CHAPTER- 4


I. Post September 11 Challenges to the U.S. Foreign Policy

The events of 11 September 2001 are often seen as a watershed for the U.S. foreign policy towards Afghanistan where U.S. declared war on terrorism as Afghanistan was accused to be a rogue state and a thriving base for promoting terrorism. The September 2001 (9/11) events became a focal point and the U.S. led its forces to attack the Taliban regime in an attempt to destroy the foundations of Al-Qaeda. This was the first time since the Vietnam War that the U.S. led its military to attack sovereigns’ country under the war on terrorism. After U.S. achieved success in toppling the Taliban regime by launching a massive crackdown on Al-Qaeda’s network, the U.S. was able to replace the Taliban’s regime with a puppet government in Afghanistan led by Hamid Karzai.

However, behind and beyond war on terror U.S. emphasis on new threats, “weak states and rogue states” is an integral part of Washington’s attempts to fusion new institutional arrangements at the global level that can more effectively deal with any present or future challenges to its hegemonic power. The U.S. National Security Strategy released in 2002, endorsed preventive war as a replacement for the cold war strategy of containment, employing classic ‘preventive war’ logic. In the words of a former Deputy Secretary of the U.S. Department of Energy, Edward Morse ‘along with the American campaign against terrorism another battle is being waged, perhaps no less important, the battle for supremacy in the energy sector between the two largest oil exporters – Saudi Arabia and Russia’. By selling its response to the 9/11 strategy as part of a global war on terrorism, the United States managed to receive unprecedented international backing for its projection of military power in the heartland of Asia, in the Caucasus and in the Middle East. After the discovery of a large energy resource in Caspian Sea and Central Asia, as the geography of a land lock country makes it imperative that it must depend on another country to run its petroleum energy resource through a pipe line route to the world market. Due to theses type of geographical difficulties, countries of the Caspian Sea and Central Asian region come to play a big role in the energy transport routes of land lock
countries. One of these countries is Afghanistan whose topography is such that it could become an alternative route for an oil pipeline. Afghanistan could provide a land-bridge from Central Asia and South Asia by running through to Pakistan and Indian ports for the world market.6

Since 2003, the U.S. has sought to recover some lost ground by using new strategic diplomacy threat discourse to provide a spring-board for a new hegemonic multilateralism of promotion of democracy “to curbing proliferation and terrorism.7 While U.S. is faced with new threats which challenge its energy security wherever and in whichever country US interests exist, for instance, Saudi Arabia the main oil exporter to the U.S., is facing various factions of Islamist groups who are opposed to U.S.’s hegemony in the Arab world and these groups try to pressurise Saudi government to keep distance from the U.S. as they feel disappointed due to the US stance on Palestinian-Israel dispute.8 Another threat perception to the US hegemony could be the Iran factor which is on the verge of developing nuclear technology which, in the judgment of the United States government would create an imbalance in the region. In addition, it is believed that Iran was backing Islamic groups (Hizbullah and Hamas) in this region to counter aggressive Israeli behaviour towards Palestinians. Iran was viewed by US as a state that would harm its political and economic interests with some of the Central Asian states if they develop relations with Iran because its location can help the landlocked Central Asian states by providing them with access to the sea. They consider Iran to be a better route through which its gas and oil could be exported to Western markets.9 The U.S. administration is also worried about the growing instability in Pakistan where Islamic fundamentalist groups are posing a stiff challenge to the Government. The U.S. is aware that if political power in Pakistan is captured by a group as a party which is opposed to the U.S. and if Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal falls down in their hands or if Al-Qaeda expands its influence in Pakistan, it will be a serious danger to the interests of United States in the region. In addition to this, the United States is also aware of the fact that Pakistan government has not been watchful of the activities of its nuclear scientist, Abdul Qadir Khan, who could again try to sell nuclear technology to Iran, Libya or an Al-Qaeda group, which would be a disaster for the United States.

The emergence of China as a big economic and military power with its fast growing industrial base and China’s aggressive campaign for searching an alternative
energy resource to fuel its industrial needs. China has surpassed the U.S. as the biggest exporter of goods in many areas such as in Iran and Africa and some Arab countries have started looking toward east for their oil export markets, especially in Central Asia and Caspian Sea region China had entered into an agreement to import energy from this region through its pipeline in west of China. As china has close proximity with Central Asian states, it is more convenient and economical for it to transport it both by rail and through a Pipeline. In addition, China has allegedly played a key role in developing lethal weapons and civilian nuclear projects of Iran, because China think that Iran could play a key role in countering U.S. hegemony in this region, and also to make the US aware about China's role in this region. It seems that 'war on terror' is just a plan, in reality; the U.S. establishment is more concerned about the possible threats from its major rival states, notably China and Russia.

Moreover, after the break-up of USSR, the re-emergence of Russia as a major economic and military power after a decade of instability has further compounded US woes. Russia has a huge reservation of energy resources which could be used as a weapon to play a key role in the European market. In addition, Russia is also known to have devised a plan to play a key role by transporting its energy resources to Central Asia and through the Caspian Sea to Europe. Moreover, Russia has recently been the moving spirit behind the idea of a Gas OPEC, an organisation of natural gas producing nations. The new body was formalized at a meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) in Doha, Qatar, on 9 April 2007. It will unite Russia, Iran and Qatar, which between them account for 60 per cent of global gas reserves, with Algeria, Venezuela and Central Asian gas exporting countries. Russia has swapped energy assets and developed joint upstream and downstream projects with all of these countries. The idea of a Gas OPEC has rattled the U.S and Europe as it would shift the alignment of forces in the energy markets and leave them out in the cold. Russian politicians admit that the Gas OPEC will be called upon among other things, to offset Western efforts to control the energy markets. Russia is expected of using energy resources and arms export potentialities to project its influence across the world.

Moscow defied U.S. efforts to isolate Iran by supplying $ 700 million worth of Tor M 1 advanced air – defence missile systems to Tehran last year (2006). It was the biggest of several defence contracts between Moscow and Tehran since 2000, when
Putin lifted an arms embargo imposed on Iran during Yeltsin's rule. Notwithstanding the nuclear controversy, Iran armed with Russian weapons and pursuing a common energy strategy may emerge as Russia's strategic partner in West Asia. The post cold war model of war was seen as much less threatening, more diffusive, and less intense.

With little doubt it can be said that after the 9/11 events the U.S. has been able to set up its military base in Afghanistan. Probably, it could be a long term plan for staying in this region to contain Iran, Russia, India, and China. Afghanistan has been well-known to be the base for containment and to act as the buffer state for the former empire power. Afghanistan is strategically located in the centre of the heart land and has also border connections with all these countries, 'where its borders on the north are with the Soviet Union, (now Central Asian countries) on the west with Iran, on the South east with Pakistan and on the east with China (Sinkiang). In accordance with these considerations, Afghanistan once again seems to have become an important factor in the strategy of the U.S., to control this region. A scholar has pointed out that 'Afghanistan has become a symbol of monumental tragedy of geography. Its location has been the cause of misery for its people. Afghanistan lies in the region between the seats of historical empires in India, Persia and Central Asia. It has been a traditional invasion route for the subcontinent. It has been on the path of numerous invaders since ancient times.' As quoted by Sreedhar the growing US interests in Afghanistan today will create the ground for an emerging cold war. This time it will not be over ideology but over economic interests. Unfortunately, Afghanistan will again become the battleground for the emerging confrontations of resource wars, that is the emergence of giant energy producers and consumers on the one hand and on the other, what Michael Klave calls, "energo - fascism" in which, he avers, the Pentagon has increasingly become a global oil protection service".

II. The Oil and Natural Gas Factor

The September 11, 2001 (9/11) events in United States and the resulting conflict in Afghanistan signified not only the beginning of a new epoch in world politics, but also a new stage in the struggle for influence in Central Asia. The 9/11 attacks on World Trade Centre and Pentagon and the subsequent US led war against terrorism radically changed the equation. These events have involved the United States deeply
in this region which was previously treated as marginal to core American interests. Therefore, it can rightly be said that: "The world once again cares about the region... because it has oil and gas...". The events of 11 September, provided an excuse to the U.S. for attacking Afghanistan and moving its forces to settle its military base there with a long term plan. It is now increasingly questioned by the rest of the world whether war on terror was just a façade for its more sinister designs. It is now being claimed that this strategy was not planned after 9/11 but it was actually getting shaped since the beginning of the end of cold war. The gaining of independence of some of the Central Asian countries from Soviet Union and after few years they discovered the hub of energy resources in these countries and the states around the Caspian Sea, so Afghanistan whose function as an energy pipeline conduit from Central Asia to the Indian Ocean was mapped out some years ago by a major U.S. oil and gas multinational.

The post cold war model of war was seen as much less threatening, and less intense, therefore, the military and intelligence posture of the US designed to deal with the Soviet threat was unnecessary. Indeed, the fundamental threats to American national security in the post cold war period no longer arose from military challenges. They arose from economic challenges from countries that could compete with American production machine. The entire sphere of military challenge was degraded to the level of subsidiary threat while the perception of the national interest shifted to the economic sphere.

After the major disruption in oil supplies that occurred twice in the last quarter of the twentieth century, the Arab oil embargo of 1973 and the Iranian upheaval in 1979, the risks of overdependence on energy resources from an unstable and politically volatile region were driven home once again by Saddam Hussein’s invasion of Kuwait in 1990. In addition the oil reserves of the Persian Gulf countries are not inexhaustible: at current levels of production they are estimated to last up to the end of 21st century at best. As Carter Said: “the U.S. will become perilously dependent on increasingly costly imported oil we could no longer enjoy our freedom as a sovereign nation if we act in our foreign relations in this manner, and we would constantly live in the fear of embargoes.” There was no doubt in the Carter admission. He had proposed a broad national energy policy.
Before the 1970s when the major oil companies still had access to the almost limitless reserves of Middle East oil adding new proven reserves was just a question of drilling some extra adjacent acreage. After the 1970s when these huge reserves of oil were removed from their control and nationalized by the OPEC revolution, the major oil companies concentrated their search for new oil fields; to replace those they had lost, in what were deemed to be politically safer areas, free from the threat of expropriation and nationalization.

Failing to find any oil field within America itself, major U.S. oil companies began to move their upstream operations abroad. A study carried out by the US Department of Energy Information Administration (EIA) in 1995, noted that since the oil price collapse of late 1985 and early 1986, the U.S. oil and gas industry has changed dramatically. The major oil companies have shifted much of their exploration and development efforts to targets outside the United States. This process continued throughout the 1990s. In 1991, the group of 20 largest US oil – producing companies designated as ‘Majors’ by the U.S. Department of Energy accounted for 55.7 per cent of U.S. domestic oil production. But, by 2000, this figure had fallen to 45.2 per cent. This movement, away from the USA, was reflected in the geographical distribution of the US ‘Major’ oil reserves in 1985.

In the beginning of the twenty – first century and with the competition of small and medium sized U.S. oil companies to acquire new oil reserves hitting up, and the extraordinarily profitable opportunities in the Persian Gulf still out of bounds, the jostling crowd of multinational companies were forced to seek out opportunities in the so-called, new frontiers of oil exploration, ‘the deep waters of oil exploration’ the deep waters of Africa’s Atlantic coast and the Atlantic west of Shetland, Vietnam, Egypt, Malaysia and the Caspian and Central Asian states of the former Soviet Union. 23 Especially, the available energy reserves in the Central Asian region offer a viable alternative with energy production poised to increase sharply after 2010. But the geographical location of the landlocked nations of Central Asia reduces the alternatives for transportation of oil and gas to reliance only on the pipe line route, which in turn offers three difficult choices: the Chinese route with its construction difficulties; the India-Pakistan- Afghanistan route through the Caspian Sea. 24 Though Russia is also a possible outlet to the sea; the first was through Russia and the network of Soviet era pipelines. This overland system was extensive, could deliver oil and gas
to Western Europe, and was already linked to the rich Tenghiz oilfield in Kazakhstan and to the Daulatabad gas field in Turkmenistan and to the gas fields in northern of Afghanistan developed by the Soviets. But at that time the internal situation in Russia was chaotic, and the transit taxes payable to the Russian state monopolies made the route expensive, therefore, the most feasible and economical outlet was though Iran, as the oil and gas could be delivered through existing pipelines to the Persian Gulf. But Iran was closed for U.S. oil companies because of the U.S. - imposed sanctions. But, according to Magsudul Hasan: there are other alternative route which Central Asian states could possibly bypass the Russia route; these could be:

(A) Western route via Georgia to the Black Sea and onto Europe either across Ukraine, via Romania or via Bulgaria and Greece.

(B) Southern – Western route from Azerbaijan to Georgia and onto the Mediterranean via Turkey.

(C) To the Persian Gulf or via Afghanistan and Pakistan.

(D) Eastern routes from Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to China (see map-8).

Despite geopolitical and security challenges, the third option to the Caspian Sea demonstrates the maximum potential at present. The Central Asian energy resources are mostly concentrated in the nation states adjoining the Caspian Sea – Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Statistics indicate that the Central Asian region accounts for only 2% of global oil reserves and 5% of proven gas reserves. However, the potential for the availability of natural gas is much greater. Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan jointly account for around 92% of the region’s reserves. The Republic of Turkmenistan possesses over 40% of the region’s reserves of natural gas followed by Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan with 27% each. Kazakhstan thus possesses a substantial amount of the region’s oil and natural gas reserves. According to U.S. Government’s Energy Information Administration (EIA) their first estimated total of oil resources of the region were put at 218 billion barrels, of which 32.5 billion were already said to be proven. After the building of a pipeline through Turkey to the Mediterranean which would come on stream ‘after the turn of the century, Caspian oil production was forecast to reach around 3.3 million barrels per day by 2005, 4.5 million barrels per day by 2010, and 5.8 million barrels per day by 2015. In other words, within seven years, the Caspian would be producing as much as Venezuela, within twelve years its production would rival that of Iran and Qatar combined, and in twenty two
years its production would be nearly as much as Iran and Iraq combined. According to
the EIA’s 1998 International Energy outlook Turkmenistan had the largest proven
reserves with 101 trillion cubic feet (TCF) in energy terms equivalent to around 17
billion barrels of oil. Uzbekistan had 66 TCF and Kazakhstan 65 TCF. Together these
three new states held more gas than the USA and Canada combined although, as in
the case of oil, new pipelines would have to be built to transport the gas to markets
outside the former Soviet Union. Overall, it seemed that at last the USA had found a
major source of additional oil and gas supplies which would give it powerful
motivation to take control of the region and possibly even a new Middle East
(see annex-1 and 2).

A reduced level of Russian support in the post-1991 period led to a temporary
downturn in the oil and natural gas production. However, this trend has been reversed
in the post-1995 period with accelerated Western investment in the oil and natural gas
sector. The politics of oil and natural gas in the region has been tilted in favour of
exploration in preference to territorial dominance by either the concerned regional or
global state actors or the involved commercial interests. This scenario may change if
the volatility of the political situation in the Middle East impacts on the long-term
supply of either petroleum or natural gas. Current trends indicate that the region’s
visibility as an energy supplier at the global level will only grow incrementally after
2010. Even this will be dependent on the stabilization of regional and geopolitical
rivalries in the area making movement of energy via cross border pipelines a cost
effective and secure process.

The pipeline politics in which the Central Asian Republics (CARS) and
Afghanistan were caught up have to be seen in the larger context of the quest for
alternative energy sources by the industrial countries of the Organization for
Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The United States has actively
been involved in the region since the early 1990s. Beginning in the 1970s the U.S.
government and private foundations funded detailed research on the region. At the
time of the independence of the Central Asian Republics (CARS), the United States
was among the first to set up well-staff embassies throughout the region.

One of the key concerns for the American policymakers has been how to secure
access to the oil and natural gas reserves in the first half of the 21st century. As
quoted by Sreedhar: the object of the revived game is two fold: firstly, to establish
friendly relations with the leaders of the Central Asian republics controlling the oil and gas resources. Secondly, to secure alternative pipeline routes to world markets. The landlocked nature of the Central Asian states creates obstacles to proposals for creating new alternative routes. Caspian Sea had become strategically important for the United States. In the words of Richard Cheney, speaking to an audience of U.S. businessmen in Washington in 1998, “I can’t think of a time when we’ve had a region emerge as suddenly to become as strategically significant”.

Initially U.S. policy towards the Caspian and Central Asian States since the break up of USSR, USA had no vital national interest in either the Caucasus or Central Asia. Indeed, as Fiona Hill pointed out, had it not been for the rediscovery of the energy resources of the Caspian Sea, and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the regions would have likely remained a marginal backwaters of U.S. foreign policy. She also pointed out that it was not until major oil contracts were signed between U.S. oil companies and the governments of Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan in 1993-1994 that the region really began to register on the radar screens of the American public, it was the commercial interests of U.S., oil companies in exploiting new energy reserves that gave U.S. policy makers specific interest to protect in the Caucasus and Central Asia. The U.S. has come to see Caspian resources as one of the few prospects for diversifying world energy supply away from the two Clinton administrations between 1993 and 2000 these two, primarily oil-related U.S. objectives, protecting the interests of U.S. oil companies in the Caspian Sea, and diversifying oil supply sources became entangled with a third, geo-strategic objective: that of detaching the newly formed Caspian and Central Asian states from both the Russian and Iranian spheres of influence. Growing U.S. pessimism about the likelihood of Russia restructuring into a US-style ‘model’ economy and society appears to have prompted a new, more antagonistic attitude towards that country during the mid-1990s. Similarly, President Clinton’s 1995 Executive order prohibiting U.S. companies from conducting business in Iran, followed by the passing of the Iran - Libya Sanctions ACT in 1996.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, a key figure was highly influential in directing the Clinton Administration’s attention towards the alleged geo-strategic importance of the Caspian and Central Asia. In the early 1990s, Brzezinski made extensive visits to the region as a consultant to the U.S. oil company AMACO. He had long been a mentor to Clinton’s Secretary of State, Madeleine Albright and he warned the White House
that the USA would be making a serious mistake if it ignores, what he claimed, were its crucial strategic interests in the region. Consequently, coveted CIA officers, some of them well-trained petroleum engineers, were dispatched, to travel through Southern Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan in order to gain further understanding of both their oil potential and their general political situation. In August 1997, Albright and her state Department colleagues received a full CIA briefing on the Caspian/Central Asian region after which Albright concluded that working to mould the area’s future was one of the most exciting thing that we can do’.

Possibly, the most important outcome of these discussions in the State Department was the decision about the role which future oil-and gas-pipeline construction would play. The Department acknowledged that some new pipelines from the region would probably have to pass through Russia, but insisted that ‘Russia should not be able to turn a valve and shut off all or most of the Caspian flow’. Above all, there was to be no weakening in the USA’s determination to block any pipeline construction southwards, through Iran, ‘the last thing we need; White House aids observed, is to rely on the Persian Gulf as the main access for more oil’.

