakness vis-à-vis India by establishing controls over Afghanistan and forging alliances with the Muslim states of the Caucasus and Central Asia. In pursuit of this strategic vision, there was heightened Pakistani activity in region during the Gorbachev era and soon after the Soviet demise.

The absence of direct communications and transport links was a major obstacle to the development of Central Asian Relations with Pakistan. The necessity

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to overcome such obstacles, coupled with potential benefits of becoming the main access point between Central Asia and the outside world, prompted Pakistani to push for the construction of a transport infrastructure across Afghanistan. Pakistani planners have recognized that the shortest distance between Central Asia and the Indian Ocean lie through their territory. They could become not merely the pipeline outlet but the major port (Gwadar) for Central Asian goods. 47 Instability in Afghanistan has caused the failure of the Trans - Afghan pipeline project, although both Turkmen President Niyazov and Pakistani leader General Musharraf sought to revive it during their May 2000 meeting in Ashghabad. 48 The two leaders also committed themselves to improving the transport infrastructure across Afghanistan. For the past few years there have been proposals regarding a gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan to Pakistan. US company Unocol and some American and Turkmen officials felt that the pipeline can be extended to India. The biggest obstacle to the project has been the political volatility in Afghanistan. 49

4.6.1 Karakorum Highway as a Branch of New Silk Route

The fragile Karakoram Highway is one important overland gateway from Pakistan into China. Twisting through northern Pakistan along a narrow corridor and precarious mountain passes, the Highway enters western China where it feeds into Kashi (Kashgar) and the traditional roads encircling the Takla Makan desert. Work on the Karakoram Highway started in 1967. A passable road was completed only in 1978, and fully opened for traffic in 1986. The Karakoram Highway is a strategic breakthrough for Beijing and Islamabad. It broke the isolation of both countries, ensuring a corridor that can withstand blockade even during intense warfare.

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49 C. Raja Mohan, ‘Central Asia's Pipeline Dreams’, *The Hindu*, New Delhi, 12 October 1996; see also, ‘India can join as pipeline’, *The Times of India*, New Delhi, 20 April 1995.
The idea of communication linkage between Central and South Asia came in late 1998 when Pakistan, China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan signed an agreement of 'traffic in transit' to further promote the existing trade relations through roads from Almaty to Karachi by using the historical Silk Route. According to the agreement, the competent authority and the executive bodies responsible for the permit will be the Ministry of Communications of the Peoples Republic of China and its authorized Department of Communication of the Xinjiang Ugraf Autonomous Region, the Ministry of Transport and Communication of the Republic of Kazakhstan, its executive department will be the Transport Inspection of Kazakhstan of Ministry of Communication, the Ministry of Transport and Communication of the Republic of Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The agreement states that the number of exchanges on the international road transiting territory shall do so through consultation on the basis of reciprocity and mutual benefits. The agreement says that the vehicles in transit will have the permit, one permit for each vehicle and valid for a single to and from journey.

When the Karakoram Highway was inaugurated in 1978, for all weather traffic, idea for using that road for promoting trade relations between Pakistan and China was presented. It was only after the Soviet disintegration and the subsequent emergence of Central Asian states that serious thoughts was given to broaden the scope of Karakoram Highway to Central Asia. Khurshid Ahmed Kasuri, the Secretary General of Pakistan Democratic Alliance, in an interview with The News, lamented that there was lot of scope for rapid expansion of economic and cultural ties. Karakoram Highway has been cut though high mountain ranges of Himalayas and Karakoram mountains to connect Pakistan with China. It opened a passage through isolated hilly regions that had remained a cultural backwater of humanity for millennia. The building of highway should be regarded as the eight wonder of the.

52 K. Warikoo, n – 9, p. 311.
Thousands of Pakistani and Chinese engineers and workers participated in the construction of Karakorum Highway. From Thakot to Khunrb, the length of the road is around 760 kilometers. When this trade route will be extended from Karakorum Highway to Kashgar, Bishkek and Almaty, the total length of the trade and transit route from Karachi to Almaty will be 3,726 kilometers.

