Impact of Establishment of Soviet Power in Central Asia:

The Soviet withdrawal from the war against Germany and their support of the liberation of the peoples of the East from alien colonial rule were aimed directly against British imperial interest. Soviet appeals to the peoples of the East, exhorting them to rise against alien imperialist rule, came at a time when the British policy towards Turkey and their harsh measures to suppress the Indian national movement had alienated a large section of the Indian population against them. The Hijrat movement of thousands of Indian Muslims spreading to Afghanistan and Soviet Central Asia came as a rude shock to the British. They now began to see the Bolshevik hand in every movement in India, which was already simmering with discontent. British anxiety, which made them desire the insulation of India from any Bolshevik influence, became more intense due to the Soviets launching a propaganda crusade against British imperialism in the East and also by their open support to Indian revolutionaries who operated from Soviet territory.

In British eyes the whole northern frontier region, comprising the North West Frontier province, Punjab and Kashmir including its frontier territories in Chitral, Hunza, Yasin, Gilgit, etc., were potential bases for spreading Bolshevism in India, as these areas were
geographically and culturally close to Central Asia. Consequently Kashmir and the area around its frontier, which commanded numerous routes from Central Asia into India, became the key in the new British strategy against the Soviet power in Central Asia. This meant increasing British control over the frontier dependencies like Kashmir, from which they could better monitor Soviet movements.

Numerous precautionary steps were taken, like closing the borders at Gilgit, Hunza and Chitral in order to prevent any possible entry of Bolshevik emissaries and Indian revolutionaries from Soviet Central Asia into India. Censorship of Bolshevik literature, imposing a ban on the import of rubles into India, curbing the export of essential commodities from India to Central Asia and the circulation of anti-Bolshevik propaganda literature amongst the Muslims in Kashmir, Gilgit, Hunza, Chitral, the North-West Frontier Province and Chinese Turkestan. Every activity of the Soviets and the Indian revolutionaries in Central Asia was closely monitored.

As a result of such measures, more than three million rubles were deposited by British authority in the Kashmir government treasuries at Leh and Srinagar in the first quarter of the year 1920, to curtail the Soviet
revolutionary activities in the British Indian soil.\textsuperscript{1} In addition, the movement of people from Chinese Turkestan into Kashmir via the Gilgit or Ladakh routes was restricted. The British officers at Gilgit and Kashgar worked jointly to apprehend Raja Mahendra Pratap while he was on his overland journey through the Pamirs. Although the Kashmir ruler cooperated with the British on all these measures, the British did not desist from undermining the Maharaja's authority in his frontier territories of Gilgit, Hunza, Chitral, etc. Even after the signing of the Anglo-Soviet Accord in 1921, British continued with their imperialist policy on the Kashmir frontier, though they continued to recognise Kashmir's more direct role there. Numerous defence projects, like the installation of wireless sets and air-landing facilities in Gilgit, Chitral, Hunza, Chilas, etc. and improvement of road and telephone communications, were launched in this areas.

What irked the British was Maharaja Hari Singh's sustained effort to exert his direct control over these frontier dependencies. The circumstance of Kashmir's agitation against the Dogra ruler, which took a violent turn in 1931, provided the British with a favourable

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1. \textit{Ladakh Trade Report for the year 1 April 1919 to 31 March 1920, op.cit.}
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opportunity to wrest direct administration of the Gilgit Agency from Maharaja Hari Singh in 1935, though they continued to recognise his sovereignty over this area. It was the British Commandant of the Gilgit Scouts, Major Brown, who hoisted Pakistan's flag in the Gilgit Agency soon after India became independent in 1947.

Thus Kashmir played significant role in India's relations with Central Asia on account of its geographical proximity and cultural affinities with the region. Kashmir assumed a new importance in the context of the Anglo-Russian rivalry over Central Asia. The shadow of this rivalry continued to lurk even after the establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia. Anglo-Russian rivalry, which had lost intensity with the conclusion of the 1907 Convention and in the face of the emergence of a common threat from Germany, was again revived in the wake of the October revolution in Russia. The British felt tempted to interfere in Central Asia owing to the chaotic conditions of civil war there. The Soviet regime also tried to embarrass the British by giving encouragement to anti-British activities of Indian revolutionaries, which in turn resulted in a further tightening of the British stranglehold over Kashmir and its frontier dependencies.
The emergence of an independent India in 1947 alone terminated the Anglo-Russian tug of war in this strategic region. Independent India freed herself from the old hangovers of British imperialist policy in Central Asia and established close friendly relations with the Soviet Union.

Soviet-India Relations in the Post-Colonial Period:

The four decade of special relationship between India and the USSR had been motivated by the Soviet desire to have a useful ally against western imperialism. The Soviets also looked upon India's geographical location as a counter weight against communist China. During India's nationalist movements and also after independence first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's pro-socialist policy and India's leading role in the Non-aligned movement brought India as a close trading and military partner of Soviet Union. At all levels India enjoyed a place of pre-eminence in their consciousness not only because of long historic ties and common heritage, but especially due to their contemporary factors, namely, India's close friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union of which Central Asia was a part for the last four decades. During that period, India's special concern for the Asian republics was indicated with fact that Jawaharlal Nehru had invited them as participants in the Asian Relations Conference in March-April 1947, New
Delhi, and then through clearly articulation in his speeches during his very first visit to the Soviet Union and Central Asia in June 1955. Timely military support was extended to India during 1971 war with Pakistan resulting in the then East Pakistan emerging as an independent country, 'Bangladesh'. Soon after the war in 1971 Mrs Indira Gandhi, then Prime Minister of India, went for a 25 years agreement on arms and military cooperation with the Soviet Union, known as the Indo-Soviet treaty of 1971. Since 1947 the end of the colonial world also changed the international environment. The raising of the banner of non-alignment had signified India's sovereignty in foreign policy, its determination to steer clear of superpower blocks and to judge issues on their merit. Indian analysts regard the end of the bipolarism and cold war as a vindication of non-alignment, which to Indian meant simply the maximising of diplomatic options, and as such continues to have relevance in a world in which there is only one superpower.

Soviet Union's policy makers welcomed the socio-


3. Muchkund Dubey, "India's foreign policy in the evolving global order", International studies, (New Delhi) special issue on India's foreign policy, 30.2.1993, pp. 17-29.
political environment after India proclaimed itself a Republic in 1950. Both being multinational democratic states, committed to peace, India's approach to solving internal problems had impact on Soviet leaders, who quite often in their official communication to third world countries pointed out that complex ethnic and religious problems were best settled through political dialogue. India's efforts to balance different interests, linguistic and religious groups, and Nehru's motto, "Unity in diversity", had become a formula for Soviet Union and Russian people. Soviet Union unswervingly supported India's stance on Kashmir, and was firm in its rejection of a plebiscite on the future of Kashmir.

