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3

India and Central Asia

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*Ambassador and Permanent Representative of India to the United Nations
in New York from 2013-2015 and
India's last Consul General to Soviet Central Asia in 1990*



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India and Central Asia*

Asoke Kumar Mukerji**

Across Central Asia today, people are celebrating the spring festival of *Navroz*, which is one common strand linking the diverse populations of India and Central Asia. The festival is especially significant for the Zoroastrian community, that in ancient times traversed the Silk Road, catalysing the movement of goods and ideas.¹ In India, the Zoroastrian Parsi community celebrates this festival as the beginning of the new year, symbolic of rejuvenation and rebirth. The lighting of a flame, whether a lamp or a candle, is an intrinsic part of the celebration of *Navroz*.

BACKGROUND

Twenty-five years after the five independent states of Central Asia re-emerged from the isolation of history into the limelight of international relations, it was also an appropriate moment to look at India's relations with Central Asia as a process of rejuvenation and rebirth. The imperial interests of Britain and Russia coincided by 1893, when both sides of the Wakhan corridor were demarcated in Afghanistan to separate the two empires. Above the Wakhan corridor was the Emirate of Bokhara, while below it was the Gilgit-Baltistan region, belonging to the Indian princely state of Jammu and Kashmir.² The histories and cultures of both the regions separated by the Wakhan corridor were closely inter-twined, influencing and being influenced by each other. By creating this buffer, the two powers stifled the centuries-old interaction between the two regions, which had traversed what is loosely called 'The Silk Road'.

*This paper is a revised version of a Lecture delivered on 21 March 2017 at Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, New Delhi.

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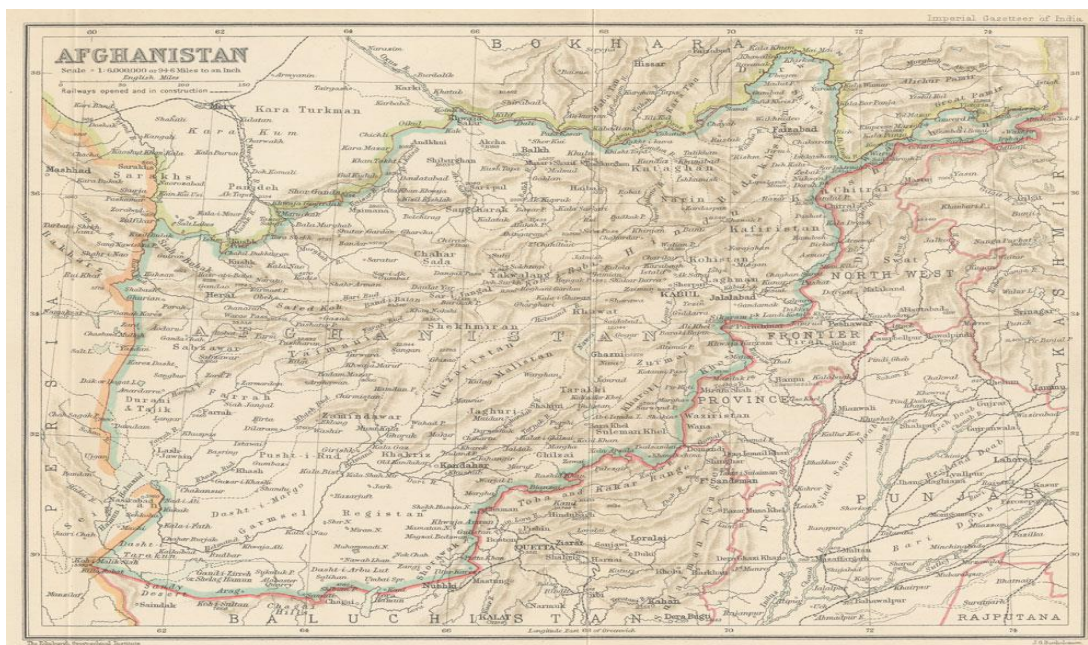


Fig. 1: The Wakhan Corridor. Courtesy: Edinburgh Geographical Institute

In July 2015, Narendra Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to visit each of the five independent Central Asian states during a single journey. This was a reiteration of India's continued interest in restoring and strengthening relations with this region.³ The visit created a platform to not only rediscover the ancient fabric of these relations, but also sought to use this shared civilization for the future development of India's relations with Central Asia, both in terms of the bilateral engagement as well as in the context of developments in regional and international affairs that impact the two regions. As the Prime Minister said during his visit, "Our relationship with the region has ancient roots and has left a strong imprint on both. It now occupies a significant place in India's future."⁴

The new political leadership in Central Asia had taken a similar initiative twenty-five years earlier, when leaders of each of the five newly independent Central Asian countries had found time, and inclination, to visit India between 1991-1993.⁵

Despite domestic preoccupations stemming from her financial crisis and the subsequent launching of economic reforms, India had reciprocated this outreach from Central Asia through the visit of Prime Minister Narasimha Rao to the two largest Central Asian states of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in May 1993.

In conceptual terms, perhaps the biggest transformation in Central Asia over the past twenty-five years has been the transition within its societies, from a seven-decade long statist ideology of Bolshevism to a reaffirmation of its earlier spiritual and intellectual traditions. This propels an advocacy of the importance of dialogues to sustain human values and pluralistic, multi-religious, and multi-ethnic societies.

The larger impact of India's re-engagement with Central Asia would be on the neighbouring countries, including Russia, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran. All these countries are today members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). India and Central Asia are well positioned to contribute constructively to a process that can result a restoration of the spiritual harmony of Asia based on its rich diversity.⁶

Following Prime Minister Modi's visit in 2015, five key areas have become relevant in giving a new orientation to relations between India and Central Asia. Two of these areas relate to revisiting and applying the spiritual traditions we have just mentioned. The other two relate to the aspirations and abilities of the peoples of the region to sustain their national identity, independence and development, including a concerted effort to restore connectivity within their region. The fifth area is an emerging challenge posed by terrorism to the core human values in the region, that underpin our common aspirations. This challenge must be rebuffed in a concerted and sustained manner to achieve the other four priorities.

1) **Buddhism**

If we began with a reference to the Zoroastrian festival of *Navroz*, then another significant ancient link between India and Central Asia is provided by Buddhism. In southern Kazakhstan, on the right bank of the Ili River, are rock carvings etched by travellers that highlight the Buddha, including the Buddhist incantation of *Om Name Padme Hum*.⁷ These rock carvings are similar to those at other points along the Silk Road, including in the Ladakh region of Jammu and Kashmir, and date back to period when Buddhist pilgrims travelled from India into Central Asia.

Photographs of these rock carvings from Kazakhstan and Ladakh were exhibited at the National Library of Kazakhstan in 2006, drawing young and old viewers who were keen to know more about their pre-Islamic heritage and the links with India. One of the essential

Buddhist texts, the *Dhammapada*, was translated and published that year in the Kazakh language by a Kazakh professor, Aubakr Dastanuly Nilibayev, who had been awarded the Padma Shri in 2004.⁸ The book became a sought-after item among the local Kazakhs.