Paradoxically, route of Pakistan for promoting trade and commercial relations with China and Central Asian states via Karakorum Highway is a significant initiative in the revival of Silk Road. Political instability in Pakistan and its hostile relations with India are obstacles in its revival process.

- The importance of traffic on the strategic Karakorum Highway between China and Pakistan has become a subject of a broad cooperation. China is financing the modernization of the Karakorum Highway to make it usable through the entire year without interruption and the building of new approach roads. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China and Pakistan have agreed on a common plan for the operation of the road.

In 1998 an accord was signed in which Pakistan, China and two Central Asian States, Kazakhstan agreed to provide trade and transit facilities via the Karakorum Highway to the port of Karachi. It is the most important agreement as far as traffic in trade is concerned and this would further boost the existing trade relations and bring people of these countries closer to each other.

55 Moonis Ahmar, ‘Communication Linkage Between Central And South Asia : A case Study of Karakorum Highway (KKH)’, Eurasian Studies 20, Special Issue, Summer 2001, p.190.
56 Moonis Ahmar, ‘Comminication Linkage between Central and South Asia: A Case Study of Karakoram Highway’ article in Eurasian Studies, 20, Special Issue, summer 2001, p. 189.
Welcoming Asian Development Bank’s initiative for the regional connectivity project to create road and railway links between South Asia and Central Asia, DAWN (17th March, 2002) says editorially “The land-locked but relatively rich Central Asian Republics would then find an outlet to the world--- (Also) with the passage of time a linkage between SAARC and the Economic Cooperation Organization could also materialize for the mutual benefit of both the regional economic groupings”.57 The establishment of the road and railway links between Central and South Asia has the potential to yield tremendous socioeconomic benefits for the people of these two neighboring regions.

The western region of China acts as a bridge promoting Chinese trade with Pakistan and other neighboring countries. It has registered a record $3 billion in foreign trade in 2003, up 45.8 percent in 2004.58

Work on the project was to begin from May 1, 1999. In the winter of 2000, a test convoy of trucks ran over the Karakorum from Pakistan to Almaty.59 It is estimated that 50-60 tankers/trucks carrying goods arrive from China every month into Pakistan.60 Items like cloth and crockery are brought from China and sold in the markets of Sust (a border Check post) and Gilgit. Some positive implications of Karakorum Highway on the lives of the local people are:

- The travel distance has been drastically reduced between far-flung areas after the construction of KKH. It used to take three days of foot to travel from Gulmit to Gilgit. Now, it takes only two hours to cover the distance. Similarly, from Gilgit to Rawalpindi it used to take around a month but now it

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58 ibid, p-November 5, 2004, p.5177.
60 Moonis Ahmar, ‘Comminication Linkage between Central and South Asia: A Case Study of Karakoram Highway’ article in Eurasian Studies, 20, Special Issue, summer 2001, p. 193.
takes only 14 hours. From Gulmit to the Chinese city of Kashgar it now take only 10 hours, earlier, it used to take 15 days to cover that area.\(^{61}\)

- KKH has changed the lifestyle of local people. Earlier, essential utilities like electricity and telephone were rarely available in this area but now here is massive electrification and better communication facilities. New markets and schools/colleges have also been established in last years.
- New trade and business opportunities have emerged in the area along the KKH.
- There has taken place a rapid rise in tourism because of KKH. Both local and foreign tourists visit this area and enjoy the scenic beautify and terrain. Tourist inflow has created job opportunities along the KKH.

Some negative implications of Karakoram Highway are:

- The cultural heritage of Northern Areas is facing a serious threat because of more construction and contacts with the outsiders.
- Growing crime and use of drugs could also be seen as negative implications of Karakoram Highway.
- Because of strategic significance of KKH, the area seems to have attracted the attention of foreign powers. Sectarian tension also tends to generate insecurity to local people.

Pakistan considers the Karakoram Highway to be a symbol and manifestation of the unique Sino-Pakistani relationship and their strategic unity of purpose. Recently, Islamabad expanded this theme to include the emerging Silk Route. For example, Pakistani officials stressed in late December 1993 that "the role of China in the construction of the Silk Route has made the bilateral relations as strong as the Karakoram Highway."

