CONCLUSION

The national security agenda has been broadened. It includes not only the military threats to security but also the non-military ones such as environmental, socio-economic issues, transnational threats and human security. Nevertheless, traditional view of security still runs paramount and cannot be out-rightly scratched. The world order that was created after World War II in 1945 is loosing its effectiveness. The United States went to war in Iraq without an enabling United Nations Security Council resolution, thus violating its principles in letter and spirit. The precedent clearly demonstrates that the nations need to create adequate deterrent in terms of military power by producing matching competitive weapons with the development and use of advanced science and technology to safeguard their borders. India’s past wars with Pakistan and China clearly indicate that adequate military might, adjusted according to surrounding environment and geopolitics, is essential to safeguard the country’s borders. Central Asia, a new entity born in 1990s, has no common border with India and poses no military threat to it. However, the Central Asian region stands important to India so far as the non-military threats are concerned.

India is facing hosts of non-traditional security threats. Cross-border terrorism, Naxalism, North-Eastern civil strife and illegal immigration from Bangladesh are prominent amongst them. Cross-border terrorism is widespread in Jammu and Kashmir but its tentacles are also found in most parts of India, threatening stability of the country. All these activities are abetted and supported by foreign agencies and are inter-linked which provide them oxygen for survival and vigorous action. There is no likelihood of any let up in terrorist activities in the near future due to the following reasons:

- The ideological appeal of terrorist organisations will continue to persist to attract adherents.
- People economically deprived and politically marginalized often form factions that would continue resorting to violence.
- Certain countries will continue supporting and abetting terrorism to divert the attention of the people from their local problems, and to destabilize neighbouring rivals as a matter of policy.
- There is no shortage of finance and weapons because of large scale participation...
of terrorist organisations in the illegal drug trade, and weapons movement due to increased effect of globalisation.

- Incremental use of communication and information technologies by the terrorist organisations facilitates creation of widespread effective network of terrorist activities, difficult to be curtailed.
- Terrorists are upbeat recounting a historical fact that the Taliban were instrumental in ousting the Soviet Union from Afghanistan, and that the present occupying forces in Afghanistan would have to go as they do not have stomach for prolonged engagement.

There is a need to view terrorism from another angle. There has not emerged, so far, any consensus amongst the nations on the definition of terrorism. Some view upheaval as an act of terrorism, whereas the others term it a freedom movement or a natural consequence of suppression. Chechnya agitation was considered as an act of terrorism by Russia, whereas United States took it as a freedom movement. The Andijan event was considered by Uzbekistan as an act of Islamic extremism to overthrow the government, whereas the United States viewed it just a rebellion against Karimov’s repressive policies. Fighting terrorism and Islamic extremism require collective cooperative efforts. The resolution of these problems appears improbable unless the countries transcend over political considerations and engage in sincere active cooperation, a rare chance indeed.

Central Asia is a victim of terrorism and religious extremism. It gets nourished by the combination of internal and external factors. External factors constitute import of radical Islamist ideology, training cadres of militant organisations along with material support. The internal factors – poverty, unemployment, deprivation, social inequality, corruption, harsh authoritarianism – provide propitious ground for indulgence of the people in militant and subversive activities. There is a great spillover effect of extremist activities from Afghanistan to Central Asia. Taliban were ousted from power after ‘war on terror’ from Afghanistan but they resurfaced back with vigour in spite of the presence of NATO and the United States forces. The chances of their decimation appear dim as they are gaining strength day by day. It appears to be a long drawn out struggle with no early solution in sight. Both India and Central Asia are threatened with the menace of religious extremism; it is difficult to judge how long it would stay.

After independence Central Asian states went for great transformation: dictatorial
regime of Soviet times was changed to farcical democracy, according to the Western standards. Most of the powers were concentrated in the hands of the Presidents. Command economy was changed to market economy but with varied differences. The change was more intense in the case of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, whereas Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan preserved the semblance of command economy. After initial decline in the Central Asian economies, the growth trajectory started from the late 1990s. The Central Asian states are rich in mineral resources; their economies are largely dependent on the level of their exploitation and international prices. In the absence of diversification of economy, the sustenance of growth remains doubtful.