Little wonder then that Cheney\textsuperscript{34} viewed the Caspian region as strategically significant and by 1998, the strategy was becoming clear to incorporate the inhabitants of the Caspian, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus (with the exception of Armenia) into a vast US dependency, anchored upon the construction of a massive new oil and gas pipeline infrastructure stretching along an East-West energy corridor that linked Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and ultimately Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.\textsuperscript{35}

The story of seeking to build pipeline projects across Afghanistan (see map-1, 2, 3, 4 and 5) to Pakistan port and from there to the world market did not actually begin after 11 Sept. 2001, but it has been tried by Bridas an Argentinian oil company\textsuperscript{36} long time ago. Bridas was the first western company that was given access by Turkmenistan Government to drill its energy resources. In January 1994, Bridas was awarded the Yashlar block in the eastern part of the Karakum desert, with a 50-50 share of the profits, with even more favorable terms of 75 to 25 when it was awarded the Keimur block near the Caspian. Bridas spent a large sum of $400 million in exploring its leases, and began exporting oil from its Keimur field in 1994. The year later it tracked gold in Yashar, with estimated reserves of 27 trillion cubic feet of gas,
or more than double of Pakistan’s total reserves. Unlike oil, gas needs an immediate
and accessible market, and Bridas set about devising one with aplomb. As pipeline
project that would pass from Central Asia to South Asia rested on ending of the
Afghan Civil War, so the security needed to be built first. The Central Asian states
feared that Afghanistan was still a fragile country and that the Afghan conflict cannot
be contained for ever within its borders. They are looking South for oil and gas
pipelines and communication routes. They want a government in Kabul which is
responsible and is a good neighbor for them.

In November 1994, Bridas persuaded Niyazov to set up a working group to
study the feasibility of a gas pipeline to Pakistan through Afghanistan. In March 1995,
Niyazov signed a memorandum with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan
commissioning Bridas to prepare a pre-feasibility study of the proposed pipeline.
Bridas spent nine months in 1995 and 1996 flying in its executive jet from warlord to
warlord in Afghanistan, and to Islamabad, Ashkabad, Moscow and Washington to
persuade leaders of the feasibility of the project. This project suited to Pakistan’s
interest also, Pakistan wanted a pipeline to pass its port on the Arabian Sea and bring
financial benefits, such as transit fees, but also to provide strategic and commercial
links with the Central Asian states. The project was also attractive to the United
States as the pipeline would bypass Iran which was being subjected to sanctions. In
February 1996, Bridas signed a 30 year agreement with the Rabbani government in
Kabul for the construction and operation of a gas pipeline by Bridas and an
International consortium that it would create, the same month, he reported to Niyazov
and Bhutto that he had signed agreements with the warlords, and now with the
Taliban, (during Taliban regime ruled Afghanistan). As pointed out by Professor
William O. Bee Man, an anthropologist specializing in Middle Eastern studies at
Brown University, US support for the Taliban had nothing to do with religion or
ethnicity, but only with the economics of oil. The UNOCAL consortium feared that as
long as the country was split among squabbling warlords, the pipeline would never be
built. Political stability was required to implement the $ 4.5 billion project and the US
believed that the Taliban regime would be the most suitable government to achieve
such a goal. Thus, in the aftermath of Taliban’s conquest of Kabul in 1996, the State
Department avoided criticizing the methods the Taliban used to establish control over
the country. John K. Cooley writes that by 1989, the US having at first
sympathetically watched (if not helped) the rise of the Pakistani – created Taliban, was observing with a mixture of sympathy and trepidation. The US oil company, UNOCAL, as it sought to negotiate with the Taliban authorization for energy pipeline from the ex-Soviet now independent, Republic of Turkmenistan through Afghanistan and Pakistan. If successful such agreements would probably be viewed by Brzezinski, the multi-national energy firms and like minded economic and political strategist’s as one of the positive long-range outcomes of the Afghanistan conflicts. It could therefore, be argued that the US administration’s endeavor to secure its oil base led it to support the UNOCAL project and the Taliban advent on the Afghan scene with a promise of stability, in 1994. When the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996 Chris Targert, a UNOCAL executive said that pipeline project would now be easier to implement. The US administration was not a behind to appreciate the development within hours of Taliban capture of Kabul. US State Department announced that it would establish diplomatic relations with the Taliban by sending an official to Kabul. State Department spokesman Glyn Davies said the US found nothing objectionable in the steps taken by the Taliban to impose Islamic law, to him the Taliban appeared to be anti-modern rather than anti-Western which was not perhaps as worrisome. Senator Hank Brown who favoured the UNOCAL project also assessed the advent of the Taliban as a positive development in Afghanistan. The good part of what has happened is that one of the factions at least seems capable of developing a government in Afghanistan. Assistant Secretary of the State for South Asian Affairs, Karl Inderfurth’s testimony before the Senate Committee in July 2000 which recalled the high hopes that greeted the Taliban movement in 1996 clearly indicate the US line at that time, giving right of way through the territories they controlled. For Pakistan, the Bridas project offered the greatest opportunities: an 875 miles gas pipeline from the Yashlar field, crossing Afghanistan to Sui in its Baluchistan province where its gas reserves and pipeline network originates, could be extended to the even bigger market of India via Multan in Sind province. Bridas proposed an open access pipeline so that other companies and countries could eventually feed their own gas into it. This was of particular interest to whoever controlled northern Afghanistan, where the gas fields developed by the Soviets, now inoperative, had once supplied to Uzbekistan.

But Bridas did fall victim to the vicious international competition that these pioneering efforts had engendered. It had opened negotiations with other oil
companies such as UNOCAL, the 12th largest in the U.S. With experience in Pakistan under Bridas sponsorship, Turkmen officials visited Houston in April 1995, and a UNOCAL delegation visited Ashkabad and Islamabad to discuss the Bridas proposals. But Bridas was running into problems with Niyazov, who was being advised by his aides that they were being exploited under the Bridas contract, blocked oil exports from Keimar. After the Yashlar discovery, Niyazov insisted on re negotiating both the Keimar and Yashlar contracts. But Bridas would not budge when UNOCAL expressed an interest in building its own pipeline from the existing Daulatabad gas fields, the profits from which would accrue to Turkmenistan. Niyazov, ignoring his contractual obligations with Bridas, saw both the financial and political advantage of engaging a major U.S. company, and with it, the U.S. government, in his impoverished country's development.

Niyazov needed the U.S. and the U.S. was supportive if this was a way to prevent him from being dependent on Iran. During a visit to New York, Niyazov summoned both Bridas and UNOCAL executive, and on 21 October 1995 signed an agreement with UNOCAL and its partner, the Saudi owned Delta oil company, to build a gas pipeline through Afghanistan. "We were shocked; said Bridas executive quoted by Ahmed Rashid, "and when we spoke to Niyazov, he just turned around and said, "Why don't you build a second pipeline". Henry Kissinger, one of many former U.S. officials whom UNOCAL had engaged as consultants, quipped at the signing ceremony that the deal was "a triumph of hope and experience". With the Taliban in control of both Kabul and the provinces through which the gas pipeline would pass, Bridas and UNOCAL wooed them assiduously. Bridas sponsored a visit by a Taliban delegation to Buenos Aires in February 1997, and a Bridas office was set up in Kabul soon afterwards. Bridas envisaged a partnership with a Saudi Company for the funding of the Afghan portion of the pipeline, and set up a separate consortium with western companies to build the Turkmen and Pakistani ends of the pipeline. It offered to start work immediately, without preconditions. On the other hand UNOCAL which handled public relations for the Taliban and sponsored visits to Washington and Houston had its hands tied by U.S. policy on Afghanistan. No pipeline could be built nor commercial terms discussed with the Taliban by U.S. companies until there was a functioning government in Kabul that was internationally recognized. The Taliban themselves were non-committal. While they favoured Bridas as a politically neutral company, the UNOCAL project carried the possibility of U.S. recognition for which
they were desperate. The competition also made them more demanding: they were not merely interested in receiving a rent for the pipeline route estimated at US $100 million a year, but wanted the oil companies to build the infrastructure along the route, such as roads, water supplies, telephone and power lines. In addition, as western exploitation of eastern natural resources tainted relations between emerging states such as Afghanistan, and western companies, business with oil companies was characterized by deep mistrust and manipulation. Thus, the Taliban exploited the rivalry between UNOCAL and the Argentinean oil company Bridas, over the construction of the pipeline, to lobby Washington for political recognition and to extort large sums of money. UNOCAL alone was believed to have spent up to $20 million, unsuccessfully, to win over the Taliban. Niyazov, the dictatorial president of Turkmenistan, was engaged in a similar game, granting Bridas the rights of exploitation only to rescind them soon after in order to give them to UNOCAL, which had offered a much higher price.

In September 1997 Bridas sold 60 per cent of its company’s stake in Latin America to the U.S. oil giant AMACO, in the hope that a U.S. company could influence Niyazov to cease off on its frozen assets in Turkmenistan. UNOCAL had meanwhile become the target of attacks from its shareholders and from feminist groups in the U.S. because of its relations with the Taliban. By 1998 both the Bridas and UNOCAL projects had become dead letters. As U.S. relations with Afghanistan were inflamed by the bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania for which Osama Bin Laden was held responsible. In August 1998, the Clinton administration launched cruise missile attacks on alleged Bin Laden training camps in eastern Afghanistan. The U.S. government demanded that the Taliban hand over Bin Laden and imposed economic sanctions, the pipeline talks languished.

As soon as George W. Bush was elected president UNOCAL and BP-ARAMCO which had in the meantime bought Bridas, the Argentinean rival stated once again to lobby administration among whom were several of their employers. UNOCAL knew that Bush was ready to back them and resumed the consortium negotiations. In January 2001, it began discussions with the Taliban, by black members of the Bush administration among whom was Under Secretary of State Richard Armitage, who had previously worked as a lobbyist for UNOCAL. The
Taliban for their part employed as their PR officer in the US Laila Helms, niece of Richard Helms, former director of the CIA and former US ambassador to Iran. In March 2001, Helms succeeded in bringing Rahmatullah Hashami, Mullah Omar’s adviser to Washington. Apparently, he even brought a carpet as a gift for George W. Bush from the Taliban leader. As late as August 2001, meetings were held in Pakistan to discuss the pipeline business. At one of these, which took place in Islamabad on 2 August, Christina Rocca, in charge of Asian affairs at the States Department, met the Taliban ambassador to Pakistan, Abdul Salam Zaeef.

While negotiations were underway, the U.S. was secretly making plans to invade Afghanistan, the Bush administration and its oil sponsors were losing patience with the Taliban; they wanted to get the Central Asian gas pipeline going as soon as possible. The ‘strategy of the Silk Route’ had been resumed. U.S. academics, journalists and intellectuals denounced the White House’s new approach. The U.S. had quietly begun to align itself with those in the Russian government calling for military action against Afghanistan and has toyed with the idea of a new raid to wipe out Bin Laden, wrote Frederick Star; head of the Central Asian Institute at John Hopkins University, in December 2000. Paradoxically, 11 September provided Washington with a casus belli to invade Afghanistan and establish a pro-American government in the country. When a few weeks after the attack, the leaders of the two Pakistani Islamist parties negotiated with Mullah Omar and Bin Laden for the latter’s extradition to Pakistan to stand trial for the 11 September attacks, the U.S. refused the offer. Back in 1996, the Sudanese Minister of Defence, Major General Elfatih Erwa, had also offered to extradite Osama Bin Laden, then resident in Sudan but the U.S. American officials declined the offer at that time as well. Instead, they told General Erwa to ask Bin Laden to leave the country. ‘Just don’t let him go to Somalia; they added. Because U.S. fears that Bin Laden will create further unrest, when Erwa disclosed that he was going to Afghanistan, the American answer was ‘let him go’ is it possible that the U.S. did not want to bring Bin Laden to ‘justice’? Could it be because he has too many tales to tell?

For Goe Vidal, the conquest of Afghanistan had nothing to do with Osama. He was simply a pretext for replacing the Taliban with a relatively stable government that would allow Union Oil of California (UNOCAL) to lay its pipeline for the profit of, among others the Cheney-Bush Junta. Vidal’s view might not be far from the truth.
Karzai’s role during the interim government is clearly that of a mediator of the interests of the U.S. oil companies in the pipeline business. Kalizad has a similar task. Two small oil companies chase energy and Caspian Energy consulting have already obtained permission from the governments of Turkmenistan and Pakistan to resume the pipeline negotiations.

So the assumption that the US strategy to establish a pro US Afghan government was to secure a pipeline route through Afghanistan come to light. As Sreedhar pointed out that the discovery of the huge energy resources in this region (Central Asia Republics) makes the west believe that it could make the region the Persian Gulf of the next Century. The Central Asian region has gained in importance as it could serve as a replacement once the oil reserves in the gulf start depleting seriously by the middle of the next century. It is in this context that Central Asia is again emerging as a murky battleground among big powers. The agenda is being set by geopolitics and oil.

The object of the revived game is twofold: firstly, to establish friendly relations with the leaders of the Central Asian republics controlling the oil and gas resources. Secondly, to secure alternative pipeline routes to world markets. The landlocked nature of the Central Asian states creates obstacles to proposals for creating new alternative routes. As insider accounts published in the British, French and Indian media have revealed that U.S. officials threatened war against Afghanistan during the summer of 2001. It is not an accident that these revelations have appeared overseas, rather than in the U.S. the ruling classes in these countries have their own economic and political interests to look after, which do not coincide, and in some cases directly clash, with the drive by the American ruling elite to seize control of oil – rich territory in Central Asia.

The official American myth is that ‘everything changed’ on the day four airlines were hijacked and nearly 5000 people murdered. The US military intervention in Afghanistan by this account was hastily improvised in less than a month. This is only one of countless lies emanating from the Pentagon and White House about the war against Afghanistan. The truth is that the US intervention was planned in detail and carefully prepared long before the terrorist attacks provided the pretext for setting it in motion. Such events used to happen before also and can be compared with new
ones, as the attack comes in the wake of revelations by an author, James Bam Ford who wrote in his book, ‘Body of Evidence,’ of a secret plan for US military intelligence operatives to commit acts of terrorism against American targets... blow up buildings, shoot down civilian airliners, blow up American war ships, and assassinate American citizens... for political gains. Operation North Woods was signed off by all five Joint Chiefs of Staff under the Kennedy administration as a way to foment public support for a war against Cuba, who would be blamed for the terrorist acts. Rejected sternly by president Kennedy which, it is sometimes presumed may have contributed to his assassination, this ‘Reich Tag Fire’ approach to political gain may have been the model for September 11, shifting the blame this time to the Taliban homeland what would make a more irascible excuse for war?

In the aftermath of the horror of what many simply call 9/11 we find government investigators minting money. Now that strong evidence exists that the true reason for the war was oil, and it is certain knowledge that such a war could not have been sold to American people without some catastrophic catalyst event.\(^5^5\)

As energy of oil and gas becomes the blood stream of this century, the booming of South and East Asia market was but natural. While, the world’s gas map depicts numerous gas pipelines moving across thousands of kilometers from Russia, Central Asia and the North Sea to Western Europe, hardly any pipelines move Eastwards’ and South wards. This is now set to change due to two important factors:

(i) The increasing Asian demand for gas; and
(ii) The ability of Asia to transport gas economically from producers to consuming centers.

Gas is transported globally as LNG and through transnational pipelines. By 2020, one-third of the world output, i.e., 1.35 trillion cubic meters, will be internationally traded, of which 50 per cent will be transported as pipe gas and 38 per cent as LNG. Given rapidly increasing Asian demand and the availability of huge gas reserves in Asia, piped gas and LNG will both be utilized and indeed will complement each other in the energy-mix of the principal consumers. The Asian Gas Grid envisages the setting up of a series of pipelines that will carry natural gas to the various consumption centers in East and South Asia.\(^5^6\)

Now we could witness that Afghanistan still important for gas pipeline corridor for South Asia market, would be a major player for booming of India market. India is
vigorously pursuing gas pipeline project’s both on its eastern and western land frontiers. The Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline is expected to bring to India nearly 90 mmcmd of gas which will be utilized as fuel power and fertilizer projects in north and north western India.

India has also agreed to participate in the Turkmenistan – Afghanistan – Pakistan pipeline project. The project is backed by Asian Development Bank (ADB) that aims at importing natural gas from the Central Asian nations to meet the growing energy needs. The steering committee meeting was called by the project sponsor, ADB, between November 28 and 29, 2007 in Islamabad that witnessed India formally becoming part of the project and the four nations signing the project ahead of Agreement and a Gas pipeline Framework Agreement.

The proposed pipeline will have a capacity of 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas per annum. The 1,680 km pipeline will run from the Daulatabad gas field to Afghanistan. From there it will be constructed alongside the highway running from Herat to Kandahar and then via Quetta and Multan in Pakistan. The final destination of the pipeline will be the Indian town of Fazilka, near the border between Pakistan and India. The cost of this international infrastructure is estimated at $4 billion. The deal on the pipeline was signed in December 2002 by the leaders of Turkmenistan, Afghanistan India and Pakistan (see map-1, 2 and 5).

As cited by Mr. Burns in his article is America’s Expectations vis-à-vis a future Indian role in Central Asia. “We are working with Delhi to encourage energy rich Central Asian states such as Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to establish oil and gas trade with Afghanistan, Pakistan and India”. He wrote, “Thereby reducing the lure of long term contracts with Iran.” What he left unsaid is the expectation-now well amplified in American policy documents-that India would help the U.S. pull Central Asia away from Russian and Chinese influence under its “Greater Central Asia” and “Regional Energy Market Access Program”.

Thus it is evident from the above analysis that there is no doubt that U.S. moved to invade Afghanistan after 11/Sept, and set up its military base there, was viewed as a step to secure energy pipeline route. Antony Hyman writes that from a geopolitical point of view Afghanistan forms a potential “land-bridge for bulk trade or oil and gas pipelines to be constructed from the Central Asian states to markets in Pakistan, India and elsewhere in the world via Karachi or another Pakistani port on the Arabian Sea.
Irrespective of which government was in place in Kabul, Afghanistan’s territory could provide access to world markets and an alternative to total dependence upon Russia’s monopoly on trade route.59

III. Pakistan Factor in U.S’ post-11 September Afghan Policy

The 9/11 terrorist attacks demanded the attention of all those who were interested in South Asian dynamics.60 The attacks were a wake-up call for Washington and the West. The cost of abandoning Afghanistan to the Taliban and the growth of an extremist policy in Pakistan was too high a price for the U.S. to pay.

Apart from cracking down on Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the U.S. after publicly busting the A.Q. Khan nuclear smuggling ring in January 2004 has shown that nuclear non-proliferation is a key objective of American policy towards Pakistan. Soon after 9/11, the then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, put Pakistan President Pervez Musharraf on notice – you are either with us or against us. The General had little choice in the matter. He had to be with the Americans. The ultimate fear that seems to be driving the U.S. is the following: what happens to Pakistani nuclear weapons in case an extremist, Islamist leadership was to capture power in that country. From time to time, there have been suggestions that the Americans want to be in a position to secure these nuclear weapons. Hillen’s comments only go to confirm that the U.S. wants to be in a position to tackle any unauthorized proliferation in Pakistan.