Nowadays most traffic on the Karakoram Highway consists of tourists and Hajjis--Muslims making a pilgrimage to Mecca--but small-scale trade has also revived. Pakistani businessmen come to Kashgar to buy on thermoses, enamel washbasins, and other items sold cheaply in Chinese shops. They are also attracted by

\(^{61}\) ibid., p.94.
Kashgar's reputation as a place of pleasure. Apart from the Hajjis, few Chinese find their way west. The Karakorum Highway, a branch of the New Silk Route or Eurasian land-bridge thus has great importance in present times.

4.6.2 Construction of Gwadar Port

Located at the entrance of the Persian Gulf and about 460 kms from Karachi, Gwadar has had immense geostrategic significance on many accounts. The continued unstable regional environment in the Persian Gulf in particular as a result of the Iran/Iraq war, the Gulf war and the emergence of the new Central Asian States has added to its importance. Considering the geo-economic imperative of the regional changes, the Asian Development Bank's Ports Master Plan studies considered an alternate to the Persian Gulf Ports to capture the transit trade of the Central Asian Republic (CAR) as well as the trans-shipment trade of the region. The ADB studies, however considered Gwadar to have the most advantageous location for such an alternative port in the region, which could handle ships and large oil tankers. Keeping that aspect in view as well as the inherent strategic and economic benefits that Gwadar Port offered, the transport plan of the 8th Five Year Plan (1993-94) of Pakistan included the development of Gwadar Port as an essential element of its aims and objectives. Technical and financial feasibilities, therefore, were undertaken resulting in decisions for the development of Gwadar Port by the Govt. of Pakistan. Pakistan is in the process of developing the Gwadar port complex, which can serve as a gateway to land-locked Central Asia and Afghanistan. This port will provide facilities of transshipment, transit, warehousing and industrial facilities for international export import trade, especially for Central Asian states & Afghanistan.62

Gwadar seaport has an important role in the development of Eurasian land-bridge; it was inaugurated on the Arabian Sea coast in southern Baluchistan on April 2002. This port is strategically located on the opposite end of the Gulf of Oman and the Straits of Hourmuz on the mouth of the Persian Gulf.63 This port will be beneficial to nearly 20 countries of the Middle East, Central Asia and South Asia.

63 ibid.
The project would also help Baluchistan, the least developed province of Pakistan. The port complex would boost tourism and growth of ancillary industries like fishing, ship building and other marine based enterprises. For land locked countries, the complex will help boost international trade and economic relations by providing an export outlet.

The Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Shaukat Aziz said "the Gwadar deep seaport could serve as a transit for Tajikistan’s trade with the Gulf and other countries". Gwadar port is important for the Turkmenistan –Afghanistan-Pakistan gas pipeline project. Turkmen gas can be exported from this port to Japan and Far-East. A well-known Pakistani economist, Javed Burki, talks of the possibility of an economic and trading block involving seven “stans” - five “stans” of Central Asia, Afghanistan and Pakistan. He suggests, that this would create a zone of 223 million population with a gross domestic production of $114 billion and per capita income of $512. Since the Central Asian Republics need to export their enormous untapped oil and mineral wealth, the role of Pakistan and Afghanistan could become important, and Gwadar seaport project would be a new approach to the New Silk Route. Genl. Perwaz Musharraf, President of Pakistan said that Pakistan is bound by geography to work with its land locked neighbors, traditionally dependent on trade through Pakistani Port, “We have to interact with each other in a harmonious manner".