Relation since 1985:

After 1985 political changes in Soviet Union created doubts in India about arms supplies as some 70 percent of India's military imports came from the USSR. India was worried that Soviet economic dependence on the west would affect its reliability as a military supplier. America's anxiety about control of missiles and pressure on USSR


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resulted in April 1987 Missile Technical Control Regime (MTCR). As MTCR was not aimed at preventing peaceful space ventures, Soviet Union assured India that it would supply the cryogenic rocket engines. In 1991 the USSR had promised India $250 million worth of cryogenic engines, used to launch communications satellites. In response Washington imposed sale and technology transfer sanctions on Russia and, insisted that the cryogenic engine technology was capable of being used for military purposes, and prohibited its sale to India. In March 1992, Moscow offered India nuclear-powered submarines, MIG-31 aircraft and SU-28 fighter bombers to counter the sale of French Mirages and US F-16s to Pakistan. In May 1992 the Russian Deputy Prime Minister, Gennady Burbulis, visited India and affirmed that Russia would continue defence supplies, but would demand one-tenth of the payment in advance. Under an agreement signed in September 1992 India received a credit to buy $830 million worth of special equipment, and in June 1994 Russia made known its readiness to give India credits to buy SU-30 fighters and a production license for the aeroplanes.6 Defence agreement signed during former Indian Prime Minister Rao's visit to Moscow ensured the stabilization of Indo-Russian military relations in the post-Soviet era.

Russia promised to help India to upgrade its 170 MIG aircraft to keep them combat worth well into the next century.\(^7\)

In July 1994 New Delhi and Moscow also agreed that Indian and Russian firms will set up a joint-venture company, Indo-Russian Aviation Private Ltd., in India which will have an equity base of $400 million and will manufacture spare parts for military aircraft of Russian origin. India will thus become the first country outside Russia to offer maintenance facilities to Russian aircraft. Such ventures will be based on commercial considerations rather than political compulsion. India had manufactured and maintained aircraft of Soviet origin for many years through licensing arrangements, but the creation of an Indo-Russian company with equal equity participation will offer profits to both countries. Also, Malaysian pilots will be trained in India to fly the MIG 29 supplied to the Malaysian air force under an agreement signed between Russia and Malaysia in June 1994.\(^8\) Nevertheless, New Delhi feels it can no longer rely on Moscow for military equipment. India is therefore seeking arms from other countries.

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8. Summary of World Broadcasts (SWB) SU/2059/S1, 28 July 1994; also Hindu Weekly, 27 February'93, p.3.
including Britain and France. Also, despite sharp differences on Kashmir, it is moving closer to the United States militarily, and in 1992 and 1993 the Indian and American navies conducted joint exercises.⁹

The issue of Indian payments for Russian arms created some friction in the Indo-Russian economic relationship. The Central issue was the fixing of a new exchange rate between Soviet Union for bilateral trade, and the planning of imports and exports and bilateral balance. India paid the former Soviet Union in rupees, which suited both countries as neither then had a convertible currency. For India this was advantageous as it helped save its scarce foreign exchange reserves. But neither the former USSR nor Russia now is able to utilize Indian rupees to buy Indian imports, and almost half the debt remains in Indian banks unpaid.¹⁰

Goodwill alone cannot forge mutually advantageous economic ties. Trade between Russia and India almost collapsed in 1991-92 due to arguments over the rupee-rouble exchange rate.


exchange rate and the amount India owed Russia as the successor state to the USSR. Russia claimed India owed it $16 billion while India claimed it owed $12 billion. During Yeltsin's visit to New Delhi in January 1993, the two sides agreed that 63 percent of the debt would be repaid over the next 12 years at an interest rate of 2.4 percent using the exchange rate of 1 rouble to 19.9 rupees, which existed on January 1990. This was expected to reduce India's debt by some 30 percent, but Indian commentators criticized the government for agreeing to this rate as the rupee was then a worth 19 roubles in the exchange market. The remaining 37 percent of the principal would be repaid over 45 years with no interest at the January 1992 exchange rate of 1 rouble for 3.1 rupees. Repayment of the debt will be in Indian goods.11

India and Russia have also discussed how the rupee funds are to be used. A large proportion will be used to import Indian consumer goods, while some will be spent on joint-ventures in Russia and India. Russia will contribute to the equity of joint-ventures to be set up in India, and this will be financed out of the rupee funds. The decision

to invest in equity capital seems to be motivated by the expectation of high returns on the investment. The funds will be utilized to set up new enterprise, modernize existing units and develop infrastructure. Russia will offer help in building hydroelectric and nuclear power stations in India. For its part, India will participate in a large construction project to expand the Novrossiysk seaport. The first of the joint-ventures have already taken off: in Moscow over 30 joint-ventures are operating, covering leather goods, computer hardware engineering and plastic etc. The State Bank of India and Roseximbank will collaborate in setting up a joint bank. In August 1994 India and Russia signed a new protocol which identified new areas of collaboration, including the aluminium, zinc and copper industries. Bilateral trade in iron and steel will increase, and the two countries will cooperate in carrying out research and development in ferrous metallurgy.

Trade between the two countries continues to be bogged down in difficulties. India faces strong competition from more industrialized countries, which have been quicker to explore possibilities of new openings in the Russian market.

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Indian businessmen complain about fast-changing laws and banking and finance bottlenecks. The sum of all these problems is that India has lost ground in Russia. Some 2 percent of the Soviet Union's trade was with India, in 1993 only 1.04 percent of Russia's trade was with India. In contrast, in 1993, 5 percent of Russia's trade was with Japan and the United States; 5.4 percent with Italy; 10.6 percent with China, and 17.7 percent with Germany.14

Central Asia and India in the post-Soviet era:

History confirms the long traditional interaction between India and Central Asia. A study of those elements in history is therefore indispensable to an understanding of contemporary relations between Central Asia and the people of India. Direct contacts over many centuries between the two civilizations had left mutual imprints on every aspect of their lives. Many of these, of course, demonstrate at all levels that they have by no means been a one-way process.

From pre-historic times to the modern, the political stability and uncertainties and overall development in Central Asia, as well as development in the Indian

subcontinent inevitably influenced each other's geopolitical, geo-cultural and geo-economic destinies.

The historical and cultural antiquities of India confirm that Central Asia had been the original home of the early settlers in India and to a greater degree the peopling of India was determined by the streams of migrations that originated from Central Asia. The political history of India is all the more an evidence of the frequent rise and growth of Kingdoms in India as a result of the partial interactions between Central Asia and India. Under the Kushans, the impact of India on Central Asia had been the most profound one and produced epoch-making results later on. It was responsible for introducing the historical identity in Central Asia.