The Americans are attempting to be in a position to take on a leadership role if a proliferation problem were to take place once again in Pakistan. Is this the price that Washington has been able to extract in lieu of letting off the Pakistani military in the nuclear supermarket run by A.Q. Khan? That certainly seems to be the case.61 As pointed out by a report in February 2004, Western defence allies have agreed to include India and Pakistan in NATO’s Partnership for Peace Program (PFP) after concerted persuasion by the U.S. such an arrangement would allow the two nuclear rivals of South Asia to consult the alliance in the event of direct threats to their internal and external security. With the change in its geographic focus, NATO plans to take control of several international military peace keeping operations under the UN mandate and both India and Pakistan are seen as major contributors to such future operations. It may be a matter of time that NATO might extend its operations to Iraq
that in turn may require peacekeeping troops from both India and Pakistan. The decision to accord a non-NATO ally status to Pakistan comes at a time when the country is under pressure regarding its nuclear program.

However, from Najim Rafique’s conclusion about strategic concept in 1999, provides the institutional justification and direction for NATO’s further development, and is likely to remain the main blueprint for NATO’s evolution during the next 10 to 15 years. As Zbigniew Brzezinski; who served as former US President, Jimmy Carter’s National Security Adviser, in his book *The Grand Chessboard*, defined the NATO alliance as part of an integrated comprehensive and long-term strategy for all of Eurasia in which NATO would eventually reach Asia, and where another military alliance would connect the Pacific and Southeast Asian states.62

If one agrees with the view point in an article about nuclear issue of Pakistan, could be an international issue in future. And with this issue linkage are found to events in Afghanistan that U.S. attacked Afghanistan after 11 September and set up its military base there to monitor Pakistan’s nuclear proliferation issue. As U.S. fears that nuclear arsenal might fall in the hands of terrorist groups or rogue states as U.S. labeled it after few days of World Trade Center attack.

Since November 2003, two episodes have highlighted some of the existential dangers that threaten the safety and security of Pakistan’s nuclear deterrent as well as the reasons that the country remains a source of serious proliferation concern. The first was an acknowledgement by the Pakistani government that it is conducting an internal investigation into the activities of some senior scientists at Khan Research Laboratories (KRL) the entity that produces enriched Uranium for Pakistan’s nuclear weapons program - for possibly proliferating nuclear technologies, technical knowledge, and tactic know-how to Iran, in violation to Pakistani laws. And second there were two nearly successful assassination attempts on Pakistani President and Chief of Army Staff, General Pervez Musharraf. This issue in brief is divided into three sections.

(i) The first review the controversy surrounding new disclosures that Pakistani nuclear entities and scientist constitute the hub of a clandestine international Cartel enrichment technologies. It analyses the likelihood and implications of the official involvement of the Pakistani government – or at least its military-in such activities, as well as the possibility that Pakistani entities and scientists have engaged in
proliferation activities unknown to state authorities. Rumors have long persisted that the Khan Research Laboratories (KRL) transferred drawings, designs, starter kits, and tacit knowledge for centrifuge-based uranium enrichment as well as information about procurement networks to Iran, Libya, and North Korea. In addition, there was a set of documents obtained by United Nations (UN) inspectors in Iraq in 1995 that may indicate an effort by Abdul Qadeer Khan shortly before the start of 1991 Persian Gulf war to sell Iraq nuclear weapon design, drawings and gas centrifuge design information, and facilitate the procurement of equipment required to build them. These items have been provided for ongoing technological assistance. Washington Post reported on January 27, 2004 that Khan’s middle man allegedly also offered the Pakistani scientist’s services to Syria and Iraq. However, these offers were not accepted. When Pakistan embarked on a nuclear weapons programme in the early 1970s, Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto framed his country’s aspirations in civilizational terms: as the quest for an “Islamic Bomb.” Since then knowledgeable observers of Pakistani politics have dwelt on the linkage between Libyan and Saudi funding for Pakistan’s nuclear weapons programme and potential Pakistani nuclear technology transfers to regimes in the Middle East. However, from the 1980s onwards, Pakistani government officials have denied Bhutto’s formulation, and portrayed the nuclear weapons program as a national enterprise driven by the strategic necessity of safeguarding their country’s security against a conventionally more powerful India.

Thus far the Pakistani government’s official complicity in the nuclear trade with Iran, Libya, and North Korea remains unproven beyond doubt. But the evidence that Pakistani nuclear labs and scientists engaged in nuclear trades unknown to Pakistani military and intelligence agencies is equally murky.

(ii) Beyond Pakistan’s role in nuclear proliferation to Iran, Libya, and North Korea, the two recent nearly successful assassination attempts on general Musharraf’s life also raise serious questions about whether the Pakistan Army can ensure the safety of the country’s nuclear arsenal and keep it from the covetous reach of terrorist groups and potential rogue collaborators within the military. After all, observers contend, if the army cannot guarantee the safety of its own chief-of-staff, what conceivable guarantees exist about its ability to ensure the safety of the dispersed and more numerous nuclear assets? The recent attempts on Musharraf’s life suggest that
the President’s inner security cordon may have been breached or that insiders within the army and its intelligence agencies could be collaborating with the Al-Qaeda and other disgruntled sectarian groups to eliminate him.

Most analysts draw analogues to the succession arrangements that followed General Zia’s sudden demise in a mysterious plane crash in the summer of 1988 and believed that succession arrangements in the wake of General Musharraf’s removal will be a relatively smooth affair as well. The consensus among most academic and U.S. government analysts is that the top leadership of the Pakistani Army is relatively moderate and, secular and generally pro-West. This is not to suggest that Islamists do not exist in army’s ranks or that the entire officer Corps shares General Musharraf’s domestic and external agendas. Indeed, the arrest of nearly 20 army officers for their alleged links with Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in 2003 points in the direction of subversion and competing agendas within Pakistan’s national security establishment.

(iii) The recent attempts on General Musharraf’s life reminds of the threats to Pakistan’s long-term stability from the forces of Islamic fundamentalism. Senior government officials and cabinet ministers and officials lower down have pointed fingers of suspicion at Al-Qaeda remnants and disgruntled Kashmiri and Afghan radical groups, which resent Gen. Musharraf regime’s collaboration with Washington in its current war against terrorism. They suggest that Musharraf’s decision to break with the Taliban and radical Islamist sectarian groups in the wake of the September 11, 2001 terror attacks on the United States and the subsequent compound crisis with India has alienated these groups from their former patrons in the Pakistani Army and its intelligence agencies. As a result, the radical Islamists are now seeking to eliminate General Musharraf in a personal act of revenge and then replace him with military leaders who would limit or perhaps reverse the shifts in Pakistan’s domestic and external policies.

Most independent observers of Pakistani politics believe that threats to General Musharraf’s regime are largely the consequence of the nature of its break with the Islamic radicals, which is tactical and not strategic. But the fact remains that the Pakistani military maintains an unofficial alliance with Islamic religious parties and continues to pamper sectarian militant groups for domestic and external reasons. Domestically, it uses the Islamic fundamentalist parties to keep mainstream, secular and ethnic political parties in check and ensures its continued corporate dominance in domestic Pakistani politics.
However, domestic factors aside, the Pakistani military is also reluctant to stamp out the power of the Islamist Parties and sectarian groups for compelling external reasons. In the past, the army had subcontracted Pakistan’s national security policies in Afghanistan and Kashmir to some of these groups, and views them as long-term allies. During the 1980s and 1990s, a large number of the Islamic religious parties controlled seminaries, served as a recruiting and training grounds for the Afghan Mujahideen and later the Taliban. The army and the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) supported both successively in the elusive hope that a friendly regime in Kabul would ensure strategic depth for Pakistan against India. Similarly during much of the 1990s, and even to an extent today, the Pakistani Army relies on Islamists to wage a low-intensity war to tie down the Indian Army in Indian–Administered Kashmir (IAK).

Although General Musharraf changed track and joined the United States in its war against Al-Qaeda and the Taliban. This policy stems from Islamabad’s long-term plans to play an influential role in Afghanistan’s largest ethnic group. This duplicitous and contradictory alliance between the Pakistan army and religious political parties and other sectarian groups is the key reason that latter retains power and influence in domestic Pakistani politics. As long as the Pakistani army does not give up its ambitious plans to play a dominant role in domestic Pakistani politics or abandon its regional security agenda in Afghanistan and Kashmir, General Musharraf will find it impossible to take on the task of destroying the power of the Islamists or launching a serious domestic reform effort. To ensure that Pakistan is transformed into a modern and moderate Islamic state and as long as the military continues to rely on the Islamists to pursue its multiple agendas, the later will continue to consolidate political power, hastening the day when they might effectively come to control Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal.

In the immediate aftermath of attack on twin towers, the U.S. turned its policy towards Pakistan on its head and realized that it had to ensure Pakistan’s support in its war on terror. As such, the US reversed its previous policy of applying sanctions on account of the nuclear tests and accorded the status of “major Non-NATO ally of USA to placate the military leadership in Pakistan. It has, ever since, turned a blind eye to the undemocratic policies of the Musharraf - led military administration in Pakistan. From 2002, Musharraf has put in place a sham system of democracy by allowing only yes – men to participate in elections. The US has allowed Musharraf to
continue the democratic facade and perpetuate his hold on power in Pakistan. It is largely because the US thinks that only alternative to Musharraf is chaos in Pakistan. There is an overblown apprehension in the US that if Musharraf goes then the Islamist opposition will take over and, as a result, a nuclear Pakistan in the hands of the Mullahs will be terribly unsafe for the world.\textsuperscript{67}

In addition, it was most likely that Pakistan could come close to China to enhance its cooperation in the field of nuclear energy, as recently, US dealing the civilian nuclear agreement with India and especially after it became clear that the U.S. would not extend the same kind of offer to Pakistan, President Musharraf has been working on concluding a deal with China along similar lines. The two countries signed a framework agreement on energy cooperation during President Musharraf’s visit to Beijing in February, 2006.

During the celebrations to commemorate the 55\textsuperscript{th} anniversary of Pakistan-China relations, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz said that the two countries were working at enhancing cooperation in the field of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes under international safeguards for the production of electricity. In addition, Pakistan is seeking Chinese assistance in developing its oil and gas sector. It is seriously pushing the idea of oil and gas pipelines from Gwadar in Balochistan to western China. At the same function, Aziz said that such a facility would provide China with a shorter and more economical route for its oil supplies from the Gulf region. Aziz also spoke of setting up a mega oil refinery “at Gwadar to further facilitate China’s oil imports from our region.”\textsuperscript{68}

The war on terrorism is expected to be long drawn. The Pakistani military and intelligence services may retain strong ties with Taliban in Afghanistan. Like the Pakistani population, many among the Pakistani military or its nuclear establishment could be sympathetic to fundamentalist’s causes and thereby, hostile to the United States. These sympathies could grow depending on the course of the war in Afghanistan or elsewhere. Such insider threats in Pakistan could pose one of the most vexing problems in the current crisis. Several observers have indicated that if Pakistan suffers a coup by forces hostile to the United States, the US military should be ready to provide security for the nuclear weapons or even to take the weapons out of Pakistan entirely without the permission of the Pakistani authorities, while other have
raised the possibility of asking President Mushrraf to allow the United States or China to take possession of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons in such situation.

Although such responses appear possible in theory, their implementation could be extremely difficult and dangerous. US military actions to seize or cripple Pakistan’s strategic nuclear assets may encourage India to take similar action. However, this job may not be easy for U.S. or for India.

Such harsh contingencies may be important to consider in order to protecting the vital interests of the United States and its allies. A better strategy, however, is to take appropriate steps to minimize the likelihood that such catastrophic scenario materializes.

This plan was attempted move along with the movement of NATO into Afghanistan, after the terrorist attacks on targets in the United States. For the first time in the history, NATO invoked Article 5 of the treaty (relating to joint defence clause). The US, recognized as the aggrieved party, did not make use of NATO’s support and decided on an independent action against Afghanistan, freely shaping what it termed as the ‘coalition of the willing. The anti-terrorist operations started by the U.S. intensified the process of further NATO expansion, at the same time reinforcing the international evolution of the alliance in terms of building more capabilities to meet the new security challenges of the 21st century.

The U.S. made it clear that without a fresh definition of its mission, NATO would not be able to efficiently oppose the new types of threats. The U.S. Defence Minister said that if NATO did not transform itself, ‘it will not have much to offer the world in the 21st century’. Perhaps keeping this in mind the NATO took command of the 5,000 strong International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan in August 2003.

The new U.S. defence concept articulated in the 2001 Quadrennial Defence Review Report’ moved away from ‘region based’ scenarios to ‘capabilities based’ planning, and underlined the need for forces that can handle two major conflicts and multiple smaller military operations, simultaneously. This shift in strategy moved the NATO focus of defence planning from Southwest and northeast Eurasia to the southern and eastern region of the Eurasian landmass of North Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The review notes that while large US forces are likely to remain
stationed in Europe, they will be called upon to be deployed elsewhere and to serve as instruments of power projection.

Historically, NATO has followed America’s military policies and security doctrines. In the context of the war on terror, the US has adopted fundamentally new security and military doctrines. In this regard, the new US doctrine of preemption will be decisive in the transformation of NATO. The US national security strategy unveiled in September 2002 says that while the US will seek allies in the battle against terrorism, it will not hesitate to act alone if necessary. The new US doctrine also calls for transformation and moderation of NATO to meet new security threats.

In Afghanistan, the US is pushing NATO but ‘coalition of the willing’ comprising some states of both the old and new Europe under US command, US relied on its CENTCOM instead the US is pushing NATO to deliver on an ambitious plan to extend its peacekeeping presence beyond Kabul and create links with American – led military operations in the South, in an effort to rout the remnants of Taliban and Al-Qaeda.

As mentioned above Western defence allies have agreed to include India and Pakistan in the NATO’s PFP programme after concerted persuasion by the US that such an arrangement would allow the two nuclear rivals of South Asia to consult the alliance in the event of direct threats to their international and external security. With the change in its geographic focus NATO plans to take control of several international military peacekeeping operations under the UN mandate.

IV. Bringing Afghanistan into the “Bigger Central Asia” Project

From 2005, a new geopolitical project is being discussed in strategic circles in the US, the so-called project for “the Bigger Central Asia”. The core of this plan is to bring together Afghanistan and the Central Asian republics in a single military strategic and geopolitical whole, and possibly include some other neighboring regions. In fact, this project was started slowly in the period immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent emergence of the newly-independent states in 1991. Initially the US policy towards Central Asia centered on security relationship with Kazakhstan. This initial focus on Kazakhstan stemmed in large part from the need to secure the Kazakh nuclear arsenal and, in December 1993,
resulted in the signing of a Cooperative Threat Reduction (CTR) Agreement to dismantle and destroy the country’s more than 100 SS-18 missiles.

By 1994, the US cemented its bilateral security cooperation with Kazakhstan through a defence doctrine and training. The neighbouring states of Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan also joined Kazakhstan in entering NATO’s Partnership for Peace Program (PFP). Central Asian membership in the NATO PFP served as the main avenue for Western security arrangement. The US approach towards Central Asia was also driven by over reaching geopolitical considerations, with an underlying goal of containing the influence of China, Iran and Russia.

Another US policy was even more ambitious with long term goals of democratization and marketization, a consolidation of regional security and cooperation and an open and unfettered environment to allow the development of the regional energy resources. This last goal effectively translated into an effort to bolster the territorial integrity and security of the Central Asian states mainly as a counterweight to Russian interference or manipulation. By 1999, the US Congress expanded a commitment to military agreement with Central Asia, to support the economic and political independence of both Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus.

Apart from isolating this wide region and bringing it out of the (mono politic), influence of other great powers-Russia and China, the project may have been dictated also by the necessity of bringing Afghanistan out of the destabilizing influence of such neighbors as Pakistan and Iran and binding this country to more stable and western-oriented region of Central Asia.

In general “the Bigger Central Asia” (BCA) project is in many ways a continuation of another geopolitical project – “the Bigger Near East” (BNE), and it has in principle the same strategic aims, diversification of strategic interests and stabilization of the territory under dominant influence of USA.

At the same time, according to this plan, Washington seeks to maintain an appearance of ‘pluralism’ by allowing Moscow and Beijing some role in the region by granting them the status (along with the West) of guarantors and donors in the modernization process attempted by the U.S. and giving them some illusion of control in the region. However, for the American strategists the role of China and Russia as ‘benevolent observers’ is quite acceptable. However, anything beyond that will be
countered by the U.S. It is also being predicted that the U.S. may facilitate the entry of India and Turkey into the region to balance out China and Russia. The developments in Andizhan in 2005 and the drastic change in foreign policy of Tashkent have jeopardized the prospect of implementation of the BCA project. The main aim of the BCA was to transform Uzbekistan into the center of the integration process by persuading it to sign special agreements with Pakistan, cooperate with Japan to build railways in Afghanistan to create transport corridor to the Indian Ocean and free trade zone around the Fergana Valley with participation of other countries of Central Asia.

This project proposes implementation of a number of organizational, technical and diplomatic measures to realize the American strategy. They concern strengthening of the role of the Pentagon and the State Department for more effective US presence in the region. It is also considered necessary to strengthen the role of NATO as one of the main instruments of the American strategy forming part of special BCA council, through which USA could coordinate and influence regional policies on a continuing basis.

V. Containment of Iran

Under the name of the war against terrorism, the United States has denounced Iran as part of the ‘Axis of Evil; openly encouraging the overthrowing of the current regime. Moreover, there was a talk within the Bush administration of invading Iran to depose the clerical government too. According to the Washington Post, the full secret version of the doctrine “goes even further” and breaks with 50 years of U.S. counter-proliferation efforts by authorizing pre-emptive strikes on states and terrorist groups that are close to acquiring weapons of mass destruction or the long range missiles capable of delivering them. The idea being to destroy parts before they are assembled. The document’s top secret appendix is reported to name Iran, Syria, and North Korea. That will be the central focus of this new approach and it pledges to “stop transfers of weapons components in or out of their borders.” A consequence of invasion of U.S. troops into Afghanistan and Iraq a year later caused Iranian government to take extreme caution.
The reason behind the new Bush approach was the heightened concern against terrorism following the September 11, 2001 attacks. One paramount American fear was that future terrorist attacks would employ chemical, biological, or, possibly, nuclear weapons. In the view of the Bush administration, Iran was linked to various terrorist groups. In spite of Iranian government’s strong condemnation of the 9/11 attacks, Iran responded positively to cooperation in the war on terror under the auspices of the UN ‘Geneva Contact Group’ provided a forum for United States and Iran to meet and discuss Afghanistan. Though the Geneva group lived through 18 months, with initial American success, the nurtured distrust and suspicions resurfaced.

In American perception, Iran was accredited with close supervision of Hamas Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Peoples Front for the liberation of Palestinian territories, and that Tehran continuously abets in Hezbollah’s efforts of acquiring WMD. Iran was also accused of direct guidance to Abu Musab Alzarqawi, propping of Ansar-ul-Islam and of harboring 300 senior Al-Qaeda activists.