The Gwadar deep seaport project is supported by the President of Pakistan Mr. Pervez Mussarraf for the prosperity of Pakistan. This can transform Pakistan into a vibrant hub of commercial activity among the energy rich Gulf and Central Asian states, Afghanistan and China. Gwadar port will also provide the strategic depth to

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Pakistani navy with strategic depth along its coastline as a naval base. The port has significance for China, as it will enable China to diversify its crude oil import routes and extend its presence in the Indian Ocean. Thus China is contributing with technical assistance, 450 workers and 80 percent of the funds for the construction of the port.\textsuperscript{69} Pakistan Foreign Ministry Spokesman, Masood Khan said “the Gwadar port is a symbol of Pak-China cooperation and is a part of our joint efforts to build modern infrastructure project in Pakistan”.\textsuperscript{70}

Gwadar seaport is an issue of concern for neighboring India and Iran over Sino-Pakistan maritime activities. It has sparked a tacit competition over whether Pakistan’s Gwadar port or Iran’s Chabahar port, built with Indian assistance, will serve as Central Asia’s conduit to oil and gas. The port is 450 kilometers farther from the Indian border than Karachi.

Construction of the Gwadar port began in March 2002 after the “Chinese agreed to provide $198 million of the $248 million required for Phase-I of the project. Phase-I involves the construction of three multipurpose ship berths and is slated to be completed early 2006. As the sign of the near complication of Phase-I, a Chinese cargo vessel carrying port related equipment successfully birthed at Gwadar. Phase-II, estimated at $600 million, will include the building of nine additional berths, one bulk cargo terminal, one grain terminal and two oil terminal”.\textsuperscript{71} China’s interests in the Gwadar port are to continue consolidating its relationship with Pakistan through large-scale collaborative development projects. This development will diversify and secure its crude oil import routes and extend China’s presence in the Indian Ocean. Chinese presence at Gwadar allows China to ensure the security of its energy related shipments along existing routes.

The Gwadar port will provide a stable and proximate point of access to the Gulf ports. Just 250 miles from the Straits of Hormuz, through which nearly 40

\textsuperscript{69} ibid., p.96.
\textsuperscript{70} ‘Beijing Lauds Best Medical care to Injured Chinese’, \textit{The News} (Pakistan), 6 may 2004.
percent of the world’s oil supplies flow, the port is strategically located to serve as a key shipping point in South Asia. The port will provide access to land-locked Central Asian Republics, Afghanistan and the Chinese Xinjiang region towards the Arabian Sea. A road from Gwadar to Saindak, which is currently under construction and runs parallel to the Iran-Pakistan border, will be the Shortest route between Central Asia and the Arabian Sea. This port will also enable the transfer of Central Asia’s vast energy resources to world markets. Benefits of the development of Gwadar port are:

a) Capitalize on opportunities for trade with landlocked Central Asian states and Afghanistan.
b) Promote trade and transport with Gulf states.
c) Trans-shipment essentially of containerized cargo.
d) Unlock the development of hinterland.
e) Socio-economic uplift of the province of Blochistan.
f) Establishment of shipping related industries in Pakistan.
g) Export processing and industrial zone.
h) Reduce congestion and dependency on other existing ports.
i) It will become a regional hub for major trade and commercial activities.

China’s interests in the Gwadar port are to consolidate its relationship with Pakistan, diversify and secure its crude oil import routes, and extend its presence in the Indian Ocean. China has also pledged to develop its western regions including Xinjiang as part of its “Go West” policy. Xinjiang has already demonstrated its economic potential by having registered $4.8 billion in foreign trade and $22.7 billion in GDP in 2003, up 10.8 percent from the previous year. Seeking to capitalize on Xinjiang’s rising fortunes and strengthens Sino-Pakistani economic ties, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz called for expanding trade links with Xinjiang and offered the Gwadar port’s services for facilitating trade during the Governor of Xinjiang’s October 2004 visit to Pakistan.

India and Iran have warily watched the construction of the Gwadar port in their backyard. This port could endanger the Indian naval security. Iran’s response to the Gwadar port has been to construct its own Chabahar port and tacitly compete with Pakistan in capturing access routes and energy-related trade from Afghanistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

4.7 EU’s Policy and Action for New Silk Route

With the support of the European Union, presidents of Azerbaijan and Georgia hosted an international conference on “Restoration of the Historic Silk Route on 8th September, 1998 in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan.” Presidents of Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova Romania, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Ukraine, transport ministers and experts from 32 countries and representatives of international organizations attended this conference. The participants emphasized the importance of the revival of the Great Silk Route and highly appreciated the contribution to that end of the TRACECA project, implemented within the European Union’s TRACIS (Transportation in Commonwealth Independent States) programme as a Eurasian Land-Bridge.