It was not Buddhism alone but also Indian thought, literature, languages, medicine and other forms of material culture that got inevitable spread over and transformed the cultural landscape of the vast Central Asian steppe land, including Chinese Turkistan. Trade and commerce also uninterruptedly linked India and Central Asia throughout history. Several Kharosthi and Brahmi script inscriptions unearthed at Wardak and Qunduz in Afghanistan, Fayez Tepe and Kara Tepe near Termez in Tajikistan, Dalverzin in Uzbekistan clearly manifest the impact of Indian literature.
and art in Central Asia in the Tarim basin. Many experts on Central Asia talk about this pre-Islamic identity of Central Asia - the depth and extent of this affecting the contemporary political dynamics of Central Asia is a matter that needs to be examined in detail. From Central Asia, India also witnessed a series of invasions of nomadic hordes. The swarming hordes of Greeks and Sakas invaded India through Central Asia.

India's perceptions and consciousness of the importance of the vast territory lying north-west of India are clearly evident from a number of hymns of the Rigveda and Adharvaveda, the Buddhist Jatakas and more explicitly from Kautilya's Arthasastra. In the aftermath of Central Asian Islamisation by the Arabs in the 7th century A.D., regular interaction between Central Asia and India continued. The invasion of India from Central Asia which took place in the 11th century was vital for the future history of India. Thereafter, a trend of foreign invasions set in that dominated India's political history for 300 years. During this period, under the Mughal empire, however, while adhering to their ideals and religion, the Mughals adopted the indigenous Indian culture. The end result of the Mughal period was the growth of an Indo-Islamic culture, conditioned by the spatial environment of the Indian subcontinent.
As a result of the British imperialism in India and the Russian expansion into Central Asia and the subsequent Anglo-Russian rivalry, what come to be known as the "great game", led to the cessation of direct contacts between Central Asia and India. However, trade and commercial links continued with varying degrees from time to time, depending on the political developments in the regions under consideration.

In the post-independence period since 1947, Indo-Central Asian lost linkages were re-established in the spirit of the Indo-Soviet relationship. In fact, Central Asian socio-economic achievements have been a source of inspiration for Indian leaders and planners for many decades, when the world had forgotten about Central Asia. In a span of 40 years, Indo-Central Asian relations developed into a sound footing. In all spheres, such as economics, trade, commerce, science and technological, cultural and spiritual spheres, India and the Central Asian republics had reached a high level of relations.

During the Soviet period, especially after the signing of the Indo-Soviet treaty in 1971, cultural exchange between
India and Central Asia increase.\textsuperscript{15} And Indian cultural life and films enjoyed considerable popularity in the Central Asian republics\textsuperscript{16} What did these contacts translate into when Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan emerged as independent states in August 1991?

Several factors must be taken into account. First, it is clear that the newly independent Central Asian republics will accord Russia top priority. They will remain economically and militarily dependent on Russia for the foreseeable future due to the economic structure inherited from the former USSR. The presence of Russian minorities in all the republics will engage Russia's interest in inter-ethnic issues. Russia's involvement in the civil war in Tajikistan, welcomed by the other Central Asian states, ensures Russia's military presence in the region. None of


\textsuperscript{16} During a team of journalist's visit to Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara in 1985, they met Uzbeks who told them that although they had never visited India, they felt culturally close to it. One of them said he was sure he would feel at home in India. When asked why they felt an affinity to India and not to Pakistan or Iran as these countries had largely muslim populations, they replied that these countries were hostile to the USSR, while India was a friend. At the same time they resented Russian domination, and displayed a certain disdain for Russian culture. Indian culture, then, seemed to offer them a via media between identifying with hostile 'Islamic' countries, and a Russian culture from which they felt alienated even if they could not quite specify why.
the Central Asian republics shares a border with India. The nearest, Tajikistan, is separated from Pakistan-occupied Kashmir by the Wakhan corridor. There are no overland trade routes between India and Central Asia. If they ever come into existence they will pass through Afghanistan and India's access to them will then hinge on its relations with Afghanistan and Pakistan. There are few air links between India and Central Asia, but exports by air would be less competitive.

What, then, can India and Central Asia offer each other? Military equipment was India's major import from the former USSR, and it was manufactured in what are now Russia and Ukraine. Central Asia was the poorest part of the USSR. The Central Asian States have not been enriched by independence and would find it difficult to survive without subsides from Moscow. These depend to a considerable extent on Russia's goodwill. Central Asia therefore cannot be a replacement for India's Soviet market. Economic links between India and the Central Asian states have had to be built up from scratch. This has been a difficult process. Indian investors are hampered by transport problems and the absence of reliable banking facilities. They have also experienced difficulty in
receiving payments and repatriating money.¹⁷

Yet India cannot ignore the newly independent Central Asian republics, if only because it must come to terms with new international and geopolitical realities. Establishing good relations with them is a matter of pragmatism as India's neighbours and rivals, Pakistan and China, are interested in the region. Afghanistan's involvement in the war in Tajikistan also enhances India's interest in Central Asia, for any turbulence in Afghanistan and Tajikistan could adversely affect Kashmir. The border between Afghanistan and Tajikistan is porous, and New Delhi is worried about the flow of arms from these war-torn areas into Kashmir.

Russia and India share a fear of Islamic revivalism in Central Asia and each regards the other as a counterpart to the influence of "Islamic" Middle Eastern Countries. Russia and India desire stability in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. The civil war in Tajikistan was discussed by the then Russian Defence Minister, General Pavel Grachev and Sharad Pawar (then Defence Minister of India) in September 1992, and again by the then India's Prime Ministers Narasimha Rao and Yeltsin in January 1993 and June 1994. Russia would like India to participate in UN sponsored talks on.

