CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The idea of reviving of the ancient Silk Road is not new either for India, or for Kyrgyzstan. Central Asia in the wide sense and India have common cultural and historical ties since ancient times including interactions in the sphere of diplomacy and trade. There were "assimilation" "extinction" of ethnoses, as well as clashes and armistices. In the era of economic globalization and attempts to expand multi-polar relations including that in culture, geo-policy, economy and security, the concept of revival of the Silk Road ties is getting more and more important for both countries.

The Doctrine of the President of the Kyrgyz Republic, "The Silk Road Diplomacy", declared in September 16, 1998 is the most articulated foreign policy concept for revival of the Silk Road on a new basis and level. Diversification of transport and communication is reflected in the Doctrine as the core issue in establishing and continuing the cultural, economic and transport links between Asian and European countries. Successful implementation of the Doctrine could promote an unprecedented expansion of trade relations on both sides, as both are member countries of the WTO, as well as provide exclusively wide access to the new markets and strengthen the economies of Kyrgyzstan and India. India's experience in the development of tourism, agriculture, industries, trade, education and science, and that of information technologies in particular, can be beneficial for Kyrgyzstan and promote mutual relationships between the two countries.

At present India has initiated the so-called "New Silk Road" policy for further strengthening of cooperation with Central Asian region which is an important strategic partner with energy and mineral resources. Kyrgyzstan and India are located in the same larger geographical region. The two countries share common approaches on many international problems such as struggle against terrorism and extremism of all forms and manifestation, organized crime, illegal drug and arms trafficking. Especially, after "Tulip revolution" in Kyrgyzstan on 24 March 2005, and after the Shanghai Cooperation
Organization (SCO) summit held on 25 July, 2005, in Alma-Ata, and then on 17 August, 2007 in Bishkek, there is a trend to strengthen trade and security cooperation. According to political observers, India and Pakistan might become full members of SCO in the future, in which case SCO’s power will significantly increase.

The thesis examines the significance of revival of the Silk Road ties between Kyrgyzstan and India that can link the areas of the “Silk Road” on a new, modern basis. In this context the issues of regional security and stability, relations with neighbors etc. shall be discussed.

BACKGROUND

Concept of Central Asia

There are ancient and modern definitions of Central Asia.

Historically, the region was called Turkistan, the land of Turk by traveler Ibn Battuta from Morocco (1304-68) (Ram Rahul, 1996, p.4.) and earlier by Marco Polo (1254-1324). Turkistan can be broadly divided into two: Western and Eastern.

Western Central Asia

The western Central Asia includes Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. Majority peoples include the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, Tajiks, and Uzbeks, who descended from succeeding waves of nomads from Mongolia in the north east. They speak mostly Turkic languages, while the Tajiks descended from the original Indo-European inhabitants of the area and speak Persian language. In addition, all ethnic groups had a complexity of nomadic and sedentary lifestyles, except Uzbeks, who were solely sedentary.

Eastern Central Asia

Beyond the Altai Mountains are the two great regions of Xinjiang and Mongolia. Xinjiang consists of the vast Taklamakan desert, ringed with oasis cities, home of the Islamic Uyghurs, another Turkic people, who produced their own distinctive textiles and
carried the Silk Road trade on to China. Mongolia and Inner Mongolia are the original homelands of the nomads who swept in waves westwards to Iran (Persia) or east into China itself. The Buddhist Mongols are nomadic pastoralists, breeding livestock and living in tents or boz-yuys (urtas).  

Central Asia was first marked out as a separate region of the world by geographer Alexandr Gumboldt (1843). According to the UNESCO definition, based on geography and climate, Central Asia includes Mongolia, the Northern China, the Northern India, the Northern Pakistan, the Northern East Iran, Afghanistan and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan.

Another demarcation of Central Asia is based on ethnic composition and includes Xinjiang, Turkic regions of Siberia, five Former Soviet Republics and Afghan Turkistan and sometimes includes the regions inhabited by Mongols and/or Tibetans. Over the centuries in both eastern and western Central Asia different ways of living, nomadic, semi-nomadic and sedentary or combination of it were practiced.

Central Asia was largely populated by wave after wave of migration of nomadic peoples from the Andron (Pro-Aryan), Saka, Hun and Usuni cultures to mingle with Turkic and Mongol tribes that moved westwards from Mongolia in search of new pastures. In some opinion this led to the beginning of the First Transmigration to west and south and formed Indo-Aryan culture. Particularly, the history of Kyrgyzstan is connected with the geographical area of re-settling of ancient Aryans. People of Andron combined agricultural (a mattock, millstone and bronze sickles are evidence of that) and cattle-breeding way of life with predominance of pastoral breeding (camels and horses of two kinds: small for meat producing and slim-legged, tall and graceful horses for military chariots). It is assumed that Androns are the first who introduced the cheese and kymyz (fermented mare’s milk) processing. The big family formed the basis of Andron community, where a leading role was given to a man. He was also an owner of herds and lands. They occupied the territory from Volga and Ural to Tian-Shan and Yenesei, the

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1 Boz-yuy - an easily-dismantled and portable dome-shaped dwelling, made from wooden struts and felt, perfectly suited to the nomadic lifestyle and culture.
primordial land of Aryans, from where they shifted to the west and south east, according to most scholars. The horse breeding was a vital activity. In order to find good grazing for these animals, nomads moved seasonally from pasture to pasture, using horses and camels for transport. Traditionally, nomads lived in portable felt-covered dwellings called yurts.