One important conference on “Euro-Asian Transport in St. Petersburg, Russia held on Sep. 15-13, 2000. Within this conference, five routes from Europe to Asia were discussed. These corridors are :- 1) The TRACECA (Transport Corridor Europe – Caucasus – Asia) corridor, from eastern Europe via the Black and Caspian Seas to Central Asia. 2) The Central corridor, from southern Europe, via Turkey, Iran and Central Asia to China. 3) The southern corridor, which runs from southern Europe to Iran, as central corridor, but reaches China via Pakistan, India and the south east Asia. 4) The northern corridor, from Europe via the trans-Siberian rail road to China, North and South Korea, and Japan. 5) A new north–south sail–ship corridor, which goes from Northern Europe to Russia, crosses the Caspian Sea to Iran, and via Iran’s southern ports across the Arabian sea to India. These corridors, with their numerous branches, form a unified network, providing a foundation for the development of a gigantic economic zone.

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73 R. Hrair Dekmejian & Hovann H. Simonian, n-3, p. 140.
74 Dr. Etibar Najafo, n – 14, pp. 2 – 4.
Europe and China thus represent the natural "development pole" of Eurasia. The European Union policy towards the New Silk Road is mainly articulated around the following complementary pillars:

- EU's TACIS programs (Technical Assistance Programs), which constitute the world's largest donor grant finance to the newly New Independent States (NIS), covering the whole spectrum of the necessary economic and political modernization of these countries.
- EU Partnership and cooperation agreement with each of the NIS: These are comprehensive frameworks covering economic issues and political dialogue and democratic institution building.
- The European Energy Charter and its Treaty, which is legally binding and which entered into force in November 1998.
- INOGATE (Interstate Oil and Gas Transport to Europe), a specific technical assistance programme. Energy Charter and the INOGATE program are designed to create opportunities for Central Asian and Caucasus countries to exploit and export energy resources as a concrete basis for their economic development.

Europe-especially Germany, its neighbors, and Italy represent the greatest single concentration of productive capacity, developed infrastructure, and qualified labor force in the world. In particular, Europe possesses the greatest potential in the world for the production and export of high-technology investment goods. In this context, it is to give stress on the policy of "New Silk Road". By 1998, the EU had already spent $75 million on TRACECA project, and was soliciting another $300 million in loans. Additional funds were pledged by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD).

In July 1999, the European Union convened a conference in Kiev attended by 50 delegations from the countries of the former Soviet Union, Central And Eastern Europe and Black Sea Region, and from international financial institutions, to initiate

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the INOGATE Umbrella Agreement.\textsuperscript{77} This accord would provide a single legal and administrative framework to facilitate cooperation among the INOGATE member countries, under a secretariat to be established in Kiev. In December 1999, the European Union approved a new seven year TACIS programme with a price – tag of € 3,138.39 million.\textsuperscript{78}

The TRACECA and INOGATE projects represent the quest for routes circumventing Russia, and even an attempt to drive a wedge between Russia and other CIS members. Indeed, the EU’s strong backing for the revitalization of Romania’s Black Sea port of Constanza, its partial funding of the Baku - Supsa pipe line and financial assistance for a new ferry service between the Georgian Black Sea port of Poti and Ilyichevsh in the Ukraine, could be perceived as attempts to by pass Russia.\textsuperscript{79} The East – West road link from Baku through Alyat to the Georgian border is one of main access routes for goods to and from Azerbaijan, and is supported by the European Union’s TRACECA as a main link in the proposed revival of the Silk Route.