Tajikistan, along with Pakistan and Iran. India is unenthusiastic about the idea because it feels that the Tajiks regard all participating countries except Russia as mere observers.\(^{18}\)

Since August 1991, India has also been concerned to counter the influence of its arch-rival, Pakistan, in Central Asia.\(^{19}\) Islamabad boasted that its close links with Central Asia would enable Pakistan to acquire strategic depth in any future war against India. The prospect led some Indians to conjure up visions of India as a Hindu Island, marooned in a Muslim sea. But the government of India realizes that Pakistan will not make much headway in Central Asia by exploiting religion.\(^{20}\)

The leaders of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan are secular and all are former communists. Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov's Haj to Mecca in 1992 has not stopped him from persecuting real or

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imagined "Islamic" opponents at home. Central Asia's rulers are wary of Pakistan because of its support for the Mujahedd in the Afghan civil war. Moreover, Pakistan is not the only player in Central Asia. Several Middle Eastern Countries, including Turkey, Israel and Iran, are vying for influence in the region and are undercutting rather than supporting one another.21

Nevertheless, Pakistan is doing its best to enhance its influence in the area. There has been an exchange of visits by religious luminaries from Pakistan and the Central Asian States. Islamic organizations in Pakistan have made donations for promoting religious education and building mosques. Pakistan is also interested in new road and air links with Central Asia. It seeks communication by road to Uzbekistan via Kabul, and to Kazakhstan via Kashgar in China.22 But its hopes come up against the reality that the landlocked states of Central Asia can only gain access to Pakistan through Afghanistan, and this will be impossible as long as the Afghan civil war lasts. Pakistan is also developing economic ties with the region, especially trade


in raw materials and manufactured goods.\textsuperscript{23} It has opened air links with the Central Asian capitals. Pakistan also anticipates obtaining supplies of power through gas and electric grid schemes or through oil supplies from Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. It has offered assistance in developing banking, insurance and stock markets, and envisages that Central Asia will be a market for its textiles and foodstuffs. Knowing that the Central Asian states would like to industrialize, it has offered help in increasing their capacity to produce cotton yarn and textiles.\textsuperscript{24}

India regards economic cooperation as the best way to counter Pakistan's influence in Central Asia.\textsuperscript{25} India has offered the Central Asian republics training in management, consultancy, and construction ventures. Air and consular links existed between New Delhi and Tashkent well before the collapse of the Soviet Union, so it is not surprising that it was relatively easy for India to focus on Uzbekistan after 1991. India offered credits of $10 million to Uzbekistan in 1992 and 1993 and during former Prime Minister

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{23} Pakistan Times Weekly, 3 January, 7 February, 25 July 1992, pp. 8, 12, 10 respectively.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Under the Soviet regime, all raw cotton was processed in European part of Soviet union, mainly Russia.
\item \textsuperscript{25} Economic Times, 14 July 1994.
\end{itemize}

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Rao's visit to Tashkent in May 1992 India and Uzbekistan signed a treaty on the principles of inter-state relations and bilateral cooperation. This was similar to the Indo-Russian treaty of January 1993, and made no reference to military cooperation. Both countries expressed the desire to cooperate in fighting terrorism, drug trafficking, and extremist ideologies. In expressing common commitment in principle India and Uzbekistan were probably referring to different countries: India to Pakistan's involvement in Kashmir; Uzbekistan to Afghanistan's involvement in the Tajik civil war. The Indian and Uzbek Governments are encouraging Indian business to invest in Uzbekistan. Leading Indian companies, including Tatas, are involved in hotel construction projects in Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara. India will import nonferrous metals, fertilizers and raw cotton from Uzbekistan and it hopes to find in turn a ready market for its machinery and consumer goods, including leather products, tea and coffee.

Kazakhstan has significance for India as the sole nuclear power in Central Asia, one that shares a broader with, and is fast developing commercial links with, India's rival China. During President Nursultan Nazarbayev's visit


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to New Delhi in February 1992, five agreements were signed. Kazakhstan sought India's cooperation in developing its textile and hotel construction industries. When Rao visited Almaty in May 1993, Kazakhstan invited India to participate in its space programme at the Baikonur cosmodrome. India offered Kazakhstan credits of $10 million in 1992 and 1993. Following a visit to Kazakhstan in June 1994 by Salman Khurshid, the then Indian Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, it was agreed that trade between the two countries should be increased. To help Indian business to overcome problems of transportation, New Delhi has been considering subsidizing weekly flights to Tashkent and Almaty.

Under an agreement signed in April 1992, India and Turkmenistan will cooperate in several fields including natural gas extraction, chemicals, processing of June 1994 India offered Tajikistan a ten-year loan worth $5 million.

Of all the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) states, Russia is likely to be India's most important


trading partner and supplier of weaponry. But given the economic dependence of both countries on the West and Russia's proximity to, and fast-expanding trade with, the Asia-Pacific region, it is unlikely that India and Russia will rank very high in each other's priorities. The democratic character of both states is not likely to change this or create a shared strategic outlook. Both are concerned about Islamic revivalism in Central Asia; both would like to see an early end to the war in Tajikistan; each regards the other as a stabilizing secular influence in Central Asia. Yet all this is not enough to foster common strategic or diplomatic objectives in the long run.

Economic ties between India and the five Central Asian states have got off to a slow start and will develop gradually. India's main aim is to prevent Central Asia from becoming a springboard for the activities of hostile countries and it must contend with Pakistan's efforts to enhance its influence in the region. Given India's own large Muslim population, and the continuing secessionist movement in Kashmir, any increase in the activities of countries whose foreign policies have an "Islamic" leitmotiv would be of concern to India. But New Delhi has realized that religious fundamentalism is a distant prospect in Central Asia. Also, as several Middle Eastern countries are jostling for influence in the region, Pakistan will find
itself being undercut rather than helped by them. New Delhi reckons that economic cooperation will give India its easiest entree into Central Asia. For the moment, India must live with the fact that Russia, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan remain areas of political, economic and diplomatic uncertainty, as they find their feet in the post-Cold War World.

The disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union has been unprecedented and unparalleled in the history of the modern nation-state system. The impact of such a significant event would be inevitably a matter of serious concern for international peace and stability. The subsequent reemergence of Central Asia on the scene of world politics is one that immediately becomes a topic of prime concern for the countries which have geographical proximity with the region. Attention to the developments in Central Asia is all the more important because of the possibility of unleashing of regional conflicts stemming from a variety of dynamics in the region.

A number of scenarios have been envisaged for Central Asia during and after the final breakdown of the Soviet Union. Some of the these, ignore the historical developments and realities. One of the obvious scenarios commonly foreseen for Central Asia is that of the Islamic
fundamentalists taking over to form an Islamic bloc for the 55 Million Muslim population of Central Asia. Some, however, speculated that the region would offer brighter prospects for a coherent Turkistan nationhood based on common Turkic origin. The probability of this scenario was seen as brighter than the evolution of Indian statehood in the post-colonial period. Many others came to the conclusion that Central Asia will become a natural extension of the Middle East. There were others who envisaged further Balkanisation of Central Asia into 35 small nationalities along diverse political aspirations and finally a new historical community of people with an overwhelming Russian element embedded in it and relegating their own culture to the status of folklore. Finally the analysts of contemporary development have been drawing scenarios of the outside powers with their varying models which would shape the future of Central Asian States. 30 There is no doubt that Islam is an important element of Central Asian identity but it is more than true that the five Central Asian states have re-emerged on the scene as a result of the Soviet collapse rather than due to resurgent Islam or nationalism. Nationalistic assertion was not even at par with the Baltics republics who even shared some Slavic

affinity with the Russians. In fact, independence was thrust on the Central Asian States. Even before the separation and the simmering discontent among the Central Asians vis-a-vis, the Soviets was more political, economic, cultural (anti-Russian culture) in nature rather than religious or ideological. 31 A century or more of living together in single country has made separation all the more difficult. The demographic composition is such that the strongest successor nationality finds itself a minority in most of the other states. 32

The ongoing state formation in Central Asia is confronted with polymorphous antagonisms with, within, and between the states with varying degrees of regime, tribal, ethnic to religious and territorial differences influencing the process. In the case of Central Asia, its internal contradictions are further complicated by the vacuum created by the Soviet retreat. Already several outside interests have spelled out their own concepts ranging from the geo-political model of Turkey to the religious mission of Iran, and so on and so forth. However, none of the outside


actors have so far made any major breakthrough in gaining substantial influence in this vast territory.