There has been intra-regional calm among the Central Asian states in spite of inherited water, border disputes and ethnic diversity, indicating sagacity of the Central Asian leadership. However, Islam which remained dormant during the Soviet era got enlivened and took the shape of radicalism, threatening the peace and stability of the region. The centres of their activities were concentrated in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan; Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan were comparatively calm. The preservation of sovereignty was the primary concern of the Central Asian states. Turkmenistan has been pursuing the policy of neutrality. In the initial years Uzbekistan’s tilt was towards the West and NATO, maintained some distance from Russia. After 9/11 event, almost all the Central Asian states provided some sort of accommodation to the United States in its fight against the Taliban in Afghanistan. They thought that the United States was strong enough to vanquish the Taliban and thus would create hedge against the spread of terrorism and Islamic extremism. Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan even provided airbases to the United States. However, the situation dramatically changed after the Andijan event. The United States was forced to relinquish its base in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan charged the United States for its complicity, whereas the United States blamed Uzbekistan that the event was the result of the oppressive policies. Uzbekistan took an opposite stance against the United States and aligned itself completely with Russia and China, and became member of CSTO. Russia and China believe in the maintenance of status quo and are opposed to the introduction of democracy by force which they consider is opposed to the societal customs and traditions of the region. The status quo is likely to remain intact unless or until some political event of consequence happens, compelling the Central Asian states to change their stance otherwise.
After the collapse of the Soviet regime, the Central Asian region featured proportionately high in the United States foreign policy agenda. Freedom Support Act 1992 and the Silk Road Strategy Act 1999 spelled out the United States basic strategic interests and economic policy towards the Central Asian Republics. Through these acts, broadly, the emphasis was laid on the promotion of democratic institutions, rule of law to fight corruption, development of free market economy and fostering regional cooperation and stability with the basic objective to create favourable business climate so as to exploit the natural resources of the region. Further, it wanted to impede any other power from gaining dominance in the Central Asian region. Through the Silk Road Strategy Act 1999 provision was made to provide assistance for the development of: independent media, non-governmental organisations, commercial transactions and transparency in political practice. The United States has made many efforts to attract the new Central Asian states in the Western military sphere by conducting joint exercises within the NATO’s PfP programme, besides providing security assistance and military training to its personnel.

The United States advocacy of democracy and free market economy is based on the premise that the Western economies would benefit the most in trade liberalization as they had the world’s most competitive economies. This conviction of economic superiority made the West to plea for globalisation and bringing down trade barriers, thinking the West would win in an open economic playing field. This confidence has been corroborated by John F. Kennedy’s 1962 statement: “a more liberal trade policy will in general benefit our most efficient and expanding industries.” This conviction is patently proved false by the robust economic growth of authoritarian capitalistic China and economic resurgence of Russia with dwarf democracy.

After the end of the Cold War, democracy and free markets were advocated by the West as panacea for all ills. Presently, both are under severe strain. Globally, democracy is under retreat, although it achieved successes in the 1990s in spreading political freedoms to Eastern Europe and replacing dictatorships in Indonesia, South Korea, Taiwan and Chile. The financial crisis in the United States has thrown principles of free market economy to the winds. Financial socialism has been used to tide over the prevalent crisis, and the United States government has provided financial help to bail out its troubled financial companies in a manner that smacks of socialization of losses and privatization of profits. By its own moves, the United States has backed away from its
own model of capitalism. The European economies have also emulated the United States. So there is no point in pressing upon the Central Asian states to follow Western model of democracy and capitalism for their economic growth and survival.

The United States has ever nurtured global dominance; this, it has done by controlling energy resources worldwide. In Central Asia, it has three fold objectives: free access to its vast energy resources, acquiring easy accessibility to outflow of oil and gas through pipelines to outside markets and reduce dependence on Russia’s inherited and enlarged pipeline system. The construction of BTC pipeline at the behest of the United States, bypassing Russia, is an alternative supply route decreasing total dependence on Russian pipeline network. The maintenance of stability in the countries through which the pipeline passes and it’s guarding has also been accorded priority by the United States.

The region has strategic importance for the United States because of its location, contiguous to Russia, China, Iran and Afghanistan. The United States is interested in the region because of the extremist activities in neighbouring countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The United States regards Russia and China having the potential to challenge its hegemony and dominance of the world; so the containment of their influence in the region is the cardinal principle of the United States foreign policy.

The United States influence in the Central Asian region is on the wane because of Andijan event and ‘colour revolutions’. The unilateral war launched by the United States in Iraq has also shaken the confidence of Central Asian regimes. They have started looking Russia and China for their safety. All except Turkmenistan are members of SCO that prepares the countries to face terrorism and Islamic extremism in cooperation with Russia and China. The CSTO led by Russia is a collective defence organisation to protect their borders and to fight terrorism and Islamic extremism. The resurgence of Russia and successful defence of breakaway regions of Georgia-Abkhazia and South Ossetia – Russia’s allies – has added credence to Russia’s ability to defend. For the present, Russia and China have been able to maintain and increase their influence at the cost of the United States in Central Asia.

Having resolved the border disputes with Central Asian states, China’s relations with them were focused on the development of trade, getting supplies of energy (oil, gas, electricity) and combating extremist threat by mutual cooperation. China has invested heavily in developing infrastructure (railways and roads) and in laying down gas and...
oil pipelines connecting Central Asia to the western region of China. China seeks to diversify its energy supplies. The Central Asian energy is easily accessible through land route and free from any disruption to be caused by military threat. At present, most of the energy supplies to China pass through the Strait of Malacca, vulnerable to disruptions. China has been able to establish its foothold in the Western dominated energy sector of Central Asia. Chinese investment in Central Asia has created a favourable environment for mutual cooperation.

China has been able to establish strategic partnership with Russia based upon specific common reasons:

- To fight terrorism, religious extremism and drug trafficking.
- Security apprehensions regarding the likely stay of the United States in Central Asia.
- The United States pressure tactics to introduce democracy and human rights, inimical to China and Russia’s interests.
- The ‘colour revolutions’ generated by the United States to install pro-Western regimes in Central Asia to weaken Russia and China’s influence.

In spite of cooperation on certain issues, there is an underlying streak of mistrust between the two, Russia and China. One does not want the domination of the other in Central Asia. Moreover, China has got well-developed economic relations with the United States. Under these circumstances it is difficult to guess how long these cooperative relations will persist.

The main objectives of Russia are: to maintain its political influence in Central Asia, undermine the United States presence in economic and political sphere, to maintain status quo position in export of gas and oil from Central Asia so as to monopolize gas exports to Europe. Other Russian priorities have been to maintain peace and stability in Central Asia, to get added share in the exploration of mineral resources and to make an effort to block or slow down competitive export routes of oil and gas; Russia has been able to achieve these objectives through military, economic and political cooperation, working on the principle of non-interference in the internal affairs of the Central Asian states.

India’s approach to its relations with Central Asian Republics is based on certain basic objectives: stability and security, ensuring energy security, increasing trade and
economic cooperation and check the spread of influence of forces inimical to India.

Terrorism and Islamic extremism is a great danger to the peace and stability of Central Asia. Terrorists operate globally through wide network. Leadership of Central Asia is secular oriented, legacy of the Soviet Union. Their fight against terrorism serves the mutual interests of both India and Central Asia. India is a plural society, home to many religious and ethnic groups. Terrorism has great ramifications for India. It may endanger the integrity of India in the long run. Therefore, it is in the interest of both India and Central Asia to check the spread of these forces.

The ‘war on terror’ and Islamic extremism is gradually being lost. Their sanctuaries are intact. The training camps and madrassas are being run with impunity. The United States government has failed to persuade Pakistan to act decisively against them. So far, the Pakistan government has been playing a dubious game. On the one hand, they pose as partner of the United States in the ‘war on terror’ and on the other, Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan has complete complicity with the Taliban. Army rules the roost and ISI is its important organ. Even Pakistan has become the victim of terrorism. The government appears either unwilling to act against extremist organisations or is unable to take on them with force. Moreover, the government has entered into peace arrangements with extremist organisations operating in the disturbed tribal areas, legitimizing their activities and boosting their morale.

Willy-nilly the policy objectives of the Pakistan government are associated with the Taliban movement. The primary purpose of Taliban appears to be to tired out the United States and NATO forces and to compel them to leave Afghanistan, so that they could have a free run in Afghanistan and on to Central Asia. India’s development of intimate relations with Afghanistan is viewed counter to their objective of having a pliable regime there. The bomb blasts on Indian embassy in Kabul is indicative of their sinister designs. Taliban with the complicity of ISI has established network of terrorist organisations in Kashmir and rest of India, which are engaged in disruptive activities to weaken India, and ultimately seeks separation of Kashmir. This situation is likely to persist in foreseeable future. India’s approach of soft tackling this problem will not work. India will have to revamp its judicial system and intelligence wing. It takes years to complete terrorist trials, giving an impression of lacking commitment to deal with terrorism decisively. Only the peace engagements between
India and Pakistan will not cut ice. The experiment of democracy in Pakistan has failed to solve the problems. The same situation may arise if the United States stresses for the introduction of Western type democracy in Central Asia. It would aggravate the problem rather than solving it.

India has no clash of interest with either the United States or Russia in Central Asia; but India is definitively wary of the Chinese policy of containment of India due to its balance of power considerations and to establish its superiority in Asia. To weaken India, China has strengthened Pakistan militarily, even supplying nuclear technology surreptitiously. The objective has been to make Pakistan impregnable in case of an armed conflict with India. To undercut the influence of India in Central Asia, Pakistan has been accorded along with India an observer status in the SCO on the behest of China in spite of its tainted image to fight terrorism.

