CHAPTER VIII
CONCLUSION
Central Asia and India have a long history of association which dates back to ancient and medieval times. Central Asia was the region through which pilgrims and traders passed on their way from China to India and vice-versa, in ancient times. Trade routes between the west and east lay through this region which was an important crossroad of civilization and commerce before the discovery of sea route. These political and cultural ties continued through the middle ages. We can find the accounts of the people who visited India like Al-Beruni, which symbolize the ties and its continuous development during the course of the 300 years rule of the dynasty founded by Babar.

On the eve of the Russian conquest of Central Asia, a flourishing trade existed between India and this region. Khanates, Bukhara and Khiva, were some of the major cities, which served as links of commerce and trade.

The nationalities of Central Asia represent a complete mixture of various ethnic groups since antiquity. It is one of the oldest centres of civilization. They developed a splendid culture of their own and achieved remarkable success in the fields of agriculture, irrigation, arts and
crafts, sciences, literature, art of warfare, comparing favourable with the achievements of other ancient and medieval cultures. They borrowed much from the cultures of Indian subcontinent and China enriched it further with their creative genius.

Under Tsarist rule, the removal of feudal stagnation, construction of railway lines, expansion of trade and commerce, and introduction of marketable agricultural products brought Central Asia into the vortex of world market.

In the 1860s, Indian merchants served the Central Asian local population by supplying tea, indigo, muslin, spices and a wide variety of Indian and British manufactured goods. The opening of the cheap trade route, i.e.; from Batum to the Caspian by the Trans-Caucasian railway and then across the Caspian to Krasnovodsk to Central Asia, had a favourable effect on Trade and commerce.

In the later half of the 19th and beginning of the 20th century a great majority of the people especially from west and north-west India, were concentrated in the Emirate of
Bukhara, the Ferghana valley, Samarkand and the Syr-Darya region of Turkestan.

The Anglo-Russian rivalry, which was constantly alive throughout the 19th century, but for brief pauses, put many restraints on the conduct of normal political, commercial and cultural intercourse among Central Asia, Kashmir and British India. If the British were interested in promoting Indian trade with Central Asia through the Srinagar-Leh-Kashgar route with a view to extending their influence in Central Asia, the Russian authorities were equally determined to keep the Indian trade out of Russian Turkestan and the protectorates of Khiva and Bukhara. The Russians even under-priced their goods in Chinese Turkestan in a bid to keep British Indian goods out of their markets.

Establishment of Soviet power in Central Asia and its dynamic impact on relations with India was first echoed in Soviet appeals to the people of the East, calling upon them to rise against alien imperialist rules. This 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.

Independent India, (1947, August 15th) emerged again as a close friend. For nearly four decades since India's independence, Soviet Union was the principal supplier of sophisticated arms at discounted price and also extended immense financial support. The role of successive Indian leaders were to promote deeper cooperation with Central Asian republics.

After 1947, India established strong ties with Moscow. All five republics - Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghyzstan and Tajikistan had attended the Asian Relations Conference in April 1947 in New Delhi. The first Indian Prime Minister, late Jawaharlal Nehru visited Ashkhabad, Almaty, Tashkent and Samarkand in June 1955. The first President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad visited Dushanbe in 1960 and then Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri signed Tashkent Treaty with Pakistan and Dr. Zakir Hussain visited the region in 1968. Late Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India, had gone to Bishkek (Kirghyzstan) in May 1985.
Besides, there has been a tradition of exchanging scholars, artists and students between Central Asia and India.

The emergence of five independent Central Asian countries namely, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kirghyzia, and Tajikistan from USSR has created a changed circumstances in the world, specially in Asian region. India has an uphill task in developing trade, economic and technical cooperation with the Central Asian states.

The Central Asian states have earnestly begun to rediscover their roots on quite a new basis. They are trying to diversify their economies and seek new partners for regional and economic cooperation. Having huge resources of gas, oil, coal, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, rate minerals and metals, hydro electric power and irrigation network, besides being the main producers of cotton, wool, silk, etc., a new realisation about their immense economic potential has dawned on Central Asian states. This has created high expectation among the people who are eager to reap the economic fruits of their independence from the former USSR.
India was one of the first countries to recognize Central Asia's independence. Therefore, she has good round on which to build political relations committed to secular politics both domestically and internationally.