4.8 Role of USA in the Revival of Silk Route

USA has particular economic, strategic and political interests along the Silk Road countries. Sam Brownback, a senator of USA in his report dated March 19, 1997 “Pursuing a Silk Road strategy”\textsuperscript{80} underlined the five US priorities in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus, as under :-

1. Central Asian and the Southern Caucasus states are the major factors in containing the spread northward of anti- extremist fundamentalism from Iran and other nations.

2. The Caspian Sea basin contains oil and gas reserves which, potentially, could rank third in the world after the Middle East and Russia, and exceed four

\textsuperscript{77} R. Hrair Dekmejian & Hovann H. Simonian, n-3, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{79} BBC SWB, EE / W0557 / WB, 1 October 1998.
\textsuperscript{80} Friedrich – Ebert – Stiftung, n – 35, pp. 74 – 78.
trillion dollars in value. Investment in this region could ultimately reduce US dependence on oil imports from the volatile Persian Gulf.

3. Strong market economics near Russia and China can only help to positively influence these two countries on their rocky path towards freedom.

4. These countries, some of them nuclear capable ones, are also at the forefront of stemming the flow southwards of proliferation of weapons of mass destination.

5. This region offers to USA historic opportunities to spread freedom and democratic ideals.

United States today, in economic and military terms, is the most powerful country, which after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, has become the only superpower of the world. The special role of United States in the revival of Silk Road is crucial. The United States supports the Eurasian development strategy of the New Silk Road, and, together with other nations, takes the necessary steps to reorganize the financial system. At the podium, wife of the American economist Lyndon La Rouche, Helga Zepp was well positioned to voice an enthusiastic and credible “Yes!” on behalf of the West, to the “New Silk Road” policy.81

Some countries are considering establishing the Euro – Asia – America Continental Bridge, as the means of a bridge or tunnel across the Bering Strait. The narrowest location of Bering Strait between Chukchi, Russia and the North America Alaska Peninsula, is only 85 Km. wide. Already in 1905, the “Cross Alaska – Siberia Railway Company” was set up by Russia and America. In 1986, a tentative plan for establishing a Bering Strait under sea tunnel was put forward.82 After that, in 1992, 1993 and 1994 three successive international meetings have been held especially to discuss this issue. As soon as the Bering Strait Tunnel is finished, the USA, Russia, China and other Asian countries will be connected together. So, the Qinhuangdo Port, Jingtang Port, and Huanghua Port of Hebei province will be one of the nearest ports

81 ibid.,

of China from west exit of the tunnel, and it will also become one of bridge heads connected with the Asian and North American Continental Bridge.\(^{83}\)

Oil is the key determinant of United States foreign policy towards the Caspian region and Central Asia and the revival of the Silk Route. American foreign policy establishment thinks that control over the Caspian region by any power other than itself will be against the American national interests. Therefore it opposes all those who show interest in the region, be it Iran or China, Russia or Europe.\(^{84}\) The Ceyhen – Baku pipeline project is a case to illustrate it. This is considered as main export pipeline by Turkey and USA in their scheme of East – West Energy Corridor.

The United States seeks to assume the leadership of Eurasia and fill the power vacuum caused by eclipse of the Soviet power. Beside, US interests are to counter Russian influence, reduce Russian monopoly on oil exports from Central Asia and Caspian Sea region, countering the influence of fundamentalist Islam in region, installing pro- American regions and bringing them in the fold of market economy – oriented western world.\(^{85}\) America’s major interest lies in not allowing the rise of any other power with aspirations and capabilities to compete with the U. S. for the leadership of and control over the Eurasian region and its resources.

### 4.9 World Bank and UNESCO Support

World Bank is joining an international effort to revive the old Silk Route connecting China and Central Asia with Europe. With a US $ 40 million credit on May 9\(^{th}\), 2002, World Bank supported the project of Silk Route Revival.\(^{86}\) That “the Azerbaijan – Highway Project aims to help promote economic growth and private sector development by improving access and lowering transport costs for goods and states.

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\(^{83}\) ibid.