The most well-known centre of Buddhism in Central Asia was Termiz, which lies on the banks of the Amu Darya river separating Uzbekistan from Afghanistan. The Fayaztepa and Karatepa monasteries excavated at Termiz, containing wall murals and sculptures depicting the life of the Buddha dates back to the Kushan era.⁹

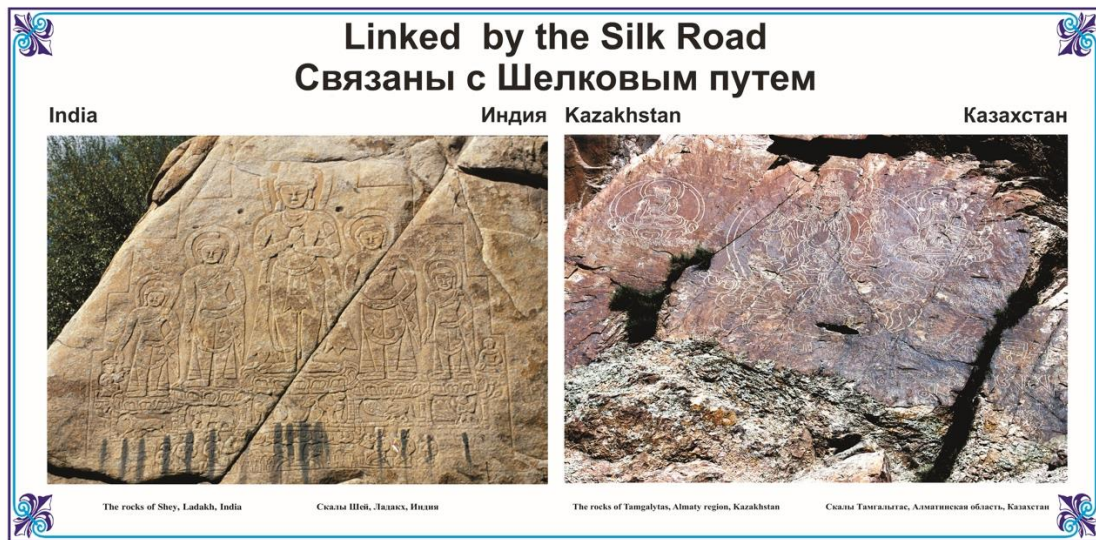


Fig. 2: Exhibition on the Silk Road, National Library of Kazakhstan, 2006

Of course Afghanistan was pivotal to the spread of Buddhism into Central Asia and China from India. The teachings of the Buddha were carried along the traditional routes leading northwards from India through Afghanistan. The most famous manifestations of the Buddha in the region were undoubtedly the statues at Bamiyan in Afghanistan. Built in the sixth century BC, these were dynamited into destruction by the Taliban in March 2001¹⁰ despite international concerns, just six months before the 9/11 terror attacks on the United States.

It is important to recall these contacts today, when many specialists in international relations are studying grandiose attempts to revive the ancient Silk Road in Asia.¹¹ The archaeological evidence, the lifestyles of people, the travelogues and histories, including that by the famous Chinese traveller Xuanzang¹² in the 7th century, all demonstrate that the Silk

Road was not confined only to the movement of, and investment in, raw materials and artefacts. Instead, one of the Silk Road's more important roles was in facilitating the flow of ideas and cultures, connecting societies in an inter-linked manner long before the current realities of globalization.

From Central Asia, Buddhism travelled east, along the Silk Road to China. The teachings of the Buddha took root along the Silk Road, transforming societies in the process. A few years ago, there was an interesting debate among diplomats and scholars about the preference of the ruling regime in China between Buddhism and Confucianism. The Australian scholar Thomas David DuBois described the background to this:

During China's middle ages, a time when Confucianism had fallen out of political favor, it was Buddhism that served as the language of international relations. Buddhist exchanges created and strengthened alliances between kingdoms across northern China, the Korean peninsula and Japan. Even after Confucianism had supplanted political Buddhism in East Asia, political Buddhism remained vibrant in Central Asia, where incarnated Buddhas and lamas held real power, and supported a succession of Mongol khans who ruled as wheel turning kings. Later dynasties, especially the territorially vast Qing, spanned these two worlds. Emperors like Qianlong ruled their Chinese subjects as Confucian monarchs, but in their dealings with the lamaist belt of Tibet, Mongolia and Manchuria, they skilfully employed the idiom of Buddhist kingship.¹³

The role played by Indian Buddhist monks in disseminating Buddhism in China has been extensively recorded in history. Initiatives to focus on this shared heritage in the 21st century have been taken at the highest level, with former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee proposing in 2003 to build an Indian-style Buddhist temple in Luoyang in the Henan province of China. The temple was constructed with a statue of the Sarnath Buddha and a stupa similar to the Sanchi Stupa, adjacent to the original White Horse Buddhist Temple. It was inaugurated in May 2010 by President Pratibha Patil, and the Governor of the Chinese Province of Henan.¹⁴ The original temple, built in 68 AD, marked the first arrival of Buddhism into China.

A significant centre of Buddhism along the Silk Road was established at Dunhuang in the north-western Chinese Province of Gansu. It included manuscripts containing the teachings of the Buddha brought from India, as well as Indian art forms such as cave-painting. The painting in Cave 158 of the Mogao Caves Complex, which has close to 500 caves, is

unique in show-casing the inter-connectedness between India, Central Asia, and China. Called the ‘*Parinirvana Cave*’, the mural depicts Buddha lying supine on his side, while assembled devotees look on in mourning, including representatives from the different tribes of Central Asia, who are easily recognizable by their distinctive styles of headgear worn in Central Asia even today.¹⁵ Today, these religious and cultural links between India, Central Asia, and China are at the heart of a major international project, known as the International Dunhuang Project.¹⁶



Fig. 3: Central Asian representatives at Lord Buddha's *Parinirvana*, Cave 158
Courtesy: Silkroad Foundation website at <http://www.silk-road.com/artl/buddhism.shtml>

As Dr. Priyatosh Banerjee, an Indian scholar, writes:

The active intercourse between India and Central Asia which began about the 1st century A.D. and lasted for about 1,000 years was of a peaceful nature and beneficial to both the sides. While India enriched Central Asian art and culture, Central Asia on its part played a unique role in the dissemination of Buddhism to China, Korea and Japan. It had also preserved in its sand dunes Buddhist manuscripts and texts of varied nature: religious,

medicinal and astronomical; most of which were lost long ago in India. Thus, the discovery of cultural relics from Central Asia has not only revealed the character and magnitude of Central Asian culture but also provided enough material to fill in the gaps in our knowledge of Indian cultural history.¹⁷

In March 2006, former President Abdul Kalam proposed the idea of reviving the ancient Nalanda University. The East Asia Summit endorsed this initiative in 2009.¹⁸ The most detailed historical accounts of Nalanda are found in the writings of the Chinese traveller Xuanzang. It is today possible to conceptualize an institutional link between the Dunhuang Project and Nalanda, focusing on the Buddhist heritage shared by countries along the Silk Road. This would reinvigorate the appeal and study of Buddhism along the Silk Road from India to Central Asia and China.

2) **Islam**

The second area relates to the dissolution of Bolshevik ideology from Central Asia in December 1991. There has been a yearning among most of the Central Asian people to reconnect with their spiritual traditions, including their Islamic heritage. Unfortunately, in the general contemporary narrative about Central Asia, as part of the Islamic world, not much is known both within and outside the region about this rich heritage, which combined adherence to religion with a modern scientific temper.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his visit to Central Asia in 2015 pointed to the bonds between our regions because of the Islamic tradition. He said, “The confluence of Indian and Islamic civilizations took place in Central Asia. We enriched each other not only in spiritual thought, but also in medicine, science, mathematics and astronomy.”¹⁹

(a) Sufism

The unique spiritual traditions shared between India and Central Asia have been revived incrementally over the past twenty-five years. In November 1992, a visiting Indian delegation made a request to the local authorities in Bokhara for assistance in visiting the shrine of one of Sufism’s most influential teachers, Sheikh Naqshband, who was born near Bokhara.²⁰ It was an unusual request, because during the previous seventy years of Soviet rule, such shrines had been kept away from the public gaze. The visit re-focused attention on

the origins of the Sufi Naqshbandi order, which was active not only in the Indian sub-continent, but also across west Asia to Turkey. Simultaneously, the visit served to provide the local population in Central Asia an incentive to re-connect with one of the treasures of their own rich heritage.