The inability of the Commonwealth of Independent States CIS) so far to create common economic space has expedited the process of regional realignment involving the Central Asian States. By joining the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) along with Turkey, Iran and Pakistan, the Central Asian states reveal a desire to keep their options open outside the framework of the CIS. In such a situation

India's economic and political cooperation with Central Asia will help the latter in not giving up secularism and democracy under the influence of Islamic states.

Structural similarities between India and Central Asian states do form the basis of closer relations between India and Central Asia. With a large state sector and predominance of rural population, India has structural similarities with Central Asia. India's experience of market economy is proving to be a guiding line for these new infant economies.
It has been concluded that the economic links between India and Central Asia has to be built up on a new basis. 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.

India cannot ignore Central Asian republics due to 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. Moreover, Afghanistan's involvement in the war in Tajikistan could adversely affect Kashmir. Pakistan is also seeking to acquire strategic depth in any future war against India. India regards economic cooperation as the best way to counter Pakistan's influence in Central Asia. It has offered training in management, consultancy and construction ventures. Central Asia will remain a prime concern of Indian foreign policy in the years to come. Apart from economic reasons, security and strategic considerations for future, also hold major impetus for India for which India is willing to cooperate through diplomatic means with other states, especially, Russia and China.
Central Asia is gradually opening its economy. The idea is to create an industrial base, through cautious and pragmatic approach is being adopted. Central Asia is facing serious socio-economic problems which urgently need outside help besides a well-conceived strategy to tackle them. They need to cooperate for mutual benefit, but rivalries and disputes between the republics has not been resolved. The grim state of economy, pressing ecological issues and unresolved political problems are all out in the open, after being long neglected or ignored.

Russia still plays a major role and will be very helpful, for Central Asian countries. Top level talk between Russia and Uzbekistan underlined an intention to coordinate more closely economic policies in tax, currencies and customs as well as to move gradually towards free movement of goods, services, capital and labour between the two countries. All the Central Asian Republics remain highly dependent militarily on Russia with maintenance and repair contracts for equipments etc.

In May 1992, Central Asian States (except Turkmenistan) signed the Collective Security Treaty initiated by Russia.
It is a politico-military alliance and prohibits the participating states from entering into any military alliance or taking part in any grouping of states or actions directed against other participating state or states. It was further expanded at the 'Moscow Summit' in July 1992, when it was agreed to set up a 'Blue Helmet' force for rapid deployment in the area of conflict within the CIS.

Two major concerns seem to dominate Central Asia's endeavour at nation-building. One, to stabilise the foundation of a productive, efficient and demand fulfilling economy, and two, to build a secular, democratic state structure in their multi-ethnic society.

In pursuance of building a secular-democratic polity they do face the possible threat of religious fundamentalism especially due to their proximity to Iran, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, from where revivalist influences do emanate.

Turkey, in March 1991, signed a wide range of bilateral agreements with each Central Asian Republic mainly in the sphere of trade, economy, culture and educational cooperation. Turkey represents, for the Central Asian states, a secular society along with a successful market
economy. As a member of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) and the Council of Europe and a major trading partner with the European Union States, Turkey may be able to help the Central Asian States obtain concessional terms of trade with the EU, so at least is hoped in the Central Asian capitals. However, other neighbouring Islamic states have also been active to woo the Central Asian states.

As a regional grouping ECO has far reaching implications. The ECO originally set up as the economic counterpart of the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO), a pro-western alliance of middle eastern states, had been dormant for long, but is being revived now.

A joint communiqué issued by Iran and Uzbekistan stressed for non-interference and stability of all existing borders. Iran has natural, geographical, advantages particularly for providing access to sea for land-locked Central Asian Region.

Pakistan offered to different Central Asian Republics several facilities like joint ventures, commercial credit, food supplies, medicines, cement factory, telecommunication systems. Offers of new trade routes, use of port facilities,
opening of railway lines connecting Central Asian cities to Karachi, use of their river navigation on Indus, use of roadways and airlinks, etc. were also made. Pakistan, as the third original member of ECO has shown great keenness in exploring new openings in Central Asia. However, Pakistani firms face considerable competition from Turkey, India and other countries of Asia. Bilateral exchange of experts, academicians, medical personnel, bankers, youth delegations and students are also being encouraged by Pakistan.