\(^{86}\) BBC *SWB SUW / 0678 WA / 17*, '9 May, 2002.
passenger traffic”,87 was stated by Akbar Noman, the World Bank’s Azerbaijan country Manager. “It will also lead to better transport services for the low income rural population living in the vicinity of the road as well as all road users by improving the organization, efficiency and maintenance practices of the Azeravtoyol road agency”.

In pursuit of its mandate “to increase the means of communication between peoples and for the purposes of mutual understanding”, UNESCO has given significant support to initiatives that have greatly enhanced of Central Asia’s cultural heritage. The ten year UNESCO project of Silk Roads through a broad programme of studies, seminars, publications and expeditions shed new light on the heritage of Silk Road. The Steppe Route Expedition undertaken in 1991 through Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, widely reported in the world media, has aroused a revival interest in Central Asia and Silk Route. With a view to promoting the Silk Roads as a destination for cultural tourism, UNESCO and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) jointly launched, in 1994, a long term programme in Central Asia.88

Certain activities launched during the Silk Roads project have been prolonged in the new UNESCO project “East – West Inter – Cultural Dialogue in Central Asia”. The main aim of this project is to bring to light elements, which illustrate the concept, which emerged during the Silk Road project of a common heritage and plural identity”. In the frame work of this project an international forum “Culture and Religion in Central Asia” was held in Bishkek in September 1999.

The second international meeting on the Silk Road was held in Tehran in April 1997, also supported by UNESCO. The primary aims of the meeting were to increase the international understanding and expand cultural exchanges, both within the Silk Road region, and between individual countries. The meeting suggested a number of

measures for the Silk Road countries with a view to achieving a high degree of sustainable tourism development.

The third international meeting on the Silk Road was held in Tbilisi from 2 – 5 November 1998 with the aim of continuing planning and marketing process which the project started four years ago and to take a stock of the current situation decide how to proceed. Through the project, the UNDP and World Trade Organization will identify eight to 10 cities along the route to award the title of "UN Silk Road City" to encourage their commitment and long-term planning to the protection of cultural assets. The Samarkand Declaration on Silk Road Tourism adopted in 1999 by 19 participating countries under the inspiration of the President of Uzbekistan and the then Secretary General of World Tourism Organization was a landmark. A special logo of WTO Silk Road Tourism Project was subsequently adopted to unite all countries organization and the private sector under a common visual banner.

In September 1994, on the 49th session of the UN Assembly the UN Secretary General presented a report on “Transit Transport System in the Newly Independent and Developing Landlocked States in Central Asia and their Transit Developing Neighbors: Current Situation and Proposals for Future Action”. Khalid Malik, UN resident co-ordinator and UNDP resident representative in China stated that the Silk Road Regional Programme (SRRP), a joint initiative between United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the governments of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, will be carried out in three areas-trade, investment and tourism with the aim to revive traditional economic co-operation.

In June 1995, the second meeting of governmental experts from landlocked and transit development countries, representatives of donor countries, financial and development institutions, was held by UNCTAD in New York with the proposals for the development of a global framework for transit transport cooperation. UNCTAD

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90 Jonathan Tennenbaum, n – 1, p. 44.
91 ibid.
conducted a "Central Asia External Trade and Transit Transport Initiative" technical meeting in Ankara where the issue of Euro – Asia corridor was again discussed.\footnote{UN, Management and Financing for Road Maintenance Report / ESCAP / World Bank Seminar, 17 – 20 Sep., 1996, (online web), www.worldpaper.com}

Many international organizations put forward some related projects, such as UNESCAP (UN Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific) with the project of a New Iron Silk Route, ADB (Asian Development Bank) with the project of an Asian Expressway, and the GIF (Global Infrastructure Fund) of Japan’s Mitsubishi Research Institute with the EATTS project.\footnote{UN, Road Safety in Asia and the Pacific: Report / ESCAP / Asian Development Bank Seminar – cum – Workshop, 2 – 6 Sep., (Bangkok – New York: United Nations, 1997).} All these development activities and initiatives clearly indicate the great potential of economic development and cooperation within the New Iron Silk Route region.
Map 5.1 Future Main Routes of the Eurasian Land Bridge
Source: http://www.worldmaps/amazon.com