During his historic visit to Uzbekistan in July 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had presented to President Karimov of Uzbekistan a specially commissioned reproduction of the *Khamasa-i-Khusrau* by the “great 13th century Sufi poet Amir Khusrau, who was born in Uttar Pradesh, and whose father hailed from Uzbekistan.”²¹ Cooperation between India and Central Asia in restoring focus on our shared Sufi traditions can become one of the main contributions from our region to the attempts being made to offer counter-narratives to exponents of violent extremism.

This approach underscores the identification of common links between India and Central Asia in coming years as a priority to reinvigorate our shared heritage. It would be appropriate to recall the words of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, when addressing the *World Sufi Conference* in New Delhi in 2015. He said:

Sufism blossomed in India’s openness and pluralism. It engaged with her spiritual tradition, and evolved its own Indian ethos. And, it helped shape a distinct Islamic heritage of India. We see this heritage in the fields of art, architecture and culture that is part of the fabric of our nation and our collective daily lives. We see it in the spiritual and intellectual tradition of India. It helped strengthen the inclusive culture that is our great nation’s immense contribution to the cultural tapestry of this world.²²

(b) The Islamic Golden Age

Within the more settled populations along the cities of the Silk Road, such as in Bokhara, Khiva, and Samarkand, medieval Central Asian scholars had interacted with, and sometimes influenced, Indian intellectual traditions. This period is often called the Islamic Golden Age, marked by its contribution to knowledge in diverse fields of science, medicine, astronomy, and natural sciences.

I. Medicine and Natural Science

Among the many scholars who link India and Central Asia through their work from this period, the writings of Ibn-Sina illustrates this connection even today in medicine. Avicenna (or Ibn-Sina), was born in Bokhara in 980 AD, and made seminal contributions to science, medicine, and philosophy. He learnt Indian mathematics from travellers on the Silk Road, and his writings on philosophy influenced Thomas Aquinas in Europe. His *Canon of Medicine*²³ played a key role in the evolution of Unani medicine in India. The contemporary impact of this can be seen in the holistic approach towards traditional medicines and knowledge in India, spearheaded by the Ministry of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy)²⁴. The practical application of Unani medical knowledge in the early 20th century by Hakim Ajmal Khan, the first Vice Chancellor of the Jamia Millia Islamia university in India,²⁵ is a good example of the kind of collaboration that can expand between India and Central Asia in the years ahead, in the areas of holistic health and medicines.

II. Astronomy

Abu Raikhan Al-Beruni, a contemporary of Ibn-Sina, was born in Khiva, now in Uzbekistan, in 973 AD. He was influenced by the ideas and languages that travelled along the Silk Road, and learnt Sanskrit. He travelled to India in 1017, writing about his observations in his book *Tarikh al-Hind*,²⁶ including a section on Indian astronomy. His contributions to geodesy, dealing with the measurement of the Earth and gravity, have an impact on our modern understanding of space research.

In our shared history, two figures are remarkable in the area of astronomy. One, of course, is Maharaja Jai Singh, who constructed the famous *Jantar Mantar* observatories in Jaipur, Ujjain, Varanasi, Mathura, and Delhi in the eighteenth century, between 1724 and 1730. The hallmark of his contribution to astronomy was his preference to use traditional methods of sight-based observations for astronomical measurement despite the existence of the telescope.²⁷

Jai Singh's observatories refine the work done earlier by Greek and Persian astronomers. They carried forward the significant contribution by the 16th century Central

Asian ruler Ulugh Beg, who built an astronomical observatory in Samarkand in the early fifteenth century. Ulugh Beg compiled a comprehensive catalogue of over a thousand stars, providing the first substantive update of a 1600-year-old database compiled by the Greek astronomer Hipparchus, and calculated the movement of the planets, at a time when the telescope had yet to be invented. A Western academic, Dr Daniel C. Waugh, has noted that Ulugh Beg's "most impressive achievement was to use the observatory at Samarkand to measure the obliquity of the ecliptic, which astronomers before him had calculated with a range of error between 7'-10'. Ulugh Beg's observatory could calculate this more precisely, with an error rate of only 0' 32".²⁸ Ulugh Beg was overthrown in 1449, and his observatory at Samarkand razed to the ground, leaving only its foundations available for future archaeologists to use in imagining one of the significant scientific structures of Central Asia.

It is time for such deep-rooted bonds between India and Central Asia to be nurtured through intensifying exchanges in a structured and time-bound manner. The objective of such exchanges would be to jointly document the contributions made by Central Asian Islamic civilization in "science, medicine, literature, art, architecture and commerce"²⁹, catalysing the revival of Central Asia's rich traditions in these areas. Such a database of information would effectively countervail attempts to stoke sectarian discord in the region by external players.

3) **Skilled Societies**

In addition to the spiritual and intellectual dimensions, a third area that holds enormous potential for India's relations with Central Asia is in the joint development of skilled societies. In ancient times, commercial interaction was facilitated by the routes of the Silk Road, and communities of traders and financiers (the latter invariably from India) dominated the marketplace of the busy bazaar towns like Samarkand, Bokhara, Khiva, Merv and Astrakhan. At Bokhara, the location of the financial district of the bazaar, where traders of the Silk Road transacted their business, is still referred to as the *Multani Serai*. According to historians, 'Multani' was the general name given to a Hindu merchant in Central Asia and Persia.³⁰ In Astrakhan similarly, the financial district was named the "Indian Quarter", and its buildings can be seen even today.³¹



Fig. 4: Registan in Samarkand, 1905. Courtesy: Prokudin-Gorskii Collection, US Library of Congress website <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/prok/>

While Astrakhan has reappeared on the map due to the alignment of the North-South Transport Corridor to link trade between Europe and Asia across the Caspian Sea, market towns along the overland Silk Road like Bokhara and Samarkand have the potential to become dynamic hubs in air and trade connectivity between India and Central Asia.

(a) The ITEC programme

At the core of the modern relationship between India and Central Asia is a determination to tap into its potential through skilled personnel. Central Asia chose to become part of India's programme of sharing developmental experience in human resources in 1992.

A week after the historic dissolution of the Soviet Union, I was privileged to welcome a perceptive Central Asian diplomat, Askar Aitmatov from Kyrgyzstan, to my home in Tashkent. His father, Chingiz Aitmatov,³² was one of the former Soviet Union's best-known writers, and Askar's own knowledge of India had emerged out of the robust intellectual

environment of his home. He said that while he understood that India was currently preoccupied by overcoming her financial and economic problems, she had a rich pool of experience in nation-building from which newly independent countries of Central Asia could benefit. This pool was our experience in developing our skilled human resources through Indian educational and technical institutions. Our conversation laid the foundation for the extension of India's Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) programme³³ to Central Asia later that year. Interestingly, training in banking services, diplomacy, and the establishment of small and medium enterprises, were among the priorities for Central Asian experts under the ITEC programme.

The Indian developmental experience had been first tapped into by the newly independent former colonies of Africa from September 1964 under the ITEC programme. By expanding this scheme to Central Asia, thousands of young Central Asian experts have been empowered by skill-development in Indian institutions.