One of the instant assessments of the situation in Central Asia in the aftermath of the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union was strongly determined by the intense fixation with Islamic factors which could unify Central Asia into a cohesive organic whole. This was shared by both the Islamic and Western worlds. Obviously such perceptions were born out of the developments in Iran and the victory of the Mujahideen in Afghanistan, which are adjacent to Central Asia, rather than based on real assessments of ground realities. West viewed this perception in an alarmist manner, in the fear of a spreading Islamic fundamentalism.

In the changed context in the post-Soviet period, India has an edge over all the neighbouring countries, in terms of understanding the situation that was to follow immediately after the collapse of the Soviet structure. It was in this spirit and appreciation gained through experience over time that India and the Central Asian States opened new chapters of inter-state relations which were continuity in spirit and fresh in content. All the heads of states paid their visits to New Delhi and shared perceptions
on various international and bilateral matters with the India leaders.

There were several agendas before the Indian decision-makers which needed to be debated upon while formulating new policies toward the newly emerging Central Asian States. These included:

1. India's traditional economic interest in the region;
2. Geo-political concerns;
3. The fear of Islamic fundamentalism;
4. The Pakistan factor;

India's economic concerns have been of foremost importance while re-establishing a new workable relationship with these states. India had a thriving trade with Central Asia covered under the Indo-Soviet trade agreement, and safeguarding of these interactions in the field of trade and commerce was vital for laying the new foundation of bilateral relations with the Central Asia states. Much before the collapse of the former Soviet Union, India had already gone in for joint-ventures in these republics.

Secondly, India's concern in Central Asia stems from the larger changing political environment around its immediate neighbourhood. The sudden emergence of new states with muslim population and fear of these states forming Islamic alliances constitute an important factor.
The third important consideration is the growing perception of Islamic threat, a phenomenon perceived as a challenge to the liberal-democratic world in the post-Cold War period. This perception is primarily a Western one but also shared in the opinion of certain groups in India. It was US Senator Larry Pressler who cautioned India on the danger of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia, sponsored by Pakistan. The point was valid and was articulated as a reality in view of Pakistan's involvement in Afghanistan and in India's Jammu and Kashmir State. Iran's intention in this case was also in the back of these concerned Indian minds. However, this perception was not bought by many Indians as a matter of great concern, at least not by the policy-makers. Instead, New Delhi went ahead with its own package based on the principles of secularism and democracy in forging new ties with the Central Asian States. Several analysts on the subject attributed the changing phenomenon in Central Asia to cultural nationalism rather than Islamic revivalism. Such a perception proved correct when all the Central Asian heads of state visited India and totally ruled out the possibility of these states moving in the direction of an Islamic theocratic state.33

The Pakistan factor in Central Asia constitute a matter of concern for India. Among other things, Indian apprehensions include the possibility of Pakistan taking advantage of the fluid situation in Central Asia. It is important to note that the Indian apprehension in this respect was born out of Pakistan's ambition to gain more territorial influence to realise its "strategic depth" vis-a-vis India. The nuclear proliferation issue also is a subject of serious concern for India.

Central Asia is not only Central to Asia but also central to Eurasian intersection and interface between Europe and Asia. Central Asia has all the potential to become the Centre of conflict and the implications of such conflicts could extend from West to East Asia and from Europe to South Asia. The situation in Central Asia is very fragile today. There is a fear of unrest among nationalities. The formation of the CIS as a post-Soviet structure has so far helped in avoiding the negative consequences of the Soviet collapse, particularly forestalling the inevitable civil war which could have afflicted the entire territory of Central Asia. The role of the CIS has already contained the crisis in Tajikistan. These is need for Russia to reorient itself to retain closer strategic ties with the Central Asian states. Any outside
intervention would trigger a chain reaction among the other regional powers and drag them in to the conflict too.

The risk of nuclear proliferation is a matter of greater concern for India for it threatens the very survival of India as a nation state. The possibility of the Central Asian states producing weapons or making their skills available to other nations in the region is a concern directly affecting India.

Central Asia will be marked with extreme political fluidity for a long time to come. Economics issues, ethnic relations, territorial problems and power struggle, within and between the states are likely to dominate the future political agenda of the new Central Asian states. The chances of outside powers intervening in such conflicts will further enhance the intensity of instability. With the present level of disparity in their stages of economic and political development, approaches to deal with such issues will be a difficult task.

Russian foreign policy behaviour, its relations with these states and the rights and security of the 10 million Russian population in Central Asian states, will be some of the determining factors in the future scenario of Central Asian Politics. Countries such as Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia will try to promote their
respective versions of Islam among the 55 million Central Asian population. They will be interested in enlisting the Central Asian states on the side of the Muslim world, on the other hand the western and liberal democratic countries want those states to be included as member of international political forums and their active participation.

Although Central Asian states are not likely to be in favour of the fundamentalist form of Islam, the growth of fundamentalist forces will influence significantly the domestic and foreign policies of most Central Asian states. The present leaders of the Central Asian states are likely to succeed in their pragmatic approach in both domestic and foreign relations to overcome the immediate economic crisis, provided they are backed by assistance from outside, particularly from the West, from Russia, East Asia and India.

Central Asia will remain a prime concern of Indian foreign policy in the years to come. India's interest in the region is not confined to the economic sphere alone, security and strategic considerations will assume far more importance in the future. India's interest would be served if Central Asia becomes a buffer zone between various interested powers. However, the creation of a common security structure under the Russian military command will
be most desirable. No matter how much the external powers like Iran, Turkey and Pakistan may have their own stakes, ultimately it would be only Russia which would act as a balancing force in Central Asia.