Hezbollah, over the years, has definitely evolved itself into an entity which imparts stability to the political divisions within Lebanon. Hamas too wants to emulate Hezbollah’s success, provided they are allowed to enter the political mainstream.

During Clinton administration there was some breaking of ground in engaging the Iranians and Saudi Arabia in the spring of 1994, and produced evidence which implicated the Iranians in the Khobar Towers bombing, where 19 U.S. soldiers had lost their lives. Evidence collected by Saudi Arabia pointed towards some disgruntled Shia segments. Alkhobar bombings of 1995 were recently duplicated in Riyadh, on May 12, 2003, through Al-Qaeda machinations, with nothing in common ideologically; the incident was once again used to link Al-Qaeda and the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Karine A incident could be termed as the most suspicious. On January 3, 2002, accusation was made that involved Karine A, a ship purchased in Lebanon by Palestinians was intercepted in the Red Sea with eighty crates of weapons loaded at the Iranian Freeport in the Persian Gulf, the island of Kish. During this time, Iranian – US relations, in the post 9/11 environment, for better cooperation in Afghanistan were warming up, and therefore, to counter this, the interception by the Israelis in the Red Sea, was blown out of proportions. It was immediately followed up by Bush’s state of
Union address, where Iran was included in the ‘Axis of Evil’ trio. Khomenei fired back with commensurate vitriol who said that the Islamic Republic is proud to be the target of hate and anger of the world’s greatest evil: “we never seek to be praised by the American officials”.

As per U.S. perception, Iran always supports terrorist groups. US was also aware about Iran’s nuclear programme where, after eight years of bitter fighting with Iraq, Iran accepted United Nations Security Council resolution to ceasefire in the war, and shortly after wards international isolation. It mended fences with the Gulf States, re-established diplomatic ties with the major West European powers, and even better relations with the United States, ‘the Great Satan’ yet, when a combination of international and regional developments offered new opportunities in the early 1990’s, Ayatollah’s imperialist ambitions were quickly reasserted as an expansion of the country’s military arsenal accompanied by sustained efforts to project Iranian influence in the Persian Gulf and the Middle East, as well as in Central Asia and the trans Caucasus.

Iran renewed and substantially accelerated its nuclear development programme. There is a strong consensus among intelligence services and arms control agencies around the world that Iran is seeking nuclear weapons. Iran is known to have been shopping for nuclear know how and material in the west, the successor states of the Soviet Union, especially Russia – from which Iran has acquired two reactors of four hundred megawatts thermal power and from selected third world countries, such as Brazil, North Korea, and China, which have long been involved with the Iranian programme. For their part, the Ayatollah made no secret of Iran’s interest in the Bomb, at least until they came under heavy American pressure to bridle their nuclear ambitions following the 9/11 attacks.

Currently, Iran seeks to develop a missile capability with a range of approximately 800 miles as well as at least the capacity to build nuclear weapons – the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has reached the conclusion that Iran has pursued both uranium enrichment related and reprocessing activities and a policy of concealment, although it did not conclude that Iran did have a nuclear weapons programme. Iran has subsequently signed a protocol to the Non-proliferation treaty that allows for “intrusive inspections” but has then objected to these, raising the likelihood that the diplomatic track has been exhausted and that Iran may now be set
on the development of nuclear weapons capability. There is apprehension that there could be a domino effect and a nuclear test by Iran could prompt its neighbours to consider whether they should also pursue nuclear option. Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Syria, the United Arab Emirates, and Turkey are sometimes referred to as countries that could follow Iran and begin their nuclear ventures. Obviously, these countries may not pose immediate concerns, but all of them have once been suspected of acquiring nuclear weapons capabilities. For example, Saudi officials mentioned in early 2004, that they were interested in acquiring nuclear capability on lease from China or Pakistan.

Once any regional country succeeds in possessing nuclear weapons, it might feel tempted or even urge to go nuclear to ensure regional security balance. A nuclear Iran means the emergence of the single regional superpower, and it might harm strategic balance among regional powers, especially vis-a-vis the Arab countries. It is no wonder Arab countries may be tempted to correct this strategic imbalance against a Persian country, by pursuing their nuclear capabilities. Moreover, Israel has already warned that it will not tolerate an Iranian nuclear capability, and might well take preemptive action.

Moreover, Iran has reserved large energy resources which could play a key role in Indian subcontinent, such as, it could raise its influence over energy needs of South Asian countries especially, India. With the massive growth in Indian economy, it would need large amounts of energy resources, therefore Indian government has been initiating import of large-scale natural gas from Iran through cross border pipeline which is perceived as one of the best long term solutions to India’s energy needs.

Iran, with over twenty-six million cubic meters of gas reserves (sixteen percent of the world’s gas reserves) is naturally interested in large scale supply of gas to the Indian subcontinent. The geographical location of Iranian gas resources makes India the best market for country’s gas export in the coming years and Iranian policy makers have studied the Indian market for exporting gas in the form of LNG via a pipeline, for over ten years. In November 2000, Iran and India agreed to launch yet another feasibility study on the land and deep sea option of gas transportation to India. According to the project studies of supplying gas through a pipeline, there would be three countries involved who would also gain significant benefits from this project. India will get energy for its growing needs, Pakistan will get both gas and a
heavy royalty and transit fees, Iran of course, would stand to gain the most financially and it would be a respite for the nation that the U.S. is trying to isolate, politically.

Even though the recent advancement of the negotiations between India and Pakistan over security of oil pipeline which will be laid down in Pakistan's territory has been positive but the greatest impediment however, comes from the strong US opposition to this project and its determination to isolate Iran and cut off its investments. There have been reports that the U.S. government is reconsidering its opposition to the $4.2 billion Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline (see map-3). But, according Vladimir Radyuhin quoted, in The Hindu newspaper, while, Russian natural gas monopoly Gazprom is developing the Southern part of the field in Iran, and is also ready to help build the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. The Bush administration has been basing its opposition to the proposed pipeline on the argument that it would help Iran, a potential target of future U.S. military strikes. US corporations are also going to be involved in the consortium; these companies might put pressure on the White House to back the pipeline. The companies would need the approval of the US government to participate in the pipeline construction. The US is clearly trying to use its influence against the pipeline from Iran due to its differences over the country's nuclear programme. Indian Ministry of External Affairs has come out with a report on US policy that cautions India about the possibility of sanctions being slapped on it by the US under the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act of 1996. Investment of over $40 million and activities that directly enhance Iran's capacity to develop its oil and gas resources may attract sanction from the U.S.

The US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, during her visit to New Delhi in March, 2005, emphasized the need for energy dialogue between the US and India. The underlying idea was to dissuade New Delhi from going ahead with Iran pipeline. The emergence of Iran as of vital interest for India and Pakistan is extremely worrisome to the US. The recent announcement by India's petroleum Minister, that Iran has agreed to research the possibility of extending the proposed 2670 km Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline to China also. It only adds to the US concerns about the possibility of Iran playing a substantive role in the economic activities of the region. The US is deeply involved in China's economy and Iran's position being elevated to the extent of being a significant player in that economy is antithetical to American interests. Therefore, the US is trying to do everything to stop Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline
project. India-US Agreement on nuclear energy cooperation is seen as an incentive for India to withdraw from the pipeline project.

Pakistan realized that the US is not willing to provide nuclear power plants to Pakistan to meet its growing energy requirements, in spite of concerted diplomatic efforts by Islamabad in this regard. In this backdrop, the Pakistani Government has been stepping up its efforts to finalize the agreement on at least one of the gas pipelines from Iran, Qatar and Turkmenistan. However, any relenting to the American side on nuclear energy cooperation could be used as an incentive to pressurize Pakistan to retract from the Iran pipeline project.

Subsequent to the India-US agreement on nuclear energy cooperation as India noted that there were uncertainties in Iran and this has been interpreted as a demonstration of lack of confidence in International bankers, who are already reluctant to underwrite the project owing to the fear of U.S. sanctions, would tend to be further discouraged by this.

Another thing is that the rise of Iran's role in Middle East, whether in economic cooperation or improving relations despite old history of regional disputes with neighboring Arab countries would be in Iran's interests, and the most crucial thing is that Iran would really like these Arab countries to expel US hegemony out of Gulf countries.

As we have seen recently, there have been exchanges of high level visits of officials from Iran to individual Arabian Gulf countries on a bilateral basis which culminated with the signing of many trade and security pacts. Saudi Arabia moved ahead in 2000 with a series of trade and mutual cooperation pacts with Iran. Both the countries signed a security agreement in April 2001 and a judicial cooperation memorandum of understanding in July 2003. Another security cooperation agreement was signed between Iran and Qatar in October 2002, encompassing cooperation on various aspects of border security, including measures to counteract drug running and money laundering. Undoubtedly, the historic dispute between the UAE and Iran over the Abu Musa and Tunb Islands has continued to impact upon relations between the GCC and Iran, and UAE and Kuwait have been critical of Tehran's military buildup there, yet, both sides have emphasized on the peaceful solution of the outstanding issues. In addition, the UAE has begun to explore joint projects that would help integrate their two economies, separated by only 180km. They are discussing the
possibility of laying under sea cables for transferring 1,000 MW of electricity. Iran is also offering Abu Dhabi gas supplies originating in Iran and Turkmenistan which straddles the Caspian Sea. Gas from Turkmenistan can be sent to the Gulf Shores across the Iranian transit corridor. Recently, some regional experts argued that Iran is using the political tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan in its favour, leveraging the fact that Iran is the only route by which Afghanistan can maintain foreign trade. Afghanistan is becoming increasingly dependent on Iran for its transit trade route as a result of the tense Afghan-Pakistan relationship. The Kabul administration has avoided speaking publicly about Iranian influence in Afghanistan, as they believe as a result of political tension with Pakistan, that Iran is Kabul’s last significant open door to the world. Moreover, as Iran and Russia are the world’s largest and second-largest holders of natural gas reserves, both support the idea of creating of a gas OPEC. Iran has an observer status in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and is likely to be a member of an energy club Russia is planning for the CEO.

At the Second Caspian Submit, the leaders of the littoral states-Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan will sign a declaration identifying the areas of agreement for a proposed convention on the legal status of the Caspian Sea. Even though the Caspian nations have made little headway on the sticking point of sharing the Caspian seabed and its resources since their first summit in 2002, Russian foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed the hope that the summit would lay down guidelines for resolving the outstanding issues with Iran, whose coastline is a mere 13 per cent of the Caspian shore, advocates an equitable 20-per cent division of the seabed, while the littoral states favour a division along a medial line based on the length of their sovereign coastlines. The recent summit is expected to confirm the close positions Russia and Iran have taken against the presence of outside powers in the region and against the construction of underwater pipelines across the Caspian Sea, Ahmedinejad told the Russian media ahead of Mr. Putin’s visit. Both Russia and Iran are more concerned with preventing the U.S. from straddling the Caspian Sea and the energy flows from the region. “We should not permit the Caspian question to turn into a challenge and a reason for anxiety of the Caspian states”, the Iranian leader said.
While, historical factors continue to dominate the over all pattern of Iran–GCC relationship which is marked by suspicion and distrust towards Iran as well as the attitude of the United States towards Tehran.

It was most likely that the amount of tensions between US and Iran would be increasing day by day. Recently President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited to the United Arab Emirates and Oman in May 2007, where Ahmadinejad had launched a fierce attack on the United States, demanding the withdrawal of American troops from the region. This was in country which is seen as a key U.S. ally. In calling for an American exit, Ahmadinejad entered into a war of words with U.S. Vice President, Dick Cheney, who was touring the region at the same time. Mr. Cheney had issued a strong statement that “Washington would not allow Tehran to dominate the oil-rich Gulf”, aboard the U.S. aircraft carrier John C. Stennis, that has been roaming the Gulf water for some time. Mr. Cheney said: “we will stand with others to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons and dominating the region”. He said, Iran would not be allowed to block the sea lanes, through which the bulk of the global oil supplies pass. While the tone and tenor of Ahmadinejad’s address was not unexpected, the UAE President’s remarks, as reported by a section of the Iranian media, certainly were, The Tehran Times quoted Sheikh Khalifa as saying: “the withdrawal of foreign fleets and armies from the region is one of our desires.”

Several factors are promoting a closer relationship between Iran and major Gulf countries, which have begun to drift away from the U.S. first, anti-American sentiments in the region is high. The spate of killings in Iraq, the seemingly endless sufferings of the Palestinians and the like are driving anger towards Washington to new heights. The leaderships of these countries can no longer ignore the popular mood. Ahmadinejad’s visit, which could go a long way in deepening Arab-Iranian ties, has brought the issue of the presence of foreign troops in the region more prominently on the agenda.

In fact the history of US-Iran rivalries did not begin after 11 Sept 2001, it actually began in 1978, when Shah of Iran, a pro-American was overthrown. United States security strategy in the Arabian Gulf has been dictated by its vital interests in ensuring the free flow of oil at reasonable prices from the oil fields of that region, to ensuring the free flow of oil has also meant that the US had to develop a security policy that would preserve the independence of the Gulf Arab oil producers. This was
an inherently difficult proposition from the outset because they have never been able to develop an independent ability to defend themselves against Iraq or Iran; they have always required the United States to develop strategies for balancing or containing the potential threats of these regional powers.

Until the overthrow of the Shah in 1978, US strategy had come to depend on a relatively benign and status-quo oriented Iran to maintain the balance of power in the region in a way which helped preserve the independence of the gulf Arab states.⁹⁵

US grabbed Afghan’s civil war as a means to counter Iran, as the US administration during Clinton era, which had been following a policy of dual containment of Iran and Iraq, saw increasing Iranian role in Afghanistan as a disturbing development in the backdrop of rising Iranian influence in Central Asian republic as well.⁹⁶ It was convinced that the Taliban was put together not just to contain the Iranian role in Afghan affairs, but the Taliban were perceived to be a ‘trap’ set up by the US, Saudi and Pakistan to drag Iran into a war with Afghanistan. A conspiracy theory sought to explain that since the Gulf war of 1991, the US was seeking to lure Iran into some war or the other that would serve as an opportunity to destroy its renovated military machine and further exhaust its economy – with the over all objective of restoring Iran to its former status as a piece of strategic chess – board. And since the US would prefer to distract the war as far as possible from the Gulf region – to avoid repercussions that might prove hard to control later on – a war between Iran and Afghanistan would be ideal.

Iran shares a 900 km long border on the east with Afghanistan with which its relations slipped to lowest point in late 1998, when ten Iranian diplomats and a journalist in Mazare Sharif went missing and were presumed to have been killed,⁹⁷ after the Taliban stormed Mazar- i-Sharif. It was later reported that 2,000 to 6,000 Shia Hazara civilians had been systematically massacred by the guerillas after recapturing the city.⁹⁸ Iran amassed 70,000 Revolutionary Guards and conducted the largest ever ground and air exercises on its Afghan border as the relations continued to deteriorate.

Therefore, the question of U.S. setting up its military base in Afghanistan after 9/11 to contain Iran and preparing for a possible invasion of Iran could be viewed as a continuation of the unfinished job. Possibility of the U.S. using forces to engage Iran
looms over dangerously now. One could discern that the neoconservative ideas surrounding US foreign policy in the academic writings of Condoleezza Rice, Robert B. Zoellick and Kenneth M. Pollack in *Foreign Affairs* journal before and after the election of Bush Junior for the first term, Rice, who later became National Security Advisor in the next term said that administration’s foreign policies must help attain the American values that the Clinton administration could not attempt. Writing on the eve of presidential election in 2000, Rice argued for a strong military so that it can deter war, project power and fight in defence of American interests if deterrence fails. Having criticized Clinton’s defence policy about military expenses and deployment of forces, she argued in favour of building the military of the 21st century rather than continuing to build the same on the structures of cold war. Secondly, the US military, she held must be able to meet decisively the emergence of any hostile power in Asia pacific region, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf. In spite of it, the realization grew that the global defeat of Al-Qaeda was not going to be possible, the issue turned out to be a long-term strategy. This new focus would not so much solve the Al-Qaeda problem but help create a process that would undermine the operational foundations of Al-Qaeda by forcing nations in the region to redefine their behaviour. From a purely military point of view, Iraq is the single most strategic country in the Middle East. Its borders are common with six other countries: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria, Turkey, and Iran. In other words, from Iraq-and with its forces in Afghanistan—the United States would influence events in countries that ranged from the Himalayas to the Mediterranean and from the Black Sea and the Caucasus to the Red and Arabian Sea. Like its predecessor Mesopotamia, Iraq is the pivot of the Middle East. As quoted by Aijaz Ahmad in *Frontline* the U.S. has waged a cold war against the Islamic Republic of Iran for almost 30 years now, and has threatened a hot war (outright invasion) for a full decade. The occupation of Iraq, is designed partly to compensate for the earlier loss incurred when the Shah was overthrown, and partly to regain access to Iranian resources, either by invading it or by imposing upon it a peace on terms favourable to the U.S., in the energy sector. An accommodation between the US and Iran in the energy sector is not inconceivable. The Security Council is ready with a draft for tighter sanctions against Iran. The U.S. navy has assembled a vast armada in the Gulf and positioned all kinds of military forces to surround Iran for psychological warfare and also for invasion, if necessary.
As quoted by Vladimir Radyuhin in *The Hindu* the Russian President, Vladimir Putin visited in the middle of October 2007, to reduce the danger of a US attack on Iran and consolidate the strategic relationship between Russia and Iran, as Russia saw that the threat of a US attack on Iran has grown all too big. The Pentagon has deployed the largest force in the region since the 2003 war, with half of the US navy's warships position within striking distance of Iran. And it was likely that the U.S. was looking for more military bases to strike and encircle Iran, we could see from President Putin of Russia was trying to persuade states around Iran not to give bases for US to launch its military strikes on Iran. Putin tried to make the military option as difficult as possible for the U.S. the fact that Tehran was the venue of a five-nation Caspian summit, which was the formal reason for the recent Putin trip to Iran, served to deter U.S. warmongers. It destroyed the wall of isolation the U.S. had been building around Iran, improved the geo-strategic climate around that country, and demonstrated its neighbors' solidarity with it. The five Caspian nations Russia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan pledged to deny outside countries the right to use their territories for launching military action. “The parties underline that under no circumstances would they allow other nations to use their territory for waging aggression or other military action against any of the parties.”