In the 1990s Pakistan provided the Taliban all sort of help to capture Afghanistan with an ultimate eye on Central Asia to seek strategic depth. Pakistan harbours open hostility to India and supports cross-border terrorism, therefore, it will be in the strategic interest of India to checkmate the spread of its influence in Central Asia through diplomatic skill, economic and political cooperation.

India’s economy is growing; the sustenance of growth requires continuous flow of energy. Central Asia with abundant resources of oil, gas and hydro-power offers an opportunity for alternative source of supply. But there are transitional difficulties. Central Asia being landlocked has no direct rail, road or sea route to India. Whatever routes available are circuitous, long and uneconomical. Central Asian oil and gas is mainly transited through Russian pipeline network and recently constructed BTC pipeline. But there is no direct link to India. The conceived gas pipeline connecting Turkmenistan to India is difficult to be realized because of political and security reasons. India has vast experience in exploration and hydro-electric generation together with the laying down of hydro-electric transmission lines. India can profitably make an investment in these sectors, provided gets a chance.

Indian trade with Central Asian states has been small. In spite of the launching of various measures by the government of India, CIS programme and Indian Export Organisation’s efforts, no tangible results have been achieved. It is because of the absence of direct land route, insufficient infrastructure, widespread corruption and
unhealthy business environment there. Closeness to China and low consumption standards due to deprivation are the other factors inhibiting large scale trade with the region. India’s investment in Central Asia has been low. It covers textiles, pharmaceuticals, engineering construction projects, and power and transmission distribution lines. There is a great scope of investment in various sectors – steel, exploration, petrochemicals, tanneries, dairy products, textiles. What’s required is security and stability of the region, government encouragement and cooperation to make investment. The environment for investment differs from state to state in Central Asia, most favourable Kazakhstan than other Central Asian states. Indian cooperation in trade and investment with Central Asia depends upon political situation, government policies and mutual efforts.

The chances of trade and investment between India and Kazakhstan have increased following National Suppliers Group’s waiver allowing India nuclear commerce worldwide. Kazakhstan is a uranium rich state, having the second largest uranium reserves in the world. It has struck a deal for uranium supplies to Indian indigenously built pressurized heavy water reactors. Kazakhstan possesses the basis of nuclear technology because of its post-Soviet connections. India can enter into wide ranging nuclear cooperation covering nuclear equipment, trade, scientific and technological interaction with Kazakhstan. India can help Kazakhstan build nuclear power reactors fuelled by natural uranium based upon heavy water technology which is quite cheap as compared to light water reactors provided by other countries.

Projections and Suggestions

- Central Asia will remain a region of intense activities between the great powers – the United States, Russia and China. The Great Game will continue to be played around the control of hydrocarbon resources and outflow of energy routes. There is no hope of respite on this front.
- To a certain extent, the security of the region is dependent on the United States future strategy of staying in Afghanistan. If the United States decides to remain there, which it is likely to do, the present situation would continue to prevail for a long time. In case it decides to leave Afghanistan, the danger of terrorism and
religious extremism will immensely increase, adversely affecting the stability and security of the Central Asian region.

- India should provide all possible help to Central Asian states to fight extremist forces and not to allow them to gather strength; otherwise, the cross-border terrorism will put added pressure on India, prejudicial to its peace, security and integrity.

- India should favour governments of secular character in Central Asia irrespective of the fact whether it is Western type of democracy or a limited one.

- India has close relationship with the Northern Alliance dominated by Uzbeks and Tajiks, which fought Taliban in Afghanistan. India should maintain and further develop its relations with its leadership which may be helpful in future exigencies in Afghanistan and Central Asia.

- India should take advantage of Central Asian states multivector foreign and economic policy to seek cooperative investment in suitable sectors.

- Iran is a gateway to Central Asia, maintenance of cordial relations with it is essential for the development of trade with the Central Asian region. India has signed nuclear deal with the United States, thereby strengthening relations between the two countries. The United States relations with Iran are at the lowest ebb. India should resist any pressure from the United States, by its skilful diplomacy, that sabotage India’s relations with Iran.

- The power of a nation depends upon its economic, military and technological strength. Powerful India will be able to defend itself from terrorism and other security threats emanating from across the border more effectively.

India is comparatively a small player in Central Asia and would remain so in the near future. But it has certain strategic and economic interests in the region for which constructive engagement and cooperation should be India’s policy objective.