India's greatest interest is to ensure stability and peace in the region. For that, India should be willing to cooperate through diplomatic means with other states, especially Russia and China. In the evolutionary phase of their nation-building process, it would be important for Russia and India to analyse the possible cultural and geo-political relationship in the region, for it may have a far reaching and unpredictable impact on both India and Russia. Both Russia and India could jointly collaborate in moderating any negative trends in the region that will threaten security interests of both.

**Economic Situation in Central Asia :**

It is an acknowledged fact that the socio-economic development of Soviet Central Asia had proceeded much ahead of its neighbouring countries like Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. This had been possible due to the Soviet policy of eliminating age-old backwardness and socio-economic inequality in Central Asia. As a result of huge capital investments made in the agricultural and industrial sectors, Central Asia was transformed into an advanced region. The
most powerful irrigation and hydel-power complexes were built in the region by bringing millions of hectares of desert and semi-desert land under cultivation and generating enough power to meet the demand of newly built industries. Apart from being the main supplier of cotton in the former USSR, industrial growth in Central Asia has also been quite impressive.

While the increase of industrial production between 1940 and 1983 was 23 times for USSR as a whole, for Uzbekistan it was reported to be 19 times, for Kirghizia 42 times, for Tajikistan 20 times, for Turkmenia 12 times and for Kazakhstan 35 times. Simultaneously, the Soviets pursued a policy of educational equalisation of various ethnic groups and gave special preference to non-Russian students in matters of admission, grading and even lowering of educational requirements with an object of creating sufficient cadres of scientists, doctors, engineers and managers locally. This changed the social structure of Central Asia radically.


Such a policy of preference and the existence of strong family bonds, persistence of old traditions and an open show of intra-ethnic solidarity among the Central Asians created a situation in which nepotism and opportunism pervaded the whole setup. The problem got aggravated due to the prevalence of corruption, abuse of office, favouritism in selection of personnel, squandering of public funds for productive purposes, lethargy and inefficiency which began to eat up the vitals of the socio-economic fabric. The corrupt ruling elite manipulated the figures in industrial and agricultural production. The padding of cotton output figures became a widespread phenomenon in Central Asia, with the result that there were serious disproportions between investment in the economy and actual production rates. Average industrial production in Kirghizia and Tajikistan declined from 10.8 percent and 9.1 percent in the period 1961-65 to just 4.9 percent and 3 percent in 1986 respectively.36 Similarly agricultural production in Tajikistan went down from 7.3 percent to 3.7 percent during the same period. This economic decline resulted in shortages and fall in standard of living of the people. This when coupled with the problem of mismanagement led to social tensions.

In Central Asia all the ills of the prevailing economic situation began to be ascribed to the faulty centralised Soviet administrative control system. The Soviet emphasis on cotton production is being seen as a negative impact of the command system of economic management. Local elites and intelligentsia began to voice their serious concern about the problem of the Aral sea, contamination of environment and other construction or industrial projects which are supposed to pose a threat to local ecology. The over representation of Russian professionals and technocrats in industry, transport and communication sectors in urban areas has been a source of discomfiture to the local people. This factor is held responsible for widening the gulf between the city and village, thereby alienating the Russians from the local Central Asian Population.

Of late the Central Asian leadership has been openly criticising what they describe as disproportionate economic development of Central Asia as compared to other republics. The Turkmen President, S. Niyazov ascribed the backwardness of Turkmenistan to the outright export of its raw materials like oil, gas, cotton etc. to other republics. He pointed out that only 3 percent of its cotton produce was being processed locally, whereas the rest was being exported for
use in textile industries in other republics.\(^{37}\) He explained that due to excessive emphasis on cotton cultivation, Turkmenia suffered severe shortages in meat, milk and others foodstuffs, thereby creating basic social problems in that republic. Similar views were aired by the Uzbek President, Karimov, in an interview telecast on the Soviet television on 29 May 1991. Karimov was critical of the one-sidedness of the Soviet economic system which treated Central Asia as a mere supplier of raw materials.\(^{38}\) He referred in particular to the export of 91 percent of cotton produced in Uzbekistan to other republics, at the cost of its own food production. Former Tajik President, Makhkamov stated on 18 July 1991 that 90 percent cotton was being exported from Tajikistan. He stressed the need to create an industrial infrastructure for processing at least 30 percent of its cotton produce locally so that thousands of jobs could be created.\(^{39}\)

When the Soviet President Gorbachev visited Alma ata on 30 May 1991, the Kazakh president, Nazarbaev placed before him the acute problems caused due to disruption in essential supplies to Kazakhstan. Nazabayev pleaded, "We

\(^{37}\) Izvestiya 19 April, 1989.

\(^{38}\) Summary of World Broadcasts SU/1088, 3 June 1991.

were told to cut coal, mine ore and smelt metal and do not worry about the rest; everything that is needed will be brought to Kazakhstan from other places. Now with the breaking up of previous economic ties and disruption of supplies, Kazakhstan and all Central Asian republics find themselves in a difficult situation. From consumer goods to technological equipment and budget resources we have to beg for all this now.\textsuperscript{40} More recently on 16 September 1991 then Turkmen president expressed his concern over the breakdown of inter-republican economic links and he threatened to sell its cotton, oil and gas in the world market if Turkmenistan did not get good grains.\textsuperscript{41}

Due to the disruption in the Soviet political and economic system and also due to the attitude of Yeltsin, the president of the Russian federation, Central Asian republics had been apprehending a drastic cut in their grants from the union budget which was dependent on heavy contributions from RSFSR (Russia). After independence the Central Asian republics got busy in evolving ways and means of creating a common Central Asian market and also to find external markets for their rich oil, gas, mineral and other resources. In order to get remunerative prices and to

\textsuperscript{40} SWB, SU/1132, 25 July 1991.

\textsuperscript{41} Cited in \textit{Times of India}, 17 September 1991.
create an appropriate industrial infrastructure for processing the mineral and agricultural resources, all the Central Asian republics intensified the process of privatisation of their economy by opening it to other republican and foreign markets. In Uzbekistan a universal commodity exchange has been formed to establish direct contacts with CIS and foreign partners, to attract foreign capital and to create conditions for the entry of Uzbekistan into the world economy.42 A law passed by the Uzbek parliament, which permits all types of foreign economic activities including banking operations, tourism and cultural cooperation, came into force in Uzbekistan on 7 July 1991.43 Kazakhstan has set up two free economic zones to facilitate investment by foreign companies in modernizing its coal mining industry and processing of manganese. Kazak President, Nazarbayaev, is also reported to be considering the proposal of US Chevron Consortium for joint development of Tangis petroleum and gas deposits.44 Similarly, Turkmenia has entered into an agreement with the Italian firm Technipetrol (TPL) which would build a combine for production of cotton fabrics near Ashkabad and also a

44. Robochaya Tribune, 6 July 1991.
complex for production of polyethylene from local natural
gas reserves. Both projects are estimated to be worth
800 million dollars.