From the 1700s, beginning with Kazakhstan, Tsarist Russia gradually established control in western Central Asia, which became known as Russian Turkistan. In response to Russian pressure, China's long involvement in eastern Central Asia increased and Xinjiang officially became a province of China in 1884. In the 1920s, following the Russian revolution, five autonomous peoples’ republics - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - were established along ethnic lines in western Central Asia and incorporated into the USSR.

**Religion in Central Asia**

Most of the region's population is Muslim (Islam arrived sometime in the 7th century). Historically, nomads practiced (even today some elements still remain within) Shamanism (many symbols remain in the form of balbals - small stone statues that are thought to have been grave markers), Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Nestorian and Manichean Christianity. Nowadays, Russian Orthodox Christianity, Seventh Day Adventists and Jehovah’s Witnesses, Roman Catholicism, Judaism and Bahai are other religions in the region.

**Concept of the Silk Road**

The Silk Road was the oldest and most ancient trade route that linked East and West. Total longitude of the Road was approximately ten thousand kilometers. This transcontinental route linked the Roman Empire in the West with the imperial court of China. The Silk Road was the major highway for transporting material goods and knowledge between Europe, the Near East, India, and China — the four major centers of civilization at the time from the second millennium B.C. through the middle of the second millennium A.D. Over this period of almost 2000 years, exotic and commercial
goods, skills, knowledge, and religion — as well as silk — crisscrossed the Eurasian continent, and shaped the course of European and Asian history and culture. China's vast western region was accessible to travelers along the classic Silk Road. The trade route was never called so until the term "Silk Road" was first used by the German scholar Baron Ferdinand von Richthofen in 1877 in his work “China”.

In due time the trade route was named differently: “lapis lazuli”, “jade”, “silver”, “tea”, “fur” or “emerald” and “golden” (Shefer E., 1981). It is interesting to know that one can trace the culture, characteristic and development of the route according to the transported goods. For instance, Lapis was delivered from Badakshan to Iran and Near East, jade was known to be from Khotan. It is Shefer’s opinion (1981) that Khotan’s jade played an important role in the Chinese culture since long from late Stone Age and mainly used for ritual and magic materials. From Egypt and Syria were transported alum for bleach washing of fleece and glass manufacturing, India was famous with gold and ivory, Khorezm for turquoise and China for paper and silk (History of Orient, 1991: 301).

The direction and scale of contact varied over the centuries, serving as a fundamental link for exchanging cultures, crafts, ideas, technologies, and beliefs. The length of the Silk Road was approximately ten thousand kilometers: transcontinental – up to ten thousand kilometers, continental - a few thousand kilometers, local – from a few thousand kilometers to a few hundred kilometers, and paths – from a few hundred kilometers to a few kilometers. Almost every 23-26 kilometers, which was the average one day caravan route, there were caravan-sarais. In the convenient climate the caravans could pass up to 8 farsah² (50 kilometers), in bad weather – 4 farsah. The caravans also were different and some could have up to 10 thousand camels.

The idea of the route for the silk delivery channel originated during the emperor of Han Dynasty Han Lyu Tche (140-87 B.C.), also known as Wu-di (“sovereign-warrior”). The eastern end of the route originated in the 2nd century BC from a desire for military and

² One farsakh (parasang) is equal to 5685 meters. Following the 30-stadia definition of Herodotus and Xenophon, the Greek version of the parasang would be equal to either 5.7 km (Olympic measure) or 5.3 km (Attic measure).
political purpose instead of trade. The Silk Road was first traveled by a court official Zhang Qian when he was sent by Han Wu-di on a diplomatic mission in order to seek allies with Usuni regents considering them as potential ally against Hun Xiongnu, who repeatedly invaded the Western Regions. However, on the way to the Western Regions, Zhang was captured and detained for ten years. After escaping from Xiongnu's detention, Zhang Qian continued his journey to Central Asia. At that time, the local rulers were satisfied with their status and refused to ally with Han Empire. On the return journey, Zhang Qian and his delegation were again captured, and in 125 B.C. they arrived back in Changan. The emperor was much interested in what they found. Although the mission failed in its original purpose, the information Zhang Qian conveyed to China about Central Asia, and vice versa, made people in each area desire goods produced in the other. By this process, the route from east to the west was opened up. Zhang Qian is still seen by many to be the father of the Silk Road. More expeditions were sent out towards the West over the following years. After a few failures, a large expedition managed to obtain so-called “heavenly horses”, which helped transform the Han cavalry.

