

From the Silk Road to Contemporary Partnerships: Tracing the Evolution of India's Geostrategic Relations with Central Asia

Ikhlaq Ahmed¹

Abstract

The ancient Silk Road connected the Indian subcontinent with Central Asia, fostering a rich exchange of cultures, languages, and commodities. Indian merchants, scholars, and travellers embarked on arduous journeys along these routes, leaving an indelible mark on the regions they encountered. India's engagement with Central Asia has evolved significantly in recent decades marked by a strategic shift in its foreign policy dynamics. India's policy towards Central Asia is multifaceted, encompassing diplomatic, economic, security and cultural dimensions. This paper delves into India's strategic interests in Central Asia, examining the key pillars of its policy framework. It highlights India's efforts to strengthen bilateral and multilateral ties with the Central Asian Republics through trade, connectivity initiatives, and people-to-people exchanges. Additionally, it explores India's focus on enhancing security cooperation, particularly in combating terrorism and promoting regional stability. Furthermore, the paper emphasizes India's pursuit of 'Look North' and 'Connect Central Asia' policy, aiming to foster deeper economic integration and connectivity through various projects such as the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Chabahar Port initiative. The paper also underscores the significance of India's evolving Central Asia policy in its broader foreign policy framework, emphasizing the need for sustained engagement, strategic partnerships, and proactive initiatives to bolster economic, political, and cultural linkages between India and the Central Asian region. It sheds light on India's efforts to navigate these challenges while leveraging opportunities for enhanced cooperation and mutual benefit. This paper is divided into four sections that discuss the evolution of India geostrategic relations with Central Asia from ancient Silk Road to current alliances and strategic partnerships.

Keywords: *Historical Ties, Culture, Trade, Interests, Investments, Diplomacy, Partnership.*

I

The Silk Road, an ancient network of trade routes connecting East and West, served as the conduit through which ideas, goods, and people traversed vast landscapes. The evolution of India's relations with Central Asia reflects a historical journey marked by resilience, adaptability, and mutual enrichment. From the Silk Road's ancient trails to the forging of modern alliances, this narrative underscores the enduring ties that bind the Indian subcontinent with the heart of Asia. Centuries ago, the Silk Road connected the Indian subcontinent with the heart of Central Asia, fostering a rich exchange of cultures, languages, and commodities. Indian merchants, scholars, and travelers embarked on arduous journeys along these routes, leaving an indelible mark on the regions they encountered. The spread of Buddhism, the transmission of scientific knowledge, and the flourishing trade in spices, textiles, and precious stones were the hallmarks of this epoch.¹

India's relations with Central Asia have historically been influenced by cultural, economic, and strategic linkages dating back centuries. India and Central Asia share historical linkages dating back to the ancient Silk Road trade routes, which facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and cultures.² This historical foundation has contributed to a sense of shared heritage and provides a backdrop for contemporary diplomatic initiatives. India's link with the Central Asian region goes back to the 4th century BC when traders brought Chinese silk to India.³ The use of Chinese silk was mentioned in Chanakya's Arthashastra. The city of Taraz was dominated once by the Sogdians, who were trading with East Turkistan and India. The Sogdians were particularly attracted to Buddhism and introduced ideas, philosophies and arts of India to Central Asian societies. Some pieces of art from India and a collection of ancient Buddhist antiques were found in the archaeological museum in Taraz.⁴ Apart from Taraz, Turkistan was another prominent site on the Silk Route. In Ancient times, it was known as Shavgar, but later, in the 10th-11th centuries, it became Yessy. Regarding Yessy and its expansion to India particularly Kashmir, Stobdan argues:

The word Yessy resembled Mongolian Jassa for state law. The Kazakhs later changed it to a shorter version – Yasa. The city has a long history going back to the 5th-6th centuries, when it was a meeting point for

¹ Ikhlaq Ahmed is Doctoral Candidate at CWAS/SIS, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. He may be contacted at ikhlaqadri786@gmail.com.