In short, Central Asia is gradually opening its economy
to foreign investment. The idea is to create an industrial
base. But cautious and pragmatic approach is being adopted.
Formation of a Regional Council of Central Asia and
Kazakhstan to develop close economic, scientific and
cultural cooperation between these republics is the first
step towards the creation of a common Central Asian market.
Central Asian republics hope to exploit the newly acquired
control over their mineral, agricultural and other
resources to their advantage.

The Central Asian response to recent revolutionary
changes in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet
union will be determined by historico-cultural peculiarity,
distinct socio-political behaviour of its people, economic
linkages and extent of external influences. One cannot
ignore the ground reality that nationalism and Islam have
gained substantial strength. The process of change in
Central Asia had actually begun much earlier than the actual
dismantling of Soviet power and this process began to get

accelerated as a result of these developments. The Central Asian ruling elite which owed allegiance to the ruling communist party switched sides and formed new political platforms in order to survive the tide. In this context it will be relevant to record that as early as on 29th May 1991 Uzbek president Islam Karimov while appearing on Soviet television launched a scathing attack on Soviet collective policy towards Muslims. He alleged, everything was banned, religion persecuted, mosques were pulled down, everything that was deeply national was suppressed, mocked and discredited. Now president Karimov claims he drew strength from his identification with the Islamic people and their aspiration.46

Karimov's attitude reflects the general tendency among the ruling elite in Central Asia to cover up their own failures by putting the entire blame on the Soviet policies. In this manner, the present Central Asian leadership is expected to continue to dominate the social, political and economic life for some time, at least till they fail to deliver the goods. Existence of strong regional linkages and clan loyalties will enable them to remain power. Central Asian leadership would prefer to proceed slowly and cautiously. They would like to be part of the present

transitional arrangement till they are able build a self-sufficient economic structure at least at the common Central Asian level if not at individual republican level.

Since the emergence of the modern nation state, the disintegration of the USSR is the greatest challenge to the territorial integrity and even the very existence of multiethnic states in Asia and Africa as well as in Europe. The example of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia demonstrates that today it is possible to destroy any state of this type (e.g. with multi-ethnic composition of the population) if the secessionist forces proclaim their right of self-determination.

The events in the former USSR stimulated a further dogmatisation of the right of self-determination in Asian countries, canonisation of its interpretations as the right of succession. The claim for self-determination is not only raised by large national or ethnic units but also by minor and even irrelevant groups, and by emigrant ethnic groups too.

Important in the context of consequences of the disintegration of the USSR are the new problems which may emerge from the appearance of the post-Soviet successor states in the international arena. After the main confrontation with Russia lost its prominence, not only the
contradiction between the successor states in different fields will grow and reach the level of collision but also the legacy from the past in their relations with other Asian countries will come to the surface. The relations of Armenia vis-a-vis Turkey, between Azerbaijan and Iran, Tajikistan and Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and China are not without complications and may lead to the emergence of new international conflict potentials.

There are certain indicators that several states in West Asia, South West Asia and South Asia, even China, are intensifying their relations with Central Asia to improve and stabilise their own strategic position. In this sensitive region with a very fragile security situation such strategic competition may lead to new frictions, and even to a new correlation of forces.

Summing up, it can be said that the specific features of the disintegration of the USSR in general, and of the developments in its Asian successor states in particular, exert a lasting influence on conflict constellations, conflict behaviour and conflict evolution in Asia, with a visible trend towards more complication.

Uzbekistan with close to 20 million people, most of the troubled Fergana Valley, and a border with each of the other
Central Asian states, will be the key to the region's stability.

Uzbek politics is a contest among five regions - Fergana, Khorezm, Samarkand/ Bukhara, Surkhandarya/Kashkadarya, and Tashkent, with Fergana and Tashkent the most powerful. President Islam Karimov, from Samarkand, appears to balance the regional rivals within the former Communist party (now the People's Democratic party), which retains power as it did under Soviet rule, through patronage, repression, and price controls. Karimov stresses Uzbek nationalist symbolism but also wins support from the 11 per cent Russian minority by casting himself as the man to assure their continued security in the republic.

Karimov has expressed a desire to follow the Turkish economic and secular model, but he has had to be pushed by Tashkent elites seeking economic liberalization. Privatization of land and business has been limited. Direct American economic interests in Uzbekistan for the near future will probably be limited to cotton trade and possible oil and gold extraction.

Karimov has allowed only symbolic political freedom in legalizing the Erk Democratic party, an intellectual-based opposition party as yet too small to challenge him. Birlik,
which has mass political support in the Fergana Valley, and the Islamic Renaissance party, whose strength is unclear in Fergana but negligible elsewhere, are repressed. Tashkent cannot prevent opposition rallies in Fergana, however, and occasionally it has had to rely on clerics, headed by the Tashkent mufti, to help dampen periodic violence there.

Kazakhstan with 6.5 million people, weapons facilities, nuclear missile bases, and large fossil fuel and mineral deposits, is the other heavyweight of Central Asia. It is also the most distinct republic. Islam, which served for more than a millennium as a cementing force for the other Central Asian societies, is diluted among Kazhaks, who as nomads preserved traditional animism and ancestor worship almost intact until about 200 years ago. While Kazhaks regard themselves as muslims, Islam must compete with their nomadic and Mongol culture and value systems. Kazakh society remains divided along ethnic, regional and clan lines. Northern Kazakhstan is mostly Russian, the south mainly Kazakh.

With a delicate ethnic balance of around 40 per cent Russians and a nearly equal number of Kazakhs, Kazakhstan forms a political and cultural bridge between Russia and the core of Central Asia. President Nazarbayev envisions building Kazakhstan's economy largely as Russia's bridge to
China and East Asia and has begun reopening rail and air links to China. The tie with China is political, too. A million Kazakhs live in Xinjiang, and more than 185,000 in Uighurs, the main ethnic group of Xinjiang, live in Kazakhstan, where they are permitted to press quietly for Xinjiang's independence. While Nazarbayev is a pragmatist who understands the need to accommodate varied groups and permits at least formal political activity, it is not clear that he holds solid democratic convictions. He has kept the formerly communist administrative apparatus largely intact, citing the danger of instability if he were to uproot it quickly - but in so doing he has allowed his economic reforms to be weakened.

Nazarbayev is backed by Russian and Kazakh political groups as an honest broker who condemns militant nationalists. He quit the communist party and has encouraged the registration of numerous, though minor, political groups. Fears of ethnic conflict remain, however. There has been virtually no political melding of the two communities.