After US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Secretary of Defence Robert Gates during one of the trip's visited Moscow, were bluntly told to drop their “unilateral” approach and “periodic calls to use military force against Iran” as these undermine and impede our collective effort”, but the momentum for war is building up. After two weeks, the Senate passed a resolution urging the administration to place Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps on the US blacklist as a ‘terrorist’ organization. Democratic Senator Jim Webb of Virginia, who voted against it, accused the White House of pushing through the resolution as “a back door method of gaining Congressional validation for military action.” “It is, for all practical purposes, mandating the military option,” he said. Recently, in last week of October 2007, the US officially announced its draconian sanctions on Iran. It has also virtually branded the entire Iranian Army, a terrorist force; the draft of tough measures against Iran includes sanctions against the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC), the Iranian Defence Ministry and leading Iranian commercial banks. The elite Al Quds
force, which is part of the IRGC, has been accused by the U.S. of arming and training
Shiite militias in Iraq and Hezbollah in Lebanon. 108

From the above it seems that the moving of NATO into Afghanistan was
perceived as a long term-plan of the US to enhance the security in the Gulf and the
Middle East. Hamid Ansari wrote: an option that has been explored as an alternative
is that of broad-basing the responsibility and co-opting European members of NATO
on the pattern of arrangements in place for Afghanistan. The European Union’s
involvement in the Middle East process is of older vintage and has been useful
though, rarely decisive. In 2004, an exercise was undertaken to explore the role that
NATO could play in enhancing security in the Gulf and the Middle East”. By the end
of 2005, the organization was asserting that it is interested in Gulf security because of:
(I) the changing security environment, (II) the changing nature of NATO itself, and
(III) the new dynamics in the Gulf region itself that has been unfolding over the past
few years.

Three countries on the western, northern and eastern periphery of the region add
a significant dimension to the security calculus of West Asia. 109 Theses are Israel,
Turkey, and Iran. All are non-Arab countries, each has a distinct identity, has a
distinct history of relations with the United States and is influenced by the security
dynamics of West Asia. In case of Iran it has remained in the headlines for 27 years
for having abandoned the Western alliance, disturbed the strategic balance in West
Asia, and being an obstacle to an unquestioned American hegemony in the region.
From Hamid Ansari’s analysis and conclusion about this matter, the national security
strategy of the United States of America, supplemented by the new NATO doctrine,
provide the answer that ‘West Asia is too precious not to be dominated, not to be
reformed in terms of the Greater Middle East initiative’. 110

VI. Containing the role of China in Central Asia and countries around Caspian
Sea

One of the most important results of the 9/11 attacks has been a shift in the
United States policy towards establishing its hegemony from that of maintaining
status quo. This shift, and the establishment of clear-cut US priorities, result from the
realization of the danger posed by Al-Qaeda and similar groups operating outside and
within the existing state systems—whereas prior to 9/11, most of the attention of the U.S. security establishment was focused on the alleged threats from major rival states (notably China and Russia).

The US policy to contain China has not actually begun after 9/11 but it began soon after the end of cold war, the theory put forward by John J. Mearsheimer, the author of the book *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics* who made an analysis of the US foreign policy after the end of Cold War, on the question of the future perspective of US foreign policy in the 21st century. In his analysis he puts China as the new rising super-power. He pointed out that the basic structure of the international system did not change much with the end of the cold war, and that there is little reason to even think that change is in the offing. He has tried to prove his point that there is considerable evidence from the decade 1991-2000 that security competition among the great powers is not obsolete, neither in Europe nor in Northeast Asia. He finally concludes that the emergence of China is the most dangerous and a potential threat to the United States security in the twenty-first century.

In the period immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent emergence of the newly-independent states in 1991, US policy towards Central Asia centered on security relationships. By 1994, with cooptation through defence doctrines and attempting to pursue Central Asian countries to enter NATO’s Partnership for Peace Program (PFP), Central Asian membership in the NATO, PFP served as the main avenue for western security engagement. The US approach to Central Asia was also driven by over-acting geopolitical considerations, with an underlying goal of containing the influence of China, Iran and Russia. Once, during Afghan civil war, U.S. viewed stability in Afghanistan as the main variable in this strategy. Domination in Afghanistan was important to it to exercise power control over the Southern corridor to Central Asia. This was the only way to enhance Pakistan’s geopolitical standing with the west in shaping the future evolution of Central Asia. This by itself would get Pakistan, economic and political rewards “by creating a regional dependence on Islamabad to ensure safety for traffic, in other words, the international acceptance of Islamabad’s hegemony over the Southern approaches to Central Asia and the western gateway to China”. It could quietly fit into American political and strategic objectives in the Central Asian region which provides ground for preventing Russian hegemony in the region, containing Iran and to play a
balancing role against emerging powers like China. The Control over the Pakistan-Afghanistan corridor and creating an opening from the South would be vital for the West in gaining access to the oil and natural gas resources of the region also. The plan of the U.S. was to keep its presence in this region to lock out China from the energy business in the region, since Washington feared they could assist the Central Asian republics in setting up their own oil companies.

Although, Russia was considered to be a loser in the long-Cold War, but was still trying to back China to be a powerful state in order to provide a rival to balance the U.S. in this area. As, at present, the grand alliance of Western states which far outweighed Russia and was finally able to defeat the Soviet Union in the Cold War still remains almost united and it was expected that they would stand together again against any Russian attempt to regain its former empire. Though China and Russia might unite diplomatically and rhetorically against American global hegemony, it is hard to understand how Russia’s interests and the security of its vulnerable far eastern possessions would benefit by backing a Chinese bid for hegemony in East Asia.

As China was also developing fast its economy, it is imperative that it would need a lot of energy resources to fuel its industrial growth. With this reason, China entered into a war for energy with the west in many parts of the world over energy reserves.

A commentary in China Daily states that the current administration “no longer tries to hide China’s growing economic weight in global affairs and the role it will have to play in order to sustain growth”. This explanation is the key to the above philosophy in order to sustain its double digit economic growth. China has no choice but to become more active internationally. A major proportion of the oil and other natural resources that China needs to feed its growing economy are imported. Thus, Beijing has begun to aggressively woo energy and other raw material rich countries across Latin America, Africa and Central Asia. These countries also represent emerging markets for Chinese products, making them doubly valuable.

For Beijing, ensuring regional peace and stability is thus critical and it is aware that it must play an active role internationally to secure this. Demonstrating its new leadership in a variety of international and regional forums, China hosted three major international summits in 2006: the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)
Summit in June, the China-Africa summit in November, and the China-Asian Summit also in November.

All three summit meetings underscored how Beijing is beginning to use multilateral forums as vehicles. The SCO, for example, binds the energy rich nations of Central Asia to China and represents a formidable alliance between Moscow and Beijing covering an area of 30 million square Kilometers or about three-fifths of Eurasia. The SCO controls a large part of the global oil and gas reserves and includes two of the world’s five declared nuclear powers. For China, leadership of such an organization is not only prestigious but also helps it set up as an alternative to U.S. influence in the strategic Central Asian region. For the Central Asian republics, China’s policy of studious non-interference in internal affairs of sovereign countries is a welcome change from America’s prescriptive dictates. Moreover, Beijing provides these countries with economic development assistance and increased opportunities for trade and investment. Beijing has been adopting a more offensive economic diplomacy towards Central Asia with the aim of stabilizing the region politically, as well as to push China’s own interests. In fact, as the competition among powerful countries for influence in central Asia, China has been more successful in commercially penetrating into the region, responding and fulfilling the immediate economic needs, especially the consumer goods requirements of these countries.

China also revived the ancient “Great Silk Route” and used the metaphor to open up China’s northern land border for direct links with Europe and the Middle East via Central Asia. A number of Eurasian highways, including rail and pipeline construction, are being planned, which will ensure a long-term role for China in Central Asia. The opening up of the trans-Eurasian rail road through Central Asia in 1990 and the linking of Almaty and Urumchi by rail road in 1992 had brought in a dramatic change in the Sino-Central Asian frontiers. The triumphant tour by Prime Minister Li Peng to Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan in April 1994 gave a new impetus to China’s campaign for its Silk Route promotion. Premier Li, while resurrecting the Silk Road, reached agreements with Turkmenistan and others on oil production and pipeline constructions (see map-8).

In an unprecedented move in June 1997, China’s National Petroleum Company (CNPC) outbid US oil companies Texaco and Amoco and won a major oil concession, taking a 60 percent share of Kazakhstan’s richest Aktyubinsk oilfield by
investing US $4 billion dollars. Again in August 1997, CNPC won a tender giving it 60 per cent of developing Kazakhstan’s second richest Novyuzen oilfield by investing US $400 million out of a total projected investment of U.S. $1.3 billion. The CNPC paid Kazakhstan signature bonus of US $372 million for both the projects. China is also planning to build a 2,000 mile-long pipeline across Xinjiang at the cost of $3.5 billion to carry oil and gas to Chinese industrial cities as well as for exports to Japan. It is expected that China’s enormous inroads into Central Asia, particularly its involvement in what is shaping up as the last great oil rush of the 20th century will have great geopolitical implications in the years to come.

China is once again wielding influence upon the steppe Zone of the Eurasian heart-land. China’s landward orientation assumes significance in the face of declining Russia’s strategic proximity with India. It is also significant that the countries like Kazakhstan are talking about Central Asia as a bridge between Europe and Asia, therefore, creating a situation as well as establishing closer ties with China as an essential balance to offset pressure and renewed assertion from Russia in the future.

Apart from this, as western part of China was locked deep in the interior of Eurasia, suffered a distance market, to find a port to carry manufactured goods. Western interior provinces with strong support from Beijing attempted to mitigate this advantage by opening transport links with their neighbors. Yunnan province in China’s southwest achieved considerable success in opening or improving road, river and rail links with and through Myanmar to ports (including several that were build by china) on the bay of Bengal. Myanmar’s location in the southeastern foothills of the Tibetan Plateau had, through many centuries, made it a natural transit route between southwestern China and Bay of Bengal. In addition, recently, China is looking forward to connect its railway to Iran by passing through Pakistan, as Iran, along with Pakistan, plays an increasingly important role in providing western China access to the Oceanic. China’s adoption in 2000 of a program to accelerate development of its western regions made development of transportation lines to the southwest even more important. Pakistan was China’s major partner in this regard. China has given many millions to Pakistan to modernize its railway system. While China’s major transportation investments in southwest Asia have been in Pakistan, Iran has played a role via several railways projects that dovetailed with China’s efforts.
in Pakistan. The first of these Iranian projects was construction of a rail line between Kerman in southeast Iran and Zahedan on the Iran-Pakistan border. Work on this line was under way in 2002. When complete, this rail line will link the Iranian and Pakistani rail systems for the first time. Work was also under way on a new rail line extending southwest from Mashad directly across northeastern Iran to Bafq. This line was to be operational by early 2005. The completion of these new lines will mean that Chinese cargo moving via the Tedzhen – Mashhad link can proceed directly to seaports without having to take the long circuitous and crowded but previously required via Tehran (see map-7).

While the major significance of these new, Chinese southwesterly lines of international transportation is commercial, they also have a strategic role. In the event of a U.S.-PRC military confrontation that became protracted and in which the United States used it naval supremacy to blockade China’s coast, China’s ability to continue prosecution of the war would be influenced by its ability to import vital materials overland. In such a situation it would be extremely useful to have robust transport links via Pakistan and Iran and to have long-standing, cooperative ties “tested by diversity” with both of those countries.\(^\text{121}\)

In the end of 2004, Beijing also signed a $70 billion energy agreement with Tehran, China’s largest organization of petroleum Exporting countries energy deal to date. China’s state Sinopec agreed to buy 250 million tons of LNG over 30 years from Iran as well as to develop the giant Yadavaran field. That agreement covered the comprehensive development by Sinopec of the giant Yadavaran gas field, construction of a related petrochemical and gas industry including pipelines.

The Iran-China strategic energy cooperation will involve constructing a pipeline in Iran to take oil some 386 kilometers to the Caspian Sea, then to link up with a planned pipeline from China into Kazakhstan. On signing the deal, Iran’s petroleum Minister announced that Tehran would like to see China replace Japan.\(^\text{122}\) Moreover, China also involved the Project of pipeline building of Iran towards south, where this route would seem to provide the US with the best incentive to date to cooperate with Iran by, in essence, competing with proposed Chinese backed oil pipeline project(pipeline route runs for nearly a thousand miles along the Afghanistan border with Iran and Pakistan serving the same oil fields in northern Iran and points towards south, preventing China from obtaining a defector monopoly holder on oil supplies.
for South East Asia, the Chinese began negotiating that project in 1997, causing a great deal of consternation for the Clinton administration and major US oil companies who stood to gain little in the project.\textsuperscript{123}

Apart from China playing a key role in energy resources field of these regions, China is still trying to woo Iran for its economic and military growth. After the Iranian revolution of 1979, U.S. influence over Iran came to an end. China came to replace U.S., Chinese efforts to strengthen Iran clashed frequently with U.S. policy.\textsuperscript{124} The joint communiqué issued at the conclusion of President Khatami’s June 2000 visit to China proclaimed that the two sides agree that the security and stability of the Persian Gulf should be safeguarded by the countries of the region free from outside interference. Beijing and Iran viewed that step-by-step, throughout the post-1979 era, the United States expended its military position in the Persian Gulf region. Jimmy Carter’s 1979 announcement of U.S. assumption of direct military responsibility for Gulf security; Ronald Reagan’s 1983 upgrading of Carter’s Rapid Deployment Force to a full-fledged regional headquarters; expansion of Diego Garcia into a major forward support base; the prepositioning or supplies and equipment for combat in the Gulf construction or expansion of military use facilities in Egypt, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, and other countries in the region; and the development of Persian Gulf war plans and training of U.S. forces to operate in a desert environment. The existence of this newly developed U.S. military power in Lebanon, Libya, Somalia, and Iran in the 1980s, and against Iraq in 1991 and again from 1998 to 2003, began to shape events in the Gulf region.

Beijing and Tehran are in agreement that the growth of the U.S. military position in the Persian Gulf region is a manifestation of U.S. hegemony, inspired by a desire to control the region’s oil resources as a step towards realizing the dream of global domination. They also agree that the U.S. push for hegemony over the Middle East is antithetical to the interests of both countries and of course, the vision of Persian Gulf without extra regional military forces and with regional security affairs managed by the countries of the region themselves, can be taken as an alternate course of development preferred by Beijing and Tehran.\textsuperscript{125} Given the nature of the Bush administration’s rush to war in Iraq in 2003, where China had a major stake in oil development, and the subsequent US blocking of other Chinese attempts at securing energy independence, including UNOCAL, it is not surprising that Beijing is taking
extraordinary measures to secure its long-term oil and gas supply resources. Energy is the Achilles Heel of China’s economic growth. This conflict was in areas where Sino-Iranian Cooperation threatened to diminish the military advantages the United States enjoyed vis-à-vis Iran and/or increased Iran’s ability to threaten the sea-lanes and/or oil supplying states of the Persian Gulf. This conflict between Beijing and Washington was manifest in the areas of nuclear energy, guided and ballistic missiles, and dual-use goods relevant to production of chemical or advanced conventional weapons.

From Beijing’s perspective, U.S. objections to China’s nuclear and missile cooperation with Iran were at bottom manifestations of U.S. hegemony. It could be seem from its efforts to dominate the Persian Gulf, interference in the Persian Gulf and the bullying of Iran which created the problem. As Hong Kong’s pro-PRC paper Wen Wei Bao commented in April 1995, ‘during the 1980s U.S. military forces shot down several Iranian war planes. These U.S. moves prompted Iran to strengthen its strategic defence system. Therefore, if Iran is currently developing nuclear weapons as the United States has said, it probably is out of consideration of national defence strategy. Keeping Iran in a condition of military importance might be desirable from the stand-point of U.S. hegemonism.

China and Iran signed agreement on nuclear cooperation in June 1985, because of mounting U.S. concerns. In mid-1986 Iranian decision to buy Silkworm missiles from China caused Reagan administration officials to mobilizing pressure on China. Washington tried to persuade Beijing that Silkworm may close the Strait of Hormuz, severely disrupting the global economy. The motivation that China was trying to initiate cooperation with Iran in the field of military development/modernization, Chinese objectives underlying its military cooperation with Iran was due to the fact that as Iran is a major regional power and it was in China’s interests to gain influence with this power. China’s assistance to IRI militarily modernization also rested on the belief that a military strong Iran served China’s interests by containing the United States.

In addition, it is likely that China will play a key role in Afghan economy also as Afghanistan’s economic situation in 2005 generated both optimism and alarm. Obvious enthusiasm from international investors focused on opportunities arising from the need for goods and services to satisfy the domestic demand and the promise
of traditional exports of agricultural products and minerals. President Karzai spoke of the positive effects of Afghanistan’s role as a land bridge connecting the Middle East, China, and India and welcomed investments in transportation and power generation. 129

Apart from this, China’s Africa push is already resulting in a sharp shift in the conceived geopolitical status quo. Beijing’s influence is beginning to replace that of the United States and traditional European powers on the African continent. 130 The rise of China’s role in African countries makes U.S. aware that oil energy resources would be grabbed by China. At the May Day gathering of African leaders in Shanghai, the Chinese government promised $20 billion for the continent’s development. Madagascar’s President Marc Ravalomanana enthusiastically said “We in Africa must learn from your success”. In January, the Chinese foreign ministry released a white paper that pointed out that unlike the U.S. and European investments, Chinese finance for Africa would be driven by equity and sustainable development. Technology transfer, the entry of African goods into the Chinese markets without barriers and the entry of Chinese finance for development projects are the main elements of the Chinese strategy. With the U.S. and European aid at a low point and with resistance from the U.S. and Europe to compromise on the debt burden of African states, the Chinese proposal was welcomed in many parts of Africa. For people in the Heritage Foundation and in the White House, AFRICOM is as much a response to China as it is to the increased anti-terrorist efforts in the continent.

As Energy Secretary Spencer Abraham said “Africa plays an increasingly important role in our energy security; since 9/11, the urgency of a stable source of oil has increased.”