The ITEC programme has also been used to fund the construction of small and medium economic enterprises in Central Asia. During the early years of their independence, when Central Asian states did not have adequate foreign exchange reserves, India's lines of credit financed such enterprises. The past twenty-five years have shown the effectiveness of this cooperation, primarily because of the receptivity of Central Asian experts in utilizing the specially designed programs for them in Indian institutions. The significance of such cooperation becomes evident while recalling the fact that Central Asia's population today is almost 70 million, with young adults below the age of 35 looking for employment accounting for one-third of the population.³⁴

The receptiveness of Central Asia to opportunities designed to increase national capacities required for nation-building is in a large part due to the importance given by them to the use of knowledge to develop skills. As in India, such application of knowledge has enabled the diverse peoples of Central Asia, both nomads³⁵ as well as settled populations, to cope with, build upon, and disseminate their historical experiences.

(b) India's 'soft' power

A skilled society is the core of any country's 'soft' power. People-to-people interaction between India and Central Asia, which was one of the living traditions of the Silk Road, has thrown up interesting connections in language, music, and dance, on which the success and popularity of Indian 'soft' power in Central Asia is founded. During the period of Bolshevik rule in Central Asia, 'Friendship Societies' in each Central Asian republic served as a platform for facilitating cooperation with India. Indian students found these Societies helpful as they adjusted to life in their new surroundings. In Central Asia, as elsewhere in the former Soviet Union, Indian students became the first contacts for attempts to establish new relationships with India, often using their contacts in the Friendship Societies at a time when official Indian structures were absent on the ground. These relationships began with a focus on people-to-people contacts.

I. Language

The soldiers of the Mughal armies used a combination of Chagatai Turkish, Persian and Hindustani words when bivouacked in tents in India. The outcome from this was the 'Urdu' language, which is linked to the Chagatai Turkic word for tent 'yurta'. Sometimes, Turkish speakers link Urdu to the Turkish word for 'army', which is 'orde', from which the English word 'horde' is derived. Academics and politicians across Central Asia refer to such links during conversations. Perhaps the best known, and certainly the most used, common Urdu word is 'dosti', or friendship, which has the same meaning in Central Asia and India.

II. Performing arts

i. Music

The traditional musical instruments of Central Asia and India have similar connections. The most popular instruments in southern Central Asia, for example, played during major events, are the *karnai*, a long brass trumpet ending in a mouthpiece, and the *surnai*, which is a wooden wind instrument, as well as the *dutar*, which literally means an instrument with 'two-strings'. The *dutar* is found as well in eastern India, along with a host of other stringed instruments. So, too is the *shenai*, which is used for the same purpose as the *karnai*, especially during weddings. The most well-known link between the musical instruments of Central Asia and India is, of course, the *rubab* of Central Asia and Afghanistan, and the *sarod* of India.

In 2006, an interesting proposal was made by the Indian private sector company, Tata, for making India part of the global western classical music map with the help of the Uralsk Philharmonic Orchestra, located in western Kazakhstan. The Orchestra was directed by the world-famous violinist and musician, Marat Bisengaliev. During their stop over at Almaty, en route to Mumbai, the Orchestra decided to play at the Indian Republic Day Concert. Apart from the traditional and modern western classical music, the Kazakh musicians, helped by Professor Bakhtiyar Amanzhol³⁶ of Almaty, adapted, arranged, and played the Ladakhi folk tune set to an Indian Army march called *Siki Amo Le* by Subedar L.B. Gurung.³⁷ Today, more than a decade later, the dynamic and popular Symphony Orchestra of India in Mumbai is a vibrant example of this unique “joint venture” between India and Central Asia in music.³⁸

ii. *Dance*

The rhythms of dance connect societies in India and Central Asia. Three years before the unforeseen dissolution of the Soviet Union, a major Indian cultural event, the *Festival of India*,³⁹ which included performances of Indian classical dances, had been held across the country, including Soviet Central Asia.

The yearning to restore people-to-people linkages with India after their independence led to the rapid growth of cultural exchanges, channelized through the Indian Cultural Centres. These Centres were a result of an early initiative taken by India in post-Soviet Central Asia in the newly independent countries of Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.⁴⁰ The Centres were helped in selecting aspiring young dancers by the Friendship Societies which existed in all of the Central Asian countries from Soviet times. Apart from keeping the traditional areas of knowledge alive, such as the study of Indian languages, especially Hindi, and the historical linkages between Central Asia and India, Indian classical dance forms like Bharatanatyam, Odissi, and Kathak became popular for training in India. The most sought-after institution was Kalakshetra⁴¹ in Tamil Nadu, associated with the legendary Rukmini Devi Arundale. The influence of the Russian ballerina Anna Pavlova on Rukmini Arundale and her work makes the choice of Kalakshetra by Central Asian dancers even more noteworthy.

Among the first Central Asian dancers to be trained in Kalakshetra was Akmaral Kainazarova, who became proficient in Bharatanatyam. She returned to Kazakhstan with the objective of opening her own school, where she could train young Kazakh children in Indian

classical dance. In 2006, the municipal authorities in Almaty approved a building for her school, the Centre for Indian Classical Dances.⁴² A younger generation of Kazakhs today learn and perform Indian classical dances at the Centre, which is the only one of its kind in Central Asia.

iii. Films

These similarities in language, music, and dance are the foundation for the much commented upon fascination of Central Asians from all layers of society for Indian cinema. The main reason for this attraction is the way in which Indian films deal with social issues, including the ability of the underprivileged and deprived to live a life of honour and dignity by following core human values. The period of relative cultural openness during the 1950s, when Stalinism was replaced by the Khrushchevian ‘thaw’, is associated by most Central Asians with the films of Raj Kapoor.⁴³ *Awara* is perhaps the best-known Raj Kapoor film, and the song *Awara Hoon* its best-known song. One of the Central Asian presidents during his visit to India recounted watching the film in the 1950s, when it was screened onto a white sheet in the middle of his village square, and even attempted to sing the song aloud for his hosts.

Subsequently, Eagle Films of F.C. Mehra and his son, Umesh Mehra, pioneered the co-production of Indian films in Central Asia, using stories from folk tales which were once shared along the Silk Road. Among their most well-known films was *Ali Baba aur 40 Chor*, which was co-directed by Umesh Mehra and the famous Uzbek director Latif Faiziyev in 1979. These two directors subsequently collaborated in making *Sohni Mahiwal* in 1984 and *Shikari* in 1991. Such joint ventures ensured that popular Indian films stars were known across Central Asia. Mithun Chakravarty, acting as Jimmy in the film *Disco Dancer*, became a household name in newly independent Central Asia in the 1990s.

Today, the thirst of Central Asians for Indian films is being sated by technology, with Indian films reaching into households across the region through satellites or through the internet. Films are dubbed into the local Central Asian languages by teachers and students from the Indology departments of each republic. The scale of interest can be gauged by the fact that in Tajikistan alone (population 8 million), over 600 Indian films were dubbed into Tajik in 2012.⁴⁴

The emotional bond between India and Central Asia provides an appropriate base for specialized development of skilled human resources. This was highlighted in the ‘Connect Central Asia’ policy by India in 2012,⁴⁵ and fleshed out during Prime Minister Modi’s visit in 2015. A joint vision for the emergence of such a pool of resources in Central Asia will enable the countries of the region to engage on equal terms with their foreign partners, and innovate solutions for their national and regional requirements in two areas which are at the heart of India’s cooperation with Central Asia: cooperation in energy, and cooperation in the use of technology for development.