Important periods for the Silk Road were the Chinese Han dynasty (206 B.C. - A.D. 220), the Chinese Tang dynasty (A.D. 618-907), and the Mongol Khanate (13th and 14th centuries A.D.). The Mongols, who ruled a vast empire, safeguarded a northern Silk Road land route that crossed the Eurasian steppes. However, the directions of the route were not fixed and permanent. It changed from time to time due to political circumstances in Central Asia and climatic conditions. According to Chinese sources there were three lines of the Great Silk Road (Map 1, 2).

From the time of Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 B.C.) the Silk Road began in the old capitals of Buoying and Xian (then called Chang'an, China), then into Gansu Province, and reached the Yellow River at Lanzhou, Tianzhu, Zhangye, Jiuquan along the Hexi Corridor, after which it reached Jiayuguan - the giant barrier of the Great Wall and the first key point of the route - and Dunhuang in the west end of the Hexi Corridor of Gansu Province from where it was divided into two.
Map 1. The Silk Road corridors
Map 2. The Silk and Sea Trade Routes

China’s Foreign Imports and Trade Routes

- China proper in the Tang Dynasty, Eighth Century A.D.
- Silk route
- Other land routes
- Sea routes

Map showing trade routes from China to various destinations across Asia and the Middle East.
The northern route then passed through Hami, before following the northern Tian-Shan mountains and the Tarim river round the major oases of Turfan and Kucha before arriving at Kashgar, and then crossed the Pamirs and through the Terekdavan pass to Davan (Ferghana valley), the Kandzui countries, the district of Ural and Lower Volga. It ended at the Greek colonies of the Black Sea.

The southern route branched off at Dunhuang, passing through the Shan’shan (the area near Lob Nor) and skirting the southern edges of the desert, via Miran, Hetian (Khotan) and Shache (Yarkand). In Yarkand the route passed to Tashkurgan and Wakhan and divided into two: the first went to Bactria, Merv and through Gekatompil and Ekbatana (Hamadan) and Mesopotamia to Syria and Antioch. The second route passed over Wakhan to the south through Gilgit and Kashmir to Gandhara and finally ended on the bank of the Indian Ocean in Barbarikon (Ind) and Brigaz (Bharosh).

Numerous other routes were also used to a lesser extent; one branched off from the southern route and headed through the Eastern end of the Taklamakan to the city of Loulan, before joining the Northern route at Korla. It functioned as the middle route. Kashgar became the new crossroads of Asia; from here the routes again divided, heading across the Pamirs to Samarkand and to the south of the Caspian Sea, or to the South, over the Karakorum into India; a further route split from the northern route after Kucha and headed across the Tian-Shan range to eventually reach the shores of the Caspian Sea, via Tashkent. In 7-8 Centuries AD the caravan trade of the Silk Road added to the sea route.

The Silk Road was discovered also by several travelers – merchants, Buddhist missionaries, etc. beginning from Zhang Qian, Xuanzang to Francesco Balducci Pegolotti and Marco Polo. Significant information was left after Pegolotti, who wrote the guidebook "Market Practices" in 14th century about rates of exchange, translators to hire and pricing the goods. Marco Polo became its most famous explorer when he traveled from Europe to Asia in the late 13th century (Map 3).
Map 3. Marco Polo's travel

Compendious Map of Marco Polo's Asia and adjacent countries

Conjectural route of the elder Polos
Conjectural route of Marco Polo
One of the prerequisites of the development was information exchange between nations and civilizations. The cultural achievements spread because of the contacts – trade, language and transmigration. Ancient territories that comprised the Silk route had a rich history. These states today can revive a link between East and West with the benefit of modern transport, communication, culture and trade developments.

*Revival of the Silk Road*

In XIX Century, Europe paid anew attention to Turkistan. The second discovery of the Silk Road was a casual result of political games. It was a period of the conflict of interests of two powers - Russia and England - that started “Great Game” in which they competed for consolidation of their possession and expansion of sphere of influence in Asia.

Since 1900 began the archeological excavations on the southern part of the Silk Road, in Khotan. Numerous masterpieces of art and manuscripts in more than 17 languages and 24 types were found. But at the beginning of the First World War these excavations suddenly stopped till 1954 when USSR and China signed the Agreement on the Construction of the Friendship Road through the Djungaria gate – the flat country where the two mountains interfaces in Kazakhstan and China. By 1965 construction was complete from the Soviet Union side, but China turned off the construction. Only in September 1990 the site Friendship – Alashan’kou connected the railways of China and Central Asian Republics in one transport net. In 1975 another agreement on integration of the railways of Soviet Turkmenia and Iran was signed. The creation of the transport system on analogy of the Silk Road on the border of USSR facilitated the expansion of intercontinental cooperation and strengthening of the status as a superpower at that time.