Eighty per cent of the oil reserves discovered between 2001 and 2004 come from West Africa, where the U.S. currently procure only 12 per cent of its total supply. West Africa is a crucial site for U.S. interests’ to a great extent. For decades, the oil regions in West Africa have been “swamps of insurgency”. As war over oil in West Africa have set the continent on fire, the US has thus far engaged with these conflicts through Africa’s national armies, who have increasingly become the protector or guard of large corporations. None of this can be justified directly as protection of the extraction of resources, so it has increasingly been couched in the language of the war on terror. The Pan-Sahel Initiative (created in 2002), Mali,
Mauritania and Niger In 2004, the U.S. extended this to the major oil producing
countries of Algeria, Nigeria, Senegal and Tunisia and renamed it the Trans-Sahara
Counter Terrorism Initiative (TSCTI). After 9/11, the U.S. moved a special operations
force into a former French foreign legion base, Camp Lemonier. In July 2003, the
U.S. earned the right to deploy P-3 Orion Aerial Surveillance Aircraft in Tamanrasset,
Algeria under the guise of the War on Terror. The U.S. government moved forces into
various parts of Africa, where they trained African armies and have been able to
intervene in the increasingly dangerous resources war. 131

Following the revolution in the international system in 1989-91, China’s leaders
concluded that U.S. hegemony-no longer deadlocked as the Soviet Union-was now on
a rampant offensive and constituted the most serious threat to China’s security.
Chinese analysis developed a long litany of U.S. moves in a purported drive for global
domination, attempts to subvert Communist Party of China (CPC) via human rights,”
thereby replication in the PRC, the US success in disintegrating the USSR;
maintaining NATO when it was no longer necessary and admitting the new ex-
socialist states of Eastern Europe into the Western military bloc (a development which
Chinese analysis styled the Eastern expansion of NATO”); encouragement of Japan to
play a larger role in Asia and the world; encouragement of Taiwanese independence
and separation from China; development of antimissile defences designed to nullify
China’s nuclear retaliatory capability; forging a strategic and military partnership with
India; and drawing Central Asia into the U.S. military system. In the Chinese view of
things, the Middle East constituted a crucial arena of the post-cold war U.S.
hegemonic offensive. The aim of U.S. policy in that the region was to bring its rich
energy resources under U.S. control as a stepping stone to global domination. This
Beijing believed was the true rationale behind the 1991 war against Iraq and the dual
containment of Iraq and Iran. Washington was determined either to compel those
regimes to bend to U.S. will or to replace them and the energy resources of the entire
Persian Gulf brought under secure U.S. control. The U.S. dream of global domination
would come closer to realization. United States global domination was antithetical to
China’s interests since the closer the United States moved to apply pressure on the
PRC. 132

Recently, U.S. tried pursuing India to sign nuclear agreement with U.S. was
viewed that it was not all about energy as pointed out by Siddharth Varadarajan in The
Hindu; U.S. strategy after 9/11 was likely to make close ties with India to contain China as Mr. Burn’s article provides clearly articulated deliverables that “India and U.S. can also do much more to create a stronger military partnership.” He elaborates that the US and India need to complete a series of defense sales that would meet India’s needs and complement India’s overall defense relationship and build on an already impressive series of joint military exercises by improving the interoperability of our armed forces to respond to global contingencies. In the latter context, Mr. Burns mentions the post Tsunami quadrilateral naval effort involving the U.S. India, Australia and Japan. The post-Tsunami operation is the model on which the Bush administration would like to develop wider security cooperation between this group of four. The target of this gang-up is clearly, China. \(^{133}\)

From an evaluation of many events given above it could be seen that the U.S. was trying to build its military base in Afghanistan after 9/11 as a long-term plan to contain China. The movement of U.S. forces into Central Asian countries after 9/11 under the name of counter terrorism makes China suspicions that the U.S. is trying to contain them. The military exercise, Centraxbat-97, in which 500 paratroopers from the 82nd Airborne Division of the US Army flew 19 hours and 12,320 kilometers to join a week-long exercise in Central Asia, as a part of the NATO sponsored partnership of peace, has been viewed by Beijing as the US containment of China and a sources, of great security concern for it. \(^{134}\) China has been monitoring the presence of American troops very closely and Central Asian states have been attempting a delicate balancing act in their relations with Beijing and Washington. China’s view was that, any military operations undertaken by Washington and its allies in Afghanistan should have specific objectives so as to reduce casualties of the innocent people. Beijing may not like the presence of American troops so close to its borders, but it does stand to gain from the additional fire power mustered against Islamist separatist movements in Central Asia. Since the politburo of Chinese communist party has identified separatism in Xinjiang as the main threat to the stability of the People’s Republic, its members may consider the US presence a price worth paying. \(^{135}\) China’s concern in Xinjiang is not only about the ethnic and religious upsurge among the minorities but also about the protection of region’s 30 billion tons of proven petroleum which are critical to China’s energy security. Over the year, foreign oil companies have been exploring more oil in Tarim basin. China also can not afford the
situation to let loose in Xingjian as it may encourage the Tibetans and Mongols to intensify their struggle for independence. The instability and ethnicity linkages between China and Central Asian Republics worked as a contributor to organize Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The first meeting of what was to become a major regional grouping was held in Shanghai in 1996 and was attended by the foreign Ministers of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. An agenda was constructed around border security, combating insurgent Islamic forces and the smuggling of Islamic literature, weapons and narcotics. This organization also could be viewed as a means for China’s attempts to counter the hegemony of the US. As we have seen recently Anti-Terrorist war games organized by the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) got underway in Russia in August 2007, about 6,000 soldiers, 1,000 combat vehicles and scores of aircraft had joined in practice combat skills in “Peace Mission 2007” a week-long drill in the Chelyabinsk region of Russia in western Siberia.

It is the biggest military exercise staged by the SCO and the first one involving all the six member states – Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The military exercises by the six-nation bloc will be followed by a bigger maneuver and expanded defence ties, the head of Russia’s general staff said.

VII. A long term plan to counter Russia

The 9/11 events in United States and the resulting conflict in Afghanistan, not only changed world politics, but also brought a new angle to the struggle for influence in Central Asia. The energy war game makes the super powers to stay around Caspian Sea and Central Asia, such as Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan and Turkey. After the 9/11 attacks, this area became strategically even more important. The US now sought to reassert its own overt influence on global geopolitical developments with a view to ensuring its own security. Vijay Kapur has pointed out that the major shift in U.S. foreign policy in the post 9/11 period has been that the US now tries to increase its influence in the newly independent nations comprising the commonwealth of independent states (CIS) or Central Asia. A reflective article by Vadim Solovelev entitled Washington Maintains the New World Order (December 25, 1998) contended that “Washington would maintain the new world order and Moscow’s influence
would be both limited and slighted”. This assertion was particularly telling on a security establishment, which found itself suddenly irrelevant in the backdrop of NATO’s relentless eastward expansion and budgetary difficulties, which further eroded the operational effectiveness of the Russian military set up. America’s unilateral withdrawal from the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) stocked more concerns in the Russian governmental set up, which felt that the US was also questioning its perceived ‘military’ primacy in the Near Abroad a Russian euphemism for the newly independent nations comprising the commonwealth of independent states (CIS).)

Before the events of 11 Sept, one of the key concerns for the American policymakers has been as to find ways to secure access to the oil and natural gas reserves in the first half of 21st century. The obvious focus was, Central Asia and Caucasus. After they declared independence, the United States encouraged the newly independent states to adopt western-style economic reforms and the integration of these states and the eventual elimination of the Russian influence in this region. The year 1994-95 was the year when the US emerged as a major player in Central Asia when it rejected Russia's claims to an energy monopoly. In February 1995, the US decided to support an energy pipeline running through Turkey and not Russia. State Department sources told Newsweek that the endorsement reflects major shift in the US policy towards Central Asia. The new approach, coordinated by the National Security Council, is designed to break Russia's grip on Central Asia's oil export.

At the same time, the US was also playing a role in the Central Asian Republics (CARs) energy economy. It urged Turkmenistan to send gas to Ukraine and also offered Kazakhstan certain guarantees if Moscow turns off the oil tap. In May, 1995, the then under-secretary of energy, William White, toured Central Asia, urging the republics to regard themselves as important producers of oil and natural gas and to treat Russia and Iran as rivals. Also in 1995, Glen Rose, the head of the energy policy section of the State Department, said that Russian position must not be imposed on the states that prefer a more normal division of the Caspian. Washington does not recognise any spheres of influence. Till this time, denying Russia the right to influence the regional economy and politics seemed to be the major concern of the United States. Therefore, its commitment to multiple pipelines should also be seen as the continuation of the policy of denying Russia any significant role in the region. In
November 1999 Washington arranged for the signing of protocols on the construction of the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline for oil (See map-9). Washington has also told Georgia that any oil shipped out of the Caspian through its ports should go in part to Ukraine to alleviate its energy dependence on Russia.  

While Russia would not only like the export routes to be controlled by any one other than itself but also the control over the oil reserves will help the US to perpetuate its influence over Russia. These states, regard as hardheaded commercial interests, are viewed by Russian as ‘incipient interventionism’. Russia is worried about these developments and the possibilities of hostile hands on pipeline taps. Russian has historic and legal claims to the Caspian Sea and has insisted that it must be made a party to any agreement on sharing oil and natural gas resources of the region. Russia attempts to control the flow of oil and gas from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Turkmenistan has been viewed in western perceptions as attempts by the Russian security establishment to impose a single direction for the pipelines for the north via Russian territory. This would give Russia tremendous control over the flow of oil and gas to western markets and will make the West vulnerable to Russia’s political whims. Russian energy policy could also be a part of an overall policy which aims to keep the west out of the Central Asian states preserving it under an exclusively Russian sphere of influence. With this scramble over energy resources in Central Asia, Afghanistan became a hot-bed of big power rivalries. The US was trying to make Afghanistan as a land-bridge to build a pipeline route from Central Asia to the world market. From Afghanistan to Pakistan’s ports and to Indian market from these ports could also present an alternative for Central Asian countries to export their natural resources, gas and oil to the world market. As we have seen during Afghan civil war that both U.S. and Russia had a hand in backing factional groups to preserve their interests. As in Ahmed Rashid’s conclusion about US that it was backing the Taliban against Russia. The Americans were supporting the Taliban either directly or indirectly through UNOCAL or through its allies, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. But Ahmed Rashid focused on whether there was a revival of the old CIA-ISI connection from the Afghan jihad era; it became apparent that the strategy over pipelines had become the driving force behind Washington’s interests in the Taliban, which in turn was prompting a counter - reaction from Russia. Russians were also reported as having a hand in backing northern alliance as a counterforce to
Taliban. As President Boris Yeltsin said in 1998, ‘by keeping the conflict in Afghanistan on the boil, Russia keeps the region unstable and has the excuse to maintain a military presence in the Central Asian Republics (CARs). It was in the interest of Russia to keep the region unstable by arming the anti-Taliban alliance.

Today’s great game is also between expanding and contracting empires. As a weakened and bankrupt Russia attempts to keep a grip on what it still views as its frontiers in Central Asia and control the flow of Caspian oil through pipelines that traverse Russia, the USA is thrusting itself into the region on the back of proposed oil pipelines which would by pass Russia, Iran, Turkey and Pakistan are building their own communication links with the region and want to be the preferred route of choice for future pipelines heading east, west or south.

An analytical article in Frontline, told us about a cold war which will emerge again between the West and Russia. The year 2007 will see the confrontation between Russia and the West over the energy resources of the former Soviet Union that gained new intensity throughout the past year. The west watched with mounting alarm as Russia skillfully used its vast oil and gas resources to set a new energy agenda that is not only reshaping the domestic and international energy markets but triggering shifts in global power equation, effectively eroding the West’s post-cold war gains.

The placement of American troop contingents in nations like Uzbekistan and Georgia in the aftermath of the events of 11 Sept, ostensibly to pre-empt the forces promoting terror and instability, reinforced this feeling of vulnerability within the Russian political establishment. American interest in oil and gas pipeline development extending through Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia, among other nations in the Caspian Sea region enabled Russia to demand its share in the shape of continued influence on developments in the region to the exclusion of the American efforts at marginalization. This proactive approach motivated the Russian establishment to further reinforce and expand their economic and military relationship with the new nation states in Central Asia as a counterpoise to growing American influence, a scenario which saw growth of Russian military contingents in Central Asian nations like Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. These troop placements were ostensibly to provide a bulwark against the movement of Islamic fundamentalist groups into the region but also implicitly served to stabilize the undemocratic
autocracies; which became the norm for what passed for effective governance in the region.

Under the name of war on terror, U.S. had a hidden plan related to the energy policy, especially in Central Asia and in the Gulf. In the words of a Former Deputy Secretary of the US Department of Energy, Edward Morse, ‘along with the American campaign against terrorism another battle is being waged perhaps one no less important – the battle for supremacy in the energy sector between the largest oil exporters-Saudi Arabia and Russia”. In 2001, in pursuit of its national interests, Russia began a process of rapprochement with Saudi Arabia as the world’s largest oil producer despite having labeled it as a country responsible for international terrorism. What Russia needs to determine is whether it should compete with the Gulf oil producers, that too, Saudi Arabia or, whether it should cooperate with them, and the profit made from supplying to the world energy market particularly the U.S. in competition with these states be worth the loss of influence in the region.

The United States, Britain and Russia have particular interests in the internal stability of the Gulf region nations and in the political reforms in these countries. Its principal concern goes beyond the intricacies of the world energy market to a factor that can destabilize not only Russia but also many of its neighbors. This concern, in the words of Dr. Zlobin, is “the inadmissibility of the expansion of politicized Islam, using terrorism as its method of struggle”. With a large Muslim population of its own and several neighboring states with a majority Muslim population, Russia needs to support international policies that combat Muslim radicalism and its international manifestation in the form of terrorism. It has to walk the tightrope of managing an oil policy that will see it optimally exploiting its potential as an oil producer, while preserving political influence in the Gulf region and in international forums in defence of its national interests.

Although the USSR had theoretically no need for Middle Eastern petroleum, Soviet interests in the area's hydrocarbons lay in the possibility of preserving its own reserves by exploiting the low-cost resources of the region by denying them to the members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and to Japan in a prelude to ordering a general conventional war, and in contriving interruptions in supply that could be turned to the Soviet advantage by splitting allies from the USA in a divisive tactic to create oil shortages as a means of weakening allied commitments to US-led
security arrangements. In addition, according to Maqsudul Hasan Nuri that, of late, Russians are getting wary of the substantial increase in US-Turkish influence in the region and the resultant threat to Russian interests in the Caspian Sea. Strangely enough, the Russians do not follow a coherent and focused policy. Their foreign and defence ministries concentrate on security while those of fuel and energy are focusing on economic interests. Some of these objectives are to dismantle the US position of power in the region; and weaken the re-emergence of OPEC, and finally, strengthen ties with Iran and join the Caspian via pipelines with the Persian Gulf.

Russia assumed the presidency of the Group of Eight (G-8) in 2006, President Vladimir Putin called for redefining the concept of energy security so that it involved not only the security of oil and gas supplies for the consumer, but also the security of sustained demand for the producer. Putin’s energy security model further threatens western interests because it replaces the so-called “liberal, open global oil market order” dominated by American companies with a network of long-term agreements and joint ventures with other energy-producing and energy-consuming countries in the developing world, such as China and India.

In 2006, the Russian and Iranian Presidents agreed to coordinate their gas marketing strategies in European and Asian markets. Gazprom signed a memorandum of understanding with the Algerian state company Sonatrach, the second biggest supplier of gas to Europe after Gazprom, to cooperate in upstream asset swaps, joint bidding for assets in third countries, and in the LNO business. In September the Gazprom chief paid the first visit to Qatar, another major gas producer, to discuss cooperation in the field of gas.

Recently, Russia has been the moving spirit behind the idea of a gas OPEC, an organisation of natural gas producing nations. The new body formalized at a meeting of the Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) in Doha, Qatar, on April 9, 2007. The idea was to unite Russia, Iran and Qatar, which between them account for 60 per cent of global gas reserves, with Algeria, Venezuela and Central Asian gas-exporting countries. Russia has swapped energy assets and developed joint upstream and downstream projects with all of these countries. The idea of gas OPEC has rattled the U.S. and Europe as it would shift the alignment of forces in the energy markets and leave them out in the cold. Russian politicians admitted that the gas OPEC will be called upon, among other things, to offset western efforts to control the energy
markets. In contrast to Europe and the US, India could benefit from the establishment of a gas OPEC. A priority task for the gas cartel would be to carve out gas exports markets to reduce competition among its members. This could lend greater momentum to plans to build the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipeline, which would help Russia avoid clashing with Iran on the European gas markets by sending Iranian gas to Asia. Putin has confirmed Russia's willingness to provide financial and technological resources for the project. Putin has used the knockout combination of Russia's energy resources and arms export potential to project its influence across the world. Moscow defied U.S. efforts to isolate Iran, by supplying $700 million worth of Tor M1 advanced air-defence missile systems to Teheran last year. It was the biggest of several defence contracts between Moscow and Tehran since 2000, when Putin lifted an arms embargo imposed on Iran during Yeltsin's rule. Notwithstanding the nuclear controversy, Iran armed with Russian weapons and pursuing a common energy strategy, may emerge as Russia's strategic partner in West Asia.

Russia and Iran share strategic interests in Central Asia, the Caspian and the Caucasus. Putin pointed out during his visit to Iran recently that the two countries had jointly helped end the civil war in Tajikistan in the 1990 and were working to normalize the situation in Afghanistan. Moscow and Tehran are both opposed to western plans to build gas and oil pipelines across Caspian by passing Russia and Iran; both countries insisted at the Caspian Summit that such projects required the consent of all the five littoral states. Russia strongly supported Iran's initiative to set up an economic cooperation organisation of the Caspian nations and volunteered to host the first meeting of the new body in Astrakhan in 2008.

Putin's visit to Teheran strengthened an emerging strategic axis between Russia, Iran and Armenia as a counterbalance in the Caucasus to NATO-aspiring Georgia and Azerbaijan. Putin welcomed Iran's signing of an agreement with Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan on the sidelines of the Caspian Summit to build a railway line along the Caspian, linking Iran with Russia. It will be a part of the North-South Transport Corridor, a joint project of Russia, Iran and India. The Russian railways, the state-owned railway company of Russia, is already involved in a multinational project to build a 350-km railway between the town of Astara on Azerbaijan's border and Kazvin on Iran territory.
Russia's natural gas company, Gazprom, has already invested $750 million in projects in Iran, and is planning to invest $1.7 billion in building an oil refinery jointly with Iran in the neighboring Armenia. The plant will process the oil pumped from Tabriz in northern Iran. Iran's Deputy Oil Minister Hossein Noqrekar-Shirazi said that the two sides had discussed further projects involving refineries, pipelines and gas fields in Iran during Putin's visit. Teheran supports Gazprom's possible involvement in the construction of the Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline. Another aim of Putin's visit to Tehran was to strengthen bilateral ties and give them a strategic dimension. Reports said that the two countries were discussing 130 economic projects together, worth more than $100 billion. During Putin's visit, both sides "agreed to increase the two nation's economic and business exchanges to $200 billion within the next 10 years", the Iranian President's website said. This would mean a 100-fold jump in bilateral trade from the current level of $2 billion. Putin is reported to have told Ayatollah Khomeini that Russia was ready to "expand ties without limitations" with Iran.

Russia is Iran's main arms and technology supplies, like combat planes, helicopters, diesel submarines, tanks and air defence systems. Teheran has given Moscow a long shopping list of weapon platforms it wants to buy. Russia has agreed to supply engines for Iran's new combat planes, Azarakhsh and Shafaq.

Putin's visit to Iran demonstrated Russia's new assertive foreign policy, which crystallized as the Russian economy bounced back from the crisis of the 1990s. The visit strengthened Russia's relations with Iran, raised its profile in the region, and undermined the U.S. bullying tactics towards Iran. The rising tensions between US and Iran, and the U.S. threats to use military power to strike Iran made Russia issue several stern warnings to the US and its allies against using force in Iran. President Putin in his February speech in Munich, Germany, vowed to challenge Washington's policy of international dictates and unrestrained use of force.