Although he has used missiles as bargaining chips to enhance Kazakhstan's position with Russia, Nazarbayev's commitments to secure Kazakh nuclear systems initially met with American approval. Still, in April 1992 the Bush
administration declined to certify Kazakhstan as eligible for U.S. aid following conflicting Kazakh public statements about the disposition of those weapons. U.S. economic interests could grow with U.S. firms helping in the development of Kazakhstan's considerable mineral wealth.

The external factor in terms of actual Saudi, Iran and Pakistani support to steer the course of Central Asian society, polity and economy will also play an important role. Here one may recall the idea of consensus between the "Islamic" states of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, first enunciated by the former Pakistan army chief, General Aslam Beg in a speech at Quetta on 25 October 1988.47 When the then Afghan Foreign Minister, Abdul Vakil visited India on 15 February 1990, he released a copy of 'secret document' prepared by the then Director General of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Lt General Hamid Gul to late Zia-ul Haq in July 1988. This document contained the alleged Pakistan plans to establish a joint confederation of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey, which was possible only after establishing a pro-Pakistan Islamic form of government in Afghanistan.48

47. Mushahid Hussain, "Pak Improves Ties with Iran", Times of India, 3 April 1990.
According to available reports Pakistan is likely to include the Muslim republics of Central Asia within its sole concept of pan-Islamic strategic alliance. In fact the former Pak Prime Minister, Ms Benazir Bhutto is reported to have wanted to include these republics.49 In any case Pakistan is definitely going to develop close cultural contacts with Central Asia. Iran has already initiated the process of consolidating its links with these republics, particularly Azerbaijan and Turkmenia. An agreement concluded in June 1991 provides for setting up and activating a ground satellite station in the premises of Baku's Radio and Television Company, to enable the latter to receive the Vision of the Islamic Republic of Iran.50 On the basis of this agreement joint radio and television programmes in Persian, Azeri and Russian languages will be produced and there will be frequent exchanges of information, news and cultural groups.51 Some Central Asian republics have set up their own airlines. Azerbaijani airline has signed a contract with an Iranian private airlines firm (Parsnivan) to carry out a charter flight from


51. Ibid.
Teheran to Baku and Almaty. But neither Iran nor Pakistan can provide technological and economic assistance of any substance to the Central Asian republics which enjoyed better standards of living and social services under Soviets. Prospects of impending economic hardship and the centralised nature of defence establishment has encouraged the Central Asian republics to join the recently formed inter republican Council of former Soviet republics.

So far as India is concerned the link between India and this ancient historic region of Central Asia dates back to Pre-Christian era. During Kushan period some Indian Traders forming small groups came and settled here. Later some Brahmins escaping King Pilivat's wrath and much later during Khilafat movements a group of Muslims took shelter here. Random exchange of population on both sides continued for centuries. No wonder, there is so much similarity in food habits, clothes, music and general mode of living etc.

Like India, women in the region also commanded great respect in ancient times. From 1658 onwards when Khan Shabi got sub-divided into Bukhara Khanate and Khiva Khanate, the economic expansion was on massive scale but the condition of general masses deteriorated and women were

52. Pravada, 8 July 1991.
reduced to the level of manual labourers. The plight of the women continued to be the same during the Czar period and the new awakening amongst them came after the October Revolution of 1917.

Till today, Tashkent remains a smiling city with all its traditional glory intact. The narrow lanes with rows of houses with enclosed court yards and long haired girls romping in salwar kameez reminds the tourist of India's Kashmir valley.

Today, Tashkent has a new face. The massive earthquake of 1966 suddenly transformed the whole character of the place. Except for the old portion of the city which survived, the rest of the construction is all modern. Number of multi-storied flats replaced the independent small cottages. Monumental buildings, each in its old style built by the various republics of USSR who rushed to assist Uzbekistan in its hour of crisis, introduced their different architectural concepts.

Added to all these features, a special link with India was formed by the installation of Shastri Memorial at Tashkent and also Shastri higher secondary school, where Hindi language is taught as one of the Asian languages. When any delegation from India visits the school, they are greeted with folded hands saying "Namaste". Warmth of the
people, their generosity and their deep love for Indian art and culture leaves a deep imprint on the visitor's minds. Peoples of Central Asia have always been god-fearing and pious at heart. They have much in common with India, its history, culture, topography, customs and general mode of living. The eternal bonds of friendship between the two countries will not only survive but flourish with the passage of time. Today, both India and Uzbekistan are passing through a difficult economic phase. New bonds of mutual friendship and cooperation will help both to cross all hurdles and soon these two nations will reach a new pinnacle of glory.53

The Khuda Baksh Oriental Public Library organised a seminar on "Historical and Cultural Links between India and Uzbekistan from ancient times to present day", from 6 to 8 December 1993 in New Delhi, under the Cultural Exchange Programme with Uzbekistan, during which some eighty presentations were made by scholars from all over India and guest scholars from Uzbekistan.

The first session on "Art, Architecture and Archeology", stressed the unmistakable archaeological linkages between Central Asia and India which had its roots in the

bronze age and had developed through the Gandhara period culminating in the close linkages of the Mughal period.

The second session on "Indo-Uzbek Relations in Modern Times", was based on travelogues as diverse as the Safarnome-e-Mehla of Sher Shah to that of Vambury.

The third session on "Contemporary Indo-Uzbek Relations", referred to the cultural interaction between India and Uzbekistan the richest harvest of which was the poetry of Amir Khusroo and Ghalib whose forefathers had come from Uzbekistan.

The fourth session on "Economic and Commercial Relations", looked into the history of Indian traders in Uzbekistan, contemporary economic potential of Uzbekistan as well as areas of mutual economic interest to the two countries. The fifth session on "Ideas and Ideals", dealt with cultural and literary traditions of the two countries, Indo-Persian literature as a part of our composite culture, Sufism and the Ulamas of Transoxiana.

The sixth session on "History", was a retrospective on the closest period of Indo-Uzbek relations, the Mughal period, and dealt with the multiple facets of linkages during that period. The seventh session on "Science and Technology", looked into scientific links between the two
countries as well as the need for closer co-operation in areas like atomic energy, electronics, biotechnology and agriculture.54

The eighth session on "Culture and Literature", reflected on the cultural interaction between the two countries. During the valedictory session consensus was reached on the need for (1) an arrangement for data based documentation of information concerning the two countries along with its regular exchange, (2) a comprehensive Uzbek-English/Urdu/Hindi and Hindi/Urdu/English/Uzbek dictionary (3) a centre for exchanging books and microfilms of manuscripts along with films and translations of contemporary works (4) scope of cooperation to be widened in science and technology, trade, commerce, art and culture. (5) unison of destiny in the perspective of united history.