US POLICY TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA

US, the undisputed super power after the end of Cold War, had little interest in Central Asia, where its policy had been evolved in 90’s after the Soviet disintegration. It policy had focused on strengthening the independence of Central Asian Republics through promoting the values including democracy, human rights, and economic liberalism. While, the region was seen as peripheral to the US interest, there was particularly little evidence of military interest. The multidimensional priorities of the US in Central Asian region were the containment of the Islamic fundamentalism, proliferation of nuclear weapons and the weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and the control over the vast natural resources of the region.

In post 1995 period, the US interest in the region was driven by the growing economic interest of China and ethno-religious pressure from Iran and their political support for independence of Central Asian states. In this context, American moves were seen to be indirect confrontation with Russian, Chinese and Iranian interests. It also signaled its ability and readiness to secure its interests on military front. The US government announced that it intended to include Central Asia in the area of responsibility of the Central Command of the American Armed Forces from 1999 onwards (Macfarlane 2004: 452).

Besides military engagement in Central Asia, the US policy has focused on “Caspian basin”, a term encompassing portion of both Central Asia and the Caucasus and this policy aimed at much more than resource development. It embraced the goal of region-wide independence, global integration and political and economic reforms. However, the fact of the matter was that Russia, China, Iran saw the US support for regional transformation as a cover for an ambitious and hegemonic policy designed to exclude traditional actors and benefit Washington (ibid: 453).
These above mentioned incidents took place during the period of the then US President Bill Clinton and the Congress Committee took keen interest in the US policy towards Central Asian Region. The 106th Committee of the US Congress mainly focused on the Newly Independent States (NIS) of Post-Soviet space in order to check any radical upsurge in this region, mainly from the radical Islamist groups, which would threaten the Western interests. The main act of this Committee was the Silk Road Strategy Act, which was made in May 1999, in order to strengthen the US position in Central Asian region. In The Senate of The United States, Congress has made the following findings:

1. The Ancient Silk Road, once the economic lifeline of Central Asia and the South Caucasus, traversed much of the territory now within the countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

2. Economic interdependence spurred mutual cooperation among the peoples along the Silk Road and restoration of the historic relationships and economic ties between those peoples is an important element of ensuring their sovereignty as well as the success of democratic and market reforms.

3. The development of strong political, economic, and security ties among countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia and the West will foster stability in this region, which is vulnerable to political and economic pressures from the south, north and east.

4. The development of open market economies and open democratic systems in the countries of the South, north, and east.
5. Many of the countries of the South Caucasus have secular Muslim governments that are seeking closer alliance with the US and that have diplomatic and commercial relations with Israel.

6. The region of the South Caucasus and Central Asia could produce oil and gas in sufficient quantities to reduce the dependence of the US on energy from the volatile Persian Gulf region.

7. United States foreign policy and international assistance should be narrowly targeted to support the economic and political independence as well as democracy building, free market policies, human rights, and regional economic integration of the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia.

In this regard the objectives of the US in the countries of the South Caucasus and Central Asia are the following:

1. to promote and strengthen independence, sovereignty, democratic government, and respect for human rights,

2. to promote tolerance, pluralism, and understanding and counter racism and anti-Semitism;

3. to assist actively in the resolution of regional conflicts and to facilitate the removal of impediments to cross-border commerce;
4. to promote friendly relations and economic cooperation;

5. to help promote market-oriented principles and practices;

6. to assist in the development of the infrastructure necessary for communication, transportation, education, health, and energy and trade on an East-West axis in order to build strong international relations and commerce between those countries and the stable, democratic, and market-oriented countries of the Euro-Atlantic Community, and

7. to support the United States business interests and investments in this region.

Further, the Congress has stated that the US President should use all diplomatic means practicable, including the engagement of senior United States Government officials to press for an equitable fair and permanent resolution to the conflicts in the South Caucasus and Central Asia. The US has given aid to these states in order to fulfill the interests of these states (Silk Road Strategy Act 1999).

Mainly the Silk Road Strategy Act, May 1999 has aimed at compelling the US geostrategic and economic interests in this region, contrary to the increasing influence of the regional actors such as Russia, China and Iran. One essential guideline for the US policy makers is to prevent any emergence of a new competitor in the post-Soviet space, which would challenge its super power status. In this regard, American post-Cold War strategy is based on a leading edge in all the fields of defense, industry, and science, which comprises “strategic control” relying on air space power as its major assets. Secondly, the US policy is to focus on energy security and the reduction of nuclear arms in post-Soviet Republics and stabilizing Russia. Thirdly, the US is engaging itself in this region through trade and investment in order to defend its national interests. In case of
threats to its national interests, it has the tactic to use force for self defense. Rather, the main aim of the US is to make the region free from regional stability and ethnic conflicts in order to fulfill its geopolitical interests. Today, the US government views the country’s security and prosperity as connected to the global movement of goods, capital, information and people and the expansion of trade-agreements to lower barriers to imports and investment (ibid).

America’s efforts must be enhanced in helping Central Asian states in the sphere of the protection from Islamic fundamentalism. Additionally, the advancement of its influence in this region will enhance its global strategy to protect the US national security interests and regional priorities. The US strategic objectives in Central Asia presents an opportunity for the US to secure its interests and diminish the influence of other regional actors such as Russia and China and the threats to national security particularly from seeking to dominate the region. Because, Iran has invested huge amount of capital in major infrastructure projects in Tajikistan and increased trade relations with Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan in recent years. On the other hand, the US has accused Iran as a part of “axis of evil” which is supporting the Islamic fundamentalist groups such as Al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan in the Central Asian region.

The US has provided huge amount of capitals as aid through International Monetary Funds, World Bank, USAID etc. to secure its interests such as spreading Western Democratic principles, checking human rights violations, organized crimes and narcotic trades in the Central Asian countries in order to make this region a safe heaven free from regional conflicts and Islamic fundamentalism so that it can fulfill its geopolitical importance. Prior to the September 11 incident the US started its engagement with these newly independents states, especially Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. The main fear of Washington was the vast space of post-Soviet Union would be turned into a space for regional instability and terrorist activities. Another factor is these states are rich in natural resources such as oil and gas. So the US wanted to utilize these resources for fulfilling its geopolitical needs as well as its partners.
US Economic Aid to Central Asian Republics

Since the disintegration of Soviet Union, the US has been engaging itself in the Post-Soviet space in order to fulfill its geopolitical interest. As it has already been discussed that the main priorities of the US is to promote western style democracy and market reforms in the Eurasian region to make it a suitable place for trade and commerce which would be connected to the world economic system. Furthermore, the US administration wants to maintain its status quo in Central Asian region. It never wants to give the second chance to Russia, its Cold War adversary to regain its influence in the Post-Soviet space. The main fear of the US is the nuclear stockpiles which are still there and a possibility is that it may come under the hands of Islamic terrorist groups. Thus, the US is giving economic aid to these Newly Independent States, those who are under continuous threats from Islamic radicalism, ethnic strife and abject poverty. The grant in aid of the US is one tactic to maintain its influence in this region. Thus, the US has been providing assistance in order to promote democracy and market reforms in these states to resolve the ethnic strife and tension.

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the US has donated $7.3 billion grants for economic and technical assistance to this region. Additionally, $4.3 billion has been provided in food aid through the Department of Agriculture, and $2.3 billion by the Department of Defense for non-proliferation purposes. The US administration had also subsidized guarantees for more than $12 billion in credits from Export-Import Bank, Overseas Private Investment Corporation and the Department of Agriculture. In its Financial Year 2002 budget request, the Administration proposed funding the Former Soviet Union account at $808 million, little change over the Financial Year 2001 appropriated level of $810. In Financial Year 2002, foreign operations application provided $768 million to the Former Soviet Union. In October, 24, the Senate approved its version of H.R. 2506, providing $795.5 for the region. (Tamoff 2007, RL32866 CRS Report on US Aid to the Former Soviet Republics).

The economic aid to Central Asian countries was very low prior to September 11, 2001 incident. In the congressional hearings, officials argued that increased assistance
would help to build good will and cement the US role in exploiting energy reserves in the region and that aid could be used to facilitate a positive business environment for the US investors, including assistance to help reform of the energy sector and democratic reform. The US donated $705.5 in cumulative budgeted funds through Financial Year 2003. In Financial Year 2002, it gave US $187.55 million aid for the security and law enforcement to the Central Asian countries. In order to check the proliferation of nuclear weapons in Central Asia, $ 344.8 m in the funds of Comprehensive Threat Reduction (CTR) and Department of Energy, was budgeted for Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in September 30, 2003). For countering narcotic trades, the US policy emphasizes the threat of rising terrorism, crime, corruption, and instability posed by illegal narcotics production, use and trafficking in Central Asia. In this regard, the US administration has budgeted $220 million for anti-drug efforts in Afghanistan in Financial Year 2004. Additionally, an agreement went into force with Kazakhstan in 2003 to provide counter-narcotics training and equipment for police and border guards. with US funding Kyrgyzstan has created a Drug Control Agency with 300 police and staff and set up a well-equipped customs past as a model (ibid).

The main priority of Washington was to strengthen its bilateral relations with Central Asian republics. The relationships were political, economic and military in nature. The main motive behind US policy towards Central Asian region was to bring these newly independent states under its control. Because, the state such as Uzbekistan wanted to avoid Russia while formulating independent foreign policy towards its neighbours and external actors after the disintegration of Soviet Union. Due to Russia’s weak foreign policy, these states wanted to strengthen their relations with external actors for regaining their economies and military powers in order to deal with the regional security problems such as Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism.

All the states except Tajikistan became eligible in Financial Year (FY) 1997 to receive non-lethal defense articles and services, including Foreign Military Financing (FMF) grants through the NATO’s PfP program. Tajikistan became eligible in FY 2002. FMF aid supports military interoperability with NATO and participation in PfP exercises,
and has included communications equipment, computers, medical items etc. The states received about US $6-9 million in FMF aid in FY 2001, which was boosted after September 11 2001, to $55.66 million in FY 2002 and over US $36 million of which went to Uzbekistan, US $16.1 million in FY 2003, an estimated US $16.4 million in FY 2004, and a requested US $16.4 million for FY 2005. The states were also eligible to receive Excess Defense Articles on a grant basis, to enhance interoperability with NATO. In February 2000, the US transferred sixteen military transport vehicles to the Uzbek military to enhance interoperability with NATO forces, the first sizeable military equipment to be provided under the FMF program to Central Asia (ibid).

For the securities of embassies, which are located in the Central Asian region, the US Congress has approved $20.3 million for opening and securing diplomatic posts in Dushanbe, Tajikistan and Kabul, Afghanistan. Among other diplomatic posts in this region, Congress has approved State Department requests for FY 2002 and for FY 2003 for designing and building secure embassy facilities in Tashkent, Uzbekistan and in Astana, Kazakhstan. In FY 2004, contracts were awarded for building the new embassy in Astana (ibid).

NATO’s Role in Central Asia

The newly independent states of this region have got the opportunity to share the military technology with the US through the NATO programs. Rather it is a unique venue of military and political exchange programme which could give the Central Asian republics enough space to discuss about the existing regional security problems with each other. Participation of NATO’s PfP multinational military exercises had played an important role in fostering greater regional cooperation and integration which was lack in this region. These exercises could provide crucial training and in peacekeeping activities and aim at developing interoperability, both of which absent in these states.
As a result, in August 1995, forces from Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan had participated in Fort Polk's Operation Nugget exercises in peacekeeping tactics for land forces, and had joined by a Kazakh contingent in a follow up round in July 1997. Additionally, forces from Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan had joined with the US and other NATO and Partnership for Peace countries' in March 2001 for exercises in Nova Scotia at Canadian Sea coast. And, these three forces had formed a new joint peacekeeping unit in December 1995 under the auspices of USCENTCOM. This new unit, named as Centrazbat, was empowered to promote stability in the region and enable the three member states to share tactical information and experience in peacekeeping and limited security patrol maneuvers. Multinational exercises have been conducted annually, in which the US and NATO member states are providing field and command training (Jaffey 2001).

On the other hand, Russia was not in a position to resolve the regional security problems due to its own limitations. The states of Central Asian region have the vast hydrocarbon resources. But, they have to depend on the Russia-supported pipelines. They want to diversify the trade routes in the sphere of pipeline diplomacy for more capitals. Thus, the US engagement in this region gave these states an opportunity to diversify their relationships with Western world. In this context, it is imperative to focus on the US relations with individual Central Asian republics in terms of NATO's engagement in this region.

Another mode of US engagement in Central Asia is through NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme, which was renamed as Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council in 1997. The main aim of the US is to bring the newly independent states of post-Soviet space under its allied military framework. On the other hand, the Central Asian region is not free from political instability, organized crime, narcotic trade, etc. as it has been discussed earlier. Thus, these states want enough military assistance to deal with these problems. Since the collapse of Soviet Union, Islamic fundamentalism has been a major challenge for these states. The export pipelines, which are connecting the vast natural resources to the western market are under consistent terrorist threats. Additionally, the Caspian region
is not free from inter-state conflicts. For an instance, the Nagarno-karabakh, Georgia-South Ossetia conflicts are quite prominent security threats in this region. In this context, it is imperative to analyze the role and objectives of NATO's PfP programme.

NATO's Partnership for Peace programme has the foundation in the establishment of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in December 1991, a forum to bring together NATO and its new partner countries to discuss issues of common concern such as security, economic, environmental issues as a means of promoting stability and security in the Euro-Atlantic area as a whole. The original objective of NATO's partnership policy was to break down barriers and to build security through dialogue and cooperation. Today, partner countries are engaged with NATO in tackling 21st century security challenges, including terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and failed states. In 1994, the NACC was transformed into the Partnership for Peace programme in order to emphasis on practical bilateral cooperation between NATO and individual partner countries. It was represented as significant step forward in the cooperative process. In 1997, the Euro-Atlantic Partnership Council (EAPC) was created to replace the NACC and to build on its achievements, paving the way for the development of an enhanced and more operational partnership. Further steps were taken at the Prague Summit in November 2002 to deepen cooperation between NATO and partner countries. A comprehensive review of the EAPC and the Partnership for Peace recommended strengthening the political dialogue with Partners and further enhancing their involvement in the planning, conduct and oversight of activities in which they participate. A new cooperative mechanism, the Partnership Action Plan, was introduced at Prague. The first to be developed was the Partnership Action Plan against Terrorism. Another new initiative was the Individual Partnership Action Plan (IPAP), which, rather than drawing from a menu of activities, allows the Alliance to tailor its assistance to interested Partner countries which have asked for more structured support for domestic reforms, particularly in the defence and security sector, according to their specific needs and circumstances. A decision was taken to put special focus on engaging with partner countries in two strategically important regions, namely the Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia) and Central Asia (Kazakhstan, the Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan). NATO has assigned a special representative for the two regions as well as two liaison officers. Their role is to assist and provide advice in implementing relevant aspects of Individual Partnership Action Plans, where appropriate,
as well as the Partnership Action Plans on Defence Institution Building and against terrorism (NATO’s Cooperation with Partners 2008).

The role of NATO is increasing due to the growth of Islamic terrorism, where the Central Asian republics are the victims since their independence. In order to check this menace, these countries have joined the Partnership for Peace programme. Central Asian countries such as Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan signed NATO’s PfP programme in 1994 and Tajikistan joined in 2002. Russia, the true successor state of former Soviet Union also joined in this programme in 1994 (ibid).

America’s engagement in Central Asian region through the NATO’s PfP programme has determined the nature of its bilateral relations with the individual countries. The US-Central Asia relation is mainly military in nature. Although, the US has tried to establish its economic relations with these countries, its engagement in this region is mainly military in nature. After the September 11, 2001 incident, the role of the Central Asian region has been increased. This region has the border contiguity with Afghanistan, the hotbed of Islamic terrorism. Thus, Washington started strengthening its relationship with the individual Central Asian republics in bilateral sphere, where the role of NATO was prominent.

US Relations with Individual Central Asian States

US-Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has vast natural resources in Central Asian region and is one of the littoral states of Caspian Sea. It is the most important factor, which has attracted the US to take its geopolitical interest in this country. Another important fact is that the nuclear materials which had been inherited from the former Soviet-Union were matter of serious concern for the US. Because, the US never wanted that these nuclear substances would fall in the hands of any terrorist organizations. Thus, the US interests included dismantling of Kazakhstan’s weapons of mass destruction, a peaceful role for its
weapons' scientists, the safe and secure storage of nuclear materials and spent fuels and non-proliferation cooperation. In order to achieve these above goals, the US wanted to make Kazakhstan a safe-heaven by promoting democratic principles and developing democratic institutions and respect for human rights, which would boost the US geopolitical interest through the development of both the Caspian basin's hydrocarbon resources and the means for their secure access to international markets.

On the other hand, Kazakhstan supported US regarding the removal of these nuclear arsenals. In December 1993, the US and Kazakhstan signed a CTR umbrella agreement for the “safe and secure” dismantling of 104 SS-18s, the destruction of silos, related purposes. All bombers and their air-launched cruise missiles were removed by late February 1994. On April 21, 1995, the last of about 1,040 nuclear warheads had been removed from SS-18 missiles and transferred to Russia, and Kazakhstan announced that it was nuclear weapons-free. A US-Kazakh Nuclear Risk Reduction Centre in Almaty had been set up to facilitate verification and compliance with arms control agreements to prevent the proliferation of WMD (Nichol 2006: 12).

The US-Kazakh relation was strengthened after the September 11 2001, incident. Because, the US aimed at enhancing Kazakhstan's capability to combat terrorist insurgents, eliminate internal terrorist cells and foster regional cooperation in the area of counterterrorism. Additionally, the US aimed at the active participation of the country in NATO's PfP in Central Asian region in order to enhance the capabilities of Kazakhstan's military interoperability with NATO forces in the context of PfP exercises for guarding the country against Islamic extremist groups. The NATO forces also facilitated armed forces reform and promote a better understanding of the role of the military in developing democracies and the development of appropriate civil-military relations and human rights (U.S. Department of States, 21 May 2003, Foreign Policy Objectives-Newly Independent States).
Since its independence, Kazakhstan has been maintaining cordial relations with its neighbours, mainly with Russia and China along with the external actor such as the US. While maintaining its strategic relationship with the US, it has never neglected its relation with the regional powers. It is a member of many regional security organizations such as CIS, CSTO and SCO. It has also participated in the Euro-Atlantic organization: NATO’s PfP programme. It has supported the US war against Taliban forces in Afghanistan. Though, Kazakhstan does not have any external threat, it has yet perceived Islamic fundamentalism as a serious challenge, because it is an immediate neighbor of Afghanistan. This is the reason, why it has supported the US in its Operation Enduring Freedom and participated in NATO’s PfP, which was renamed as Euro-Atlantic partnership program in 1997. Astana has always supported US in matter of nuclear proliferation. And, it has always shown positive interest in the political and economic reform along with the improvement of human rights record in the country. In this context, the US has supported Kazakhstan, while providing aid through international organizations such as WTO, USAID, etc.

Thus, Kazakhstan is a country, which has successfully maintained its relations with Russia, China and also with the US. Due its engagement with the West, these two powers have tried to maintain strategic relationship with Kazakhstan in the spheres of economy, trade and military. Russia cannot afford to neglect this republic, which has vast natural resources along with geostrategic importance. On the other hand, despite its cordial relation with the US, Kazakhstan has to rely on Moscow in the areas of trade and security. In case of any immediate security threat, Kazakhstan has to rely on Russia.

US-Kazakhstan relation was supposed to be disturbed after the SCO’s declaration to give time limit to the allied forces, which was stationed after September 2001 incident. Uzbekistan’s K2 base was closed, where US-led allied forces were stationed. The main reason was the colour revolution, which was assisted by the US in order to change the regimes in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. And it was quite natural that, these newly independent countries along with the regional actors started taking measures against the
growing influence of the US. Despite these incidents, Kazakhstan pursued it "multi-vector" foreign policy, which could maintain the strategic partnership with America.

In the area of trade, Kazakhstan is developing the Kazakhstan-Caspian Transportation System, which aims to deliver oil from the Kashagan and Tengiz oil fields by tanker to Azerbaijan, where it will be funneled into the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline. In the economic sphere, Kazakhstan’s company KazAtomProm has to purchase a 10 per cent stake in Westinghouse, a prominent American corporation (Eurasia Insight 10 June 2008).

In 2008, the US and Kazakhstan reached a new milestone in a multilayer joint project to irreversibly decommission the Soviet-era BN-350 fast breeder reactor located at the Kazakhstani port of Aktau in the Caspian Sea Basin. This step has demonstrated and reinforced the strength of the US-Kazakhstani strategic relationship on the issue of nuclear proliferation (U.S.-Kazakhstan Milestone in Non-Proliferation Cooperation 2008).

US-Kyrgyzstan

US-Kyrgyzstan bilateral relations are both military and political in nature. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, both the countries started maintaining their relationship in bilateral sphere. It is the Central Asian republic, which has permitted its Manas air-base to be used as a base for the US led allied forces. Thus, It is a major concern for Russia in the Central Asian geopolitics. Thus, the role of Kyrgyzstan in this great power rivalry has immense importance.

Russia never wants the long-term US military presence in Central Asia. China as an emerging power in this region has eyed on Kyrgyzstan, when the latter has granted its Manas airport to the US for using in the war against the Taliban militia in Afghanistan.
For both China and Russia, Kyrgyzstan has importance in terms of Central Asian geopolitics. Both the powers want to bring this newly independent country under their military and political influences in order to check the growing influence of the US in the Central Asian region.

On the other hand, as an independent country, Kyrgyzstan has followed its independent foreign policy. It has become a member of CIS, CSTO, SCO and Euro-Atlantic Partnership programme, which was earlier known as NATO’s PfP programme. It seeks to get benefits in terms of security and economic assistance from external and regional powers. It wants to revive its economy through the economic assistances from the US economic assistance. It always seeks the assistance of Russia in the spheres of economy and military, because it is the powerful neighbor after the disintegration of Soviet Union. Despite the Russia-US rivalry, Kyrgyzstan has successfully maintained its bilateral relations with the US. Its relationship with the US has been strengthened after the latter’s declaration of war against the Taliban militia in Afghanistan. Thus, it is quite important to discuss about the US-Kyrgyzstan strategic partnership after the September 11, 2001 incident.

At bilateral level, both the countries have emphasized military training, which aims at helping the Kyrgyz Republic contribute to security and regional cooperation in Central Asia. The US has aimed to enhance Kyrgyzstan’s capabilities to combat Islamic terrorism and secure its borders through the reform its military on the line of civil-military relations and defense management. Additionally, the US sought expanded assistance for international military education and to facilitate active participation by the Kyrgyz Republic in NATO’s Partnership for Peace (PfP) and related activities. In Financial Year 2002, 15 Kyrgyz military officers received a full year of English language instruction and follow-on military training. Others received specialized training as English language instructors (Bureau of Political-Military Affairs 2003). Kyrgyzstan has allowed both the US and Russia to retain the airbases at Manas and Kant respectively. Both the great powers are not ready to lose the bases in the near future. Another important fact is that after the closing of the Karshi-Khanabad base in Uzbekistan, the US does not want to lose
the base in Kyrgyzstan. Russia as its main competitor has never wanted the US military presence in its neighbouring country.

On July 14 2006, Kyrgyzstan and the US issued a “joint statement of the US and the Kyrgyz Republic on coalition forces airbase at Manas airport”, resulting from the final round of negotiations on the continued presence of the American airbase on Kyrgyz territory. The statement emphasized the importance of the airbase in stabilizing the situation in Afghanistan and its war against global terrorism. According to the statement, “the US government is also ready to pay reasonable compensation to the Kyrgyz government and to Kyrgyz business for goods, services and support of US operations. Additionally, “the US intended to hand over $150 million in the form of assistance and compensation over the next year, pending approval by the US Congress” (Osmonov 2006).

It was the result of earlier decision taken by the Kyrgyz President for increasing the rent of retaining the Manas airbase by the US-led coalition forces. In February 2006, he announced that, “the U.S. would pay around $207 million, about 100 times more than previously. At the time, the American side was stating that it will pay more than it did before” (Osmonov 2006). On the other hand, Russia also declared that the CSTO would retain the Kant air-base forever. In 2006, CSTO secretary declared that On the other hand, the commander of the Russian Air Force, General Vladimir Mikhailov and Collective Security Treaty Organization Secretary Nikolai Bordyuzha met on February 16 the same year with Kyrgyz President and Defense minister Ismail Isakov to discuss the future of the Kant base. During his meet, Mr. Mikhalov said, “Our base is here forever” (Pannier 2006).

Despite the power rivalry between Russia and the US, Kyrgyzstan has successfully maintained its strategic relationships with both the adversaries. It is acting as an independent actor in this great power rivalry. Kyrgyzstan wants the maximum benefit
from the security assistance provided by the both the powers. And, it has successfully bargained for these above goals.

**US-Tajikistan**

The US-Tajikistan bilateral military relationships continue to develop in mutually beneficial way, building on the joint efforts in support of Operation of Enduring Freedom. Because, Turkmenistan's porous borders have made it highly vulnerable as a transit point for the movement of terrorist insurgents, narcotic and small arms trade that can destabilize other parts of the region. Washington aims at promoting the development of a stable civil society, a market economy and democratic rule with full respect for human rights. Additionally, it seeks to strengthen its re-integrated military to be able to inter-operate with an independent Tajik Border Guard to secure its own borders and play a more active, constructive role in Euro-Atlantic security affairs along with an active participant in NATO's Partnership for Peace Programme, which was renamed as Euro-Atlantic partnership program in 1997.

After getting independence, Tajikistan suffered from the civil war inside the country. During the civil war, the United States provided emergency food supplies and medicines to Tajikistan. By the mid-1990s, United States policy toward Tajikistan centered on support for peace negotiations and encouraging Tajikistan to develop closer relations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other financial organizations that could help in the rebuilding process. In the sphere of military security, Tajikistan also supported the US war against global terrorism in Afghanistan. It permitted large volume of humanitarian assistance bound to Afghanistan through its territory. There has been increased cooperation between the two countries in the sphere of prohibiting narcotic trade.

It also participated in the Euro-Atlantic partnership programme. The US also provided military aid to Tajikistan under this programme. In financial year 2002, thirty-
three Tajik military personnel and government officials of all ranks attended courses at the George C. Marshall Centre for Security Studies, Marshal Centre of Conferences, and PIP conferences in Kyrgyz Republic and Russia. Additionally, the military programmes included English language training and initiatives to increase border security, Cooperative Threat Reduction and funding to finance military-to-military contacts in order to defend its borders to check narcotic trades and Islamic fundamentalism (U.S. Department of States, 21 May 2003, Foreign Policy Objectives-Newly Independent States).

**US-Turkmenistan**

The main aim of the US is to deliver the agile resources of Turkmenistan to the world market through Turkey which would bypass Iran. Maritime and pipeline security are the key components of this objective. Like in case of other Central Asian republics, the US is focusing on the security of Turkmenistan Republic in order to protect its borders from the weapons of mass destruction, narcotic trade and Islamic fundamentalism. It has also encouraged the participation of Turkmenistan in NATO’s Partnership for Peace program and related activities to introduce it in the regional military cooperation. The US has also emphasized the language training, professional military education and other courses, particularly in the area of civil-military relations, which supports Turkmen military reform by exposing officers to the US democratic standards and values (ibid).

Turkmenistan is rich in energy resources. It is one of the Caspian littoral states of Caspian Sea Basin. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, trade and transit systems in the region have been reshaped. The artificially drawn borders created a barrier in front of the trade flow and restricted access to resources and markets, which prevents multinational companies to come and invest in the country. It shares border with Afghanistan, which is a troublesome neighbor.

In 1997, six international companies and the government of Turkmenistan signed the agreement regarding the formation of a Consortium named Central Asia Gas Pipeline ltd. US oil company UNOCAL was also permitted by Turkmen president to lead this
project. The project aimed at transporting gas from Turkmenistan’s Daulatabad field to Pakistan. A possible extension of the line to New Delhi was part of this project.

As a Caspian littoral state, Turkmenistan is important for the US due to the extensive resources present in the Country. On April 23, 1998, meeting that was held in Washington, US president Bill Clinton and Turkmen president Saparmurat Niyazov agreed to extend the cooperation between the two republics. Both have set the objective of strengthening political, economic, security, commercial and agricultural ties between the two countries. This cooperation was targeted to promote and develop market economy in Turkmenistan. The development of Caspian energy resources and pipeline infrastructure in order to carry those resources to the International market were also emphasized. Prime importance was given to the functioning of Trans-Caspian pipeline and the issues related to this pipeline such as the legal status problem of Caspian Sea Basin along with political instability in this region (Joint Statement on United States–Turkmenistan Relations 1998).

**US-Uzbekistan**

The US has special interest in Uzbekistan to bring this regional hegemon under its control in order to strengthen its foothold in the Central Asian region. Since independence, Uzbekistan tried to keep itself away from the influence of Moscow because of its big brother attitude. After getting independence, Uzbekistan faced serious limitations in its foreign policy. The main challenge in front of Uzbekistan was how to combat perceived Islamic threat. In this matter, it had to rely on Moscow for military assistance. But, it wanted to avoid the Russian sphere of influence. Thus, it chose the US as its strategic partner to deal with Islamic extremism and counterweight Moscow. Additionally, the US, sole superpower was the ideal international partner as an ally against perceived Islamic threat along with as a source of financial aid and investment in Uzbekistan’s shattered economy.

Plans for eastward expansion of NATO in the 1990s offered Tashkent a highly, visible and significant issue to use in its overtures to Washington. Tashkent presented
itself as Washington’s natural ally in the process of de-Sovietisation. It explicitly rejected Moscow’s objections to the admission of East European states to NATO as misguided and dangerous. Tashkent also dismissed Russian ambitions to turn the CIS into a military alliance as a counterweight to NATO. President Karimov warned that the realization of Russia’s ambitions for the CIS would turn the clock back and return CIS members to the past (Akbarzadeh 2005: 65).

He also impressed on the defence secretary of the US William Perry that Uzbekistan viewed NATO as offering gateway to regional stability and security for the former Soviet bloc. On the other hand, Uzbekistan’s pro-US attitude irritated Russia, when Moscow was trying to create a united front against the NATO operation against Yugoslavia. Uzbekistan deliberately distanced itself from Moscow and refused to sign a declaration against NATO bombings. At the April 1999 summit, Uzbekistan announced that it would not renew its membership in the CIS CST (ibid: 74).

In 1994, Uzbekistan joined the outer periphery of NATO by signing up for the NATO Partnership for Peace programme. In 1995 Uzbekistan along with Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan formed the Central Asian Battalion as a peace keeping force within the framework of NATO PfP and took part in a joint military exercise with US troops.

The US was seeking to orient Uzbekistan’s sizeable military towards greater cooperation with its own neighbors and NATO. Its active participation in NATO’s PfP programme and the Central Asian Peace Keeping battalions would enhance this cooperation. Training focused on defense resource management capabilities, command and general staff and war college courses, English language, and such operational subjects as infantry, signal and field artillery officers, airborne and ranger, Special Forces and mountain leaders’ courses, which would foster interoperability in both operations and tactics (U.S. Department of States, 21 May 2003, Foreign Policy Objectives-Newly Independent States).
Subsequent US-Centrazbat exercises were held in 1997, 1998 and 2000 in Central Asia. Uzbekistan was not present at the March 2001 training camps in Nova Scotia, but the Uzbek leadership had been at pains to emphasize its commitment to close security relations with the US and its allies. At a press conference in 1999, for example, President Karimov declared his enthusiasm for close military ties with Turkey because of that country’s full NATO membership and the benefits that Turkish-Uzbek relations would offer Uzbekistan’s closer ties with NATO (ibid: 61). It is quite important to note here that Turkey is country which was America’s Cold-War ally. It is the country, which has historical, cultural and traditional relations with the Central Asian republics.

The US policy towards Uzbekistan was perturbed with two parallel objectives such as the democratic reforms and regional stability. Though, the US administration was not satisfied with the poor human rights record of Uzbekistan, it assisted Tashkent in the sphere of military security. Another important reason for the US engagement in Uzbekistan was the vast natural resources of Central Asia. In February 1998 Assistant Secretary of State Robert Gee set out US interests in the region before the House Committee on international Relations, Sub-Committee on Asia and the Pacific, which included energy security, geostrategic interests and commercial. Gee explained in detail that finding multiple export routes for oil and gas from the Caspian basin region was critical for its integration into the world economy. It would also diversify sources of energy and reduce current dependence on the Persian Gulf region’s oil and gas, and challenge the ability of any state to monopolise export routes (ibid: 63).

A US-Uzbek Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) was signed on October 7, 2001, and the air campaign against Afghanistan began an hour later. The SOFA provided for use of Uzbek airspace and for up to 1, 500 US troops to use a Soviet-era Karshi-Khanabad. In exchange the US provided security guarantees and agreed that terrorists belonging to the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan how were fighting alongside Taliban and Al Qaeda forces would be targeted. According to some reports, the problems in negotiating the US-Uzbek SOFA further spurred the US to seek airfield access at the Manas International Airport in Kyrgyzstan, which in early 2002 became the primary hub.
for operations in Afghanistan. US military engineers upgraded runaways at the Manas airfield and built an encampment next to the airport, unofficially naming it the Peter J. Ganci airbase. Additionally, Uzbekistan has also offered a base for about 300 German troops at Termez and a land corridor to Afghanistan for humanitarian aid via the Friendship Bridge at Termez. Over 100 French troops have used the Dushanbe airport in Tajikistan for refueling and humanitarian shipments (Nichol 2009: 28).

US-Uzbekistan military relationship continued to develop in a mutually beneficial way, having expanding greatly to build on the joint efforts of operation Enduring Freedom and the War on Terrorism after the September 11 incident. The US looked for Uzbekistan to play a stabilizing and increasingly cooperative role among its neighbors and in the region. The US Administration wanted to advance its objectives in the region by enhancing Uzbekistan’s capability to combat terrorist insurgents and cells in Central Asia. In the Financial Years 2002 and 2003, the US has sanctioned funds for this above purpose. It aimed at promoting interoperability of Uzbekistan’s Ministry of Defense and Border Guard as a part of this goal.

The US policy goals focus on its objectives by preventing the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and associated delivery systems, materials, technologies and expertise across borders, as well as interdicting narcotics and terrorists. All of these goals call for specific military reforms and Uzbekistan has been an enthusiastic partner in this area during Financial Year 2002.

In the matter of nuclear proliferation, the US assisted the transfer of 11 kilograms of enriched uranium fuel, including highly enriched uranium to Russia in September 2004. Furthermore, at the US-Uzbek joint commission meeting in May, 1999, the two sides signed a CTR implementation Agreement, extending new CTR assistance to Uzbekistan. In 1995, the US Defense Department assisted Kazakhstan in sealing at the Semipalitinsk, the former nuclear test site to secure nuclear wastage.
In Uzbekistan, the US Drug Enforcement Administration trained personnel and in May 2003, opened a Sensitive Investigation Unit in the Interior Ministry that has conducted several undercover and international operations. A National Defense Authorization Act for Financial Year 2004, called for up to $40 million in counter-narcotics aid for Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

After the September 11 2001, incident, Tashkent has started strengthening of its strategic relationships with the regional powers along with the US. Its relationship with Russia has been improved, which was once avoided by Tashkent after the immediate disintegration of the Soviet Union. Despite its relations with the US the sole super-power, Uzbekistan has started recognizing the potential of Russia in the spheres of energy and security. Like Kazakhstan, it has also started playing as an independent actor in the Central Asian geopolitics.

After the US involvement in Central Asia in bilateral level, all these Central Asian republics have started playing as independent actors. The US engagement has prompted the regional actors mainly Russia, China and Iran to reassert in this region for achieving their geopolitical needs. Mainly, Russia, the most powerful regional actor started engaging itself in its ‘near abroad’ in the spheres of security, economy and trade. These involvements in Central Asian region have given the newly independent states of this region the opportunity to get the security and economic assistances for resolving their economic and security problems.

The energy rich states such as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have also started diversifying their economic and trade routes to the Western market. The involvement of NATO in Central Asian region has also given them the opportunities to share the developed technicalities with the US in the spheres of military security. Here, it is imperative to note that the energy factor is playing a bigger role in the US policy towards Central Asia. The US proposed pipelines have started playing major roles in the great power rivalry. In order to fulfill its geopolitical needs, Washington has started
focusing on the Central Asia and Caspian region. Though, its bilateral relations with the Central Asian republics are mainly military in nature, America has emphasized on the energy pipelines and the interests of its energy companies in the Caspian geopolitics.

**America’s Caspian Policy**

The US Caspian policy is driven by its economic interests. The main area of concern is to democratize the Caspian littoral states of Central Asia and Caucasus. Washington aims at developing market economy along with political reforms in these newly independent republics, so that these states can become conducive for Western market. The merger of these states into the international economic institutions such as WTO, IMF, etc. is the main concern of the US. As it has been already mentioned that Central Asia and Caspian region is not free from regional conflicts and political instability, thus America wants to make this region free from regional conflict through providing economic aid along with the engagement of NATO. Additionally, the US wants to support the pipelines, which would bypass these two states. In this regard, Baku-Ceyhan pipeline is the clear instance, which has been created to bypass Russia and Iran, while connecting the Caspian resources to the Western market.

First of all the growing geopolitical influence of the Caspian region and secondly the regional instability in the Middle East have made the US to engage in this region. In order to fulfill its geopolitical interest, the US is concentrating on the littoral states such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, which are Newly Independent States and would help America to counter the influence of Russia and Iran. The transportation routes to China could be extended from western Kazakhstan to India through two possible ways such as one from Turkmenistan via Afghanistan and Pakistan and another from Iran via Pakistan or bypassing Pakistan, through the deep water pipeline or importing liquefied natural gas by tankers. The main problem of the US in the Iran-India strategic relationship is that its policy still continued to follow the policy of sanctions towards Iran according to the 1995 Iran-Libya Sanctions Act. According to the US, the so-called “Asian route” could be meant for the independent of the littoral states such as Kazakhstan and
Azerbaijan from the clutch of the US. Additionally, Russia and Iran’s growing influence in Caspian Sea Basin which was regarded as a certain “geopolitical loss” for America (Alam 2005: 169).

U.S policy goals regarding energy resources in Caspian Sea region have included supporting their sovereignty and ties to the West, supporting U.S. private investment, breaking the monopoly of Russia over oil and gas transport routes by encouraging the building of pipelines that would bypass Russia and China, promoting Western energy security through diversified suppliers, assisting ally Turkey, and opposing the building of pipelines that transit "energy competitor" Iran or otherwise neutralize its position in this region. To achieve these above mentioned goals, the Clinton administration endorsed building trans-Caucasus oil and gas pipelines to Turkey, with trans-Caspian links to Central Asia, as part of a "Eurasian Transport Corridor" plan in 1997. In 1998, a Special Advisor to the President and the Secretary of State for Caspian Basin Energy Diplomacy was appointed to coordinate TDA, OPIC, Eximbank and other agency programs to ensure the "development of the Caspian and open commercial access to its energy" and Eximbank opened a Caspian Finance Center in Turkey (ibid:167). The main tasks to be followed by the US in order to fulfill its geopolitical interest in Caspian region are that to maintain regional stability in this Central Asia and Caspian region and create the proper environment for the economic integration of these newly independent states with the International market.

The US Administration appointed number of panels comprising oil corporate experts as well as senior government officials to promote deeper understanding about the Central Asian region in order to control over the huge natural resources of this region. During the period of the US President Bill Clinton, a number of western oil companies were lobbing the US government in order to take major role in the transportation of these resources to the world market (ibid: 168). In this regard, it is quite important to describe about the US proposed pipelines.
US Proposed Pipelines

It has already been discussed that the US Administration had set up panels for pipelines routes in the Caspian Sea Basin, which could facilitate for fulfilling its geopolitical interest such as: to connect the abundant resources of this region to the Western market. Here, it is quite important to mention these pipelines in order to analyze the US strategy in the Caspian geopolitics.

The US supported pipelines are as follows: first one runs from Baku, through Chechnya and to the Russian Black Sea port of Novorossiisk. Second one is Baku to Georgian Black Sea port of Supsa, north of Poti, which can be called as Supsa line. Additionally, the three major pipelines are under consideration, among these lines two are oil pipelines and other one is for gas (US Department of Energy, Energy Information Administration 2007).

Caspian Pipeline Consortium is running from Kazakhstan to Tikhoretsk and onto Novorossiisk. Second one is Trans-Caspian gas line from Turkmenistan through Caspian, Azerbaijan, and Georgia to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan, which can be called as Trans-Caspian gas line. Third one is quite important oil pipeline that runs from Baku (Azerbaijan) to Turkey’s port Ceyhan and oil can be transported from there through tankers to the Western market (ibid).

The main objective behind these proposed lines was to facilitate the overall development of the region. The vast natural resources of this region would provide tremendous economic benefits to all the newly independent states of the Caspian Sea Basin, helping to bolster national viability and build democratic institutions and market economies. If these natural resources were not well managed, then these states would aggravate tensions, increase instability, and undermine the viability and independence of them.
Among all these proposed pipelines, the US policy has, in effect, focused on the creation of an East-West corridor, which is to bypass Russia and Iran. And, the Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey corridor is set to become one of the major routes for the transport of Caspian oil to Western markets once the BTC pipeline is fully operational. On the other hand, Russia in order to contain the US influence in its traditional sphere of influence is focusing on upgrading and developing pipelines that lie exclusively on Russian territory and promoting the "North-South corridor" for exports of Caspian energy. The Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan oil pipeline project aims at the transportation of crude oil produced in the Caspian Sea Basin by a pipeline to a maritime terminal on the Mediterranean coast of Turkey in Ceyhan and to world market by tankers. The pipeline has an approximate length of 1,100 miles or 1,770 kilometres, which would cost an estimated US $3.6 billion. The pipeline would have a capacity of one million barrels per day. On September 20 1994, in Baku, a group of foreign oil companies led by British Petroleum signed an US $8 billion production sharing deal with Azerbaijan Stated oil company, SOCAR, which was called "Contract of the Century.

The main objectives of the pipeline was to deny Iran, a significant actor as a leading Caspian energy exporter, reduce the dependence of Caspian states on Russian pipelines, and bolster fledging regional economies, especially those of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey. America and Turkey alliance made it into a realistic dream, where Western oil companies supported the $3.4 billion project. And, BTC is the first project aimed at changing the power balance of the region, which would bypass Russia and Iran, the two leading regional actors in CSB. Since 2006, the BTC line has been started operating which given the chance to export the region's greatest oil reserves, such as Kazakhstan's Kashagan field. With Chevron Texaco's involvement in the project, it can be argued that BTC has gained a kind of guarantee for a sustainable, direct, steady, and reliable supply of crude oil from Kazakhstan's Tengiz and Kashagan fields which will keep it operational well beyond its estimated lifetime and capacity (Babali 2005). But, the main point here is the availability of oil resources for running this pipeline.
The main obstacle in front of the US is the availability of enough oil and natural gas to supply these various pipelines. In this case, Russian-supported pipelines are ahead of the US-supported pipelines, because of the abundant availability of supplies. Because, all the newly independent states of Caspian region have vast potential of oil and gas resources. Their potential profitability makes them attracting to central and eastern European countries that are trying to reduce dependence on Russia (Woehrel 2008: 16). Moscow can use its effective energy policy to invite western European firms for investing in its oil and natural gas fields. In this case, it is imperative for the US to promote its energy companies to invest in Moscow.

The US has emphasized the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline in order to bypass Russia and Iran. But, the fact is that there is not enough oil has been discovered yet to justify its construction. The Caspian oil resources are not enough like the Middle East. The oil resources of Persian Gulf spread across eight different countries. On the contrary, In Central Asia and Caucasus, only three countries have major hydrocarbon deposits—Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Among these three countries only Kazakhstan holds up to 80 per cent of the region's future oil potential. The resources of other two countries are doubtful according to some geologists. The potential of oil reserves of Central Asia and Caucasus currently represent less than 3 per cent of world's proven oil reserves. By comparison, proven oil reserves in the Middle East account for 55 per cent of the world's proven reserves. Additionally, it is quite difficult to drill the CSB and it is debarred from modern technology, because of its location i.e. land locked region. It has to rely on extremely limited supply routes, such as the Volga River, for bringing in necessary equipment. And, this region is being located at a great distance form the world's major energy-consuming regions, so that the littoral states of CSB need expensive pipelines built through neighboring countries (Jaffey and Manning 1998-99: 114-6).

The dilemma in the US foreign policy has debarred it from taking any positive measures in this region. The Republican government in the US headed by G.W. Bush has emphasized on the regional stability and domestic reforms, which is against the interests
of most of the Central Asian Republics. This policy has adverse impact on the western oil companies, because they do not want to wait for a long time. Additionally, the proposed Baku-Ceyhan pipeline is too costly to be feasible in the near future.

The Western companies are trying to improve their own relations with Russia’s oil company Gazprom and other Russian parties that may help enhance their chances of monetizing assets. Some companies have hopes on US-Iranian relations which would open the possibility of more economical export routes through Iran. Other companies would like to see a shorter-cheaper bypass of Turkey’s Bosporus Strait constructed only once it is seen definitely that the waterway cannot handle rising oil tanker traffic. In this regard, the US-Iran relation can also be regarded as a major factor regarding the oil politics in the Caspian region (Jaffey 2001).

Another challenge to US-supported efforts is posed by Russia and Iran. They have asserted that no country bordering the Caspian Sea can legally undertake projects such as building a pipeline on the seabed or drilling for oil and gas there without the consent of all Caspian littoral states. Although the other littoral states such as Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan reject the Russo-Iranian view, this position could make potential investors’ apprehension of investing in such project. Shipments via oil tankers across the Caspian to Baku can be increased, but would be more expensive (Woehrel 2008: 17).

Russia is also using its political and economic levers to strike a hard bargain with Central Asian countries on the use of its supported pipelines. They have another option to develop pipelines eastward, toward China and the rest of Asia (ibid: 18). It would have repercussion on US-supported pipelines, because, they may not go for these US-supported routes and Russia-supported routes. In this context, the US has to compete with China, an emerging actor in Central Asian geopolitics.
Role of Western Oil companies in Caspian Sea Region

After the disintegration of Soviet Union, the US companies have started showing interests to invest in Caspian Sea Basin, because of the growing geopolitical importance of this region after Middle East. American oil companies such as Chevron, Pennzoil, Exxon, Mobil, Texaco, Amoco, Union oil Company of California (UNOCAL), Enron, Schlumberger and Atlantic Richfield have started working in Central Asia and Trans-Caucasia in order to exploit the oil resources. These companies have invested in the ‘deal of the century’ in Azerbaijan. The US is assisting its companies to work in this region in order to fulfill its geopolitical needs (Peuch 2001:173).

On the other hand, the newly independent states of this region such as Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan were anxious to invite the US after getting independence from the Soviet Union in order to gain US dollars from the pipeline projects to revive their shattered economies. In this context, Washington’s aim in the Caspian Sea Basin is two-fold. On the one hand, it has desired to ensure for itself safe access to the underwater hydrocarbon reserves and, therefore, to protect US investments in the region. On the other hand, it wants to create some sort of ‘neutral zone’ bordering Russia, Iran, Afghanistan and China. Because, these powers were considered by Washington as its competitors in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Caspian region. The short term strategy of Washington was to maintain regional stability in this region through economic and political reforms in these states. On the other hand, it had to soften its stances which it had taken earlier. For an instance, the US imposed Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act on Azerbaijan (ibid).

The US congress passed this act in 1992 to facilitate economic and humanitarian aid to the former republics of the Soviet Union, hoping it would help stabilize democratic forms of government and foster economic growth. There were 15 erstwhile Soviet republics: Armenia, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, those who received aid under this legislation. Only Azerbaijan was restricted to get the economic assistance as per the legislation, because of its conflict with Armenia over...
Nagorno-Karabakh region. As per the title 9: Section 907, "United States assistance under this or any other act may not be provided to the government of Azerbaijan until the President determines, and so reports to the Congress that the Government of Azerbaijan is taking demonstrable steps to cease all blockades and other offensive uses of force against Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh" (Section 907 of Freedom Support Act 1992).

But, the US companies lobbied to repeal this section for the energy oil development. According to C.D. Sabathier, president of Mobil Oil New exploration and Producing Ventures for the CIS and Caspian regions, providing Azerbaijan with financial assistance would help consolidate 'Azerbaijan's prosperous secular government' and, thus, protect US investments in this country. In September 1998, Washington used the international financial institutions to leverage its economic assistance to Baku (Azerbaijan) before the House Appropriations Committee agreed to lift Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act (Peuch 2001:174).

In the context of pipeline routes, the then energy secretary and the oil company Amoco approved Baku-Supsa-Ceyhan route as the main export corridor, which would bypass Russia and Iran. This was the clear instance of the coinciding of American energy policies with the oil companies. But, there was still one case of disagreement in the issue of US-Iranian bitter relation. Though, US oil companies lobbied to lift the embargo on Tehran, the Clinton administration was reluctant to soften its stance towards the Iranian government in the issues of Iran's relation with Islamic fundamentalist groups such as Al-Qaeda. Another reason was that the US did not want to see Iran as a growing regional power, which would create problem to Israel and Turkey in the geopolitics of Central Asia and Caspian. In order to check the growing influence of Iran, in 1984, the US imposed the Foreign Assistance Act, which severely limited business contacts between American and Iranian companies.

America also imposed Iran Libya sanctions Act (ILSA) which was adopted in 1996 in order to take action against non-US firms that invested US $20 million or more a
year in Iran’s oil and gas sector. The ILSA Act introduced the US sanctions during the Clinton administration in response to Iran’s stepped up nuclear programme and its support to terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah, Hamas, and Palestine Islamic Jihad. President Clinton issued Executive Order 12959 on May 6 1995, banning US trade with and investment in Iran. The logic was that these sanctions would curb the strategic threat from Iran by hindering its ability to modernize its key petroleum sector, which generates about 20% of its GDP. Iran’s onshore oil fields, as well as its oil industry infrastructure are aging and need substantial investment. Its large natural gas resources were undeveloped when Iran Sanction Act was first considered (Iran-Libya Sanctions Act 1996).

On the other hand, Iran wanted to be the main export corridor for Central Asian oil and gas. The Central Asian countries such as Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan as well as foreign investors including the US oil companies have predicted that Iran would be the shortest and cheapest route to Europe and Asia. Additionally, the pro-Azeri lobby in Washington was trying to impress on the Clinton administration that the Iranian embargo was no longer profitable and insisted that the ILSA should be repealed (Peuch 2007: 176-7).

In September 1997, Total, Gazprom and Malaysia’s Petronas Dagang Bhd signed a US $2 billion deal to develop the vast natural gas reserves of the South Pars deposit in southern Iran. Due to amidst protests from Russia and European countries, the US government gave up the idea of imposing sanctions on the signatories as per the ILSA act. In another instance, the Anglo-Dutch group Royal Dutch/Shell decided to open an office in Tehran for a projected gas pipeline running from Turkmenistan and Iran and it was later on joined by British Petroleum (BP), France’s Elf Aquitaine and Italy’s Agip. In this situation, it was difficult for the US government to impose sanction on these companies. In 1998, American oil company chief executive Archie Durham described the ILSA not only as being inefficient, but also as doing ‘devastating harm’ to US ties with its allies. Therefore, he said, his company would go ahead with its cooperation with Iran.
In the meantime, European oil companies were taking advantage over the major US companies from the Iranian market to negotiate lucrative projects with Tehran. The US policy towards Iran puts American companies 'in a distinct competitive disadvantage in those parts of the world where energy companies are allowed' (ibid: 177). Due to the pressure of the private energy companies, the US government has to reconsider its energy policy regarding Caspian geopolitics. Additionally, the US has the focus to resolve the regional security problems in this region.

The Role of US in Regional Security Problems of CSB

The continuing unresolved legal status of the Caspian Sea has threatened to create conflict among the littoral states. Although Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan have signed bilateral agreements demarcating their respective sectors of the Sea, no multilateral agreement has been concluded among the five littoral states yet. Because, there are conflicts among the littoral states regarding the ownership of certain oil fields as it is between Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan on the ownership of Chirag oil deposits. And, Iran’s military response to an Azeri exploration vessel in July 2001 heightened tensions regarding oil and natural gas production in the southern Caspian. Thus, the unresolved conflicts among the littoral states of Caspian Sea region regarding the legal status of the Sea have hindered the construction of any new pipelines in this region. Several trans-Caspian oil and natural gas export pipelines have been proposed, but none will be implemented until an agreement clarifying the Sea's status can be reached among the five littoral states. The continuing unresolved legal status of the Caspian Sea has threatened to create conflict among several among the littoral states. Although, Russia, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan have signed bilateral agreements demarcating their respective sectors of the Sea, no multilateral agreement has been concluded among the five littoral states, and the southern part of the Caspian, especially, has remained in dispute (Sulaiman 2001). These regional conflicts in the Caspian basin have compelled the US to engage itself through its NATO to resolve. In this context, it is important to analyze the role of NATO in Caspian geopolitics.
Recent developments in Caspian Sea Basin in the sphere of necessary export of pipelines have been slowed by regional conflicts, political instability and lack of regional cooperation. Furthermore, many of the proposed export routes pass through conflict ridden regions, where conflicts remain unresolved. Although these proposed pipelines offer the hope of long-term prosperity, the long term regional conflicts have compelled energy companies and potential investors to think seriously before investing in this region.

Most of these conflicts are in the Trans-Caucasus part of the Caspian region, where conflicts in Nagorno-Karabakh, Georgia, and the Chechen republic of southern Russia have created obstacles on the path of development of export routes westward from the Caspian Sea. On the east side of the Caspian, the unstable situation in Afghanistan, following over 23 years of war, has checked the development of export routes to the southeast. Additionally, the prolonged threat of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia especially in Uzbekistan would prohibit any new export pipelines involving that country. In the South Asian region, the existing conflict between India and Pakistan serves as a further deterrent to Caspian export pipelines running south east, either via Iran or the unstable Afghanistan.

Role of NATO in the Caspian Region

Another mode of engagement in the Central Asia and Caspian region is the Western military engagement under the umbrella of NATO's Partnership for Peace program. As it has already been mentioned that, Energy Security is of increasing importance to the US and its European allies, NATO, the multilateral alliance which is consisted of European countries has begun to discuss the issue as an allied concern. Because, most of the European countries are heavily dependent on imported energy and Russia is a key supplier of oil and natural gas. And a fact is that these countries import 25% of their energy needs from Russia. By 2030, EU countries will import 40% of their gas needs from Russia, and 45% of their oil from the Middle East (CRS Report on NATO and Energy Security 2007). Additionally, oil in particular is an important factor in the World economy; these countries are no longer in a position to depend on the Middle East, because of this region's security issues.
On the other hand, they do not want Russia’s domination, because, Moscow has not allowed foreign ownership of its pipelines, and squeezed out some foreign companies that have been developing its energy reserves. Due to this reason, the US and its Western allies have proposed Trans-Caucasian pipeline in order to avoid Russian dominancy. Another problem is the Caspian and Central Asian region is not free from regional security problems, thus, the US officials believe that NATO could play a role in building International political solidarity in the event of a deliberative disruption of energy flows. And, NATO might coordinate policies among member-states and with non-member partners’ governments to share resources and to bring an end to energy disruption.

During 109th Congress, the Senate passed S.RES 456, which urged the administration to raise the issue of energy security in North Atlantic Council, and to report the results of such a meeting to Congress. Several House and Senate Committees held hearings on the issue of energy security, which emphasized on the possibility of NATO’s role (ibid). Thus, the role of NATO has been expanded from purely military nature to maintain International political solidarity among the Western energy companies, Caspian littoral states and regional powers in the Caspian Sea Basin. But, the US engagement in this region in the regional level has its effect on the regional and littoral states in Central Asia and the Caucasian region.

US Engagement in CSB and its Impact on Regional Actors

The US long term interest in Caspian region has its impact on the regional actors such as Russia, Iran and China. The US policy towards Iran has been designed to prevent energy companies from investing in Iranian pipelines for transporting Caspian resources to international markets. But, the US position in its relation with Iran may create tension between it on the one hand and Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan on the other.
Russia is an important regional power in Caspian Sea Basin. In order to defend its geopolitical interests, the US is compelled to emphasize on Moscow’s relationship with the region on its broader bilateral agenda. None of them can step out of Caspian Sea Basin, because they have stakes in the natural resources of this region. The US agenda should be to shape Russia’s role in its near abroad to postures that can enhance those interests, which the US, Turkey and Russia share in the spheres of regional stability, economic development, trade and a reduction of human suffering and ethnic warfare. Because, the bitter experiences of both Russia and the US in Chechnya and Balkan respectively have taught them the lessons that single handedly they cannot resolve the regional security problems. Even during the time of the US war against the Taliban forces in Afghanistan, both the countries have cooperated with each other despite the old rivalry i.e. the Cold War rivalry. Another reason is that, the US cannot completely underestimate Russia, because the latter has historical, cultural, economic and military ties with the states of Central Asia and Caspian region along with Iran and Turkey.

The Caspian and Central Asian region is regarded as a Muslim dominated area, surrounded by Muslim states such as Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, which may be emerged into a strong Islamic bloc. It may become a great challenge to the Western notions of democracy. After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the US has tried to counter the influence of Iran diplomatically in this region in order to keep these states from fundamentalist ideals (Sulaiman 2001). Despite the victory of moderate forces after Khatami coming to the power, the US has been yet pursuing suspicious attitude towards Tehran. The main concern of the US government is the nuclear test conducted by Iran. The US still believes that Russia has provided support to the Iranian nuclear programme. In this context, it is a fact that Moscow has supported Iran’s Bushehr reactor project. Under US pressure, Russian president Putin instituted new and tighter control export controls in 2000. However, Russia has not given up its support to this project (Barnes 2002: 14).

After September 11, incident, there was some speculation that Washington might find Tehran as a useful ally against Taliban. Because, prior to this incident, Iran hated the
Taliban regime in Afghanistan more than after the alleged murder of Iranian diplomats and journalists in Mazar-e-sharif. Both Iran and Russia did not object the US military engagement in Central Asia during its war against Taliban forces in Afghanistan. Rather, it was an opportunity for both Moscow and Tehran to oust the Taliban regime. Instead of Iran's tacit support, the US never relied on Iran. The relation between Washington and Tehran is still hostile. Moreover, the Bagram air base, which is 40 kilometers from Kabul, emerged as a major US facility with 5,000 troops is close to the northern Iranian city of Mashad. It can be regarded as a threat to the security of Iran from America (Alam 2005: 193). The US government concerns about Iran's nuclear programme by the possible future acquisition of WMDs. It became clear in 2002, when the US President G.W. Bush linked Iran and North Korea as part of "axis of evil" in his address to state of the Union.

The US also deployed its Air Force in Azerbaijan to check the influence of Iran in Caspian region. Because, in July 2001, Iran adopted coercive diplomacy, which included the deployment of Iranian warship in Azerbaijan's territorial water. Iran's action against Azerbaijan was intended to force Baku to relinquish claims to the Araz-Alov-Sharg Oil deposits in the Caspian Sea, which it also claimed. Iranian air force fighters threatened the BP/AMOCO ship, which was exploring that area (Blank A 2002). As a result, on March 27-28 2002, the first bilateral US-Azerbaijan military consultations took place in Baku, which focused on naval defense in the Caspian and on standardization of air controls, as well as training programmes (Blank B 2002). The main aim of America's military engagement with Azerbaijan was to protect its geopolitical interests from the coercive action of Iran.

Thus, Tehran wanted to take serious measures against the growing influence of the US in Central Asia and Caspian region. Iran has been trying to strengthen its relations with Tajikistan, Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan in order to gain a larger share of Caspian wealth (Alam 2005: 194). Thus, Iran's relations with America have not been improved yet and it is still full of uncertainties. In the future, it may create regional tensions in the vast Post-Soviet space. Thus, the improvement of relations between Tehran and Washington is quite necessary for regional stability in the Central Asia and Caspian

127
region. In terms of Caspian geopolitics, the US government is facing pressure from its oil companies to repeal the Iran-Libya sanctions act so that they can invest in Iran. In this regard, the US has to reconsider its policy towards Iran.

In the case of China, the US policy is quite ambiguous. The USA has not opposed oil or gas pipeline routes from Kazakhstan to China and even given consideration to providing credits to a US firm to participate. However, China has still viewed the US as its strong competitor in Central Asia. China along with Russia has engaged in the Central Asian and Caspian region for fulfilling its energy needs. Beijing has also concern for the regional security problems. Like, Russia and the US, China has the aim at maintaining regional stability in this region. It has military engagement with Russia and four of the Central Asian republics under the aegis of SCO. It is considered as an emerging regional power in Central Asian region.

China has its geopolitical interests in Central Asian region. It has a strong bilateral relation with Kazakhstan, the newly independent Caspian littoral states. Kazakhstan is a reliable trade partner of China since its independence. China proposed pipeline is also gaining importance in Central Asian geopolitics. In the near future, it can compete with the US backed pipelines. One advantage of this pipeline is the availability of sufficient oil and safe passage. Though, China would not pose a direct threat to the US and its allies in the future, it remains a strong competitor to the US in this region due its strategic relations with the newly independent states of Central Asia and Russia. It would remain active in the Central Asian geopolitics.

Turkey is another regional player and the NATO ally has also dictated that US policy makers give Caspian energy issues top priority. It has actively lobbied the US and its oil companies to help it find a solution to what it terms unacceptable shipping congestion through its environmentally sensitive Bosporus straits, which currently serve as a passage for the transport of 1.2 million barrels a day of oil.
A large rise in Caspian and Russian oil exports could potentially bring tanker traffic through the Bosporus to dangerous levels, Turkey argues, endangering the population of Istanbul, which borders the water way. The matter is being investigated by several world bodies, including the International Maritime Organization and Turkey has already sparred with Russia over the issue of accident insurance for tankers passing the straits, Russia argues that improved management and traffic control equipment would permit safe passage of projected oil exports through the Straits. Free passage through the waterway is guaranteed by the Montreux Convention of 1936. This Convention provides the legal basis in international law for passage of warships of non-Black Sea states through the Turkish Straits. In peacetime, only light and support naval ships with a tonnage less than 15,000 tons during their transit through the Straits are allowed, and their number must not be more than nine with a 15-day notification of the Turkish government (Murinson 2008).

Turkey’s concern for the future of the Bosporus Straits has led it to lobby for the construction of an oil pipeline that would extend from Baku to Ceyhan. Since, 1995, the US government has assertively backed this routing, not only to show support for Turkey, but also because it believes that such pipeline will enhance economic and political ties in the region and cement its independence from the undue influences of Russia and Iran. In order to achieve its geopolitical importance in this region, the US Administration supported the 1998 Ankara Declaration of support for the Baku-Ceyhan pipeline project by the Turkish President and other regional leaders, including the Presidents of Georgia and Azerbaijan (Nassibli: 2000). However, commercial and political barriers have so far blocked the development of the Baku-Ceyhan line, and this has raised questions about the effectiveness of US diplomacy in the region.

Apart from being the Cold-War ally of the US, Turkey’s democratic and secular political culture could strengthen its relation with the US. It has also aim to expand its influence in Central Asian region. It has extended huge amount of economic aid to these states in the form of providing scholarships to the students of this region. Its secular model has also attracted the Central Asian states to maintain cordial relations with
Turkey. So, these are the factors which have made the US to use Turkey as a bulwark against Iran. Turkey also support Baku-Ceyhan pipeline because it would cover 1,037 Kilometers of its territory.

Azerbaijan one of the littoral states is the focal point of the US. Because, its location, which can connect the East-West corridor, i.e. Baku-Ceyhan pipeline. It links the Central Asian states to the Caucasus and onwards with the Black Sea and the Mediterranean regions. In September of 1994 Heydar Aliyev, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan, issued a decree to allow the State Oil Company of the Azerbaijan Republic (SOCAR) to sign a contract with the International Consortium of oil companies. The Consortium consisted of oil companies like "AMOCO Caspian Sea Petroleum Ltd"., "British Petroleum Exploration (Caspian Sea) Ltd., "Den Norske Stats Oleselskap A.S","LUKoil" joint stock company, "Mc Dermott Azerbaijan Incorporated," "Pennzoil Caspian Corporation", "Ramco Khazar Energy Ltd.,” "Turkish Petroleum A.O." and "UNOCAL Khazar Ltd”. The contract provides oil developments in the above-mentioned deposits for the term of 30 years (Contract of The Century 1994). After coming to know the significance of Azerbaijan, the US lifted its sanction which had been imposed in 1992 due to the cause of ‘Nagorno Karabakh conflict’.

US Policy towards Central Asia after September 11, 2001

The US policy towards Central Asia after 9/11 incident has made a dramatic reconfiguration in the global politics as well as a shift in the ranking of American foreign and security priorities. The relocation of Central Asia from the periphery to the very centre of its strategic interest has affected the regional actors like China, Russia and Iran. The war on terrorism has brought with it a new dimension and has intensely involved the US in the region. The US government has acquired the transit rights for passage of war planes and military supplies from the countries in Central Asia, West Asia and their periphery, a projection of American power into the centre of Eurasian landmass.
The US war on terrorism was cordially supported by Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan; the Central Asian Republics who provided their territories for stationing of US forces during the latter’s war on terrorism in Afghanistan. The US granted financial assistance to these republics for the maintenance of its forces. Additionally, it ensured them for more loans through International Monetary Fund and World Bank to revive their fragile economies. Because, the US policy was motivated by creating Central Asia as an economically and militarily stable region to contain the Islamic threats which would safeguard its interest such as the exploitation of vast natural oil and gas resources through its proposed pipelines.

Even the US and the Central Asian Republics signed defense cooperation accords prior to September 11, 2001, which could provide frameworks for aid and joint staff and working group contacts and facilitated enhanced cooperation aftermath. A fact was that the US-Uzbek had some clandestine efforts against Al Qaeda in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan provided a base for US cooperation at Karshi-Khanabad.

Like, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan also provided over-flight rights and expedited rail transshipment of supplies. Turkmenistan permitted blanket over-flight and refueling privileges for humanitarian flights in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Tajikistan permitted use of its international airport in Dushanbe for US, British, and French refueling and basing. Though, the US administration rejected the idea of the permanent bases in Central Asian region, but, the US Defense Department stated that US defense and security cooperation in Central Asia must continue to support actions to deter or defeat terrorist threats in the foreseeable future and to build effective armed forces under civilian control. The fact sheet of the State Department also mentioned that the US military presence in this region will remain as long as operations continue in Afghanistan. Furthermore, the Washington Post reported on March 25, 2004, that the US administration may be considering asking Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan for long-term access to military facilities for emergency training and staging by rapid-reaction forces under a new US military basing strategy.
After the September 11, 2001, the US signed many security accords with the Central Asian Republics. These included the US-Uzbekistan Declaration on the Strategic Partnership signed on March 12 2002, which covered non-specific security guarantee. It meant, in case of serious external security threat to Uzbekistan’s security, the US would consult with Uzbekistan on an urgent basis regarding a response. Like, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan’s President Askar Akayev also pledged to deepen the strategic partnership with the US in September 23, 2002, in a joint statement with the US President Mr. George Bush, which included the cooperation of these two countries in counter-terrorism and the US was agreed to give aid for Kyrgyzstan’s border security and military capabilities.

There are serious discussions going on in the US Congress regarding the US military aid to the Central Asian Republics in particular and the Former Soviet Union in general. Most of the US policy makers are supporting the US aid to the newly independent states, because it can help to spread democratic principles and market economies in this region and make a peaceful environment, which would conducive for the US to fulfill its geopolitical interests in this region.

But, some of them are not satisfied with this strategy, because, the US aid after the September 11 2001, incident has been focusing on the military aid rather than reforming the authoritarian governments and poor human rights record in the Central Asian Republics. These steps may adversely affect the security situation of this region. These predictions are true in the sense that the US government has emphasized on the geopolitical interests in the Central Asia and Caspian region. It has tried to create conducive environment in this region for its energy companies to fulfill its energy thirst. The Central Asian leaders also do not want to reform their government for the betterment of their concerned republics. The violation of human rights, corruption, repressive governments’ policies are still prevalent after the US engagement during the Operation Enduring Freedom. Though, the ousting of Taliban regime in Afghanistan, the death of Juma Namangani, the leader of IMU during the US bombings are the instances, which can give temporary relief to the leaders of Central Asian republics, the deplorable
conditions such as poverty, illiteracy, mass-unrest, unemployment are yet the major reasons for the uprising of mass-unrest in this region, which would benefit the fundamentalist groups for their future plan of action.

The US presence in Central Asia has changed the geopolitical situation of this region. The role of America in the regional security issues such as Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and the legal status of Caspian Sea Basin, has not brought any positive outcome. The role of US as an arbitrator is also full of uncertainties. Its policy has mainly emphasized on diminishing the influences of Russia and Iran in this region. And, Washington's military aid to the states such as Azerbaijan, Georgia, along with the Central Asian republics has only short term goals and would create regional instability in the future.

Its policy towards Iran and Russia is quite doubtful. The US action to alienate these two regional actors in the Caspian pipeline diplomacy has not been proved fruitful. Because, these powers have the traditional linkages with the newly independent states of Central Asia and Caspian and in any case of conflicts, these republics have to rely on Russia and Iran. Furthermore, these states have provided them the opportunity to exploit the natural resources through the existing pipelines, which are proved to be cost-effective.

The US proposed pipelines have provided them the new opportunity to connect their resources with the Western market and the advanced technical expertise to explore the resources in the land-locked region would help them to explore the yet-to-be discover resources in the vast Post-Soviet space. But, the availability of resources to run these pipelines in the future is doubtful. For this reason, the Western companies are not ready to take the risk, while investing in these pipelines. Rather, they have shown their interests to invest in Russia-supported pipelines and in Iran.
The US has provided economic aid through international institutions to promote democratic values and market economy in the states of Central Asia. It has also promoted the non-government organizations in this region to change the existing the political structure in Central Asia and Caucasus. These attempts have caused for color revolutions in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan for regime change in these states. These attempts have created suspicious attitude among the Central Asian republics towards the US policy. They have now started trying to keep away from America. For an instance, Uzbekistan gave time limit to the US for shutting its Karshi-Khanabad base for allied forces, which it provided during the Operation Enduring Freedom. This incident has shown the adverse effect of US policy towards Central Asia.

The US military engagement in the Central Asian region to overthrow the Taliban regime along with resolving the traditional security problems such as narcotic trade, organized crime, etc. has proved partially successful. Because, the establishment of a secure government in Afghanistan is still a difficult task for the US allied NATO forces. The Taliban forces are still active in Afghanistan and Pakistan and are posing threats to the citizens of these countries. On the other hand, the NATO’s bombings to counter the Taliban militia have caused for severe casualties in these regions.

Thus, the impact of US engagement in Central Asia is short-term and has bore mixed fruits. It has strengthened the newly independent states of Central Asia for formulating independent foreign policies and maintaining relations with their neighbor along with the Western countries. The US-led NATO’s PfP program has provided the leaders of this region a platform to discuss about the regional security problems, which lacked earlier. The involvement of Western and Eastern energy companies in the Caspian region has enhanced the importance of these republics. Now, they can formulate their energy policies for reviving the economy, while exploiting the natural resources with modern expertise. These states have diversified their energy pipelines to the West and the East. These reasons have made Russia to stress on the Central Asian republics and Caucasus in the spheres of military and trade. Russian President Vladimir Putin took
active interest in strengthening Russia’s relations with Central Asian republics through pragmatic foreign policy.

Despite these positive changes, the leaders of Central Asia have to focus on the political reforms in their states. Because, the problems such as authoritarian government and the lack of freedom of media have caused for “democratic-deficit” in these republics. There is lack of coordination among the leaders of these republics in the case of economic, political and military relations among them in all the matters of development. For the betterment of this region as a whole all these states have to promote democratic values, freedom along with a proper economic system, which can suit to the political and economic conditions of these countries. In the matters of foreign policy, all these republics have to follow pragmatic policies, while maintaining strategic relations with the regional and external powers for the economic and security benefits due to their own limitations. In the case of Caspian pipeline diplomacy, all these powers have to follow effective energy policies towards the neighbouring states of Caucasus such as Azerbaijan and Georgia, regional powers such as Russia, China, Iran, Turkey and India along with external power such as America for extracting maximum benefit and looking after the environment of Caspian region.