Addressing the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit at Shanghai in June, 2007, Putin called for the setting up of an SCO energy club. In fact, Russia has come a long way towards forming such a club, having signed long-term oil and gas deals with China, and strategic pacts with Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for the purchase and joint development of their hydrocarbons. Recently, in May 2007 Russia signed two landmark pacts with Central Asian states to
build natural gas pipelines that would cement Moscow’s control over the region’s energy resources and thwart western efforts to divert their exports away from Russia. Meeting in Turkmenistan’s city of Turkmenbashi on the Caspian Sea, the leaders of Russia, Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan agreed to construct a 1-billion 500-km gas pipeline to export Turkmen gas via Kazakhstan and Russia to Europe. Under a separate agreement signed in Turkmenbashi, Russia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan agreed to overhaul and expand a soviet-era gas pipeline carrying Central Asian gas through Uzbekistan to Russia. The two proposed pipelines will carry up to 90 billion cubic meters of gas by 2028, Russia’s Energy Minister Victor Khristenko said. This is a major success for Russia enabling it to retain control over the bulk of Central Asian gas exports. The deals are also a blow to an alternative plan lobbied by the United States to build a gas pipeline across the Caspian Sea to ship Central Asian gas via Azerbaijan and Georgia to Europe, by passing Russia. Mr. Putin’s week-long tour of Central Asia was deliberately timed to coincide with an energy summit in Poland which invited the leaders of Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan to discuss oil and gas routes to Europe around Russia. Russia and Kazakhstan also agreed to expand a pipeline that carries Kazakhstan’s oil to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk (see map-5). So far, Russia has been the sole re-exporter of Turkmen gas to the European markets. Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan have rich oil and natural gas stocks which the U.S. and European Union were striving to divert through a pipeline linking them with Azerbaijan to bypass Russia.¹⁵⁸

European Union efforts to loosen Russia’s energy grip by seeking alternative supplies from Central Asia via the Caucasus suffered a stunning setback. But even before President Vladimir Putin agreed to the deal, expanding his control of Kazakhstan’s and Turkmenistan’s gas and oil exports, Europe’s drive to diversify was running on empty.

Russia supplies about 25% of Europe’s gas and a growing proportion of its oil (see map-10). That is increasingly seen as a strategic weakness that could leave the continent vulnerable, to politically motivated energy blackmail. This was the fate that allegedly befell Ukraine and Belarus in 2006. Lithuania is currently under similar pressure after Moscow cut oil deliveries.

Energy security will figure high on the agenda at EU-Russia summit in Samara. A key aim is to induce Moscow to sign up to the energy Charter, a set of rules
covering trade investment and transportation of oil and gas. But experts predict the
Kremlin will continue to resist the scheme. Russia is focusing instead on increasing its
market dominance from production through to the point of sale, by expanding its
investments in Europe (while denying European businesses reciprocal access). The
state-controlled energy giant Gazprom now has a stake in 16 of the EU’s 27 countries,
while the remaining are divided on the question of how to respond, Gazprom is busy
maximizing its advantage. “Gazprom already had direct access to end-consumers in
three of the biggest EU gas markets: Italy, Germany and France,” said Katinka
Barysch, in a study published by the Centre for European Reforms. In the UK, it
hopes to raise its market share to 10% by the end of the decade. Not content with
controlling pipelines, Gazprom is building power plants and gas storage facilities in
various EU countries”.

Russia’s other main tactics is its forging of bilateral deals that undermine a
collective pan-European approach. Moscow’s most spectacular success was the
agreement with Germany on a Baltic pipeline that is to bypass Poland. But Mr. Putin
has also dangled the prospect of individual supply and distribution arrangements with
Slovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria and a host of other energy-hungry EU members.

Moscow’s aggressive, and increasingly successful, attempts to entrench its
dominant position have also undercut political and financial support for alternative
European supply projects that would bypass Russia. One is the so called Nabucco
pipeline to bring gas from the Caspian. Russia also deals with Kazakhstan and
Turkmenistan and has also raised possibly terminal doubts about the viability of US
and European ideas for a Central Asia pipeline. While EU countries are looking for
another route of pipeline energy to avoid dependence on Russia as EU foreign
ministers agreed a counter offensive recently to intensify energy and other
cooperations with Black Sea countries, including new neighbors Ukraine, Georgia,
Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Acting unilaterally, Poland is leading the efforts
to build East European links with Caspian Basin energy producers.\textsuperscript{159}

After the Sudden death of Turkmenistan’s long time autocratic ruler Suparmurat
Niyazov in December gave the U.S. and the European Union a new chance to push
through their strategic plan to build the Nabucco pipeline, which would run from
Central Asia through the southern Caucasus\textsuperscript{160} and Turkey to Europe, by passing
Russia. The U.S will also lobby for the creation of an “Energy NATO” as against
Russia. The idea is to make Europe speak to Russia with one voice and force it to ratify the Energy Charter, which would give western companies free access to Russian energy resources and pipelines. “Energy NATO” would stop European nations from striking bilateral energy deals with Russia and prevent Russian companies from buying into downstream energy projects in Europe. Washington also seeks to block the construction of the Nord Stream gas pipeline, which would bring Russian gas directly to Germany across the Baltic Sea, and scuttle Gazprom’s plan to expand the Blue stream gas pipeline – the Russian alternative to the Nabuuco project running from Russia to Turkey across the Black Sea.

In addition, India, China, Japan and South Korea are all looking to benefit from Russia’s plans to diversify its energy export routes, which mostly go to Europe today. Moscow plans to increase exports of crude to Asia from 3 to 30 per cent and that of gas from 5 to 25 per cent by 2020. As Talmiz Ahmad pointed out that over the next 25 years, the energy requirements of Asia are expected to increase 2 1/2 times. By 2020, one-third of the world output, i.e., 1.35 trillion cubic meters will be internationally traded of which 50 per cent will be transported as piped gas and 38 per cent as LNG. Given the rapidly increasing Asian demand and the availability of huge gas reserves in Asia, piped gas and LNG will both be utilized and indeed, will complement each other in the energy-mix of the principal consumers.

The Asian Gas grid envisages the setting up of a series of pipelines that will carry natural gas to various consumption centers in East and South Asia. According to current estimates, the additional pipelines required to be set up would be about 22,500 km., costing about 22 billion dollars. The Asian continent, particularly Russia, the principal Asian consuming countries and the major producing countries of the Gulf are readily able to provide the financial and technological resources for the project.

Further more; the SCO has also undercut the U.S. strategic position in Central Asia. It called on the U.S. to set a timetable for the withdrawal of its forces deployed in the region after 9/11 to support the anti-Taliban campaign in neighboring Afghanistan. It also encouraged Uzbekistan in 2005 to disallow a U.S. air base on its territory.

A confidential North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) report prepared in run-up to its summit in Riga, Latvia, in November, 2007, warned that Russia was out
to set up a gas cartel stretching from Algeria to Iran and central Asia, to use as a political weapon against Europe.

Putin’s natural resources nationalism has spurred a global wave of nationalization and consolidation of state control over energy resources from Central Asia to West Asia, from Africa to Latin America. Russian supplies of weapons to energy – producing developing countries, such as Venezuela and Algeria, embolden them to challenge the dominance of the United States. Resources rich countries today control over 70 per cent of global energy resources, while the share of Western energy giants has shrunk to less than 10 per cent. This has thrown the West into a state of panic.

The mounting global energy leverage that is increasingly coming to reside in the hands of Russia and its strategic partners is an irresistible power, literally unequalled in all human history, for it is the power to throttle or even to credibly threaten to strangle the highly industrialized economies of the West”, warns W. Joseph Stroupe, a writer on energy geopolitics. Where has all the hype about the West’s victory in the cold war gone? Marshall Goldman, associate director of the Davis center for Russian Studies at Harvard, U.S. claims that the U.S. is defenceless in the face of Russia’s energy wealth which has made it more powerful now than at any time in its history.

What drives the West especially mad is that its companies can no longer walk into the Russian energy supermarket and pick up assets as they like. Moscow has made it clear that foreign companies will only get access to Russian energy resources if they offer their own assets and technologies in return, and if Russian companies find these assets worth swapping. Explaining Gazprom’s decision to develop Stockmen alone, Putin said that foreign companies had failed “to offer adequate assets” in exchange for a stake in the vast Russian field.

To add insult to injury, Putin in October, 2007, approved plans to promote Russia’s own crude oil Mix REBCO (Russian Export Brand Crude Oil ), which should eventually replace Brent as a pricing benchmark, and to set up the Russian fuel and Energy Exchange where the new mix will be traced in Roubles, rather than in dollars.

A month later, U.S. Senator Richard Lugar urged NATO to intervene to stop Russia from flexing its energy muscles. “The alliance must avow that defending against such attacks using as a weapon is an Article 5 commitment, “the outgoing chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee said on the sidelines of the Riga
summit, referring to the need to invoke the alliance's mutual defence clause. The comprehensive political guidance document adopted at the summit identified "the disruption of the flow of vital resources" among the main risks or challenges for the alliance for the next 10 to 15 years. While the NATO refrained from pointing the finger at Moscow, the U.S. has vowed to take on Russia in 2007. National Intelligence Director, John Negroponte, predicted a further worsening of relations with Moscow in the coming years. He accused Russia of attempting to exploit the leverage that high energy prices have afforded it, increasingly using strong-arm tactics against neighboring countries."

"Russian assertiveness will continue to inject elements of rivalry and antagonism into U.S. dealing with Moscow, particularly U.S. interactions in the former Soviet Union and will dampen U.S. ability to cooperate with Russia on issues ranging from counter-terrorism and non-proliferation to energy and democracy promotion in West Asia", the top U.S. intelligence official said in his annual review of global threats for the Senate Intelligence Committee on January 11, 2007. The statement amounted to be the declaration of a new policy for containment of Russia. U.S. media readily responded to the call; It's time we started thinking of Vladimir Putin's Russia as an enemy of the United States", the Wall Street Journal fumed "...It is because the foreign policy of Russia has become, openly and often gratuitously, hostile to the U.S."

Energy will be the main battle ground in a new cold war the U.S. is going to wage on Russia; and the direction of attack has been already identified. One is Georgia and the other is Ukraine, key transit countries for oil and exports to Europe, which the U.S. will try to put under its control by getting them admitted to NATO, the Baku-Tbilisi Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline, which transports Caspian Sea oil to Turkey, runs across Georgia, while Ukraine is the main transit route for Russian natural gas bound for Europe. In 2006, Washington put Georgia on the fast track for admission to NATO, together with several East European countries that have been waiting for their turn since 2002. The U.S. Senate also voiced readiness "to support efforts by Ukraine to join the alliance even though Ukraine's Prime Minister said his country had no plans to apply."

Russia was convinced that it has already occupied the key global position and that it cannot be shifted out of that position no matter how vigorously the US and its
allies may try. Middle East instability is on the rise with no relief in sight. That solidifies Russia’s new position, oil-rich Central Asia is moving firmly into alignment with both Russia and China. Europe is absolutely obliged to rely on Russia as regards energy, so is Asia. There is no way out in the near future, for at least a decade or two. Anyway, in that space of time, Russia easily could, if it were obliged by US unilateralism, apply tremendous economic and political pressure to severely damage, or credibly threaten to such damage, to the economies of the West.

The global order is re-dividing into roughly two de facto blocs—one has the US at its core and the other has Russia-China at its core. Energy is the major dividing line between the two blocs. As astronomers say that at the center of a galaxy there exists an energetic black hole that fuels the entire structure and keeps order, and that sometimes, if the black hole at the center weakens, the structure can begin to come apart. If America is likened to the black hole at the center of the American “galaxy” then Russia-China is the black hole at the Center of a new Eurasian “galaxy”.166

From the above evaluation, it emerges that this region has become a battle ground for super powers and also for nearly emerging powers. Afghanistan will be one of the more geo-strategically significant nation for this region as Cheney viewed “the Caspian region is strategically significant” and by 1998, the strategy was becoming clear, to incorporate the inhabitants of the Caspian, Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus (with the exception of Armenia) into a vast US dependency, anchored upon the construction of a massive new oil and gas pipeline infrastructure stretching along the East-West energy corridor that linked Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and ultimately Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.167 But Afghanistan has become the ground for energy war game between Russia and the US even before 9/11 as Ahmed Rashid wrote that ‘the battle of wills between the USA and Russia will dominate future pipeline competition. Russia remains adamant in keeping the USA out of its Central Asian backyard. “We can not help seeing the uproar stirred up in some western countries over the energy resources of the Caspian. Some seek to exclude Russia from the game and undermine its interests. The so called pipeline war in the region is part of this game’, Said President Boris Yeltsin in 1998. By keeping the conflict in Afghanistan on the boil Russia keeps the region unstable and has the excuse to maintain a military presence in the Central Asian Republics (CARs).168
Recently, the US accused Iran for helping the resurgent Taliban forces in Afghanistan. Of course, there is no evidence to prove that Russia has its hand in this job, but it could be viewed that Russia seems to agree with Iran because both Russia and Iran have become close allies and working together to expel U.S. hegemony out of this region. Infact, after US toppled Taliban regime in 2001, Russia also has tried to have the role in Afghan’s internal affairs, at least the government that will come to replace Taliban regime should be pro-Russia party/group. After Hamid Karzai, who was picked to head an interim authority in Afghanistan by an UN-sponsored international conference in Bonn, Germany in December 2001, his own security in Kabul was maintained by an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) of 4,000 to 5,000 troops whose command was rotated among various participating countries. But the Northern Alliance opposes any extensive foreign peace keeping force. Russia believes the Northern Alliance alone is the legitimate government of Afghan, Iran agrees with it. As Gabriel Kolko wrote that “after 11 Sept, US compelled to rely principally on the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan to provide the ground forces without which the Taliban would not have been driven out of the cities. But before Russian had covertly armed major components of the Northern Alliance after 1996 (many of whose leaders had earlier worked with the Soviets) in the hope it would create a buffer along its borders and prevent Islamic extremism from spreading to the newly independent former Soviet republics. After September 11, they supplied the Northern Alliance with a new infusion of tanks, artillery and other heavy equipment. If the Northern Alliance is oriented to any foreign nation, it is Russia.”

In our opinion, the events of September 11, 2001, led the US to invade Afghanistan to topple (Taliban) Afghan-government hostile to U.S. and set up a new regime which was pro-US and then followed it policy by putting with NATO forces to settle in Afghanistan, could be viewed as a long-term plan to contain Russia and exclude Russia from Central Asia and Caspian oil and natural gas rich region. As Vladimir Radyuhin wrote: “the top U.S. intelligence official said in his annual review of global threats for the Senate Intelligence Committee on January 11, 2007. His statement amounted to the declaration of a new Russian containment policy.”
There is no doubt that the US is playing its cards closely riot, by cementing its ties with India and then moving NATO forces into Afghanistan. Siddharth Varadarajan wrote that: the controversy that nuclear negotiations between India and the United States tend to agree wholeheartedly, the nuclear agreement is not simply about energy. The real intention behind friendly gesture towards India came after 9/11 events. As said by Mr. Burns in his article about America’s expectations vis-à-vis a future Indian role in Central Asia, “We are working with Delhi to encourage energy rich Central Asian states such as, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to establish oil and gas trade with Afghanistan, Pakistan and India”. He wrote, “Thereby reducing the lure of long term contracts with Iran.” What he left unsaid is the expectation now well amplified in American policy documents, that India would help the U.S. take Central Asia away from Russian and Chinese influence under its “Greater Central Asia” and “Regional Energy Market Access Program”.

The movement of NATO into Afghanistan, after the terrorist attacks on targets in the United States for the first time in history NATO, invoked Article 5 of the treaty, relating to joint defence clause. The US recognized as the aggrieved party did not make use of NATO’s support and decided to take an independent action against Afghanistan, freely shaping what it termed as the ‘Coalition of the Willing: the anti-terrorist operations started by the U.S. intensified the process of further NATO expansion, at the same time reinforcing the international evolution of the alliance in terms of building new capabilities to meet the new security challenges of the 21st century.

The U.S. made it clear that without a fresh definition of its mission, NATO would not be able to efficiently oppose the new type of threats the U.S. Defence Minister said that if NATO did not transform itself, ‘it will not have much to offer the world in the 21st century’. Perhaps it was with this in mind that NATO took command of 5,000 strong International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan in August 2003.

The new U.S. defence concept articulated in the 2001 Quadrennial Defence Review Report moved away from region-based scenarios to capabilities based planning, and underlined the need for forces that can handle two major conflicts and multiple smaller military operations simultaneously. This shift in strategy moved the NATO focus of defence planning from southwest and northeast Eurasia to the
southern and eastern region of the Eurasian landmass, North Africa, the Middle East and Southeast Asia. The new US doctrine also calls for transformation and moderation of NATO to meet the new security threats.

Notes and References


3 The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research (ed.), Major Powers and their Interests in the Gulf Region, (UAE: The Emirates Center for Strategic Studies and Research, 2004), pp. 5-6.

4 Siddharth Varadarajan, n.1, p. 10.

According to Mackinder’s heartland concept, he made a bold statement regarding the superiority of land power to Sea power. Mackinder revised the Eurocentric vision of history, in favor of the geographer’s vision where the pivotal role of Europe would be eclipsed by the ascendancy of the new geographical pivot of history, namely the heartland of the Euro Asia, the main geo-strategic advantage of this imaginary centre of a true world empire, that would be invulnerable to the direct application of sea power, he called ‘the world Island’. Thus, in Mackinder’s prophetic vision the fate of the future empire of the world would depend on the control of this central core, the “heartland”. However, it has to be recognized at the outset that Mackinder had envisioned this invulnerability in a pre-missile technology age. (Mackinder’s heartland concept was formulated in the course of a lecture given in January 1904, at the Royal Geographical Society, entitled: the Geographical Pivot of History”). See Anita Sengupta, Russia, China and Multilateralism in Central Asia (India: Shipra Publication, 2005), p.12.


9 Sreedhar, n.6, pp. 1463-1494.


12 See for further detail, Sreedhar, n.6, pp. 1463-1494.
16 Sreedhar, n. 6, pp. 1463-1494.
20 George Friedman, n.8, p.51.
23 Ian Rutledge, n.19, pp. 4-6.
25 Angelo Rasanayagam, n. 21, pp. 158-161.

Although the USA was determined to isolate Iran, Turkmenistan could not afford to do so, as Iran offered the nearest and most accessible outlet to the South and the Sea. Adroitly, Niyazov wooed the USA while seeking Tehran’s help in developing road and rail links. In December 1997, the Iranians completed construction of a 119 mile-long gas pipeline between the Korpedzhe gas fields in western Turkmenistan to Kord-Kuy in north eastern Iran. The Turkmen gas that flies through it is consumed in northern Iran. This pipeline is still the only new pipeline built between Central Asia and outside world after nearly a decade of trying.