(c) Energy

Oil: Joint cooperation in exploitation of the Satpayev oilfield in the Caspian Sea was operationalized during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit in July 2015.⁴⁶

Nuclear Energy: In keeping with the global shift away from fossil fuels towards environmentally friendly energy resources, which Central Asia also possesses in significant quantities, India has been successful in initiating cooperation with Kazakhstan in the area of nuclear energy, with an agreement on delivery of uranium from Kazakhstan to India signed during Prime Minister Modi’s visit in 2015.⁴⁷ A similar arrangement has been discussed with Uzbekistan.⁴⁸ These supplies will ensure that India’s existing nuclear power plants have adequate fuel supplies to function at optimum capacity.

Natural Gas: Another major milestone was India’s participation in the ambitious Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline,⁴⁹ which is designed to annually supply 33 billion cubic meters of natural gas, an eco-friendly natural resource, from Turkmenistan to India by 2019.⁵⁰

Hydel: Similarly, with Tajikistan, cooperation in hydropower has been made a priority during Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to that country in July 2015. Such cooperation will build on the successful completion of the upgradation and modernization of the Varzob-1 power plant by India’s BHEL and NHPC in Tajikistan.⁵¹ In the larger context, these projects provide scope for the mutually beneficial cooperation between skilled personnel of India and Central Asia, applying and innovating technologies related to energy, especially non-fossil fuel energy, in the future.

(d) Information and Communication Technology (ICT)

The other area is the use of information and communication technology (ICT), for socio-economic development, e-governance, and eventually e-commerce. The emergence of India as a major influence in global cyberspace, through its software development skills and IT processing, has made Central Asia look to India for partnerships in this sector. ICT has become an integral part of the ITEC training programmes for Central Asian experts. India has already established Information Technology Centres in Central Asia, located in national academic institutions such as the Tashkent University of Information Technology in Uzbekistan. Inaugurated in 2006, this Centre, named after Jawaharlal Nehru, specializes in training students and government officials in Uzbekistan.⁵² Subsequently, India established Centres of Excellence in ICT in Ashgabat in Turkmenistan, Dushanbe in Tajikistan, Bishkek in Krygyzstan,⁵³ and Astana in Kazakhstan.⁵⁴ India's gift of a Param super-computer to Kazakhstan was announced during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit in July 2015.⁵⁵ What distinguishes this bilateral cooperation is the participation, on both sides, of young people who are well grounded in the basic sciences that drive the ICT sector.

Speaking at the *Second Raisina Dialogue* in New Delhi in January 2017, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "In Central Asia too, we have built our ties on the edifice of shared history and culture to unlock new vistas of prosperous partnership... We have invested in all round prosperity of our Central Asian brothers and sisters and have brought about a successful reset to longstanding relationships in that region."⁵⁶

The sustainability of these efforts depends on increased connectivity, and the maintenance of peace and security in the region.

4. Connectivity

Connectivity between India and Central Asia is rooted in history. The drivers of such connectivity range from political upheavals to socio-economic factors, migration, and trade. More than two thousand years ago, the Kushan Empire⁵⁷, extending from Central Asia to central India, laid the foundations for the Silk Road, and was a manifestation of this process

of migration and assimilation. The Kushan period provides us with extensive material to appreciate the role of knowledge in building resilient societies.⁵⁸

We have already noted the subsequent interaction between India and Central Asia, in the spiritual and intellectual fields, as well as the presence of Indians vis-à-vis the flow of trade and commerce along the Silk Road. The mutual benefit of such interactions drive the initiatives in the 21st century to maximize this relationship through modern connectivity.

(a) Air connectivity

The role of air connectivity between India and Central Asia has significantly increased people-to-people contacts. As Prime Minister Modi remarked during his visit to Central Asia, “More than 50 flights a week connect the five Central Asian capitals to India. And, it takes about the same time as it would take to fly to Chennai from Delhi.”⁵⁹

Air connectivity, though, remains a high cost and low volume means of interaction for trade and economic purposes. For trade and commerce, three strands of connectivity have become relevant, *viz.* connectivity using the traditional overland routes of the Silk Road, maritime connectivity to supplement land connectivity, and digital connectivity, especially in the context of impending emergence of the architecture of global e-commerce.⁶⁰

(b) Overland Connectivity

Of the three, overland connectivity appears currently the least viable option for significantly increasing the flow of commerce. Historically, the political separation of Central Asia from India by the imperial powers in the 19th century, resulted in the lack of modern road infrastructure in the region. The volatility of the space lying between Central Asia and India today, prevents sustainable investments in restoring and upgrading the ancient caravan routes that brought the two regions together centuries ago. Apart from this, there are physical and technological barriers to enhanced land connectivity, especially the requirement to build durable all-weather roads across some of the highest mountain ranges of the world, posing a challenge for any significant increase in the volume of overland interaction.

One area where land connectivity is being pursued despite political and physical constraints is in the energy sector. The most well-known project in this area is the ambitious TAPI gas pipeline, expected to increase energy security in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India, and enhance energy market development in Turkmenistan.

(c) Maritime/Land Connectivity

The maritime supplement to land connectivity opens other alignments on the ground, especially using the territories of Russia, Iran and Afghanistan to give more depth to India's relations with Central Asia. During the early period of the Silk Road, maritime links connected Bharuch in Gujarat with Persia and Mesopotamia.⁶¹ In recent months, this option has assumed greater relevance for three reasons:

First, the Iran nuclear deal with major world powers in July 2015 gives investors and entrepreneurs the confidence to restart their activities without fear of violating the UN sanctions regime on Iran.⁶²

Second, following the historic agreement between India and Iran on 23 May 2016 to jointly develop the Chahbahar Port in Iran, and connect it with road and rail networks up to Afghanistan and Turkmenistan, the potential for using this maritime-land route to augment India's relations with Central Asia has increased. This was reflected in Prime Minister Modi's remarks during the signing ceremony of the Tripartite Transport Agreement between Afghanistan, India and Iran, when he said, "the economic fruits of the Chahbahar Agreement will expand trade, attract investment, build infrastructure, develop industry and create jobs for our youth. The Agreement will strengthen our ability to stand in mutual support against those whose only motto is to maim and kill the innocents. Its success will be a positive vote for peace and stability in the region."⁶³