Turkic-speaking people. During the 7th century, it was a flourishing town with a crowded bazaar and endless caravans passing by from Europe to China. Turkistan later got associated with the great 12th century Sufi poet and philosopher, Khodja Ahmed Yassawi. Yassawi studied in Bukhara and was a student of Sheikh Khodja Yusuf Hamadani. He later founded a Sufi philosophical school at Yasa which came to be known as Yassawi School. Yassawi is one of the main spiritual orders among the Turkic-speaking people of Central Asia. His main verses *Diwan-i-Khikmet* became very popular within Central Asia and outside. Yassawi rejuvenated the Turkistan city with thousands thronging to the Sufi town for pilgrimage from as far away as the Kashmir Valley...It seems the Kazakh government is trying to popularise the Yassawi Order as an alternative religious narrative against the growing popularity of other sectarian groups such as Wahhabism.⁵

Politically speaking, India-Central Asia relations included the Kushan Empire, which ruled across what is now Central Asia and India, as well as the rise of the Mughal Empire in India in the early 16th century.⁶ In terms of the economy, Central Asian cities like Samarkand and Bukhara were crucial to the Silk Road, which connected India with China and Europe. Indian traders who were based in the area also played a significant role in economic relations. In addition to the two regions' strong economic ties, there was a flourishing exchange of cultures. For instance spread of Buddhism from India to Central Asia and Sufism from Central Asia to India.⁷ Central Asia played a significant role in the development Sufi tradition in India. Therefore, Central Asia shares deep-rooted historical connections with India. Thus, India's engagement with Central Asia is marked by a strategic approach aimed at enhancing connectivity, fostering economic cooperation, addressing security challenges, and promoting cultural exchanges. As India navigates the complexities of the contemporary geopolitical landscape, its engagement with Central Asia continues to evolve, drawing inspiration from a shared history and a vision for a cooperative and interconnected future.

II

India established its first Central Asian consulate in Tashkent in 1987, but cooperation was limited due to a lack of shared border and infrastructure connectivity. India's engagement with Central Asia gained momentum after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, leading to the emergence of independent Central Asian nations. With the independence of Central Asian republics, comprising Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, in the 1990s, India faced challenges in adjusting to the post-Cold War international order and domestic economic reform.⁸ But at the regional level, India has focused on fostering multifaceted relations with these countries based on mutual interests, including energy cooperation, trade, cultural exchanges, and security collaboration.⁹ Over the past two decades, countries in Central Asia have also been searching for strong allies, especially in the fields of security and the economy. Fighting terrorism and radicalization, stopping illegal trade, and looking into potential economic collaboration are goals that both parties have in common. India's long-standing ties to the area offer both parties the ideal chance to build on their current collaboration and discover fresh, creative approaches to make it even better.¹⁰

India's foreign policy evolved post-Cold War, emphasizing engagement with Central Asia. Former Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao visited Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Kyrgyzstan in 1993 and 1995, signing agreements for trade, investments, and development assistance. These visits emphasised shared secular values and common threats, driving India's engagement with the region through a 'Look North Policy.'¹¹ India's Look North Policy was a strategic initiative aimed at enhancing diplomatic, economic, and cultural ties with Central Asian countries, situated to its north. Envisioned as a proactive approach to fostering regional cooperation, the policy seeks to capitalize on historical connections, geographical proximity, and economic opportunities. As India diversifies its foreign policy and expands its global footprint, the Look North Policy emerges as a crucial component in shaping a more robust and interconnected South Asian region.

The roots of India's Look North Policy can be traced back to historical trade routes, cultural exchanges, and shared civilizations between India and Central Asian nations. The ancient Silk Road facilitated the movement of goods, ideas, and people, establishing a strong foundation for mutual understanding. By cultivating ties with Central Asian nations, India aims to secure a stable and diverse energy supply, reducing dependency on traditional sources. The Look North Policy seeks to improve connectivity through infrastructure projects, such as the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).¹² These initiatives aim to facilitate smoother trade routes, boosting economic collaboration and opening new markets for Indian businesses. The Look North Policy fosters economic integration by promoting trade and investment in sectors such as agriculture, technology, and manufacturing. By engaging in joint ventures and business partnerships, India aims to create a win-win situation for both itself and its northern neighbours.¹³

Therefore, India's economic and trade ties with Central Asia have witnessed notable developments since the 1990s. The trade between India and Central Asia has expanded gradually. India primarily imports commodities such as oil, natural gas, minerals, and metals from Central Asian countries. Meanwhile, India exports pharmaceuticals, textiles, machinery, and agricultural products to the region. While the Look North

Policy holds significant promise, it faces certain challenges. Geopolitical complexities, historical baggage, and competition with other global players in the region necessitate a nuanced and adaptable approach. Additionally, the need for infrastructure development, bureaucratic hurdles, and cultural differences pose practical challenges that require careful consideration.

To further develop relations with the region, in 2012, the 'Look North Policy' was reframed as the 'Connect Central Asia' policy. This policy was based on the following points shared by India at First India-Central Asia Dialogue:

- i. We will continue to build on our strong political relations through the exchange of high level visits. Our leaders will continue to interact closely both in bilateral and multilateral fora.
- ii. We will strengthen our strategic and security cooperation...In focus will be military training, joint research, counter-terrorism coordination and close consultations on Afghanistan.
- iii. We will step up multilateral engagement with Central Asian partners using the synergy of joint efforts through existing fora like the SCO, Eurasian Economic Community (EEC) and the Custom Union.
- iv. India looks to Central Asia as a long term partner in energy, and natural resources. Central Asia possesses large cultivable tracts of land and we see potential for India to cooperate in production of profitable crops with value addition.
- v. The medical field is another area that offers huge potential for cooperation. We are ready to extend cooperation by setting up civil hospitals/clinics in Central Asia.
- vi. India's higher education system delivers at a fraction of the fees charged by Western universities. Keeping this in mind, India would like to assist in the setting up of a Central Asian University in Bishkek that could come up as a centre of excellence to impart world class education in areas like IT, management, philosophy and languages.
- vii. We are working on setting up 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.
- viii. Our companies can showcase India's capability in the construction sector and build world class structures at competitive rates...India can help set up several medium size steel rolling mills, producing its requirement of specific products.
- ix. As for land connectivity, we have reactivated the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). We need to join our efforts to discuss ways to bridge the missing links in the Corridor at the earliest and also work on other connecting spurs along the route.
- x. Absence of a viable banking infrastructure in the region is a major barrier to trade and investment. Indian banks can expand their presence if they see a favourable policy environment.
- xi. We will jointly work to improve air connectivity between our countries. India is one of the biggest markets for outbound travelers estimated at USD 21 billion in 2011.
- xii. Connections between our peoples are the most vital linkages to sustain our deep engagement...We already have a robust exchange of students. We will encourage regular exchanges of scholars, academics, civil society and youth delegations to gain deeper insights into each other's cultures.¹⁴

The Connect Central Asia policy signifies a strategic approach aimed at fostering robust ties with the Central Asian nations. This policy underscores the multifaceted dimensions of cooperation, encompassing economic, political, educational and cultural spheres. The policy places a strong emphasis on improving physical connectivity between India and Central Asia. Infrastructure projects, including the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Chabahar port in Iran, play pivotal roles in facilitating smoother trade routes and connectivity. These initiatives aim to reduce transportation costs and transit times, fostering efficient movement of goods and people.¹⁵ Economic engagement was a cornerstone of the 'Connect Central Asia' policy. By promoting trade, investment, and joint ventures, India seeks to tap into the economic potential of Central Asian nations. Natural resources, energy, and opportunities in sectors like agriculture and technology are key areas for collaboration, contributing to the economic development of both India and Central Asia. The

policy underscores the importance of diplomatic collaboration to address regional challenges and enhance geopolitical stability. India and Central Asian nations share common concerns related to terrorism, extremism, and regional security. By strengthening diplomatic ties, the countries aim to work collectively to address these challenges and contribute to regional peace and stability.

Both India and Central Asian nations have entered into bilateral agreements aimed at promoting economic cooperation. These agreements cover various sectors, including trade facilitation, investment protection, avoidance of double taxation, and promotion of joint ventures. Energy has been a focal point of cooperation. India has expressed interest in Central Asia's vast energy resources, and discussions have taken place regarding the development of pipelines and energy partnerships. The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project is a significant example, aimed at transporting natural gas from Turkmenistan to India through Afghanistan and Pakistan.¹⁶ During the NDA government, these relations took new momentum and regular diplomatic visits started from both sides. High-level diplomatic visits have taken place where India signed a number of important bilateral agreements with Central Asian countries. The relations between India and Central Asia are not free of challenges in the form of geographical distances, lack of direct land access, and competition from other global players have affected the pace of economic cooperation. However, opportunities exist for both sides to further explore and diversify trade, invest in infrastructure projects, and collaborate in sectors beyond energy and commodities.

III

The security cooperation between India and Central Asia has witnessed significant developments, marked by evolving geopolitical dynamics, mutual security concerns, and strategic engagements. The dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent emergence of independent Central Asian states provided a platform for India to forge stronger security ties with these nations. India's outreach to Central Asia was driven by fears of Pakistan seeking strategic depth in the region, fueled by the Tajik civil war between 1992 and 1997, the Taliban's control over Afghanistan, and growing American and Chinese influence in Central Asia.¹⁷ Tajikistan served as India's bridgehead in Afghanistan during the period, providing material and logistics assistance to the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. It also hosted long-term Indian military training and could have been India's first overseas military base. In 2002, India signed a bilateral defense agreement with Tajikistan, refurbishing Ayni, a disused Soviet airbase. India's military cooperation with other nations is limited, with Tashkent being an arms supplier.¹⁸

In order to enable India-specific exemption for civil nuclear cooperation with the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) nations, Kazakhstan helped India in 2008. India and Kazakhstan agreed to supply 2,100 tonnes of uranium to India till 2014 the following year. Two years later, they inked a deal for "Cooperation in the Field of Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy" during a visit to Kazakhstan by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.¹⁹ Except for infrastructure support for military training institutions in Central Asia, and officers from the region attending courses at India's military institutions, India's military cooperation with the region has primarily consisted of military education and training.²⁰ Notably, in 2011 India and Kyrgyzstan held their first-ever combined military exercise in Khanjar.²¹ Collaboration on counterterrorism, combating extremism, and regional security issues remain important areas of mutual interest and cooperation. Bilateral defense cooperation has expanded through military training programs, high-level visits, and exchange programs aimed at enhancing military capabilities and interoperability. Both India and Central Asian countries have grappled with the common threat of terrorism and extremism. They have collaborated in intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, and capacity-building initiatives to counter these threats. India has consistently supported the sovereignty and stability of Central Asian nations.²²

Cooperation in regional forums like the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has provided a platform for dialogue and collaboration on security issues affecting both regions. India and Central Asian nations share concerns regarding stability in Afghanistan. Both have worked together, bilaterally and within regional frameworks, to promote peace and development in Afghanistan and prevent the spread of extremism. Despite the geographical distance, India's emphasis on maritime security aligns with Central Asia's interest in secure sea lanes. Initiatives focusing on maritime security cooperation have been discussed, considering the growing interconnectedness between the Indian Ocean and Central Asia.²³ India and Central Asian countries also cooperated on non-traditional security concerns such as cyber-security, energy security, and disaster management, recognizing these as critical aspects of overall security.²⁴ The security cooperation between India and the Central Asian region is not free of challenges. However, despite many challenges, both India and Central Asian countries recognized the importance of collaboration in ensuring stability, security, and economic development in the region.²⁵ The security cooperation has gradually expanded, emphasizing the need for continued engagement and joint efforts to address evolving security challenges and promote peace and stability in the broader Asian region.

IV

Apart from economic, political and military relations, both India and Central Asia enjoy cultural relations. Cultural and educational exchanges between India and Central Asia have been significant since the 1990s, fostering a deeper understanding and strengthening historical ties. These exchanges encompass various initiatives aimed at promoting cultural heritage, educational collaborations, and people-to-people interactions.²⁶ Cultural exchanges between India and Central Asia have been frequent, featuring festivals, art exhibitions, music and dance performances, and film festivals. These events showcased the rich cultural heritage of both regions, fostering cultural understanding and appreciation. Indian universities and institutions have engaged in partnerships and academic collaborations with Central Asian counterparts. Exchange programs, joint research projects, and academic conferences have facilitated knowledge sharing and academic cooperation. India has offered scholarships to Central Asian students for higher education in Indian universities and institutions. Similarly, Indian students have also pursued studies in Central Asian universities under various exchange programs.²⁷

Despite the ceased direct contact between India and Central Asia, the region still practices Islamic culture, with a philosophical outlook dominated by Buddhist thoughts. The popularity of Bollywood remains a reality, and there is immense potential for Indian culture to flourish in the region. A number of pilgrimages from the Yassawi Sufi Order have visited Turkistan to lay a Kashmiri chaddar at the Yassawi tomb. The tradition of celebrating a day of Yassawi continues in Kashmir. Other cities with rich historical heritage include Kulan, Mirki, and Aspara, reflecting the cross-cultural confluence of Indian, Persian, Turkic, and Chinese cultures.²⁸ Therefore, regular visits by cultural delegations, artists, scholars, and government officials have strengthened ties and facilitated greater cultural understanding between India and Central Asia. Thus, cultural diplomacy plays a pivotal role in India-Central Asia relations, fostering people-to-people ties and promoting a better understanding of each other's societies. Educational exchanges, tourism, and collaborative cultural events contribute to building a shared narrative and strengthening the fabric of regional cooperation. Scholarships, cultural festivals, and academic collaborations aim to deepen mutual understanding and foster a sense of shared heritage.²⁹ Thus cultural diplomacy contributes to creating lasting bonds between the people of India and Central Asia.

Conclusion

India's relations with Central Asia exemplify a comprehensive partnership that spans economic, diplomatic, security, and cultural dimensions. The geographical proximity, historical linkages, and common challenges faced by India and Central Asian nations have spurred collaborative efforts, fostering a relationship built on mutual respect and shared interests. Historically, the ties between India and Central Asia have deep roots dating back to the ancient Silk Road trade routes that connected the two regions. The exchange of ideas, goods, and culture laid the groundwork for enduring connections. Diplomatically, India has actively pursued stronger ties with the Central Asian countries, recognizing the strategic importance of the region. Regular high-level visits, diplomatic dialogues, and participation in regional forums have been instrumental in building trust and understanding. India's diplomatic engagement with Central Asia is characterized by a commitment to respect each other's sovereignty, address common challenges, and promote regional stability. Trade and economic cooperation form a significant pillar of India's relations with Central Asia. Both regions recognize the potential for mutually beneficial partnerships, particularly in the areas of trade, energy, and infrastructure development. India and Central Asian nations share common concerns related to regional security, terrorism, and extremism. Cooperation in these areas is crucial to maintaining stability. India's commitment to working together with Central Asian countries to address shared security challenges reflects a concerted effort to promote regional peace and counter common threats. Cultural diplomacy and people-to-people contacts play a key role in fostering a deeper understanding between India and Central Asia. Educational exchanges, scholarships, and cultural events serve as channels for building strong bonds and nurturing a sense of shared heritage. These exchanges contribute to creating a more robust foundation for bilateral relations. Thus, India's relations with the Central Asian region have evolved into a comprehensive partnership that encompasses diplomatic, economic, and cultural dimensions. The strategic engagement reflects a shared vision for regional stability, economic growth, and cultural enrichment. As both regions navigate the complexities of the contemporary geopolitical landscape, the commitment to a collaborative future underscores the resilience and potential of the India-Central Asia relationship.

References

- ¹ Chabdra Bagchi, Prabodh (1955), *India and Central Asia*, Calcutta: National Council of Education, pp.90-102.
- ² *ibid.*
- ³ Marlene Laurelle and Sebastien Peyrouse (2011), *Mapping Central Asia: Indian Perceptions and Strategies*, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing.
- ⁴ Stobdan, p. (2020), *India and Central Asia: The Strategic Dimension*, New Delhi: Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, p.175.
- ⁵ *Ibid.* pp.175-77.
- ⁶ Menon, Rhea and Rajiv, Sharanya (2019), "Realizing India's Strategic Interests in Central Asia", *Carnegie India*, 1 December 2019, URL: <https://carnegieindia.org/2019/12/01/realizing-india-s-strategic-interests-in-central-asia-pub-80576>.
- ⁷ Ministry of External Affairs (2008), "India-Kazakhstan Relation", December 2018, URL: https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/december_2018.pdf.
- ⁸ Bhavna Dave (2016), "Resetting India's Engagement in Central Asia: From Symbols to Substance", *Rajaratnam School of International Studies*, January 2016, URL: https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/PR160202_Resetting-Indias-Engagment.pdf.
- ⁹ Ministry of External Affairs (2017), "India-Uzbekistan Relation", January 2017, URL: https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Uzbekistan_Jan_2017.pdf.
- ¹⁰ *ibid.*
- ¹¹ Emilian Kavalski (2015), "India's Bifurcated Look to Central Eurasia: The Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan", in David Malone, C. Raja Mohan and Srinath Raghavan (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, pp. 424-437.
- ¹² Chatterjee, Bipul and Singh, Surender (2015), "An Opportunity for India in Central Asia", *The Diplomat*, 04 May 2015, URL: <https://thediplomat.com/2015/05/an-opportunity-for-india-in-central-asia/>.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁴ Ministry of External Affairs (2012) "Keynote address by MOS Shri E. Ahamed at First India-Central Asia Dialogue: India's 'Connect Central Asia' Policy", 12 June 2012, URL: <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/19791/>.
- ¹⁵ Ranjan Bose, Pratim (2018), "On a railroad from Russia to Iran", *The Hindu*, 17 January 2018, URL: <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/opinion/on-a-railroad-from-russia-to-iran/article8843606.ece>.
- ¹⁶ The Gazette of Central Asia (2012), "India Authorizes to Sign TAPI Gas Sales and Purchase Pact", *Satrapia* 18 May 2012, URL: <http://gca.satrapia.com/+india-authorizes-to-sign-tapi-gas-sales-and-purchase-pact+>.
- ¹⁷ Sebastien Peyrouse (2011), "Domestic and International Articulations of the Indian Involvement in Central Asia", in Marlene Laurelle and Sebastien Peyrouse (eds), *Mapping Central Asia: Indian Perceptions and Strategies*. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2011, pp. 75-90.
- ¹⁸ Amit Mukherjee (2004), "IAF To Get 5th IL-78 Refueller Soon", *The Times of India*, 29 September 2004, URL: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/IAF-to-get-5th-IL-78-refuellersoon/articleshow/867031.cms>.
- ¹⁹ Ministry of External Affairs (2018), "India-Kazakhstan Relation", December 2018, URL: https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/december_2018.pdf
- ²⁰ Gupta, Pravesh Kumar (2021), "India and Central Asia Defence Cooperation: Challenges and Opportunities", *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal*, October-December, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp. 331-340.
- ²¹ John C.K. Daly (2018), "India and Kyrgyzstan Deepen Their Military Cooperation", *Eurasia Daily Monitor*. Vol. 15, No. 83, 2018, <https://jamestown.org/program/india-and-kyrgyzstan-deepen-their-military-cooperation/>
- ²² Menon, R. and Rajiv, S. (2019), "Realizing India's Strategic Interests in Central Asia" *Carnegie India*, 01 December 2019, URL: <https://carnegieindia.org/2019/12/01/realizing-india-s-strategic-interests-in-central-asia-pub-80576#:~:text=In%202008%2C%20Kazakhstan%20supported%20India,uranium%20to%20India%20until%202014..>
- ²³ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴ Bhattacharya, Debasis (2022), "India-Central Asia relations: Growing convergence brings relations to strategic heights", *Observer Research Foundation*, 11 January 2022, URL: <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-central-asia-relations/>
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶ Kabluko, Evgeni (2004), "India and Central Asia: Cultural Relations in Middle Ages", *Dialogue*, October - December, 2004, Volume 6, No. 2, p.3.
- ²⁷ Joshi, Nirmala (2010), *Reconnecting India and Central Asia: Emerging Security and Economic Dimensions*, Singapore: The Central Asia-Caucasus Institute and the Silk Road Studies Program, pp.20-27.
- ²⁸ Stobdan, p. (2020), *India and Central Asia: The Strategic Dimension*, New Delhi: Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, pp.175-77.
- ²⁹ Joshi, Nirmala (2010), pp.24-26.