Niyazov also courted western oil companies to build gas pipelines that would free him from the Russian pipeline network. In April 1992 Turkmenistan, Turkey and Iran agreed to build a gas pipeline to Turkey and on to Europe which would cost US $205 billion. That pipeline never got built and subsequently saw several variations as the US tried to block any route through Iran. Finally, in February 1999, Turkmenistan signed another agreement, this time with a US consortium, to build a Turkmenistan – Turkey gas pipeline which would go under the Caspian Sea to Azerbaijan and avoid Iran

As Niyazov saw his country’s economy crumble, he sought alternative export routes, on the drawing boards in 1994 were plans for a 5,000 mile-long oil and gas pipeline eastwards to China that would cost over US $20 billion, but the project is still only in the feasibility stage. Also in 1994, Bridas the Argentinean oil company which had concession in Turkmenistan, proposed building a gas pipeline that would cross Afghanistan and deliver gas to Pakistan and India. The US Company Unocal, with support from Washington, proposed a similar pipeline in 1995 the battle between the two companies to build this pipeline, which is explored, sucked in the Taliban and the other Afghan warlords. Thus Afghanistan became the fulcrum of the first battle of the new great game.


28 Ian Rutledge, n.19, pp.102-105.

29 Vijay Kapur, n.24, pp.13-14, For further detail about oil pipeline rout see Srreedhar, n.6, pp.1463-1494.

30 Angelo Rasanayagam, n.21, pp. 158-161.


32 Srreedhar, n.6, pp.1463-1494.

33 Zbigniew Brzezinski was the former National Security Advisor to President Jimmy Carter See: Ian Rutledge, n.19, pp.102-105.

34 Richard Cheney had spent almost all of his adult life in politics. He had entered public life as a relatively minor civil servant in the Nixon Administration, after which he rose through the ranks to serve briefly as president Gerald Ford’s White House Chief of Staff from 1975 until the end of his presidency in 1977. He was then elected to the House of Representatives as Republican Congressman for his home state of Wyoming, a position to which he was re-elected five times. Wyoming is an oil – and coal producing state and it likely that Cheney developed his interest in and knowledge of energy matters during his period continuing to raise through the ranks of republican politics and demonstrating indefatigable support for conservative causes, in 1989 he became Secretary for Defence in the Administration of George Bush Sr. See Ian Rutledge, n.19, pp.60-68.

35 Ian Rutledge, n.19, pp.102-105.

36 Bridas Company is an Argentinean oil company that had become the third largest independent oil company in Latin America: Bridas had no experience in Asia but had extensive experience in discovering, developing and transporting gas through cross – border pipelines to multiple markets in Latin America. In 1991 Bridas took a huge risk by becoming the first Western oil company to bid for leases in Turkmenistan, shunned by other oil companies because it was land-locked, had no legislation to protect investors and outlets except through the Russian system. See Angelo Rasanayagam, n. 21, pp. 158-161.

37 Angelo Rasanayagam, n.21, pp. 158-161.

38 Ahmad Rashid, n.25, pp. 155-156.

39 Angelo Rasanayagam, n.21, pp. 158-161.


43 Angelo Rasanayagam, n.21, pp. 158-161.

44 Loretta Napoleoni, n.40, pp. 113-114.

45 Angelo Rasanayagam, n.21, pp. 158-161.


47 Actually behind of key memberships of Bush administration was backed by oil and gas interest group, as Ian Rutledge pointed out: the central role in oil in US geo-strategy in the
region is clearly revealed by checking the membership of an innocuous-sounding body called, the US-Azerbaijan Chambers of Commerce. Originally established in 1996, this body was controlled by key members of the US political establishment, along with senior managers from all the major US oil companies. Its Honorary Council of Advisors consisted of Dick Cheney, Henry Kissinger and Zbigniew Brzezinski, along with former members of Bush Sr.’s Administration, Brent Scowcroft, James Baker and Lloyd Bentsen. Future Deputy Secretary of State in George W. Bush’s Administration, Richard Armitage, was a member of its Board of Directors, while Richard Perle, soon to be chairman of the Defence Policy, Board at the Pentagon, was a member of its Board of Trustees. The US oil industry itself was represented by the executive Vice President of Exxon Mobil Exploration Co., the President of Conoco, the Vice President of UNOCAL International Energy Ventures. The General Manager for International Government Relations of Chevron Texaco, the Vice President of Devon Energy, and the Chairman of Montcrtief oil International.

It would be difficult to imagine a more revealing testimony to the key role which the oil interest was now playing in US foreign policy. Here we see key members of the U.S. power elite – Brzezinski, former National Security Advisor to Democrat President Jimmy Carter; Scowcroft a Republican realist from the Bush’Sr. Administration; Perle the arch-ideologue of ‘neo-conservatism’ – all closely collaborating in an enterprise whose sole objective was the incorporation of Caspian oil into the commercial and political orbit of the USA. See Ian Rutledge, n.19, pp. 107-108.

Strategy of Silk Route is an EU initiative for which the basis had been laid in May 1993, at the time, eight ex-Soviets signed up in Brussels to the Traceca project, which aim at developing transport links across the Caspian region to provide an alternative to the traditional Trade route through Russia. Marginalizing other initiatives to bring the Caspian region into a single transport infrastructure – such as the 1996 ‘Innovates’ program of the European Commission (interstate oil and gas transport to Europe) – the New Silk Road was confirmed in September 1998 with the aim to link China and Mongolia to Europe, with a permanent secretariat set up in Baku, and meant to secure the participating countries independence from Russian dominance. see Vander Pijl, n.27, pp. 351-352.

During the 1990s Karzai was involved in negotiations with the Taliban regime for the construction of Central Asian gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Western Afghanistan to Pakistan. At that time he was a top adviser and lobbyist for UNOCAL, the California-based oil company which was negotiating the right to build the pipeline across Afghanistan. During the anti-Soviet jihad, Karzai was a member of the mujahidin. In the early 1990, he was one who contacted with ISI moved to the US where he cooperated with the CIA and the ISI in supporting the Taliban political adventure. See Loretta Napoleoni, n.40, pp.113-114.

This policy is well known to what extent powerful Multi-National Cooperation (MNC), once their interests are clearly defined, can go to remove all obstacles in their global operations. At times some MNC have not hesitated in deposing regimes and installing favorable regimes in the third world without any compunction whatsoever. One may recall the involvement of U.S. MNC AT&T in the overthrowing of the legitimate regime of Salvador Allende in Chile in the seventies. During the 19th century, oil companies used intrigue and bribery to gain strategic foothold in the emerging oil industries in many countries. Standard oil of the U.S. monopolizes oil transportation networks for its own gains, often by devious methods. See Sreedhar, n.6, pp. 1463-1494.

Zalmay Khalizad was an Afghan born US citizen who served in the Reagan and Bush Sr. Administrations, worked for the Rand Corporation and served as Counselor to Donald Rumsfeld. He had also been a consultant to Unocal Corporation, the large U.S. multinational oil company, and played a part in that company’s negotiations with the Taliban to build oil and gas pipelines across Afghanistan, from the Caspian to the – coast of Pakistan, negotiation, which only came to an end when the Clinton Administration

53 Sreedhar, n.6, pp. 1463-1494.
54 Patrick Martin, n.46.
55 \textit{Afghanistan war planned months before 9/11 Suicide Air attacks its all about blood money’ http://www.ronse.com/Generu/115/afghanistanwarplanned.htm, accessed on 27 August 2007.}
58 Siddharth Varadarajan, “This has nothing to do with energy”, \textit{The Hindu}, New Delhi, 2 May 2007, p.10.

During President Bill Clinton’s administration, the US South Asia policy was concerned with finding the right balance between India and Pakistan but the US stance changed when George W. Bush (junior) took over the presidency and the balance shifted to India. The administration focused on India as a rising power, at the expense of Pakistan who had been a staunch ally against the Soviet Union. Thus, the Bush administration initiated new policy on South Asia based on an ‘India only policy’ to counter China’s influence in the region. In fact, the Bush administration perceived; India as a potential partner in maintaining stability in the South Asian region particularly in fighting Islamic fundamentalism and checking Chinese ambitions; for this purpose, the administration appointed an Assistant Secretary of State solely for India to play a particularly strong role in setting the tone of the administration’s relationship with India.

However, the events of September 11, 2001 changed the United States strategic scenario and Pakistan became once more key regional player and vital strategic ally of the US-led war against terrorism and offered its military bases, airfields, logistic support and intelligence information to America in the planned counter terrorist campaign against Osama bin laden’s al-Qaeda network and the Taliban. Once again, Islamabad occupied considerable attention in Washington, mainly because of the belief of US policy makers that the country could be a dangerous centre of terrorists with unpredictable consequences for the surrounding region. Pakistan combines the two major security threats to the United States; weapons of mass destruction and perceived link with terrorism. In the emerging situation, the Bush administration requested congress to withdraw imposed sanctions on Pakistan and India. The Bush administration described several identifiable interests in South Asia; such as preserving the integrity of the Pakistani states, curbing Islamic extremism, containing terrorist activity in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where possible, and preventing a potential dangerous nuclear arms race in South Asia. See A.Z. Hilali, \textit{US-Pakistan Relationship: Soviet invasion of Afghanistan} (England: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), pp.245-246.

60 Amit Baruah, “What the U.S. is doing to Pakistan”, \textit{The Hindu}, New Delhi, 19 August, 2006, p.11.


Gaurav Kampani, n.63.


After ending of cold war signaled a new era in Euro-Atlantic security. At the Washington Summit in 1999, the Alliance’s Heads of State and Government adopted the strategic concept and decided to streamline the NATO command structure. The new structure was implemented with a view to achieve the end state by 2006. At the strategic level NATO has only commander responsible for all operations, wherever they may be conducted in or beyond Alliance territory; that is SACEUR, the Supreme Alliance Commander in Europe. Beneath SACEUR, the various 2nd and 3rd level headquarters are being re-configured to fit the new structure or, in some cases, stood down altogether. The Alliance Strategic Concept, recognizing the evolving security environment, makes provisions for operations beyond the territory of member states. The dramatic events triggered in September 2001 have proved this theory right and NATO is increasingly engaged well away from its borders. The aim is to keep risks for NATO’s member security at distance and contain crises and conflicts to avoid a spill over.(A) to support the strategic concept,(B) to set up for success in the 21st century, (C) to give real force to the need for change, to transform NATO’s capabilities; and (D) to become expert at expeditionary operations.

Indeed, 11 September 2001 triggered a global re-examination of security and a key shift in attitudes world-wide towards terrorism. One of the consequences of all this has been the Alliance’s decision to take over the International Security Assistance Force, or ISAF, Operation in Afghanistan. NATO has taken that lead on 11 August 2003. This operation demonstrates NATO’s readiness to deploy forces wherever the Alliance decides in order to ensure common security. NATO’s mission is to assist the Afghan Transitional Authority in the maintenance of security, thereby assisting the emergence of a united and sovereign country, integrate into the international community.


Gilles Dorronsoro, n.5, p.346.


Gilles Dorronsoro, n.5, p.346.


Narsi Ghorban in Hamid Ansari, n.57, pp. 261-263.


Vladimir Radyuhin, “Preventing Iran from going to Iraq way”, The Hindu, New Delhi, 16 October 2007, p. 10.

Recently such action also happened to Switzerland when Israel and the United States opposed to the multi-billion dollar Iran-Switzerland gas deal on 17 March 2008. This dealing came under attack from an influential U.S. based Jewish interest group. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) has targeted Switzerland for the deal, under which Iran will supply Europe 5.5 billion cubic metres of gas annually by 2012. The ADL also criticized and blamed Switzerland of supporting terrorism because the deal would strengthen Iran. The deal would provide Iran with additional resources to pursue its nuclear programme and arm anti Israel groups such as the Lebanese Hezbollah. However, Swiss Foreign Ministry denied that they never involved with that accusation and went on to assert that the agreement did not violate law as it “ is in full conformity with the existing U.N. sanctions against Iran,” as well as the Iran Sanctions Act of the US he said. Besides, at least 10 other countries were party to major energy deals with Iran, including Japan, France and Italy, he said. See Atul Aneja, “Swiss-Iran gas deal under attack”, The Hindu, New Delhi, 11 April 2008, p.16.

Seema Sridhar, n.85, pp. 10-12.


Vladimir Radyuhin, n.86, p. 10.

Atul Aneja, n.90, p. 11.

How important is the straits of Hormuz for U.S. we can see from Brent Scowcroft (National Security Adviser,) warned that it would probably be ‘easier to defeat Europe at the straits of Hormuz than on the central front. As the Persian Gulf, the sea routes around the Gulf are the arteries through which that lifeblood passes. Moreover, Gulf oil could
also be used either as an incentive or as a weapon to placate or coerce restive client states, and to procure new clients in strategically important areas of the world. So our view, one day if Iran becomes capable by procuring arms and weapons to control this area, it would bring tragedy to the West. See, A.Z. Hilali, n.60, pp.18-20.

Martin Indyk, n.83, pp. 117-128.


In the period immediately following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the subsequent emergence of the newly-independent states in 1991, US policy toward Central Asia centered on a security relationship. By 1994 with cooperation through defence doctrine and training to pursue Central Asian countries to enter NATO’s Partnership for Peace Program (PFP). Central Asian membership in the NATO PFP served as the main avenue for Western security engagement... The US approach to Central Asia was also driven by overarching geopolitical considerations, with an underlying goal of containing the influence of China, Iran and Russia. See Richard Giragosian, “The US Military Engagement in Central Asia and the Southern Caucasus: An Overview”, Journal of Slavic Military Studies, Vol.17, No.1 March 2004, pp. 45-47.


Ibid.

Muhammad Tahir, n.91.


George Friedman, n.8, pp.246-248.


Vladimir Radyuhin, n.86, p. 10.


The IRGC was formed immediately after the Islamic Revolution of 1979 and had played a crucial role in the eight-year war with Iraq. It owes its allegiance to the Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The IRGC today numbers around 130,000 and runs more than a hundred companies involved in a range of activities including building of roads and airports and manufacturing of cars. They have a big stake in the hydrocarbon sector as well. See John Cherian, “Warmongering”, Frontline, Vol.24, No.22, 3-16 November 2007, pp.54-56.

As an article in The Hindu newspaper an analyst wrote about the effort of U.S. and its ally (Israel) trying to do everything to bring Iran down or at least to make unstable within Iran by whatever means. Recently quoted by M.K. Bhadra Kumar: Turkish intelligence reported that Israeli experts providing training to Kurdish military forces in the autonomous Kurdish region of northern Iraq. Israeli intelligence provides a perfect setting for mounting covert operations inside Iran. The imperative of regime change in Tehran became the core objective of the US and Israeli policy. However, PKK which being long hostile insurgent groups that turn to against Turkey caused many Turkish troops to die. Meanwhile, the PKK cadres freely roam around in northern Iraq. Its leader openly admitted that they received weapons from US. When Turkey as a NATO close ally of U.S. demanded US to stop the activities of PKK in northern Iraq US replied that US are busy to handle with al-Qaeda in Iraq and have not enough forces to manage with PKK in

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northern Iraq. Turkey feels sad that to know terrorist organisation are sheltering behind America and using American arms against Turkey. (M.K. Bhadrakumar, “Turkey’s Kurdish Problem: Lessons for India”, The Hindu, Delhi, 31 October 2007, p. 12).


Anatol Lieven, n.11.


Richard Giragiasian, n.72, pp. 45-47.


Loretta Napoleoni, n.40, pp. 189-190.


The mount of tension between U.S. and China over energy resources in Central Asia did not start after 11 Sept 2001, but it has started since the break up of Soviet Union. As cited by E William Engdahl in Asia time: on December 15, 2007 the state-owned China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) inaugurated an oil pipeline running from Kazakhstan to northwest China. The pipeline will undercut the geopolitical significance of the Washington-backed Baku-Tbilisisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline (see map 8 and 9) which opened this past summer amid big fanfare and support from Washington. (William Engdohl, China Lays Down Gauntlet in Energy War, http://www.uofaweb.ualberta.ca/chinainstitute/navo3,CFM?navo3=44361&navo2:43876&navo1=43092, accessed on 24 August 2007).


Afghanistan war planned months before 9/11 suicide air attacks its all about blood money, n.55.

John W. Garver, n.78, pp.201-206.


William Engdohl, n.122.

John W. Garver, n.78, pp.201-206.

Ibid, pp.197-199.


Pallavi Aiyar, n.117, p. 10.


John W. Garver, n.78, pp.197-199.

Siddharth Varadarajan, n.58, p.10.

P. Stobdan, n.120, pp. 12-14.


P. Stobdan, n.120, pp. 12-14.

There were reports that once US had played some game in this region to preserve its pipeline interests, Georgia was the first former Soviet state in 2003 where the US orchestrated a “velvet revolution” to install a pro-American regime. With the opening of the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline in May 2005, Washington broke Russian monopoly over energy flows from the Caspian and Central Asia. The US is now pushing to deploy troops and aircraft in Azerbaijan and Georgia for pipeline protection”. A key oil pipeline linking Azerbaijan and the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiysk runs through Dagestan. An even more strategically important pipeline operated by the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) passes through neighboring Kalmykia a poor Buddhist territory that may be sensitive to instability in Dagestan. The CPC is Russia’s main hope for competing with US-sponsored BTC pipeline.

A large part of Russia’s Caspian naval flotilla is based in Dagestan ports. Dagestan also lies on strategic North-South transport route linking India and South-East Asia with Russia and Europe. And because of instability of Islamic rebels Mr. Putin also ordered the strengthening of the border guards along the border with Azerbaijan and Georgia. See Vladimir Radyuhin, “Threat to Russia’s hold on Caucasus”, The Hindu, New Delhi, 1 August 2005, p.11.

Vladimir Radyuhin, n.149, pp. 59-62.

Talmiz Ahmad, n.56, pp. 162-163.


See for further detail of history of BTC pipeline and political rivalries over gas pipeline to Europe at, Kees Vander Pijl, n.27, pp. 351-352.

Vladimir Radyuhin, n.149, pp. 59-62.

US has tried to place it base in Southern corridor to Central Asia from the beginning after the end of cold war era, after Soviet withdrawal from invasion of Afghanistan and followed with the collapse of Soviet Union. The west showed sign to replace Russia’s hegemony in this region by giving credence to Pakistan to play the role and lead the West into this region. As Ajay Darshan Behera wrote that ‘stability in Afghanistan was the main variable in this strategy. Domination in Afghanistan was important to it to exercise powerful control over the Southern corridor to Central Asia. This was the only way to enhance Pakistan’s geopolitical standing with the west in shaping the future evolution of Central Asia. While Pakistan would get economic and political rewards by creating a regional dependence on Islamabad to ensure safety for traffic-in other words, the international acceptance of Islamabad’s hegemony over the Southern approaches to Central Asia and the Western gateway to China.”

It could quietly fit into American political and strategic objectives in the Central Asian region which provides vantage ground for preventing Russian hegemony in the region, containing Iran and play a balancing role against emerging powers like China. The control over the Pakistan-Afghanistan corridor and creating an opening from the South would be vital for the West in gaining access to the oil and natural gas resources of the region. See Ajay Darshah Behera, n.114, pp.1375-1377.

Najam Rafique, n.62, pp. 41-57, see also, Luke Hill JDW, n.70, p.5.