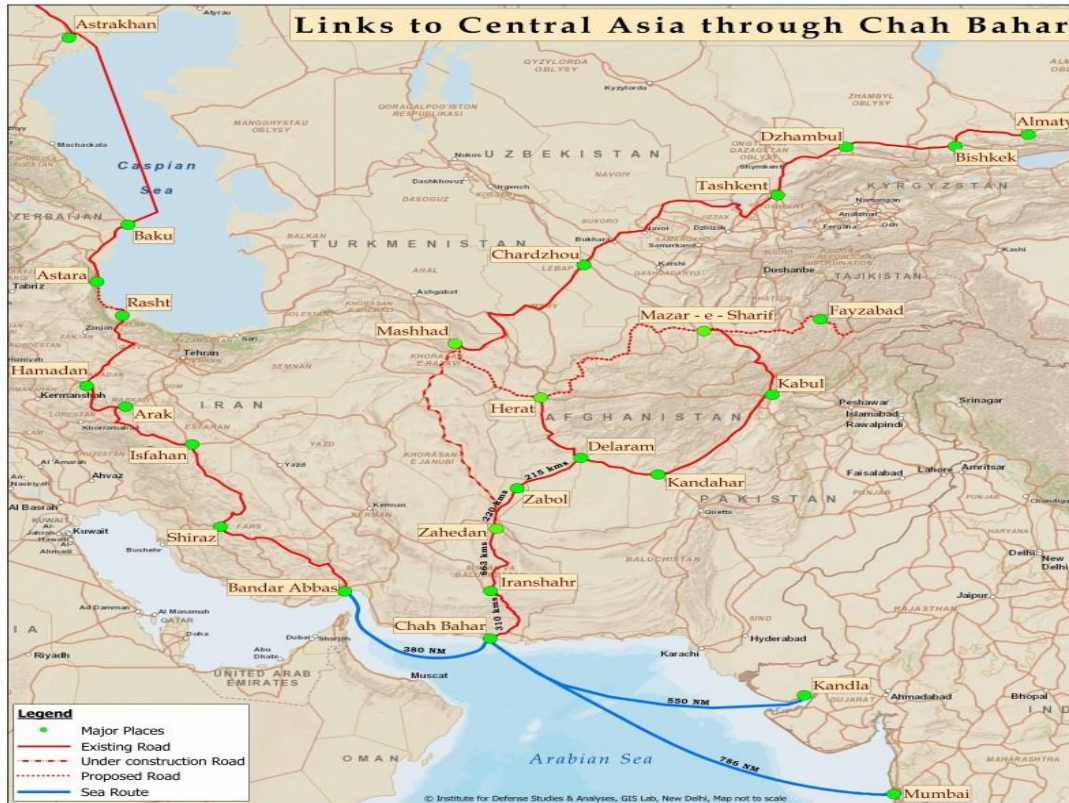


Fig. 5: Access to Central Asia through Chahbahar Port in Iran. Courtesy: Institute for Defense Studies & Analyses, New Delhi

Third, the increasing volatility in the existing Red Sea maritime route that links India to Europe (and through Europe to Central Asia) due to the ongoing conflict in Yemen⁶⁴ has revived the prospects of the North-South Transport Corridor Project. This project, initiated by Russia, India and Iran in September 2000 during former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's visit to St Petersburg in Russia,⁶⁵ proposes to connect the European Union port of Helsinki through the Volga river of the Russian Federation and the Caspian Sea into Iran, exiting at the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas, and connecting shipping lanes to India and Singapore. India agreed to join the Ashgabat Agreement in March 2016. This would enable India to use the existing trade and transit corridors linking Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan, and integrate these links with the North-South Transport Corridor.⁶⁶

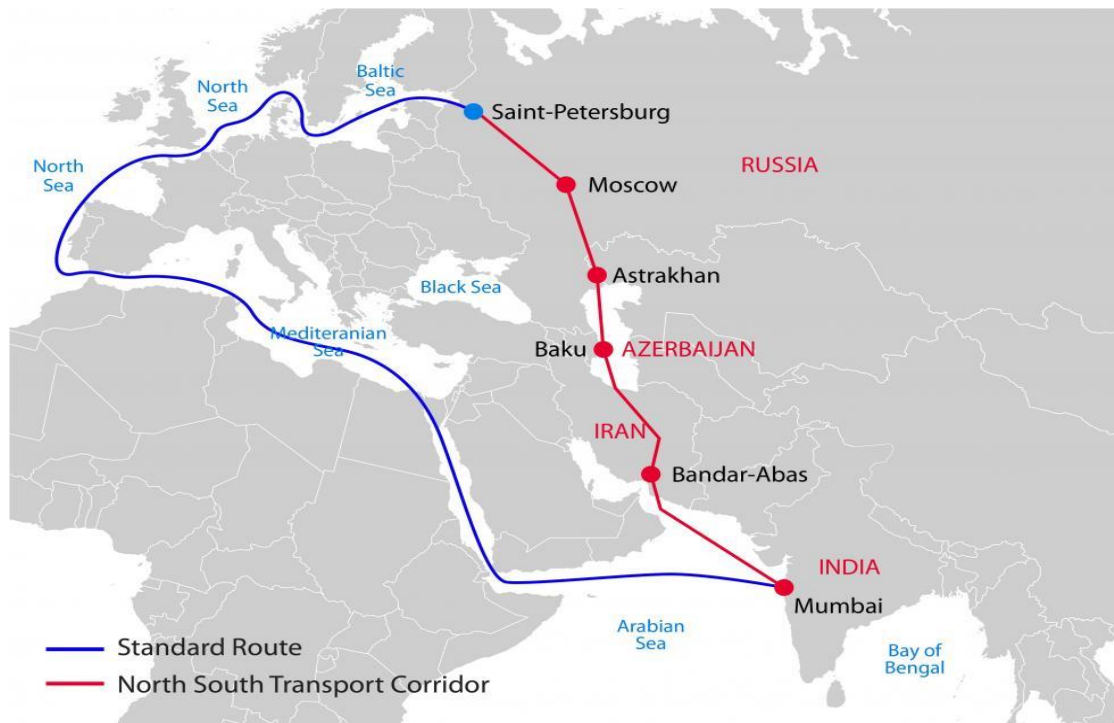


Fig. 6: The North-South Transport Corridor. Courtesy: Alena Repkina, Russia & India Report, 12 December 2016 in their website https://in.rbth.com/blogs/the_outsiders_insight/2016/12/12/long-awaited-north-south-corridor-close-to-launch_655489

(d) Digital Connectivity

The fourth sector, digital connectivity, is a new option that can completely transform India's relations with Central Asia in the 21st century. The use of ICT for providing platforms for tele-medicine, tele-education as well as e-governance projects in Central Asia, will enable India to share its developmental experience in implementing the ambitious 'Digital India' initiative.⁶⁷ As e-commerce becomes a more significant part of regional and global trade activity, the availability of new technologies and applications will make digital connectivity the new Silk Road for our peoples and regions, complementing current efforts to overcome barriers to the physical connectivity between India and Central Asia.

As part of India's 'Connect Central Asia policy', the idea had been proposed of a "Central Asian e-network with its hub in India, to deliver, tele-education and tele-medicine connectivity, linking all the five Central Asian States"⁶⁸. This idea drew upon the visionary pan-African E-network project, conceived of by the former President of India, Dr APJ Abdul Kalam, and launched in February 2009. The e-network uses a fibre-optic network to provide satellite connectivity, tele-medicine and tele-education between India and 48 countries in Africa.⁶⁹

The first such project in tele-medicine was launched during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Central Asia in July 2015, when he witnessed a tele-consultation for a cardiac patient between doctors in Osh city in Southern Kyrgyzstan, with doctors in Bishkek and with the Apollo hospital and AIIMS in Delhi.⁷⁰

Ultimately, the application of internet technologies to accelerate cooperation between India and Central Asia, especially in specific areas of the Sustainable Development Goals of Agenda 2030, provide a major opportunity in the near future. For such e-connectivity, having a dedicated platform in outer space to link India and Central Asia holds tremendous potential. A scientific base of educated young people engaged in space research is available on both sides. A dedicated satellite for Central Asia could be launched to catalyse a 21st century variant of the Silk Road in outer space.⁷¹

5. Countering the Challenge of Terrorism and Violent Extremism

The four priorities outlined so far form the core strategic objectives underpinning India's future relations with Central Asia. The aim of the relationship is to implement a mutual desire to restore direct contacts, supporting Central Asia's process of nation-building. Sustaining stable, independent and resilient societies in Central Asia will enable the region to become a bulwark against repeated attempts to turn it into a sectarian battlefield. Upgrading existing diplomatic, socio-economic and security cooperation are essential to counter the challenge of terrorism and violent extremism facing the region. India and Central Asia can

achieve such cooperation due to the depth, dynamism and aspirations of their comparatively young and pluralistic societies.⁷²

When the states of Central Asia re-emerged as independent countries in 1991, their foremost foreign and security policy priority was political stability. A visiting delegation from the US National Endowment for Democracy met me in our office after going around each of the five Central Asian states. The delegation included a Professor from the Johns Hopkins University in Washington D.C., whom I had known during my assignment in the United States. We discussed the aim of the delegation to advise on 'democracy in Central Asia'. Based on my observations of ground realities and their historical setting, I said that democracy in the region could not be brought about like 'instant coffee', but would take probably two to three generations to nurture.

The yearning for change in Central Asia is palpable to any observer. Most of Central Asia's first political leaders responded to this yearning by organizing constituent assemblies to draw up new constitutions and holding elections based on these constitutions. The debates in the constituent assemblies reflected both their consciousness of Central Asia's ancient heritage and their hopes from the future. For example, in Uzbekistan, there was an animated debate on the national symbol which incorporates a mythical bird called the *Simurg*. In Sufi literature, the *Simurg* is depicted as the symbol of the search for destiny in Farid-ud-din Attar's 12th century poem *Bird Parliament*.⁷³ It has been likened to the Phoenix of Greek mythology, a symbol of renewal.

Into this process of change, external elements sought to influence the outcome of the evolution of Central Asia through their perspectives on what the region's Islamic heritage meant, and its role in nation-building. The polarization between such attempts and the broader movement focusing on stable, pluralistic societies aspiring for socio-economic development, became the crucible for terrorism to take root in contemporary Central Asia, especially in the densely populated Ferghana valley that is shared by Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The population of Tajikistan, which neighbours Afghanistan (with its own significant Tajik population) was directly impacted by the ‘descent into chaos’ of the 1990s. This was marked by the coming to power of the Taliban in Afghanistan, supported by Pakistan.⁷⁴ Terrorism unleashed a bloody civil war in Tajikistan, which was eventually ended by a Russian-brokered truce in 1997.⁷⁵

The proponents of using violent extremism and terrorism in Central Asia draw upon the historical memories of the Basmachi rebellion against Russian Tsarist and Bolshevik rule in Central Asia between 1916-1926. In their narrative, support for the Afghan Mujahedeen’s fight against the ‘godless Communism’ of the Soviet Union must now be seamlessly transferred to violently destabilizing post-Bolshevik governments, in what is sometimes referred to as Turkestan.⁷⁶ Linkages between Central Asian terrorist movements like the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) and the Islamic Jihad Union (IJU) with the Taliban, and subsequently with the Al Qaida and now the ISIS, has threatened the territorial integrity and social fabric of all the Central Asian states.⁷⁷ Central Asian terrorist groups have become increasingly active in areas in the region impacted by the Haqqani network and Tehrik-e-Taliban in Pakistan, targeting Central Asia as well as India.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union coincided with the first arrivals of foreign terrorist fighters in India’s Jammu and Kashmir state from 1989 onwards. The abduction of western tourists in Jammu and Kashmir, and the beheading of one of them in 1994, presaged the brutal violence that has become the staple of terrorist activities today.⁷⁸

In the 1990s, India and Tajikistan worked together to support the Northern Alliance in Afghanistan against the Taliban, including through a medical facility set up by the Indian army at Farkhor, where the mortally wounded Afghan leader Ahmed Shah Massoud was taken for treatment on 9 September 2001.⁷⁹ In 2003, two key Central Asian states, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, set up joint working groups with India to counter terrorism. However, more than fifteen years later, the threat to the region from terrorism has not stabilized. Calibrated by sophisticated state sponsorship from Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI),⁸⁰ terrorism

in the region has become the only certainty in an area of uncertainty. The transitions in Central Asia and India towards socio-economic development are directly challenged by terrorism.

The regional and global implications of this challenge should not be underestimated. This was highlighted during the Sixth Ministerial Conference of the Heart of Asia process, held in Amritsar on 4 December 2016. India and the five Central Asian countries participated actively in this conference, which recognized that ‘terrorism is the biggest threat to peace, stability and cooperation in our region.’⁸¹

Terrorist disruption of the political and socio-economic fabric of the region will jeopardize not only the objectives of India’s relations with Central Asia, but also other attempts to integrate the infrastructure of the region, including Xinjiang, through a revival of the Silk Road. As Prime Minister Modi said during his visit to Central Asia,

The Islamic heritage of both India and Central Asia is defined by the highest ideals of Islam – knowledge, piety, compassion and welfare. This is a heritage founded on the principle of love and devotion. And, it has always rejected the forces of extremism. Today, this is an important source of strength that brings India and Central Asia together.⁸²

In a world that is more interconnected and interdependent than ever before, the consequences of ignoring this reality will be felt by people of the region and beyond. The significance of implementing the strategic objectives of the India-Central Asia relationship are evident in this context. The way in which the region deals with the flow of ideas will play a determining role in any attempts to recreate the physical infrastructure of the ancient Silk Road.

¹ ‘The Sogdian Cults and Zoroastrianism’, by R. Suleymanov, published by UNESCO. Available at http://en.unesco.org/silkroad/sites/silkroad/files/knowledge-bank-article/the_sogdian_cults_and_zoroastrianizm.pdf

² ‘A Few Salient Points’ by Frank Jacobs, *The New York Times*, December 5, 2011. Available at <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/12/05/a-few-salient-points/>

³ The five independent states of Central Asia, viz. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are spread over than 4 million square kilometers in area, larger than India with a population approaching 70 million people, which is more than the population of France or the United Kingdom.

⁴ Remarks by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Tashkent. Available at <http://www.narendramodi.in/text-of-pm-s-statement-to-media-during-the-joint-press-briefing-with-president-of-uzbekistan-at-tashkent-182579>

⁵ Even as the Soviet Union was in the process of dissolution, the late President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan, became the first Central Asian leader to make India his first foreign destination in August 1991. In February 1992, President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan made India his first foreign destination, after becoming the head of state of independent Kazakhstan. This was followed by the visits in March 1992 of President Askar Akayev of independent Kyrgyzstan, President Saparmurad Niyazov of independent Turkmenistan in April 1992, and Prime Minister Abdullah Abdullajanov of independent Tajikistan in February 1993.

⁶ For a discussion of the diverse faiths and traditions along the Silk Road, see “Belief Systems along the Silk Road”, available at the Asia Society at <http://asiasociety.org/education/belief-systems-along-silk-road>

⁷ ‘Kazakhstan’s mysterious rock carvings: TamgalyTas’. Available at <http://www.edgekz.com/kazakhstans-mysterious-rock-carvings-tamgaly-tas/>

⁸ National Library of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Available at https://nlrk.kz/page.php?page_id=335&lang=3&news_id=508

⁹ ‘Ancient Tirmiz’, UNESCO. Available at <http://whc.unesco.org/en/tentativelists/5298/>

¹⁰ ‘Taliban explains Buddha Demolition’, by Barbara Crossette in *New York Times*, 19 March 2001. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/19/world/taliban-explains-buddha-demolition.html>

¹¹ ‘Action Plan on Belt and Road Initiative’, available at http://english.gov.cn/archive/publications/2015/03/30/content_281475080249035.htm

¹² ‘The Great Tang Dynasty Record of the Western Region’, published by the University of Hawaii Press. See <http://www.uhpress.hawaii.edu/p-4509-9781886439023.aspx>

¹³ http://www.huffingtonpost.in/entry/china-religion_b_864469

¹⁴ ‘Cultural Relations between India and China: The Tradition of Continuity’, available at <http://www.indianembassy.org.cn/DynamicContent.aspx?MenuId=4&SubMenuId=0>

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- ¹⁵ ‘Buddhism and its spread along the Silk Road’ gives considerable information about Buddhism’s spread from India to Central Asia and China. Available at <http://www.silk-road.com/artl/buddhism.shtml>
- ¹⁶ ‘The International Dunhuang Project: The Silk Road Online’. Available at <http://idp.bl.uk/>
- ¹⁷ ‘The spread of Indian art and culture to Central Asia and China’, IGNCA Paper by Dr. Priyatosh Banerjee. Available at <http://ignca.nic.in/pb0013.htm>
- ¹⁸ Nalanda University. Available at <https://www.nalandauniv.edu.in/about-nalanda/history-and-revival/>
- ¹⁹ Text of Address by PM at Nazarbayev University, Astana, Kazakhstan, on 7 July 2015. Available at <http://www.narendramodi.in/text-of-address-by-pm-at-nazarbayev-university-astana-kazakhstan-183692>
- ²⁰ ‘The Imam of the Tariqat Shah Baha’udin Naqshband’. Available at <http://naqshbandi.org/the-tariqa/the-imam-of-the-tariqat-shah-bahauddin-naqshband/>
- ²¹ ‘A Gift for the President of Uzbekistan’, July 6, 2015. Available at <http://www.narendramodi.in/a-gift-for-the-president-of-uzbekistan-175714>
- ²² From ‘Text of PM’s Address at the World Sufi Forum’, 17 March 2016. Available at http://www.pmindia.gov.in/en/news_updates/text-of-pms-address-at-the-world-sufi-forum/
- ²³ ‘Avicenna’s Canon of Medicine’, AMS Press, New York. Available at https://archive.org/stream/AvicennasCanonOfMedicine/9670940-Canon-of-Medicine_djvu.txt
- ²⁴ For details regarding AYUSH, see <http://ayush.gov.in/>
- ²⁵ ‘About Jamia’, available at http://www.jmi.ac.in/aboutjamia/profile/history/historical_note-13
- ²⁶ ‘Alberuni’s India’, Columbia University Library Digital Editions. Available at http://www.columbia.edu/cu/lweb/digital/collections/cul/texts/ldpd_5949073_001/
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- ²⁸ ‘Ulugh Beg and his Observatory’, by Daniel C. Waugh. Available at <https://depts.washington.edu/silkroad/cities/uz/samarkand/obser.html>
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ ‘Multanis and Shikarpuris’ by Scott Levi, published in Global Indian Diasporas, ed. Gijsbert Oonk, Amsterdam University Press, 2007, pp. 31-66. Available online at <https://oopen.org/download?type=document&docid=340114>

³¹ ‘18th Century Russia welcomed and cherished Indian merchants’ by Maxim Rubchenko, *Russia and India Report*, 16 September 2016. Available at <https://in.rbth.com/amp/629927>

³² ‘Chingiz Aitmatov: Leading novelist of Central Asia’, obituary in *Independent*, 17 June 2008. Available at <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/chingiz-aitmatov-leading-novelist-of-central-asia-writer-849174.html>

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³⁵ In Kazakhstan, for example, the robust oral tradition kept ancient wisdom alive through the centuries, until the legendary Abai Kunanbayev, began the process of writing and preserving this invaluable culture, contributing, in the words of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to “education as the shield and pillar for the Kazakh people”.

³⁶ Bakhtiyar Amanzhol. See <http://www.conservatoire.kz/en/structure/faculties/bakhtiyar-amanzhol-totebayuly/>

³⁷ Original Indian Army march available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jUH6WdGnBDc>

³⁸ Symphony Orchestra of India website. Available at <http://www.soimumbai.com/>

³⁹ ‘Coming attraction in Soviet: Festival of India’ by Sanjoy Hazarika, *New York Times*, 28 June 1987. Available at <http://www.nytimes.com/1987/06/28/world/coming-attraction-in-soviet-festival-of-india.html>

⁴⁰ ‘List of Indian Cultural Centres Abroad’, ICCR. Available at <http://www.iccr.gov.in/content/list-centres>

⁴¹ ‘Kalakshetra: an overview’. Available at <http://www.kalakshetra.in/site/>

⁴² Centre for Indian Classical Dances, Almaty. See details at <http://indiandance.kz/index.php?lang=en>

⁴³ ‘Bollywood stirs Uzbek passions’, BBC News, 24 October 1998. Available at http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/200689.stm

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⁴⁶ PM Modi's Visit to Kazakhstan: Day 1: July 7, 2015. Available at <http://www.narendramodi.in/prime-minister-modi-s-visit-to-kazakhstan-day-1-189160>

⁴⁷ Text of Media Statement by PM, Astana, Kazakhstan, 8 July 2015. Available at <http://www.narendramodi.in/text-of-media-statement-by-pm-in-astana-kazakhstan-189156>

⁴⁸ 'Agreement for supply of Uranium', Reply to Rajya Sabha Unstarred Question 1124 dated 30.07.2015. Available at <http://www.dae.nic.in/writereaddata/parl/monsoon2015/rsus1124.pdf>

⁴⁹ Joint Statement between Turkmenistan and India during the Prime Minister's Visit to Turkmenistan. Available at <http://www.narendramodi.in/joint-statement-between-turkmenistan-and-india-during-the-prime-minister-s-visit-to-turkmenistan-197232>

⁵⁰ See Asian Development Bank (ADB) Technical Report on the project, available at <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-document/73061/44463-013-reg-tar.pdf>

⁵¹ Joint Statement between Republic of Tajikistan and the Republic of India, 13 July 2015. Available at <http://www.narendramodi.in/joint-statement-between-the-republic-of-tajikistan-and-the-republic-of-india--205868>

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⁵³ Joint Statement between the Kyrgyz Republic and the Republic of India, 12 July 2015. Available at <http://www.narendramodi.in/joint-statement-between-the-kyrgyz-republic-and-the-republic-of-india-203526>

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⁵⁵ Text of Media Statement by PM in Astana, 8 July 2015. Available at <http://www.narendramodi.in/text-of-media-statement-by-pm-in-astana-kazakhstan-189156>

⁵⁶ 'Inaugural Address by Prime Minister at Second Raisina Dialogue, New Delhi', 17 January 2017. Available at <http://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/27948/Inaugural+Address+by+Prime+Minister+at+Second+Raisina+Dialogue+New+Delhi+January+17+2017>

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⁵⁸ See, for example, ‘Languages and Literature in the Kushan Empire’ by J. Harmatta, published by UNESCO, and available at http://en.unesco.org/silkroad/sites/silkroad/files/knowledge-bank-article/vol_II%20silk%20road_languages%20and%20literature%20in%20the%20kushan%20empire.pdf

⁵⁹ See endnote 4 above.

⁶⁰ See ‘Proposal for e-commerce draws interest’, World Trade Organization, 17 November 2016. Significantly, the proposal was made by China and Pakistan. Available at https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news16_e/good_17nov16_e.htm

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⁶² ‘Security Council adopts resolution endorsing Iran nuclear deal’, 20 July 2015. Available at <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=51455#.WM9DEvI96M8>

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⁶⁵ See ‘International North-South Corridor (INSTC)’, available at http://www.instc-org.ir/Pages/Home_Page.aspx

⁶⁶ ‘India to accede to the Ashgabat Agreement’, Press Information Bureau of India, 23 March 2016. Available at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=138309>

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⁷² ‘Moderate Islam? Look to Central Asia’, by S. Frederick Starr, *The New York Times*, 26 February 2014. Available at https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/27/opinion/moderate-islam-look-to-central-asia.html?_r=1

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⁷⁵ ‘UNMOT Background’, United Nations. Available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unmot/UnmotB.htm>

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