*The Silk Road today*

The independence of Central Asian states following Soviet disintegration maximized the prospects of revival of the Silk Road. Nowadays there are many important projects on revival of the Silk Road like Transport Corridor Europe Caucasus Asia (TRACECA), which was launched in 1993 in Brussels’ Conference and approved two and half yeas later in Vienna Conference. The project undertakes the creation of the transportation
system through Central Asia, Caucasus and Europe, also the so-called Southern New Silk Road. The technical assistance for development of the Central Asia-Caucasus-Europe transport corridor undertaken by TACIS (EU) is also in the framework of the long term 23 projects. If this corridors start to function, which correspond to the directions of the Silk Road, it would provide favorable conditions for economic growth of Central Asia and expansion of transit corridors in Asia-Pacific, India and China to Near East and Europe.

The opening of another “northern route” through Kazakhstan and Chinese railways, (Friendship – Alashan’kou) created the necessary prerequisites for forming a new direction – the Tran-Asian highway from the Pacific ports of China (Liuniungan’, Tsindao, Tiantszin) through Urumchi to Iran and Turkey. The total distance of the highway from China - Almaty - Tashkent - Tedjen - Serakhs - Meshhed - Teheran – Ankara - Istanbul is 10.5 thousand kilometers.

The presently functioning transport corridor, Baku (Azerbaijan ) – Ceyhan (Turkey), is part of the initial project supposed to be the Eurasian highway routed through Liuniungan’ (China) – Almaty – Ashgabat – Turkmenbashi – Baku – Giandja – Tbilisi – Ardahan – Erzurum – Ankara – Istanbul connecting finally to Europe.

Energy is the main factor today for the European Union’s TRACECA project, or other alternative transport corridors and the realization of them opens the possibilities of conflict as well as cooperation in Caucasus and Central Asia. The revival of the Silk Road could multiply its complexity. There are plenty of projects also for promoting information technology, development and preservation of the cultural heritages, historical study and development of the communication and surface transport.

Taking into account the unique role of the Silk Road in the history of civilization, UNESCO in 1987 launched the “Silk Road” research program. As results it has several publications “The cities and routes of the Great Silk Road”, etc. In 1994 NATO initiated “The Virtual Silk Road” (www.silkproject.org) program on computerization and access
to the worldwide Internet with the headquarter at the Physics Institute DESY (Hamburg, Germany) for the states in the ancient road, which was operationalised in 2002.

Thus, Eurasian Continental Bridge, built to rival the Trans-Siberian Railway, has been constructed from LianYun Gang city in Jiangsu province (on the East China coast) to Rotterdam; the first phase of this development has already been completed, and the official opening of the railway was held on 1st December 1992. It already promises to be at least 20% cheaper than the route by sea and at 11,000 kilometers is significantly shorter. From China the route passes through Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus and Poland, before reaching Germany and the Netherlands. The double-tracking of the railway from Lanzhou to the border of the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) has now been put high on the Chinese development priority list.

On the other sides, there are certain projects being worked out to revive the historic cultural traditions of the Silk Road. The Silk Road Foundation is an on-going project to compile an annotated list of all the important travelers on the Silk Road. These travels are arranged in chronological order. Each entry will include a brief description, highlighting possible issues such as where the person went, and why the journey was undertaken for and so on.

Another Silk Road programme in Seattle is a public education project using the "Silk Road" theme to explore cultural interaction across Eurasia from the beginning of the Christian Era to the Seventeenth Century. The principal goal is to provide, via the Internet, materials for learning and teaching about the Silk Road.

The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and the Silk Road Studies Program created a joint Transatlantic Research and Policy Center in 1996 (affiliated with the Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies of Johns Hopkins University and the Stockholm-based Institute for Security and Development Policy) to respond to the increasing need for information, research and analysis on these regions.

Also, the Silk Road Regional Program (SRRP), a joint initiative between United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the governments of China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan,
Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, will be carried out in three areas - trade, investment and tourism - with the aim to revive traditional economic cooperation. The project will encourage public-private partnership in selected fields such as infrastructure, tourism and hotel development through a Silk Road Investment Forum, an annual or biannual event to attract international and Chinese investment. Through the project, the UNDP and WTO will identify eight to ten cities along the route to award the title of "UN Silk Road City" to encourage their commitment and long-term planning for the protection of cultural assets.

Apart from being a major trading route the Great Silk Road was of immeasurable significance for the establishment and maintenance of diplomatic relations. Today, while talking about the revival of the Silk Road as a historic-cultural and socio-economic complex, one can not help mentioning the growing process of globalization and increasing interdependence that makes it more vital. The dynamic development of political, trade and economic relations needs to get strengthened if mutually beneficial partnerships are to be developed between all the States on the Silk Road. From this standpoint, the revival of the Silk Road could play an important role not only for Central Asia and India, but for the entire world.

Silk Road ties of India and Kyrgyzstan

On a historical-cultural plane the territory of contemporary Kyrgyzstan formed in ancient times a common territory with Eastern Turkistan where Buddhism took deep root as far back as centuries II B.C. – IV AD and continued to retain influence in several regions for a long time. It is known from numerous sources that the earliest bearers of Buddhism along the route to the East were a large group of natives of Central Asia - Sogdians, Parthians, Khanguis. Of great historical and cultural significance was the activity of the Ak Shigao, a Parthian from Marghilan and crown prince of his country (who rejected the throne like Shakyamuni). He settled in Loyan in 148 AD and till 170 AD was working on translation into Chinese of Buddhist works. Buddhism arrived Central Asia with missioners and migrants who traveled along with Silk Road. Buddhism reached its highest flourishing during centuries VII-VIII B.C. Interpreters of Indian holy texts and
authors of new literary and historical works on Buddhist themes were known through works of Sanskrit, Khotai - Saka, Tibetan, Chinese, Sogdian and Tokhar literature.

Buddhism prevailed and the most outstanding monuments that were created were considerably distinctive and different from their Indian prototypes. Existence of famous icon painters of Buddhist paintings with Sogdian names and surnames indicating their Central Asian origin speaks in favor of this assumption. Different researchers draw attention to the leading role of representatives of ancient Central Asian ethnoses, who were first to transfer Indian culture to the East. This is also true of Kyrgyzstan as well, where Buddhist monuments were discovered by A.N. Bernshtam during archaeological exploration of the whole territory of the Republic between 1933-1954. In the western gallery of the shrine (Ak Beshim) a sculpture of sleeping Buddha was excavated in 1961 and in the southern side fragments of paintings was found on the wall.

After 8th century AD Buddhism in Kyrgyzstan did not revive as in Tibet, Eastern Turkistan and Far Eastern countries where this religion beginning from X-XI centuries AD entered a new phase in its development, undergoing local transformations. However, ancient Yenisei Kyrgyz did not stand aside from the influence of Indian Buddhist culture in folklore, geographical names, and moral ethical code and everyday life and ritual.

The first written evidence of the Kyrgyz people as a nation was found in Chinese chronicles that dated from 2 to 1 century B.C. Some of the Kyrgyz tribes set themselves free from Xiongnu domination and moved to the Enisei (Mother-River), and Baikal (Rich-lake) Lake regions. There they formed their first state known as the Kyrgyz Kaganat, which existed from 6 to 13 AD. This was also the time when the Kyrgyz culture and the first written Kyrgyz language started to form, confirmed by the unique runic inscriptions on stone monuments (History of Kirghiz SSR, 1984: 441). The Kyrgyz Kaganat collapsed as the result of a foreign invasion and the Kyrgyz people consequently lost their written language. One may infer that ancient Kyrgyz people had its civilization, since written script is a major indication of the existence of a civilization.
In India before coming of the Aryans, there existed the Harappan civilization. The civilization is also called the Indus valley civilization. The Harappan civilization spread over a large area from Baluchistan to Gujarat. Some historians like Prof. B.B. Lal estimated that it covered the eastern valley of the river Indus, spreading over an area measuring 1,600 kilometers east to west and 1,100 kilometers north to south. In other words, area covered by Indus civilization was much greater than other contemporary civilizations in Egypt and Sumeria.

During the reign of the Kushans, who dominated the areas of Hindu Kush into Kabul, Gandhara, northern Pakistan and north-western India, trade between India, China, Parthia and the Roman Empire became extensive. This provided an ideal medium for the further spread of Buddhism. From the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century AD, Buddhism gradually developed in northwestern India and the great Kushan ruler, Kanishka, who reigned from 144-172 A.D., was converted. Under his influence, Gandhara, a Buddhist settlement, flourished and created a distinctive Greco-Buddhist art form, which affected the arts in Central Asia and eastward in the first four centuries of our era.

Kyrgyzstan’s ancient Silk Road connections with India have been established on the basis of archaeological sites existent in Naveket (Nevaket), Sujab, Ak Beshim, Balasaghun etc. Few Buddhist images (VII - VIII century A.D.) found in Naveket town, 35 kilometers away from Bishkek, are preserved and displayed in the Archaeological museum of Kyrgyz -Slavonic University and historical museum in Bishkek.

That Naveket finds resemble the finds in Adjna Tepe, Fayaz Tepe, Kara Tepe and Merv in other Central Asian Republics, offer conclusive evidence of close historic-cultural links between India and Central Asia according to many scholars including Kyrgyzstan’s Kyslasov (1959) and Goryacheva (1980). Great Silk route was not only a means of transferring goods but also exchange of ideas between the two regions. Great Silk Road played the role of a connecting bridge between cultures and civilizations.
Kyrgyzstan

The Kyrgyz Republic (Kyrgyz Respublikasy) is a landlocked republic in the eastern part of Central Asia that is bordered on the north by Kazakhstan, on the east by China, on the south by China and Tajikistan, and on the west by Uzbekistan. Bishkek, the capital is located at the juncture of two great Central Asian mountain systems (the Tian-Shan and the Pamir). These two systems are geologically separated from each other in southern Kyrgyzstan, between the Alai Mountains of the Tian-Shan and the Trans-Alai Range of the Pamir. Victory Peak (known as Pik Pobedy in Russian and Jenish Chokusu in Kyrgyz) is the highest peak in the Tian-Shan system at an elevation of 7,439 m (24,406 ft). Located on the Kyrgyz-China border in northeastern Kyrgyzstan, Victory Peak is also the highest point in Kyrgyzstan and the second highest peak in the former USSR. A series of mountain chains that are part of the Tian-Shan system, including the Ala-Too ranges, spur off into Kyrgyzstan. The Fergana Valley in the west and the Chui Valley in the north are among the few significant lowland areas in Kyrgyzstan. The Kyrgyz, a Turkic-speaking people, constitute a slim majority of the multiethnic population of Kyrgyzstan. The constitution enshrines Kyrgyz as the country's state language, although Russian continues to be used widely as an official language.

Kyrgyzstan became part of the Russian Empire in the late 1800s. In 1924 it was incorporated into the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) as an autonomous region, and in 1936 its status was upgraded and it became one of the 15 constituent republics of the USSR, officially called the Kirghiz Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR). Kyrgyzstan became independent from the USSR and joined Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) with the most liberal trade regime, in 1991. In 1993 the republic ratified its first post-Soviet constitution. Kyrgyzstan, along with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Belarus, and Russia, are seeking to create a common economic space within the framework of the Eurasian Economic Union.

India

Since the early 1990s, India has been undergoing a transition to a liberalized free-market economy. The private sector is predominant in agriculture, most non-financial services,
consumer goods, manufacturing and some heavy industry, although the State dominates the economy through public ownership in sectors such as finance, energy, capital goods and heavy industry, and infrastructure.

India is also regarded as a giant in technological achievements and industrial output: it has significant expertise in nuclear energy, communication satellites, vehicles, software design, combat aeroplanes and helicopters, oceanography and deep sea oil drilling, as well as machinery and manufactured goods. Recent reforms include liberalized foreign investment and exchange regimes, industrial decontrol, significant reductions in tariffs and other trade barriers, reform and modernization of the financial sector, significant adjustments in government monetary and fiscal policies and safeguarding intellectual property rights. The rapidly growing software sector is boosting service exports and modernizing India's economy.

It has the world's 12th largest economy, and the third largest in Asia behind Japan and China, with total GDP of around $570 billion. Services, industry and agriculture account for 50.7%, 26.6% and 22.7% of GDP respectively. India is capitalizing on its large numbers of well-educated people skilled in the English language to become a major exporter of software services and software workers (India – societe generale, March 2, 2007, p.22; Government of India, 2007).

**Kyrgyzstan – India relations in the Post-Soviet Period**

India's warm relations with the Soviet Union during the Communist period have continued after Soviet disintegration, and particularly with Kyrgyzstan the relations are very cordial. India was one of the first countries to recognize Kyrgyzstan's independence and establish diplomatic relations. The bilateral cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and India was established in March 1992 with signing of diplomatic relations protocol during the first official visit of the President of Kyrgyz Republic to India. In 1993 Embassy of Kyrgyzstan in New Delhi started functioning and in 1994 Embassy of India opened in Bishkek.
HYPOTHESIS

1. The relations between Kyrgyzstan and India have received a fillip in account of Silk Road ties which are being revived by various countries.
2. Geographical location of Kyrgyzstan between China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan makes an important country for India’s security interests.
3. India has significant trade and investment opportunities in Kyrgyzstan in hydro-electric energy and other resources which are facilitating the development of transport corridors.
4. Regional integration trends have strengthened the basis for deepening Kyrgyz – India ties.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS:

1. **What are the historical characteristics of India – Central Asia’s ties?**
2. **Why reviving of Silk Road links is important for a development perspective?**
3. **How the contemporary relations between Kyrgyzstan and India can help develop regional co-operation?**
4. **What are the regional trends and how can these benefit Kyrgyz – India relations?**

Along with political and economic relations there is an evident interest in enhancing relations in the cultural sphere. Indian epic “Mahabharata” was translated into Kyrgyz (by N. Kemelbaev, 1997) and Kyrgyz epic “Manas” into Hindi (by Varyam Singh, 1997). Moreover, as mentioned earlier, India also has its historical links that go beyond the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Friendship of 1971 to the Mughal period and Silk Road.

Apart from future possibilities of cooperation in hydro-electric sector, there are several potential areas for Kyrgyz-Indian joint cooperation like food processing, information technology, tourism, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, cosmetics, engineering goods, electronics, banking service, and mining. But the existing cooperation needs to enhance in a strategic and long-term cooperation framework with a view to increase investment
not only in energy resources, but also in banking, tourism, information technology, high-tech sectors and develop cost-effective transport corridors in near future.

Objectives of the present research are:

1. To study the historical background of Central Asia - India ties in cultural, political and trade aspects.
2. To analyze modern relations between India and Kyrgyzstan.
3. To evaluate the impact of relations between the two countries on regional security and stability.
4. To identify the problems and perspectives of reviving of Silk Road in the context of promoting the interest of the two countries.

The study shall be mainly on the contemporary relationship between Kyrgyzstan and India. However, since the original Silk Road existed in the ancient period, there will be a background chapter on the history of the relations since the ancient times. The main focus would cover the post – 1991 period after Kyrgyzstan became independent. The study shall cover relationship not just in the trade and economic areas, but also political, cultural and strategic aspects.

THE STRUCTURE

The thesis paper consists of Introduction, four Chapters, Conclusion and Bibliography. **Introduction** includes a survey of literature and development perspectives on revival of Silk Road ties on a new basis between countries that once were strongly linked economically, culturally and even politically. **The First Chapter “The Silk Road: Historical-cultural links between India and Central Asia”** discusses the socio-cultural and economic linkages facilitated by ancient Silk Road between India and Central Asia. Socio-economic and security challenges following Soviet disintegration creates the need to revive the links that integrated the areas of the Old Silk Road. In the **Second Chapter “Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan: socio-economic and security dimensions”** trade and economic policies, transport projects etc., in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan have been discussed. It shall also focus on the security dimensions, especially in the context of strengthening
security ties with Russia, China and India. *The Third Chapter "Contemporary Kyrgyzstan – India relations"* examines the need to have development perspectives that can facilitate the formation of a common economic, cultural and information space since 1991. *The Forth Chapter "Regional integration trends: Role of the Silk Road"* shows how regional integration can form a strong basis for Kyrgyzstan –India relations. The revival of the Silk Road ties, however, has faced challenges from groups that promote exclusive ideologies and conflict situations. In the last one and half decade major countries that belonged to the "Silk Road" have come closer, which has raised the prospects of regional integration. Finally, a concluding Chapter would summarize the findings of the research and gives some indications about the prospects of India-Kyrgyzstan relations.

**HISTORIOGRAPHY**

The history of the Great Silk Road was described by different scholars, especially with regards to Central Asia and India. It can be mark out that many authors from Ssu-ma Ch’ien ("Records of the grand historian of China", translated from the Shih chi of Ssu-ma Ch’ien by Burton Watson) who has given the important information from travelers of Han Dynasty, Marco Polo ("The Travels", translated by R. Latham, and papers about him), Bichurin H. I. (Iakinf) ("Sobranie svedeniy o narodah, obitavshih v Sredney Asii v drevnie vremena") to Aurel Stein ("Archaeological Discovery in the neighbourhood of Niya", "Archaeological Discovery in the neighbourhood of Niya"), Swen Hedin ("The Silk Road"), and, Frankfort H. P. ("The Central Asian dimension of the symbolic system in Bactrian and Margian") have given a detailed description of traveling route from India to Central Asia. The knowledge gained by Aurel Stein and Sven Hedin is recorded and examined and Baumer, Christoph (Southern Silk Road. In the Footsteps of Sir Aurel Stein and Swen Hedin) and others like Walker, A. ("Aurel Stein: Pioneer of the Silk Road"), Whitfield, Susan ("Life along the Silk Road"), Juliano, A.L., & Lerner, J.A. ("Monks and Merchants: Silk Road Treasures from Northwest China: Gansu and Ningxia, 4th-7th Century").

This work on history of civilizations of Central Asia presents an account of various movements of populations and the interrelations of their cultures in this region, when the nomads were driven back; sedentary civilization was strengthened and became rapidly predominant. With the rise of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, the civilizations of Central Asia underwent a fundamental change by a progressive syncretism between Zoroastrianism, Greek religion and Buddhism, which formed the basis of the civilizations of Central Asia up to the Arab and Mongol conquests. Turkish, and to a much lesser extent Mongol military expansion south of the Oxus river into what is now Afghanistan and northern India was also to have lasting political effects on these regions. The changes brought about by the movements of Turkish peoples were accelerated by the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century.

The region had always been content to absorb influences from the surrounding civilizations. Lamaist Buddhism which established itself in the Mongolian region and in Tibet, and Islam among the Turkish peoples of Transoxania, southern Siberia and Xinjiang. As early as three thousand years ago Hebraic and Iranian religious ideas and practices traveled eastwards in this way, to be followed centuries later by the great missionary traditions of Buddhism, Christianity, Manichaeism, and Islam. Foltz, Richard C. ("Religions of the Silk Road. Overland trade and cultural exchange from antiquity to the fifteenth century") tells the story of how cultural traditions, especially in the form of religious ideas, accompanied merchants and their goods along the overland Asian trade.
routes in pre-modern times. Stobdan P. ("Traces of Buddhism in the Semirech'ë", "Himalayan and Central Asian Studies". Vol.7, No 2, April-June 2003) devoted his article to the highest degree of Buddhist archaeological concentrations in the Semirech'ë, which are found in the Chui Valley bordering Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. There are 4 Buddhist sites: two situated around Tokmak (Ak-Beshim and Krasnaya Rechka) and two in the vicinity of Bishkek (Novopokrovka and Novopavlovka). A rich and prosperous trade developed between the Mediterranean and China through Central Asia by what is known as the Silk Route. Traversed by caravans of Bactrian camels, this international highway remained in use for several centuries despite the development of the sea routes. The main pass in the North Himalayan region, which played the role as a trade route between India and Tibet, was divided into three groups like the Shipki, the Almora and the Darjeeling – Sikkim. In Central Asia – India’s point of view might be interesting north – western ranges of Himalayas. The Himalayan ranges shut off the country from other parts of Asia. Balkam Srivastava ("Trade and Commerce in Ancient India") described the Ancient India trading through three routes: the Himalayan Uplands, the Indo-Gangetic plains and the peninsular India.

Thus, these works showed the historical, cultural as well as trade relations between Central Asia and India on basis of archaeological, art elements and personal experiences which help to arrive at a better understanding of the history of the Silk Road between Central Asia and India.

The historical context of Central Asia in XIX-XX cc. is outlined in the works of Subbotin A.P. ("Russia and England on Central Asian markets"). Ram Rahul ("March of Central Asia", "Central Asia: An Outline History") chronicles history of East Central Asia: Tibet and Xinjiang, and West Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, the central region of the continent of Asia, through twenty centuries from the ancient time to the present. It tells of the condition and circumstance of all Central Asia, its episodes and encounters, and the routes taken by its society. Devendra Kaushik ("Central Asia in Modern Time. A history from early 19th century") describes the situation in the Central Asian khaganates – Bukhara, Khiva and Kokand – in the first
of the 19th century, testifying to their extreme economic, political and cultural backwardness, the latest period in the history of Central Asian nations – their struggle for victory and consolidation of the working people’s power in Turkestan, and the Jakhara and Khiva khaganates, the national separation and establishment of national publics.

The post 1990s changed the world dramatically where the political hold of the Russians declined comparatively. Some works stressed this trend: Surendra Gopal (“Dialogue and Understanding: Central Asia and India: The Soviet and the Post-Soviet Era”), Central Asia: The Challenges of Independence (edited by Boris Rumer and Stanislav Zhukov), Central Asia in Transition: Dilemmas of Political and Economic Development” (ed. by Boris Rumer), Ajay Patnaik (“Nations, Minorities and States in Central Asia”) look at the state policies in Central Asia that have consolidated indigenous nationhood and policies that seek to build upon a multi-ethnic and diverse society. Patnaik’s study also looks at identity issues in Soviet and post-Soviet times and concludes that differences in ethnic and demographic situations notwithstanding, the new states need to reflect and present through their policies the multi-ethnic character of their societies. K. Warikoo and Mahavir Singh (“Central Asia: Since Independence”) present an integrated view of the momentous changes taking place in the five Central Asian Republics since their independence: nation-building, democratization, and economic development, regional cooperation, building of bilateral and multi-lateral relationships, and impact of Afghanistan crisis over the developments in Central Asia.

necessitated redefining and restructuring of Indo-Central Asian relations. This includes a research program “India-Central Asia Economic Relations” (A Report of RIS/CII Seminar, New Delhi, October 17, 2003) and book “India – Kyrgyz Relations. Perspectives and Prospects” (eds. K. Santhanam, Ramakant Dwivedi, New Delhi, 2008) on bilateral cooperation between India and Central Asia.

At a time, when Central Asia is passing through a phase of reconnaissance and is constantly looking back and earnestly trying to search for its identity, every Central Asian State looks back to India for spinning the fabric of its historical and cultural splendor and searches for the new cooperation between India and Central Asia.