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## India and central Asian republics: Energy security prospective (1991-2011)

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### Abstract

India has ancient civilizational, trade and cultural links with the landlocked Central Asian region but no direct lines of communication because of Pakistan's traditional antagonism and Afghanistan's internal geopolitical instability. However, the energy rich Central Asian Republics (CARs) could secure an assured and uninterrupted supply of energy which is critical for India's fast growing economic growth and energy security. India currently sources almost three-fourth of its oil and gas consumption from abroad, much of it from the Middle East region. Thus energy security has become a central component of Indian national security and foreign policy. India being a 'Civilisational Power' is trying to bridge itself with Central Asia through 'Geo-Historic-Strategic' linkages. Various pipeline projects and transportation links are in progress, in particular the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) and the Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) gas pipelines and International North-South Transportation Corridor (INSTC) project. In addition, India also trying to regain same special status in the legendary Silk Route which concurrently being pursued by China, the European Union and Russia. The present work is such an attempt to portray the closer connection that exists between geopolitics of Central Asia energy resources and India's energy security.

**Keywords:** Energy security, India, CARs, pipeline diplomacy, connect central Asia, TAPI, INSTC

### Introduction

The concept of energy security has for the past several years become an inherent part of India's national discourse. The last two decades will witness the twilight of organic energy sources and perhaps the dawn of commercially successful non-organic sources. Energy security doesn't only refer to the copious amount of energy resources that was given to a country or region but also deals with the security of energy supply which means safe and secure uninterrupted appropriate distribution system's availability and that should also be cost effective and available at competitive and modest price in the international market. As per International Energy Agency (IEA) definition energy security is "the uninterrupted availability of energy sources at an affordable price" [1].

After initiations of India's economy reform in 1991, the energy requirements in the country is rising sharply with the industrial and economic activities accompanied with population rate which raises the energy security concerns. 'According to the Energy Information Administration (EIA), India's energy consumption was 7.782 quad Btu in 1991 while in 2011 consumption reached 23.103 quad Btu which was more than 3<sup>th</sup> times of 1991 energy consumption' [2]. The according to the Planning Commission India targeted countries' GDP growth rate 5.6, 6.5, 8.1 and 9 per cent in respectively 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> five year plan. According to 11<sup>th</sup> planning commission, in order to support a growth rate of 9%, the country's energy supply will have to increase by 6.5% every year. To achieve increasing energy supply, it has emphasized the need for expanding the domestic production of oil, natural gas and coal as well as energy imports. "According to economic survey of 2004-2005; in spite of the low rainfall during the monsoon and the increase in world prices for petroleum, coal and steel, Indian economy has managed to maintain its growth momentum" [3]. President Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam on the 59<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Independence Day speech said that 'India have to focused on the efficient use of energy by cutting down losses and taking a more positive approach to consumption and also have to use all the energy sources at the local, regional and global level, until the end of the fossil fuel era' [4]. 'He also said that India has to move from energy security to energy independence' because now "Energy Independence" was an important strategic outlook for India' [5].

After liberalization, 'It has been noted by the Planning Commission 2002 that primary commercial energy demand has grown at the rate of six per cent between 1981 and 2001' [6]. 'India ranks fifth in the world in terms of primary energy consumption with 6.8% global share in 2011' [7]. The country's reliance on imports (60 per cent or 75 per cent million tons in 1995-96) will three times with 237 million tons per annum by 2011. Net energy import dependency was 38 percent of total energy consumption in 2011. For this growing economy, it is projected that India is one of among the top three consumers of energy India will need a vast amount of energy to sustain this economic growth. Thus energy security needs to be considered in the overall national security prospect.

### Central Asia energy outlook

Undoubtedly all Central Asian Republics (CARs) have plenty of natural energy resources and are well prosperous potentially with mineral and hydroelectric resources. Central Asia has reserves of uranium ore plus the potential for its enrichment; so the region could be tapped as a source of uranium for India's civilian nuclear programme, which would in the long term help diversify its energy base. Kazakhstan has the second largest reserves of uranium and world's leading uranium producer, with almost 35% of world production in 2011' [8]. Central Asia contains vast hydrocarbon fields both on-shore and off-shore in the Caspian Sea. These are home to an estimated 4 per cent of the world's natural gas reserves, and approximately 3 per cent of oil reserves. Most of these resources are found in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan, although Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan also have potential for generating hydro-electric power. 'In Turkmenistan, there is abundance of natural resources and ranks the country of world's sixth largest reserves of natural gas with 3.1 percent global share' [9]. Tajikistan is endowed with huge hydroelectric potential and Kyrgyzstan is rich in hydroelectric power' [10].

### Energy routes and transportation links

Energy resources from Central Asia can satisfy the energy needs of India. Hence oil, gas and nuclear sector were a top most priority for India in Central Asia. The landlocked status of Central Asian energy resources has been a strong factor in linking the fields and their potential markets. However, lack of connectivity and common borders remain as a big challenge for exporting these resources to India. Pakistan and china conflict borders not allowed India to direct access to CARs.

Central Asia's energy resources have been traditionally marketed through the FSU's (former Soviet Union) pipeline networks to the west which is not feasible for India. The sea route is fairly mature and cheap but Central Asian land lock position not appropriate for sea route transport. India had to search new alternate transport means and route and for this several logical decisions need to be made prior to its actual materialization. 'These alternative pipelines need not only huge amount of investment and guaranteed length of time sufficient delivery but also had to see they shouldn't pass through conflict-prone regions' [11].

India initiates pipeline diplomacy by proposing Russia-China-India (RCI) pipeline. The RCI is supposed to stretch from Russia via Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, to Kashgar in the Xinjiang province of China. It will enter Kashmir (POK) through Ladakh, crossing the Siachen

Glacier and the LAC (Line of Actual Control between Indo-China) or alternatively via hilly Himachal Pradesh—to supply gas to India. This proposal could not execute due to its geographical proximity and environmental issue. Then India decided to focus on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline instead of RCI pipeline' [12]. TAPI project started with an agreement between Turkmenistan and Pakistan in 1995 and Afghanistan join in 2002 after 9/11 attack on US. 'In May 2006, the Indian government also officially approved its participation in the TAPI (costing US\$5 billion) gas pipeline project' [13] while signed a framework agreement on 24 April 2008 with Pakistan and Afghanistan to buy natural gas from Turkmenistan. An inter-governmental agreement (IGA) was signed in 2010 by the heads of four member nations. It was 1814 km long pipeline started from Galkynysh gas field in Turkmenistan through Afghanistan into Pakistan and then to Fazilka in India and having capacity of 33 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas per year in which India get 14 bcm. TAPI was like lifeline for all four member countries but over transit fees of pipeline and Pakistan and Afghanistan internal terrorism problem always questioned on security of this project.

Alternatively, India has also been looking at making swap arrangements with Iran. In fact, this is considered to be the most practical step from India's point of view. Regarding this "international north-south Transportation corridor (INSTC)" from Iran to Russia via Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan is expected to ensure a seamless connectivity to Central Asia. This Corridor used the ship, rail, and road route for moving goods and energy raw material from South Asia to Europe through Central Asia, the Caucasus, and Russia. This project first started with Tripartite agreements on international transit of goods between India, Iran and Turkmenistan signed in 22 February, 1997 at Tehran and then this project Mooted by India, Russia and Iran in St. Petersburg in 2000 and signed in 2001, the idea of this corridor has travelled through many ups and downs. 'This project hypothesized a route started from Bandar Anzali port on the Caspian Sea; thence through Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and further onwards towards Russia, and through Mediterranean region to reach transportation network that connects ports on India's west coast to Chabahar (also known as Bandar Abbas) in Iran, then Ukrainian ports, and then onwards to Russia and Central Asia' [14]. The new route will reduce transport cost and travel time to a significant extent because the Suez Canal route takes about 45-60 days while the Iran route will take about 25-30 days.

### Challenges for India- CARs energy security relations

Throughout the history, Central Asia had been considered very important for India because of its transit route. Relations between two regions had been warm and cordial. But after collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan became independent republics, the big powers like Russia, China, EU, USA and so on setting off influence in the region for access to its raw materials which was called as The New Great Game 2.0 by some scholars. In these two decades (1991-2011) relationship at all fronts, such as; political, diplomatic, economic, trade and especially energy security between the India and CARs regions is missing their full potential due to internal and external factors. 'With

the starting of the New Great Game, scholars, analysts, think-tank and Indian Foreign Policy makers realized that India has not paid attention to this area as it should be. Having realized this, India tried to make up these mistakes and give priority to this region in its foreign policy. However, some problems and uncertainties which are still posing major challenges for India. Indo-Pak rivalry, Afghanistan instability, terrorism and big global power like USA, China, and Russia make adverse impact of India-CARs energy diplomacy.

### Conclusion

Development is an overarching concern which is undergoing a new spurt in light of the recent efforts during the last decade to promote liberalization and implement growth-oriented policies. Both the people and the present government of India have a consensual desire to achieve satisfactory economic growth. India is perhaps the largest and most attractive destination for Central Asian energy resources, as it is the only market of its size close to the source. India's quest for energy security has become a multi-tier approach. The external component of energy production is mainly confined to transportation needs. However, Central Asia's gas resources offer an opportunity to extend this input to electricity generation for industrial use. But, in addition to the economic, this must also be a geopolitical decision. India foreign policy has to adjust its developmental pace with external factors in such a delicate situation where Pakistan and Afghanistan will be involved. Now India has to move ahead from its 'Look North Policy' and 'Connect Central Asia Policy' and have to pursued 'multi-vectoral' foreign policy.

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