Afghanistan is in a fragile state due to tensions between its diverse ethnic and tribal elements. The present conditions in Afghanistan may produce a wider regional impact, and affect present state borders. The tussle between the Islamic-oriented and 'secular' factions have spilled into central Asian states most of whose formerly communist leaders are apprehensive of the rise of fundamentalism. The basic interest of Central Asian States is in an early settlement of Afghanistan crisis and the emergence of a stable government.
Slow off the starting block, India is now moving quickly to gain a foothold in Central Asia, a gold mine for economies in quest of markets and a region of immense strategic importance.

There are several agendas before the Indian decision makers which need to be debated upon while formulating new policies towards the newly emerging Central Asian states. These are:

- India had a thriving trade with Central Asia covered under the Indo-Soviet trade agreement and safeguarding of these interactions in - India’s traditional economic interest in the region
- Geopolitical concerns
- The fear of Islamic Fundamentalism
- The Pakistani factor

The fields of trade and commerce were vital for laying the new foundation of bilateral relations with the Central Asian States. Much before the collapse of the Soviet Union, India had already gone in for joint venture 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 becoming parts of an Islamic alliance constitute an important factor.

Third important consideration is the growing perception of Islamic threat, a phenomena perceived as a challenge to the liberal-democratic world in the post-cold war period. Several analysts on the subject attributed the changing phenomena in Central Asia to cultural nationalism rather than Islamic revivalism. They 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 becoming Islamic theocratic states.

Indian external Affairs minister Raghunandan Lal Bhatia and Salman Khurshid visited the region in November 1992 renewing ties that could also be economically beneficial for India in years to come. India is a large export/import potential country in neighbouring South Asia which the Central Asian states could use for their long term commercial expansion. At the same time, the Central Asian
states are a varitable bazaar of resources such as oil, natural gas, uranium, gold and agricultural products.

India signed a wide range of bilateral agreements with each Central Asian republic mainly in trade, economy and diplomatic cooperation. India agreed to provide financial and technical assistance for the modernisation of their industrial enterprises.

Another important aspect of India's strategy has been the pursuit of its foreign policy interests overseas. India's favoured position in Central Asia stems from the special relation it had enjoyed for decades with the Soviet Union. India had already received positive response from Iran to approach Central Asian states which resulted in signing triennial agreement in February 1993.

In February 1992, India and Kazakhstan signed a five-year framework agreement to cooperate in trade, economic relationship, science, media, culture, education and technology. The agreements also included provisions for promoting contacts for training through 'exchange of visits of business delegations, participation in trade fairs, workshops and exchange of information'. Joint ventures are
also visualised in mining, oil exploration, textiles, leather, food processing, project export and consultancy work, etc.

On July 22, 1993, India and Kazakhstan agreed to accelerate cooperation. Four sub-committees were formed. These were sub-committees on trade and commerce, including industrial collaboration, agriculture, science and technology and hydrocarbons. Parallel with the meeting of the Joint Commission and sub-committees, members of Kazakh delegations also had interaction with leading Indian businessmen.

India and Tajikistan signed 6 agreements in February 1993 on economic and technical cooperation in cultural, art, science, education, sport, mass media spheres.

During former Prime Minister Narasimha Rao’s visit to Tashkent in May 1992 India and Uzbekistan signed a treaty on the principles of inter-state relations and bilateral cooperation. Both countries expressed their desire to cooperate in fighting terrorism, drug trafficking and extremist ideologies. India will import non-ferrous metals, fertilizer 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.

Though the independence of the Central Asian Republics has changed the whole scenario in the region, through friendship treaties, MOU on various cooperations with neighbouring states, Central Asian states are trying to adjust to a changed geopolitical environment. However, there is a long way to go for establishing their independent identity and to strengthen their economy. As far as relation with India is concerned, new avenues have opened up and India is providing full cooperation and financial credit to them. Moreover, geopolitically these states have importance to India, and their fragility and instability could affect India's own security.