

Aspire IAS *The name associated with excellence*

Guess paper MAINS 2019



ASPIRE IAS

The Name Associated with Excellence

GUESS PAPER SERIES

SESSION - 25

DATE- 14 September 2019

CENTRAL ASIA

Copyright © Aspire IAS *All rights are reserved. No part of this document may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission of Aspire IAS.*

Aspire IAS *The name associated with excellence*

10/70 old Rajender Nagar N. DELHI www.aspireias.com 8010068998/011-47561070

©2019 ASPIRE IAS. All right reserved

Page | 1

Guess paper MAINS 2019

CENTRAL ASIA

Introduction

Central Asia is the geographical centre of Asia that marks the confluence of the world's four religious ideologies Islam, **Buddhism, Christianity and Hinduism**. Modern Central Asia consists of five nations: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. All five nations became independent after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. India and the Central Asian region share a long history. Indian subcontinent and Central Asia share loose trade and cultural linkages, whose beginnings can be traced to the Indus valley civilization. Central Asian region is considered to be the part of India's "extended neighbourhood". However, soon after India's partition in 1947, its relations with the Central Asian region suffered a setback as it lost its direct overland access to the region through Afghanistan (POK captured by Pakistan). This meant that goods from India bound for the Central Asian region, instead of going through Pakistan and Afghanistan, would have to take much longer routes which usually involved the sea route to Iran and then overland through Iran, rendering economic relations less viable. However, after the 1971 signing of the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, friendship and cooperation and subsequent strategic convergence between India and the Soviet Union, allowed India to be able to foster closer ties with the Central Asian Republics.

Background

- The region grew in strategic importance to India during the 1990s and particularly over the past decade.
- Since the turn of the century, Central Asia has become increasingly important to India as a means for maintaining regional stability, especially in the border areas between Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- During the 1990s Central Asia was seen as a route for supplying the anti-Taliban coalition, the Northern Alliance, in Afghanistan.
- The significance of Central Asia has grown as India has sought to diversify its energy sources by including such imports from the region.
- In the domain of Indian foreign policy, Central Asia was focused upon under the narrative framework of the 'Look North' policy. However, the economic slowdown in India and global power competition in Central Asia have discouraged India from playing a major role in the region for a larger part of the 1990s.

Guess paper MAINS 2019

India and Central Asia relations:

- Ancient kingdom of Kushan had territory in parts of both regions, India and in central asia.
- In Medieval ages, Muslims rules in India had their origin in Central Asia.
- After Second World War, Central Asia became part of USSR. India had good diplomatic engagement with the region due to friendly ties with Moscow.
- After the breakup of USSR in 1991, there seemed to be a drift in India's relation with this region.
- However during the early 21st century the relationship started improving.
- India realized that Security, stability and prosperity of Central Asia is imperative for peace and economic development of India, especially after US withdrawal from Afghanistan.
- To improve the relation with Central Asia the Government of India launched Connect Central Asia Policy.

FIRST INDIA-CENTRAL ASIA DIALOGUE

Context

- The first India-Central Asia Dialogue took place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan.
- The dialogue included representatives from five Central Asian countries- Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan as well as that of Afghanistan.
- The dialogue focussed on varied issues including trade, connectivity and security as well as bringing stability by restoring peace in Afghanistan.

Recent Initiatives:

- Renovation of Chabahar port in Iran which will help in connecting to Eurasia
- Development of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) . INSTC is a multi-mode network of ship, rail, and road route for moving freight between India, Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia and Europe.
- Central Asia is one of the largest beneficiaries of Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) program. India provides higher education at marginal cost to Central Asian students when compared to European and American universities.

Guess paper MAINS 2019

Areas of Cooperation Energy security

- The countries of Central Asia are endowed with significant hydrocarbon and mineral resources.
- Kazakhstan is the largest producer of uranium and has huge gas and oil reserves as well.
- Uzbekistan is also rich in gas, and is an important regional producer of gold along with Kyrgyzstan.
- Tajikistan has vast hydropower potential besides oil, deposits, and Turkmenistan has the fourth largest gas reserves of the world.

Geo-strategy – Strategic location of CAR

India is losing its “immediate neighborhood” to China, which developed very good political and economic relations with nearly all of India’s neighbors, thereby strategically encircling India.

Trade and Investment potential

The economic development of Central Asia, especially in Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, leads to development of sectors like IT, pharmaceuticals and tourism. India has expertise in these sectors and deeper cooperation will give a fresh impetus to trade relations with these countries.

Security:

- To tackle the challenge of terrorism, narcotics trafficking and arms smuggling.
- Central Asian region holds strategic significance for India in its fight against terrorism.
- Indian and Kazakh armies engaged in a joint exercise to strengthen bilateral army-army ties and exchange information and skills.

Challenges:

- Lack of direct access to Central Asia: India to reach Central Asia, the shortest route goes via Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pakistan’s hostility with India remains problematic for India to connect Central Asia.
- The unstable situation in Afghanistan and a highly problematic India-Pakistan relation have deprived India from the benefit of relations with Central Asia.
- Chinese presence: central Asia is part of Silk Road Economic Belt (BRI) initiative. India could not match the deep pockets of china.
- India’s role in Central Asia is restricted by the involvement of major powers in the region.
- Afghanistan remains a challenge especially after the withdrawal of US troops.
- