Power rivalry between Russia and the US has its root in the Cold War period. During this period, both the powers were engaged in confronting with each other through a system of alliances and counter-alliances. Towards the end of this long confrontation the events such as the fall of Berlin wall, the disintegration of Warsaw pact, the Soviet withdrawal of troops from Eastern Europe were supported by the US led Western alliance and finally, the Cold War ended with the sad demise of the Soviet Union.

After many years of Cold War, the events like eastward expansion of NATO, terrorist attack in America on September 11, 2001 followed by the US war against Taliban forces in Afghanistan and the establishment of the US led NATO forces in the Central Asian region brought the former adversaries into the sphere of power-rivalry. Again Russia ceased to be a super-power following the Soviet break up and pursued a pro American policy for some time. However, after short honeymoon in relationship, their interests clashed in a world, where the US becomes the only super power.

In this regard, the proposed study has focussed on the term “power rivalry” as a competition for vast natural resources and the dominance over Central Asian region, which has geopolitical importance. Furthermore, the unexpected independence of Central Asian Republics from Soviet Union made them the breeding ground for the terrorist outfits like Al-Qaeda, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), etc. Along with the rise of Islamic fundamentalism in the region, civil war in Tajikistan and the growing influence of Islamic countries such as Iran and Turkey in Central Asian region were the matters of pressing concern for Russia. Because, Moscow has geographical proximity with the Central Asian region and in case of any happening in this region, it may have its serious repercussions for Russia. Furthermore, US military engagement in Russia’s traditional sphere of influence during its war against the Taliban forces in Afghanistan made Moscow to reengage in Central Asia.
Geopolitical Dimension of Power Rivalry

In the current power rivalry, both the powers want to establish control over the resources of Central Asia. Unlike, the Cold-War phase, both the adversaries are eager to make Central Asian region stable in order to exploit the natural resources of this region. This common concern on part of both the powers is reflected by a willingness to harmonize their interests in the region. Besides their common interests, both the powers are competing for the vast natural resources of the region. The main factor for this rivalry is the geopolitical importance of Central Asian region, due to which the two major powers are at their logger head. The main aim of ‘new great game’ phase is to establish control over the territory. In this context, it is imperative to analyze the term “geopolitics”.

Theories of Geopolitics

“Geopolitics is the study of the influence of geographical factors on state’s behaviour—how location, climate, natural resources, population and physical terrain determines a state’s foreign policy options and its position in the hierarchy of states” (Griffiths, Martin and Callaghan, O’ Terry, 2004: 120). In other words, Geopolitics is the practice of states controlling and competing for territory. Geopolitics, as thought and practice, is linked to the establishment of states and nation-states as the dominant political institutions. Rather Geopolitics is connected to the end of nineteenth century, a period of increasing competition between the most powerful states and it is the theories generated at this time, which can be labeled as “classic geopolitics”. During this period, “Geopolitics was understood as the realm of inter-state conflict, with the quiet assumption that the only states being discussed were the powerful Western countries” (Flint 2006: 13).

The Great Game and Geopolitics

In this context, it is pertinent here to briefly discuss about the great game phase, because it was a competition between two adversaries for the domination over a particular region. The term, “Great Game” was coined by Rudyard Kipling in 1830s. It was linked with geopolitical discourses. This term was widespread during 19th century due to the conflict
between British and Russian empires over Central Asian region, which had geopolitical importance. The "Great Game" was consisted of three phases. It was started in 18th century and ended with consolidation of Bolshevik power over the old tsarist domains. Domination by territorial control was the central focus of both the adversaries of the "great game" (Edwards 2003: 84-5).

Geopolitical Dimension of "new great game"

After the end of old "Great Game" phase, the "new great game" phase has been started, which had its root in Cold-War phase. During Cold War phase, the two adversaries such as Soviet Union and United States of America had conflict over the control of the territories that was provoked by geopolitical terms and images such as "the Iron Curtain", the "free world" and the threat of Communism from the perspective of Western governments and the "Imperialism" of America from the Soviet Union's perspective (Flint 2006: 13).

The Cold War ended with the demise of Soviet Union, which made the former Soviet space vulnerable for external, regional and non-state actors to compete for the natural resources such as oil and gas. This phase is considered as "new great game" phase. The main reason of this competition is to control over the vast natural resources of Central Asia and Caspian region. It is rather a multidimensional security, geopolitical and economic game. And this new competition is a permanent challenge for America and Russia. Not only, these two major powers but also the powers like, China, Iran, India and Turkey along with multilateral security organizations such as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), etc are involved in this struggle for domination.

In the context of "new great game" phase, geopolitics can be regarded as the practice and representation of territorial strategies. In the contemporary world politics, terrorist attack against America on September 11, 2001 followed by the US war against
terrorists in Afghanistan, deployment of American troops in the bases of Central Asian Republics indicate the relevance of geopolitics. Geopolitics is not a matter of countries competing with one another over territories. Rather the competition for territory is broader than state practices. It can also include inter-ethnic strife inside a country, narcotic trade, organized crimes, armed conflicts etc. Now, it is not the preservation of state to control the territories of other countries. Many non-state actors such as terrorist organizations, multinational companies and multilateral security organizations are involved in a particular region, which is rich in natural resources.

While the objective of the old “great game” was the hegemonic domination, the new phase is far more diverse. The actors are concern for the regional security problems, which has been already discussed. In order to fulfill their geopolitical interests, the actors have formed many multilateral security structures, which have an added impetus to the geopolitics of Central Asia and Caspian region. On the other hand, the newly independent states of Central Asia have started searching for the new opportunities for reviving their fragile economies. Thus, unlike the old “great game” phase, the “new great game” phase is quite complex, that has to be analyzed through different theories of geopolitics propounded by many geopolitical thinkers and strategists. They have developed their interests in this discourse as a science of statecraft or as a method of study the supposed significance of geographical factors in international relations. Among them, to name a few Sir Halford John Mackinder, Alfred T. Mahan, Nicholas J. Spykman and Brzezinski propounded their own theories of geopolitics to maintain the status quo of their concerned states.

This term was first coined by Rudolph Kjellen, a Swedish political scientist in 1899. He viewed geopolitics as the “science of the state,” whereby the state’s natural environment provided the framework for a power unit’s pursuit of “inexorable laws of progress.” It became popular in 1930s, because of a group of German political geographers and in particular the retired Major General Karl Haushofer in the Department of Geography at University of Munich who proposed a German-Russian alliance, a Pan-
Russia-South Asia grouping and a Japan-China-Russia bloc to form a Eurasian pan region that would dominate World-Island (Cohen 2003:11-2).

First of all, the main aim of the study is to draw the theoretical parameters of geopolitics in terms of Central Asian geopolitics. Thus, it is quite important to examine whether the important theories of geopolitics are appropriate for analyzing the geopolitical importance of Central Asia and Caspian region or not.

Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840-1914) a noted geostrategist and United States navy flag officer, who first coined the term “sea power”, while emphasizing on naval power to control the “heartland”. For an example, the shatter belt or crush zone that is politically and economically fragmented and unstable. He identified a vast zone of instability stretching from North East Asia between Japan, Russia and China, to the Balkans and Russia’s far South Western rim. It encompassed the area where World War I began such as the Balkans; the Suez and the Middle East; Iran; Pakistan and Afghanistan; Persian Gulf; northern edge of the Himalayas; Japan and the Asian mainland (ibid: 19).

Mahan was aware of the false distinction between land and sea power. The interrelationship between land and sea power was crucial to his view. In this context, Russia is regarded as dual threat to the interests of the United States. The combination of Soviet land power with its expanded sea-going capabilities was one of the realities that made the prospect of containing Russia so difficult. Its vulnerability lay on the flanks - Europe and East Asia. China at the time was too weak to contain Russia (ibid: 19). He prescribed for an alliance of Teutonic powers, included Great Britain, Germany and the US in conjunction with Japan. This vision of Mahan became widespread during post World War II period. The US, Germany and Britain were eventually joined together in the NATO alliance and along with the US-Japanese post war alliance, this became the forge containment that eventually broke Soviet and East bloc power (Robertson 1996: 356-7). Mahan advocated that the US role was only of containment because of Russia’s incomparable land position. Mahan predicted the role of Asian giants such as China and
Japan as a threat to the US in the Pacific Rim. He advocated "Open Door" policy for the US to contain Russia and China in the Pacific Rim (ibid: 356-7). Mahan's sea-power theory has influenced many geographers to formulate their theories to support their concerned powers. The growing involvement of China in Central Asia and its alliance with Russia in Shanghai Cooperation Organization is reflected in the leading multilateral security organization as predicted by Mahan's theory. Influenced by Alfred Thayer Mahan’s "Sea Power" theory, Halford Mackinder (1861-1947) a noted British geographer believed that sea-powers maintained an advantage. But with the introduction of railways, he articulated that, the advantage of switching to land-powers would lead a country to dominate and organize the inaccessible "Heartland" zone. Rather, Mackinder saw global politics as a "closed system", which meant that the actions of different countries were necessarily interconnected and that the major axis of conflict was between land and sea powers. He defined the geography and history of land-power as the core of Eurasia as the Pivot Area. In his Eurocentric approach, the history of world was pivoted around the sequence of invasions out of this region into the surrounding areas that were more leaning to the sea. Mackinder's "heartland" theory was quite popular during the First World War as a 'theory of statecraft'. Mainly it analyzed the theory of major power rivalry between the two major powers such as Great Britain and Soviet Empire to control over the "heartland" i.e. territorial core of the Soviet Union. His theory was highly acclaimed, because, it finely analyzed the "Great Game" phase of 19th and early 20th centuries. He prescribed two goals one for Great Britain to rule Eastern Europe in the face of challenge from Germany. After analyzing the role of US in 1924, he proposed for a Midland Ocean Alliance with the US to counter the possible alliance between Germany and the Soviet Union. His proposals for an alliance created a base for Cold-War strategists and the proponents of NATO (Cohen 2003: 13-9). Later on, Mackinder's theory influenced the geographers and statesmen of Russia and the West for propounding many theories for their concerned powers in the "new great game" phase.

Nicholas John Spykman (1893-1943), a Dutch-American geostrategist and scholar of international relations propounded his "Rimland" theory after getting inspiration from the theories of famous geopolitical thinkers like Mackinder and Mahan. His theory has been presented as a remedy to the concept of Mackinder's Heartland. His "Rimland" is
consisted of the Eurasian coastal lands including Maritime Europe, the Middle East, India, South East Asia and China. He prescribed his theory to contain Nazi Germany through an alliance of Anglo-American sea power and Soviet land power from seizing control of all the Eurasian shorelines and thereby gaining domination over World Island (ibid: 22-3). However, he rejected the land-power doctrine. In his terms, “who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world.” Like, Mahan’s “sea power” doctrine, he emphasized naval powers to control over his “Rimland”. The seizing control over the Eurasian shorelines is the main objective of his theory in order to control the world-Island (ibid: 22-3).

These above mentioned Classical theories of geopolitics have been prescribed for control over the territories by the states. It is the conflict over the territory which is a determining factor for the geopolitics of a region. And, these theories are justified by different statesmen for the interests of their states concerned. Like, Classical geopolitical terms such as “heart land”, “Rim Land”, “Sea Power” etc, the term “Eurasianism” is quite relevant in the current geopolitics of Central Asia. Here, it is quite important to discuss about different theories of “Eurasianism” to analyze Russian foreign policy during the period of Putin in the context of “new great game”.

**Eurasianism**

Eurasia is a geopolitical term which encompasses geography, culture, population, society, politics and economics. This idea had been originated during the period of Peter, the Great (Soviet Emperor), who had conceived it to strengthen Russia, while including the won territories of European empire. Later on, the idea of “Eurasianism” has been adopted by many academicians, geographers to posit their thoughts. The Eurasianists have viewed that Eurasia is a single geographical individual, which is organically integral and tightly cohesive. Its cohesiveness came from the nature itself. The result of the special topographical affinities is between tundra, taiga, steppe and desert. The natural physical geographical unity of these four zones fostered the development of Eurasia’s political, social, and cultural unity across the ages (Bassin 2002: 287).
Later on Russia’s classical geopolitical thinker Nikolai Danilevsky (1822-85) defined Eurasia as the vast unbroken land-mass bounded on its edges by the high mountain ranges of the Himalayas, Caucasus and Alps and the large bodies of water that has made up the Arctic, Pacific and Atlantic oceans and the Black, Mediterranean and Caspian Sea. Thus, the term Eurasia is meant as a central plain of Europe and Asia. He also offered an elaborate plan of a unique cultural identity formed out of shared historical experiences of the peoples inhabiting the geographic space of the Eurasian plane. Danilevsky called for the people of Eurasia to unite under Russian leadership and oppose the history of domination, violence and greed largely by the common experience of subjugation under the Mongols (Schmidt 2004: 90).

During 1920s, this term was advanced by Nikolai Trubetskoi. He claimed that the Eurasian continent served as the arena for the formation and development of a distinct civilization and culture, a civilization that absorbed and blended both European and Asiatic elements while transforming them in the process into a homogeneous synthesis that belonged to neither realm. So, Eurasian region is a zone of profound ethnographic diversity, which is made up of a core of Russians, Ugro-Finnic people and the Turkic population of the Volga Basin, Siberia and Central Asia. He clearly mentioned that Russia was not a European power, because of its distinctiveness from both Europe and Asia. Rather it was a Eurasian power by virtue of its cultural patterns and in terms of anthropological-racial considerations (Bassin 2002: 1-3). Thus, Eurasia includes a much larger landmass of Asian territory contiguous to the continent of Europe i.e. China, India and Iran. Thus, in view of its central location, in the heart of Eurasia, Russia has been key player in shaping the Eurasian map. Halford Mackinder viewed the Russia’s Eurasian empire as a unique institution representing a “remarkable correlation between natural environment and political organization” (Mackinder 1904: 421-44).

From 1991 to 1996, the Eurasianist idea became increasingly attractive since it fitted with the reality of the eastward movement of Russia’s border and justified a focus on the renewal of ties with the CIS as well as its eastern neighbors. This idea was quite
popular after the disintegration of Soviet Union, when there was wide gap between Russia and the West in the spheres of security, economy and culture (Sengupta 2005:50).

**Neo-Eurasianism**

Like Classical Eurasian school of thought, Neo-Eurasianism shares the view of Russia as a single cohesive civilization entity, encompassing the diverse people who occupy the broad spaces of the Eurasian land-mass. This civilization is the result of centuries of coexistence and interaction, which has been shaped by social, political and cultural forces coming in equal measure from Europe and Asia. Due to its cultural tradition based on Russian nationalism, both the schools have portrayed Russian-Eurasian civilization basically in terms of its contrast to that of the “West” (Bassin 2002: 284).

There are two prominent schools of thought such as the expansionist school and Civilizationist school, those who have analyzed Russia’s role in Eurasia. The expansionist school prescribes that Russia should forcibly control over the space of former Soviet Union. It prescribes for building a larger geopolitical axis of allies such as Germany, Iran and Japan in order to resist Atlantist influences. On the other hand, Civilizationists such as Petr Savitsky and Nikolay Gumilev portray Russia as culturally anti-western independent unit in general hostile world. They view empires as independent civilizations, that are relatively self-sufficient and geopolitically stable territories, not constantly expanding Russia’s role must to maintain its civilizational self sufficiency. They also dream of Russia restoring its Soviet era super power status and attribute significance to the country’s nuclear and economic capabilities (Sengupta 2005:57).

It regards west as a great threat to Russia-Eurasian civilization. They are both originated as a reaction to external circumstances such as the breakdown of political structures into a collection of sovereign or quasi-sovereign entities. Alexander Dugin, a famous geopolitical thinker and strategist of Russia has posited that Eurasia is domestically on the territories of former Soviet Union. He has firmly endorsed that the
Post-Soviet development is of consolidated political entity. The geographical corpus of his Eurasia is not restricted to former Soviet space. It should be extended westward into Europe, south into Central Asia and eastward into China and even the Pacific (Bassin 2002: 287-8).

Like Dugin, another thinker Panarin has stated that there exists a cultural unity and a community of historical destiny that is shared by Russians and the people of Post-Soviet space. There are cultural invariants which can explain the deeper meaning of contemporary political events. Both have criticized “Atlanticist” domination considered dangerous for the rest of the mankind (Schmidt 2002: 92).

Expansionists view Russia as a culturally anti-western state and a constantly expanding territorial empire. They regard trade relations with the west as a main threat to Russia’s cultural identity. They emphasize on Russia’s expansion through the use of force, whereas Geo-economism, another school of thought in Eurasianism emphasizes the role of geo-economics over geopolitical factors in the post Cold War world in general and Russia in particular. It defends the image of Russia’s Eurasianist identity as that of “intersection” of various economic as well as cultural influences in the region. They portray the world as a curious mixture of liberal transnationalism and critical geographical thinking. It is rather a world in which opportunities are at least as important as threats and dangers. In this world, the main threat to Russia is not of a politico-military nature but rather geo-economic. Economic prosperity and social development are the mere maintenance of political order and stability (Sengupta 2005:57).

The geo-economic thinking posits that if in fact Russia takes advantage of this “intersection” position in the middle of Eurasia and manages to develop a coherent strategy of trans-regional development, the favorable outcomes would also include political order and peace in the region. They prescribe for a series of trans-national economic projects sponsored by both the state and private sectors with the participation of various western and Asian countries. Vladimir Kosolov and Nikolai Miranenko are
founders of this school (ibid: 58). Whereas, pro-Westernism school of thought states that Russia is essentially a European country that must associate itself primarily with the Western world and its institutions. It perceives the west as the only viable and progressive civilization in the world. It argues that only by incorporating western institutions and working together with western countries can make Russia be able to adequately respond to various economic and political challenges in Eurasia. The westernists maintain that if Russia must have any special role in Eurasia, it should be the role of setting standards of liberal democracy rather than stabilizing or unifying the region. Pro-Western school was closely associated with Russian politicians like Yegor Gaidar and Andrei Kozyrev, those who advocated Russia’s strategic retreat from the former Soviet space and larger Eurasia in order to directly integrate the country with the western world and its institutions. It was then advocated by the parties of liberal orientation and often supported by the west oriented private sector (ibid: 58).

The Eurasianist school of thought has been formulated to portray Russia as a powerful actor in the Eurasian region due to its geopolitical importance. In the current great power rivalry, this school of thought has impact on the Russia’s policy towards the US. As a Eurasian Power, Russia under the President Vladimir Putin followed anti-American stance in his foreign policy. He sought to abrogate the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, NATO's eastward expansion and its intervention in Kosovo, international criticism of its war in Chechnya. Russia’s strategic partnership with China and the leading role of Shanghai Cooperation Organization in the Russia-US rivalry are the clear instances of the impact of Eurasian idea on Russia’s policy towards the West. The formation of Eurasian Economic Community (EEC), which includes Kazakhstan, Belarus, Tajikistan, Russia and Kyrgyzstan in October 10, 2000, is another example of Putin’s adoption of Eurasian idea in his foreign policy.

In his ‘April 2005 State of the Nation’ address, Putin stated that “Russia was, is and will be a major European power. And, Russia should continue its civilizing mission on the Eurasian continent”. According to Putin, the mission of Russia consists in ensuring “democratic values, combined with national interests, enrich and strengthen our historic
community” (Kaushik 2007: 180). Putin’s pledge to re-integrate all the republics of Central Asia has been reflected in Russia’s new foreign policy doctrine 2000. His attempt to revive the Eurasian identity at the advantage of Euro-Atlantic community in Central Asian region can be regarded as a strategic move of Russia against US. In this context, it is imperative to mention about Brzezinski’s idea on Eurasianism.

**Brzezinski’s Theory of Geopolitics**

Zbigniew Brzezinski is a political scientist and geostrategists served as national security adviser to the US government from 1977 to 1981. He propounded his theory of geopolitics to support the US control over Eurasian region. In his most popular work, “Grand Chessboard” he mentioned, “Eurasia is the globe’s largest continent and geopolitically axial. A power that dominates Eurasia would control two of the world’s three most advanced and economically productive regions. The control over Eurasia would almost automatically entail Africa’s subordination, rendering the Western Hemisphere and Oceania geopolitically peripheral to the world’s central continent. About 75% of world’s population lives in Eurasia and most of the world’s physical wealth is there. All of the potential and economic challenges to American primacy are Eurasia. Eurasia’s power vastly overshadows America’s. Eurasia is too big to be politically one. It is the chessboard on which the struggle for global primacy continues to be played” (Brzezinski 1997: 31).

From the strategic point of view, he has termed the Eurasian region as a chessboard, which has been surrounded by four hemispheres such as Eastern, Western, Southern and Middle spaces. All the key players are located in all these four hemispheres. The Western space is dominated by Iran and Eastern space is the seat of China. In Southern space, India and Pakistan are prominent powers. India aims to be the regional hegemon in this space. And the Middle space is controlled by Russia (ibid: 34-5).
In this context, he recommended that the US should perceive China as its natural ally in Eurasia and India as an adversary inclined to cooperate with Russia in Central Asia. China’s support for Pakistan as was seen by him as a factor for constraining India’s ambitions. He prescribed for a Trans-Eurasian Security system which is an expanded NATO and a triangular political-security dialogue between America, China and Japan. It would be an effective instrument to prevent Russia’s efforts to regain its status as a world power. Russia should be included in NATO to remain under American control (ibid: 208-209).

His geostrategic vision is based on the US-Soviet conflict as an ‘endless game’. Therefore, he underestimated the other external powers such as China and India. Despite the limitations of his theory, the September 11 incident followed by the establishment of military bases in two Central Asian states are clear example of influence of Brzezinski’s strategy. And the involvement of the US in Central Asian region through economic and security ties with the newly independent states has proved its geopolitical ambition to diminish the influence of Russia in this region, which cannot be denied.

Geopolitical Importance of Central Asia

Central Asia is a region which is a place of interaction between Europe and Asia. In the long run the role of Central Asia will increase as the creation of trans-Asian railroads, highways and communication networks in Afghanistan open up new possibilities of reaching the Persian Gulf and three Caucasian countries into a single network which will increase the transit capabilities. During the very ancient period the geographical location of Central Asia had become the prime importance for trade and commerce. It had formed crucial corridor connecting East to West and South to North. Central Asia was home of silk route, before the opening of sea lanes to India. The strategic and economic importance of Central Asia, previously known as ‘Soviet Middle Asia’ was not changed after the Soviet disintegration. The disintegration of the Soviet Union and subsequent emergence of five independent states- Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan in December, 1991, created a new geopolitical situation in Post Soviet space.
Likewise, Central Asian region, which is rich in natural resources such as oil and gas and who controls the resources of this region can be able to control the international energy market in 21st century and even control the economic lifelines of some countries. Thus, Central Asian region is proved to be one of the important geopolitical regions and this is the main factor, which has attracted major powers to engage in it. Additionally, the oil and gas pipelines have added new dimensions in the regional politics of Central Asia. There are five newly independent states and each country has different polity, ethnic composition, geopolitical composition which should be briefly described.

**Brief Analysis of Individual Central Asian Republics**

**Kazakhstan:** Kazakhstan has an area of 2,717,300 sq. km and shares borders with Russia, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and China. It is rich with petroleum, natural gas, and coal and iron ore. According to 1999 census, this country’s population is composed of varied ethnic groups such as Kazakh (53.4%), Russian (30%), Ukrainian (3.7%) and Uyghur (1.4%) (CIA World Factbook 2009).

The main exports of this country were oil, natural gas, coal, wood products, metals, chemicals, grain, wool, and meat. Russia and China are among the top customers of Kazakh exports. Its oil reserves are estimated to be in the range of 5.4 billion to 17.6 billion barrels or more than that (Olcott 2005: 32).

It has three major oil and gas fields such as Tengiz, Karachaganak, and Kashagan, all three of which have money for the state treasury, either from production revenue or large signing bonuses from the firms given exploitation rights. (ibid: 32).

Like, Tengiz on the Caspian coast, Karachaganak is an inland field. Near the Russian border due north of the Caspian, it sits atop proven oil reserves of 2.2 billion barrels and 500 billion cubic meters of natural gas. Forty percent of the country’s natural gas reserves are located in that one field. In 1997, an international consortium including
Chevron-Texaco signed a US $7-$8 billion final production sharing agreement to develop the field for forty years, with a planned investment of US $4 billion by 2006 (ibid: 32-3).

The country's third major field lies deep beneath the Caspian at the offshore Kashagan site. It could contain up to 40 billion barrels of oil, three times more than Tenghiz, but only about one-quarter of that potential is thought to be recoverable. Kashagan, which is likely to be the largest oil discovery in the past forty years, has two US firms in the Agip KCO consortium that operates the site: ExxonMobil with a 16.67 percent stake and ConocoPhillips with 8.33 percent (ibid: 33).

Kazakhstan has several other significant oil and gas deposits, which include the Tengiz, Zhanzhol, Uritau fields and Aktobe in north and Kumkol in the Kzyl-Orda region. Undeveloped offshore areas are believed to hold large amounts of natural gas but due to poor pipeline infrastructure linking the natural gas fields in the western part of the country to consumers in the southern part of the country, Kazakhstan still imports natural gas to meet domestic demands (ibid: 33).

Turkmenistan: It shares borders with Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and China. It has natural resources are hydropower, some petroleum, uranium, mercury, brown, coal, lead, zinc, antimony, tungsten, silver and gold. According to 2003 census, its population is composed of varied ethnic groups such as Turkmen (85%), Uzbek (5%), Russian (4%), etc. (CIA World Factbook 2009). It has approximately 101 trillion cubic feet, natural gas reserves second to Russia among the post-Soviet states in the size of its gas reserves. Additionally, it has 1-4 billion barrels in proven oil reserves, with possible additional reserves mainly in the western part of the country and in undeveloped offshore areas in the Caspian Sea. Cheleken, a project, which is headed by Dragon Oil: a joint venture of Ireland-UAE is estimated to have 600 million barrels oil in Kazakh oil field. Another project, which is headed by Burren Energy, an oil company of UK is estimated 100 million barrels in this region (Olcott 2005: 37).
**Kyrgyzstan:** It shares borders with Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and China. According to 1999 census, its population is composed of different ethnic groups such as Kyrgyz (64.7%), Uzbek (13.6%), Russian (12.5%), etc. (CIA World Factbook 2009). It has abundant hydropower, significant deposits of gold and rare earth metals and locally exploitable coal, oil, and natural gas. (Olcott 2005: 248). The Kumtor mine of Kyrgyzstan has estimated reserves of 9.3 million ounces of gold (ibid: 42).

**Tajikistan:** It has borders with Afghanistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China. According to 2000 census, its population is composed of different ethnic groups such as Tajik (65%), Uzbek (25%) and Russian (4%) etc. (CIA World Factbook 2009). It has natural resources such as hydropower, some petroleum, uranium, mercury, brown coal, lead, zinc, antimony, tungsten, silver and gold. It is the poorest country among the other Central Asian countries (Olcott 2005: 248).

Its limited asset base has not been successful to draw foreign investment. Since its independence, over 80 per cent of the population has been living below poverty line. Additionally, the civil war which lasted for one year during early 1990s was caused for its fragile economy. It was estimated that the war to have cost about $7 billion in lost revenue, leaving the economy of Tajikistan in virtual ruin. Tajikistan’s Sangutda hydropower station, a multi-level project headed by Russia, Iran, Tajik governments and Rugun hydropower station by Russian Aluminum have agreed to invest in this region to exploit the water and aluminum resources respectively (ibid: 44).

**Uzbekistan:** It has borders with Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. According to 1996 census, its population is composed of varied ethnic groups such as Uzbek (80%), Russian (5.5%), Tajik (5%), Kazakh (3%), etc. (CIA World Factbook 2009). It has natural resources such as natural gas, petroleum, coal, gold, uranium, silver, gold, copper, lead and zinc, tungsten, molybdenum. The Projects such as Central Ustyurt and Southwest Gissar oil and gas fields and Muruntau goldmine are aimed at exploiting the natural resources of Uzbekistan (Olcott 2005: 250).
Regional Security Problems in Central Asia

All these above facts have shown that Central Asia is the region, which has vast potential of natural resources. But, many years of conflicts during the period of Cold-War and the impact of the disintegration of Soviet Union have made this region unstable. In this context, Brzezinski has regarded Central Asia as "Eurasian Balkan" and the Post Soviet space as "Black Hole" because of the ethnic strives, regional instability and inter-regional conflicts. And, Russia is no more a strong player to control over the vast region. Its economic and military powers are declining (Brzezinski 1997: 123).

All the Central Asian Republics have been facing similar security problems after getting independence from the erstwhile Soviet Union. Since their independence, they have been facing the security problems such as Islamic radicalism, organized crimes, narcotic trade, etc. On the other hand, all the external actors those who are engaged in Central Asia after the disintegration of Soviet Union have to tackle with the security problems of Central Asia to safeguard their own interests i.e. the exploitation of natural resources of this region.

The geopolitical factors behind these problems are border contiguities among these newly independent states, which has affected the inter-regional cooperation and has given rise to conflicts and common economic problems. The existing trade routes are not sufficient to satisfy the economic needs of these states. And this is the reason for which the states are striving to get external support for flourishing their trade and economy. The existing oil and gas pipelines of this region, which connect with the world market pass through the conflict ridden regions Thus, the material well being and political stability depend on the neighbouring states.

All the countries have common history and culture. The population of Central Asian region is broadly from the Turkic speaking group. They have common economic problems because of the collective use of energy, water resources, irrigation and
transportation. There are conflicts prevailing over the sharing of natural resources and water due to the cause of demographic disproportions. Additionally, the agrarian and raw material orientation and the similarity in export structures are the causes of competition among these five states. The authoritarian style of governments in all the Central Asian Republics can be regarded as a major factor for the conflicts among these states. These states are facing common security problems such as the threats to the military security, border disputes and ethnic strife, threats from Islamic radicalism, narcotic trade and organized crimes, threats from weapons of mass destruction etc. In this context it is important to analyze these problems.

Border Disputes and Ethnic Strife

The newly independent states' borders have been arbitrarily drawn during the period of Joseph Stalin. He had drawn the borders of Central Asian states across the ethnic conclaves in an arbitrary fashion. Later on, the administrative boundaries had been modified many times and were designed to leave large irredentist populations scattered throughout the region. Thus, the Central Asian states have national boundaries without the reflection of natural geography. It is the main reason for which millions of Central Asians live within the region but outside of their national republic. It is the major factor for border disputes among the newly independent states and leads to mass migration. (Olcott 2005:24-5).

Threat posed by Extremist Ideology

Central Asian leaders were not concerned for what might be the fallout across the border in the way that they handled other potential security risks. Some leaders responded by largely closing off their borders; other could not control, regardless of the danger they posed to their populations. The main reason for revival of Islamic radicalism is due to the decline of communism, where, the Soviet-era bureaucracy sought to manage relations between believers and the broader Islamic community in all the Central Asian republics. After the independence of Central Asian states, each Muslim administration generally formed around a state committee on religion subordinated to the Council of
Ministers, was given the task of appointing the country’s leading clerics and licensing the principle mosques and all religious schools. But, many in these states started resenting the state’s continued control of their spiritual worlds (Olcott 2005: 28). Such groups like Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and Hiz-ut-Tahrir al-Islami or the Islamic Party of Liberation took violent measures to spread fundamentalism. These groups have link with Taliban regime of Afghanistan (Roy 2004: 190). Thus, it is quite important to mention about the rise of Taliban in Afghanistan, which can be considered as a major security threat to Central Asian republic after the disintegration of Soviet Union. Additionally, the terrorist activities of this radical Islamic group have adverse impact on Central Asian geopolitics.

The Taliban movement which emerged in Afghanistan in 1994 as an Islamic movement with the support of Pakistan’s armed forces. The Taliban came to power by killing about 25,000 people including the deposed President Najibullah and his brother. Pakistan also wanted to gain strategic move against India through its undisputed control over Afghanistan and use of its territory for direct overland access to Central Asian states. In this strategy, the US also supported Pakistan as a proxy power in order to gain access to the land-locked region of Central Asia for fulfilling its geopolitical interest by constructing of pipelines through Afghanistan and Pakistan to avoid Russia and Iran (Kaushik and Alam 1998: 40). In the mid-1990s, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Uzbekistan to build the Central Asia natural gas pipeline stretching from Turkmenistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan. In addition, the proposed Central Asia Oil Pipeline would pass from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan enroute to a Pakistani port on the Arabian Sea. But, the conflicts between Taliban and Northern Alliance in Afghanistan during the late 1990s obstructed the projects for further development (Energy Information Administration 2002).
Transit and Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD)

The Central Asian region remains highly vulnerable to the smuggling of fissile material for WMD. During the Soviet period, Central Asia was the raw material base for its nuclear programme. After independence, Kazakhstan has closed its nuclear test range and has committed itself to being a non nuclear weapon state under the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, but it has not lost its potential of being a nuclear power. Uzbekistan has the world's third largest uranium deposits. Tajikistan also has uranium reserves as well as capability for enrichment. Kyrgyzstan, meanwhile, has a lot of nuclear waste left over as legacy of the former Soviet Union. Thus, there is a serious threat of the proliferation of WMD (Roy 2001: 455).

Threat posed by Organized Crime and Corruption

In the Central Asian republics, the elite classes are engaged in corruption because of their monopoly over the major exports. On the other side, masses are poor and unaware of the situation. It is hampering the stability in society and the future of the economy of the country is looking bleak. It plays a major role in enhancing organized crime in society (ibid: 454).

Drug Trafficking and Smuggling of Arms

Today, Central Asia is known as an area of narcotic trade and drug trafficking. The Central Asian Republics are used as markets for the shipment of drugs. Afghanistan produces 75% of the world's heroin supply, over 65% of which is now transported through Central Asia. As a fact is that the regions such as Ferghana Valley and Caucasus would guarantee that the flow of drugs from Afghanistan to the West operates smoothly. In the southern part of Kyrgyzstan, four million people involved in the dealing, moving, growing or processing of raw opium. The main reasons behind the drug trade are economic instability and poverty in this region (Olcott 2005:212).

These are security problems, which have been faced by the Central Asian states since their independence. They were heavily dependent on the economic subsidies, which were provided by Soviet Union. After the demise of Soviet Union, they were searching
for new opportunities to tackle these security issues. They are now acting as independent actors to play their role in a new global setting. They want to diversify their relations with other external actors other than Russia, because, Moscow is not in a position to give these newly independent states enough economic and military security guarantees as it was giving during the period of Soviet Union. Like Central Asia, there is Caspian Sea Basin, which is an area of US-Russia engagement in the sphere of energy security. In the Caspian Sea Basin, Russia, Iran, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan are the littoral states, those have engaged with each other in oil diplomacy and all these states have strategic relations with US. Thus, it is important to discuss the geopolitical significance of Caspian region. This region has growing geopolitical importance, because, the regional as well as external actors have stakes in the natural resources of this region.

Geopolitical Significance of Caspian Sea Basin

Caspian is an inland sea, which does not have any maritime significance. Its size, which is about 700 miles long, contains six separate hydrocarbon basins, and most of the oil and gas reserves in this region have not been explored yet. Caspian Sea Basin (CSB) is not free from the great power rivalry. After the end of Cold War, the struggle over controlling the hydrocarbon resources has become intense. This power struggle has been incorporated into three levels such as global, regional and local levels. At the global level the external powers such as the US, at the regional level the actors such as the Caspian littoral states and at the local level the actors such as the ruling elites of Russian Federation, rebel territories in Russia, Georgia and Azerbaijan are involved in the Caspian basin to establish their control over the abundant natural resources. As per the estimate of energy administration of USA, Caspian Sea region contains approximately 17-49 billion barrels of oil (EIA 2007: 2). Oil production in the next decade will come from Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan. This region has also the potential of 230 trillion cubic feet of natural gas (ibid: 6).

Another important point is that Caspian Sea Basin is not free from the conflicts among the littoral states. Here it is quite essential to mention the factors of conflict. The growing number of littoral states is regarded as one of the major factors which cannot be denied. During the period of Soviet Union, the Caspian Sea was shared by only two
countries namely the USSR and Iran. After the disintegration, the number of littoral states has increased into five that include Iran, Russia, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. Additionally, the newly independent Caspian littoral states do not want to be bound by the agreements entered into by the former USSR and Iran in the past on the question of sharing the resources of the sea (Gidadhubli 2004: 303).

Another source of conflict is the uneven distribution of energy resources among the Caspian littoral states. At present, it appears that so far as oil is concerned, about 88 per cent of total reserves are located in three states namely, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan (EIA 2007: 6). Hence the share of Russia and Iran in Caspian is relatively modest although they have vast energy resources in other parts of their territory. This uneven nature of the distribution of energy seems to have contributed to occasional conflicting situations in the Caspian region, particularly because both Russia and Iran which are the original partners for several decisions taken in the past concerning the energy resource development often make efforts to retain their position and influence in the Caspian region. Additionally, there is lack of collective effort of the littoral states to explore the natural resources of Caspian Sea Basin (Gidadhubli 2004: 305-6).

Status Issue

There is inability to arrive at a consensus on the issue of Caspian legal status. There are persisting differences among the Caspian Sea States over the last decade on the legal status of the Caspian Sea. As observed earlier it was contended that the Russo-Iranian treaty of 1921 and 1940 be considered as valid and the resources of the Caspian Sea be exploited with the agreement of all littoral states without dividing the sea into national sectors. Initially there was convergence of opinion between Russia and Iran in this regard which in effect meant that both the bottom of the sea and surface water of the sea were to be utilized equally by all the Caspian Sea states (ibid: 306-7).
Russo-Iranian treaty of 1921

This was the first treaty which was signed between Soviet Union and Iran regarding the legal status of Caspian Sea Basin. Under this treaty, Soviet Union had to return the Russian base on the Iranian island of Ashuradeh in the Caspian Sea and ceded the Russian installation at the port of Bandar-e Anzali to Iran. According to Article 11 of this treaty, Iran was forbidden to have armed vessels in the Caspian Sea. It also added, 'the two high contracting parties shall enjoy equal rights of free navigation on the sea, under their own flags, as from the date of signing of the present treaty'. Under this treaty, the differences between the two Caspian littoral states had been settled down. Both of them got equal rights of free navigation on the sea, under their own flags, as from the date of signing of the present treaty (Granmayeh 2004: 18). Like 1921 treaty, Russo-Iranian Treaty of 1940 is quite important for the legal status dispute over Caspian Sea Basin.

Russo-Iranian Treaty of 1940

Article 12 of this treaty described the privileges of merchant vessels of each country in crossing the Caspian Sea and enjoying the assistance of the other party where necessary. It also asserted that coastal trade is reserved for the national vessels of each of the contracting parties. In order to check any type of infiltration through Iran, this treaty asserted that only vessels belonging to the citizens and commercial and transport organizations of either of the contracting parties, 'sailing under the Soviet or Iranian flag respectively, should be found over the entire Caspian Sea'. Under this treaty, the Caspian Sea Basin has been defined as Soviet-Iranian Sea, whose entirety is open to navigation by Soviet and Iranian vessels as in a condominium. On the other hand, the fishing zone of each part was limited to 10 nautical miles in its respective coastal waters (ibid: 18-9).

Early Approaches of Russia and Iran between 1992 and 1994

In December 21 1991, the Alma Ata Declaration confirmed that the other littoral states (Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan) would observe the international agreements of Soviet Union, thus including the Soviet-Iranian treaties of 1921 and 1940
on the Caspian Sea. In this regard, both Iran and Russia stressed that the joint utilization of the Caspian Sea, as defined in these treaties, should serve as the legal basis for the rights and obligations of all littoral states in the Caspian Sea. But, it was not possible for the joint utilization of Caspian resources because of growing number of littoral states. Thus, Iran proposed the formation of a regional organization of littoral states to coordinate all activities relating to fisheries, oil and gas exploration, transport, and the prevention of pollution in the Caspian Sea. In October 1992, it was decided that a body of experts would study the responsibilities of the projected organization, then report back to their respective governments (ibid: 19-20).

In 1994, when representatives of the Caspian states met in Moscow, the formation of a regulatory regional organization was mentioned favourably, but no agreement was signed on this issue. In the meantime, three out of five countries around the Caspian Sea unilaterally claimed a national sector and entered into negotiations over energy operations in their sectors with foreign contractors. These states claimed that the division of the northern part of the Caspian Sea made in the 1970s as an internal Soviet agreement. Thus, the respective Soviet republics were allocated economic zones should now be considered as the basis for international boundaries (ibid: 20). During 1995, Russia’s position regarding Caspian legal status was started fluctuating. For an instance, earlier Russia condemned Azerbaijan for taking unilateral action in concluding the 1994 ‘Contract of the Century’, but it participated in the same project. The main reason was that Russia wanted to bring the export oil pipeline of Azerbaijan under its territory (ibid: 21).

In 1997, both the presidents of Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan signed a joint statement in Almaty, which was formerly known as Alma-Ata, emphasizing the rights of their respective countries within their ‘national sectors’ in the Caspian Sea. President Niyazov of Turkmenistan stressed that the Caspian Sea bed was divided legally into territorial economic zones during the Soviet period and that each of the littoral states, likewise Iran, had its own maritime borders. And, this principle should continue to be respected now along with the work to determine the legal status of the Caspian Sea should continue. But, Russia did not pay any heed to this joint statement and started its
engagement with Azerbaijan for the transportation of oil through its pipeline to the port of Novorossiysk on the Black Sea. Iran and Turkmenistan maintained an isolationist policy towards this development and Iran condemned Azerbaijan’s commencement of the commercial exploitation of a Caspian oilfield (ibid: 22-3).

These differences among the littoral states regarding the legal status of CSB and the sharing and exploring the resources lead to conflict. Even, Russia as a dominant power in this region could not pursue a pragmatic policy towards Caspian region after the disintegration of Soviet Union. Rather, its stance on legal status of Caspian started fluctuating, which created disturbances among the newly independent states of the CSB. On the other hand, these new littoral states of this region started maintaining their relations with the external powers for exporting gas and oil to the western market, which has become a major issue in Caspian geopolitics.

Caspian Pipelines

Many pipelines have been proposed and constructed by Russia and America in CSB to export the oil and gas resources to the world markets. There are main four pipelines to export oil to the Western market such as the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan, the Baku-Novorossiysk, the Baku-Supsa, and the Caspian Pipeline Consortium lines carry the majority of the region’s oil and gas resources to the Western markets of Turkey, Europe and the Mediterranean. The Baku-Supsa, Baku-Novorossiysk and Baku-Batami rail routes also transport oil and gas but, these may be phased out as the larger pipelines are expanded even further.

The Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) project connects Kazakhstan’s Caspian Sea area’s oil deposits with Russia’s Black Sea port of Novorossiysk. Although the CPC pipeline transverses Russia and was developed in conjunction with the Russian government, the pipeline was the first to give the Caspian Sea region and Kazakhstan a viable alternative to the Russian dominated northern export routes. CPC is currently
operating at the rate of 65,000 barrels per day. According to industry experts CPC’s pipeline system is one of the safest and most technologically advanced in world and has resulted in an outstanding environmental, health and safety performance.

**Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan Pipeline:** It is exporting Azeri and possibly up to 600,000 billion barrels per day of Kazakhstani oil along a 1,040 mile route from Baku, Azerbaijan via Georgia to the Turkish Mediterranean port of Ceyhan. This route will allow oil to bypass the Bosporus straits of Russia. A BP-led consortium will operate the pipeline. The construction of 1 million barrels per day BTC pipeline was completed in May 2005 with the first tanker deliveries beginning in June 2006. Oil exports via BTC averaged roughly 21,000 billion barrels per day by early 2007.

**Kazakhstan-China Pipeline:** An oil pipeline from Atasu in north-western Kazakhstan, to Alataw pass in China’s northwestern Xinjiang region was completed in December 2005 and worked the first step to meet this demand. The 200,000 billion barrels per day Kazakhstan-China pipeline, when all the three stages are completed, will open almost 1,860 miles from its start in Atyrau to Alashnkou in China.

**Iranian oil exports and swaps:** Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan have initiated low-volume oil “swap” deals with Iran, delivering oil in tankers to refineries in Iran’s northern regions in exchange for similar volumes of crude at Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf. The different types of Caspian crude over blended together at the $2.00 per barrel. All the swap contracts are handled by Naftiran Inter Trade Corporation, National Iranian oil Company’s Lausanne-based subsidiary. The largest of Nico’s contract is with Kazakh state oil company Kazimunaigas, which is supplying up to 70,000 billion barrels per day of different types of crude to Neka sea port to allow swap capacity to increase from roughly 50,000 billion per day to 1,50,000 billion barrels per day.
Nico also receives shipments of gasoline and gas oil from Turkmenistan at its smaller terminals of Bandar Nowshar and Bandar Anzali. During early 2004, Iran completed efforts to upgrade its domestic distribution network and to the Neka seaport to allow swap capacity to increase from roughly 50,000 billion barrels per day to 150,000 billion barrels per day. In October 2006, Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh, Deputy oil minister of Iran said that the capacity of the pipeline would be expanded from around 150,000 billion barrels per day to 250,000 billion barrels per day by the end of the month and with the installation of new pump stations, would reach a capacity of 500,000 billion barrels per day by the end of March 2007.

Baku-Novorossiysk-Supsa Pipeline: Russia has proposed multiple pipelines routes that utilize its existing and proposed infrastructure. After the disintegration of Soviet Union, two new pipelines were constructed, known as the ‘Northern’ and ‘Western’ early oil pipelines. These extended from Baku to Novorossiysk and Baku to Supsa (Georgia) respectively and have a combined capacity of roughly 2,45,000 billion barrels per day. There is also an existing north bent pipeline from Atyrau in Kazakhstan to Samara in Russia, that has been upgraded. Like oil pipelines, natural gas pipelines are there to export the gas resources to the world market.

Natural gas pipeline routes in CSB

The Gazprom system: It connects Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan with Russia and, beyond Russia, with a group of markets from the Caucasus to Ukraine, Central Europe and beyond.

The Trans-Balkan line: It connects the old Soviet system with Turkey via Romania and Bulgaria and is the main route for current Turkish imports of Russian gas. A major expansion of this line, raising capacity up to 14 billion cubic meters per year, was operational as of early 2002.
The Korpedzhe to Kurt-Kui line (KKK): The 200 km KKK line was constructed by Iran in 1997 to link the Turkmen gas fields around Korpedzhe, on the eastern shore of the Caspian, with the Iranian gas distribution system at Kurt-Kui. Its capacity is around 10-12 billion cubic meters per year but deliveries to date have fallen far short of this level.

The Iran-Turkey line: The first gas supplies to reach Turkey from Iran via the new 574-km Tabriz-Erzurum line flowed across the border on 10 December 2001. Turkish officials somewhat ironically noted that it appeared to be Turkmen-origin gas that was actually flowing through the line at that time.

There are some major gas pipelines which connect the gas resources of CSB to the world market. The South Caucasus pipeline also named as the Baku-Tbilisi-Erzurum pipeline runs parallel to the BTC oil pipeline for most of its route before connecting to the Turkish gas infrastructure near the town of Erzurum. At a cost of roughly $1 billion, the 550 mile long South Caucasus pipeline is designed to carry natural gas from Azerbaijan’s Shah Deniz field and have an initial capacity of 0.8 billion cubic feet per day by the first quarter of 2007.

The pipeline will be expanded to 1.5 billion cubic feet per day depending on market conditions and eventually to 3 billion cubic feet per day. Roughly 610 million cubic feet per day of the Shan Deniz gas will be sold to Turkey, 145 million cubic feet per day to Azerbaijan and up to 77 million cubic feet per day to Georgia. In June 2005, Georgia offered Azerbaijan to buy an additional 290 million cubic feet per day of gas. However, this will only be possible in the second phase of the project.

Central Asia-Centre-Pipeline: Countries east of the Caspian Sea export most of their natural gas via the Central Asia Centre pipeline, which is routed into the Russian natural gas pipeline system. Capacity has been increased to 5.2 billion cubic feet per day in 2007, from 4.4 billion cubic feet per day currently. Natural gas is exported further to European and world markets through the Gazprom transport system. In an effort to diversify export
routes, a number of natural gas pipelines originating in Central Asia are under consideration. Central Asia has also a number of internal pipelines, including the Tashkent-Almaty pipeline to serve natural gas customers in the region.

**Trans-Afghan Pipeline:** An additional way for the Caspian region exporters to supply Asian demand would be to pipe oil and natural gas south through Iran to Persian Gulf or South west to Afghanistan. The Afghanistan option, which Turkmenistan has been promoting, would entail building pipelines across war-ravaged Afghan territory to reach markets in Pakistan and India. With the removal of the Taliban in Afghanistan in December 2001, proposals to build a Trans-Afghan natural gas pipeline have emerged. This pipeline would span over 1,000 miles from a point in Turkmenistan to Fazilka on the Indo-Pak border.

The Development of a southern pipeline through Iran would be problematic under the Iran-Libya Sanctions Act, which imposed sanction on non-US companies investing in the Iranian oil and natural gas sectors. In 1997, Turkmen-Iran completed the $190 million Korpezhe-Kut-Kui pipeline linking the two countries, thereby becoming the first natural gas export pipeline from Central Asia to bypass Russia. According to terms of the 25 years Contract between these two countries, Iran will receive between 177 billion cubic feet and 215 billion cubic feet of natural gas from Turkmenistan annually, with 35% of Turkmen supplies allocated as payment for Iran's contribution to build the pipeline.

These above mentioned pipelines are connecting the huge natural hydrocarbon resources of CSB to the world market and pass through conflict ridden region, such as Chechnya, Nagarno-Karabakh, etc. Thus, it is quite important to mention about these prominent regional conflicts, where Russia and America are striving to prove their niche in CSB.
Regional Security Problems in CSB

Like Central Asian region, Caspian Sea Basin is not free from regional instability. There are some conflict areas such as Nagorno Karabakh, South Ossetia and Chechnya, where the two adversaries such as Russia and US are involved. Here, it is quite important to briefly analyze the security situation of CSB.

There was severe conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over the region, "Nagorno Karabakh". It is a mountainous region populated by ethnic Armenians but nestled inside predominantly Muslim Azerbaijan. Its declaration of independence in 1988 sparked a six-year war that killed more than 30,000 people and drove about 1 million people, mostly Azeris, from their homes. It was ended with the intervention of Russian mediated cease-fire that left the enclave and some surrounding territory about one fifth of the territory of Azerbaijan firmly under control of an unrecognized ethnic Armenian government and its militia. Since the May 1994 ceasefire, hundreds of people have been killed each year in sporadic violence and by mines that mark a no-man’s land around the 1,600 square miles mountainous region. Azerbaijan has maintained an economic blockade of Armenia since the conflict broke out, and relationships between Russia and Azerbaijan were strained when it became known that Russia had shipped over $1 billion of arms to Armenia from 1993 to 1995. Armenia and Russia signed an updated friendship treaty, as well as a deal to create a joint venture with Russia’s Gazprom to supply Armenia with natural gas, since Armenia’s fuel supplies have been constrained by the Azeri blockade. Later on the US had intervened in this conflict and had sanctioned on Azerbaijan, because of Baku's blockade against Armenia. In 1994, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) formed the “Minsk Group” including Russia, US, and France in an effort to bring the sides closer together to forge a lasting peace (EIA 2007).

Georgia: Ossetia Separatism

Likewise, Ossetia Separatism problem which could obstruct the proposed western route which passed through Baku to the Georgian port of Supsa on the Black Sea, and several routes including the proposed Baku-Ceyhan route to the Turkish Mediterranean
coast, which passed through Georgia. This problem had been started when Abkhazia had fought a civil war with Georgia between 1992 and 1993, and had demanded to be a sovereign republic with minimal ties to Georgia. Later on Georgia had expressed its concern to grant Abkhazia some autonomy. Thus, the port of Supsa had been created as a buffer zone, rather 12 miles away from the buffer zone between Abkhazia and Georgia. In the late 90s, the assassination and coup attempts had been made against the Georgian President led to call for the NATO led by the US to station a military contingent in Georgia to protect Caspian oil transport. In December 1998, representatives from the GUUAM Group had held talks about setting up a special peacekeeping force to protect the oil export pipelines and later on proposals had been made to work with NATO to set up this force within the framework of PfP programme. Despite the negotiation processes, a lasting resolution has not been agreed on yet (ibid). Both Russia and US are still at logger head in this region to maintain their supremacy, where geopolitical factor is playing major role. Along with these two areas, Chechnya region is important “new great game” phase. Russia fought many wars with Chechen separatists. It is a victim of terrorism, which is originated from this region. Thus, it is imperative to mention about this problem.

**Chechnya**

The population of Chechnya is approximately about one million and composed primarily of Chechens and Ingushes as the dominant ethnic groups in the region. Most Chechens are Sunni Muslims. Both Chechen and Russian civilians have suffered in this conflict. Approximately 200,000 to 250,000 Chechens have been forced to leave their home during the Russian invasion of 1999, while Russian civilians have had to live in fear of suicide bombings and various other forms of terrorist attacks inside Russia (Flint 2006: 112-3).

In Caspian geopolitics this region is quite important, because the Baku-Novorossiysk pipeline has passed for 80 miles through the Russian Republic of Chechnya. After a long battle a peace agreement was reached in July 1997 among Azerbaijan, Chechnya, and Russia on early oil exports from Azerbaijan. But, it could not settle the issues of regional security and pipeline tariffs. Later on, Russia’s Transneft
pipeline transport company and Chechen government officials had clashed over the issue of tariffs and war reparations from Russia. The renewal of war in Chechnya in 1999 prompted Transneft to construct a 300,000-bbl per day through Chechnya bypass, which was completed in 2000. But, the pipeline is still vulnerable to terrorist attack (EIA 2007).

Since, the disintegration of Soviet Union, Russia has been facing the problems from Chechen separatists. It is a regional security problem of Russia to deal with. According to Russian officials, Chechen separatists have links with Taliban of Afghanistan. On the other hand, Russia was criticized by the US for violating human rights records, while dealing with Chechen separatists in Chechnya. But, after the September 11, 2001, Russia got the opportunity to bring the Chechnya issue under the global campaign against international terrorism. And, it is an appropriate example of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s pragmatic foreign policy to deal with the regional security issues.

These regional conflicts are the major concerns for the regional as well as external powers, those who involve in the Caspian region to fulfill their geopolitical needs. The main aim of all these powers to free the region from the regional conflicts which would affect the oil and gas pipelines, those connect the resources of CSB to the world market. There are many pipelines, which have been mentioned above pass through the conflict ridden regions. Thus, all the powers and their energy companies those who have invested in this region do not want to take the risk further. Russia and the US are the two major actors have stakes in this region and they want to manipulate the regional security problems according to their own for maintaining clout in this region. The US has provided aid to the newly independent states of this region to maintain security and stability in this region. After September 11, 2001, the US led NATO deployed military forces in Central Asian region to protect these regions from Islamic fundamentalism. On the other hand, Russia the powerful regional actor has supported the US stationing of military forces in Afghanistan and Central Asia. It has also tried to cooperate with its Cold-War adversary in the Caspian geopolitics for exploring the resources. Additionally, Russia has also started engaging itself in its ‘near abroad’ due to the growing presence of the US in its ‘backyard’.

32
The Strategic Dynamics of Russia’s Pragmatic Foreign Policy: A Brief Analysis

Despite the economic and military limitations of Russia, it wants to reengage itself in Central Asia in order to keep the external actors at bay. In the sphere of security issue, Russia has its own security problem like Islamic fundamentalism and separatism. The US engagement in Central Asia has provided Russia an opportunity to deal with these problems. Russia supported China to resolve the security problems such as Islamic fundamentalism and border disputes under the banner of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, the regional security structure. Though, China is regarded as the competitor of Russia in Central Asian region, Russia needs to align with China to check the influence of the US in Central Asia. Additionally, Russia and China have already given observer status to other external actors such as Iran, Pakistan and India to make Central Asian region free from the influence of the West.

Russian military and foreign policy establishment still regard Central Asia as Russia’s exclusive security buffer. Many tend to believe that the deployment of the US forces is not motivated by its struggle against international terrorism but by a drive to control Caspian oil and gas while pushing Russia out and also strengthening its foothold in backyard of Russia and China. In this context, the impact of US presence on the regional powers needs to be discussed.

The US presence in Central Asia and its impact on the regional powers

Russia, the major power in the region supported the US led west’s campaign in Afghanistan, because the former regarded US military presence in its traditional sphere of influence as a boon for it, providing Moscow with a cost free, increased security apparatus vis-à-vis unstable state along with its vulnerable southern frank. As it has been already mentioned, both the US and Russia have parallel interests in Central Asian and Caspian region, the war on terrorism made these common perceptions even stronger than before. The US began to treat Moscow as its partner and wanted to integrate Russia with the western multilateral security and economic organizations like NATO and WTO respectively, which would confer Moscow a new identity. Additionally, the US led
military campaign against terrorism in Afghanistan provided leverage for Russia to achieve its objectives in Chechnya.

Despite its initial cooperation with the US, Russia started expressing resentment and apprehension about the prolonged American presence in the region. The US’ Caspian policy has added fuel to fire which would aim at bypassing the oil pipelines away from Russia. To face the US challenge in Central Asia, Russia was trying to strengthen its relations with Central Asian states on the one hand and trying to foster strategic partnership with China on the other.

China is another important actor because of its geographic proximity and its economic, political and strategic stakes in Central Asia. The war on terrorism has helped in advancing some of the important Chinese foreign policy goals such as the eradication of the political threat posed by Uyghurs and other Turkic Muslim minorities living in Western China. After the September 11, 2001 incident in America, the Chinese government induced the US to include Uighur groups to its lists of foreign terrorist organizations.

Iran, the regional player in Central Asia, which has traditional linkages with the Central Asian republics have suffered setbacks after the US military engagement in the region. Because, the US has hardened its policy towards Iran by including the latter in the “axis of evil”, together with Iraq and North Korea in January 29, 2002. The US has alleged that Iran is pursuing weapons of mass destruction and nuclear weapons and supporting the terrorist groups in the Middle East.

Like Iran, Turkey has traditional linkages with the Central Asian republics and stakes in the region’s energy resources. It is also an ally of NATO and has been maintaining cordial relation with the US since the Cold War period. Turkey’s geographic proximity to Iran and Iraq made the US to maintain cordial relation with Ankara.
Furthermore, Turkey’s liberal democratic political tradition along with market economy was being portrayed by the West as a role model for the economic development of the newly independent states of Central Asian region.

Influence of Geopolitical Theories on the Power Rivalry between Russia and US in Central Asia

The theories of geopolitics whether classic or reality-based have impact on the power rivalry between Russia and the US. Mackinder’s “heartland” theory, Alfred Mahan’s “Sea Power”, Spykman’s “Rimland” theory, Brzezinski’s “Grand Chessboard” etc are the main examples which indicate the power politics between sea power and land power. During the phase of Cold War era, many alliances and counter alliances were formed on the basis of geopolitics. The two important actors such as Soviet Union and the US were to control over the regions to eliminate the importance of their adversaries. In this phase, the smaller powers were used as the pawns in the game of great power rivalry. Even after the many years of Cold War phase, the power such as Russia, the true successor state of former Soviet Union and the US the present super power, are engaged in the Central Asian region to uphold their supremacy. Unlike the Cold War phase, there is no such belligerent situation in this region. Rather it is the geopolitics which is going on between the two powers along with other regional powers. It is rather the reality-based geopolitics which is going on over the Central Asian region, which is rich in natural resources. All the powers are trying to extract the maximum benefit through competition and cooperation.

There are many proposed pipelines by the US created to avoid the Russian domination. Russia is also emerging as a major power, which is trying to strengthen its foot hold over its traditional sphere of influence. China as an emerging actor is trying to cooperate with Russia to contain the US influence in this region because of its stakes in Central Asia’s energy resources. Thus, the whole game is for the natural gas and oil resources. On the other hand, the Central Asian states are trying to get economic and military assistance for reviving their fragile economies and resolving the security issues.
It is the geopolitical factor which has made this region a centre of attraction for the major powers.

The US engagement in Central Asia has forced regional actors to formulate their own strategies to maintain their footholds in this region. Broadly, it can be regarded as a power rivalry between the two major powers such as Russia and the US by taking account of other regional actors. Currently, the competition for supremacy in Central Asia has reached in a critical stage, when the major regional actors like Russia and China are engaging in this region jointly on the one hand and individually on the other. While, Russia the true successor state of the demised Soviet Union has started its involvement by emphasizing on the old regional security structure like Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and engaging bilaterally with individual Central Asian states. China, the growing regional power has signed many bilateral trade agreements with the individual states of Central Asia. Furthermore, both the powers are at loggerhead with the US through a regional multilateral organization-Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) which was created as a forum for settling the border disputes of the concerned member states: China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan. Later on, Uzbekistan, the most populous and militarily supreme state of Central Asia joined this multilateral forum. Shanghai Cooperation Organization can be considered as a direct attempt to undermine the rationale for the US security presence in the region.

In a summit meeting of the SCO which was held in Kazakhstan’s capital Astana on July 5-6, 2005 in which India got the observer status, the six members’ regional grouping called on the US led anti-terrorist coalition to set a deadline on its military presence on the territories of the SCO member states. The fact is that in the run up to the SCO summit in a meeting in Moscow on July 5, 2005, the Chinese President Hu Jintao and the Russian President Vladimir Putin issued a joint declaration rejecting the efforts by any power to achieve a monopoly in world affairs by dividing the world into ‘leaders and followers’ and for imposing models of social development on other countries (SCO Declaration 2005). On the other hand, the Central Asian countries are scared of the US’ aggressive policy of democratization, which attempted to change the governments of
Ukraine, Georgia and Kazakhstan under its banner of color revolutions. In the present scenario, the leaders of the Central Asian republics those who backed the US in its war against terrorism started tilting towards Russia and China. In an instance, Uzbekistan’s President Islam Karimov ordered to close the Karshi Khanabad base (k2), which was offered to the US during the war on terrorism. Currently, this power rivalry between Russia and the US in Central Asia has reached in such a stage, where Russia along with China is going to lead in containing the US influence in the region while making the whole of Central Asia as a battlefield for great power rivalry. In order to analyze the power rivalry between Russia and the U.S. first of all the policies of major powers such as Russia, the U.S. and China, Iran, Turkey and India should be examined in particular. This “New Great Game” is an ongoing struggle over the geopolitically important region, thus the study should be focused on the strategies adopted by the individual actors in this context, so that the contour of this competition can be properly dissected and some solutions can be drawn from which the Central Asian states would get maximum benefits from this great power rivalry.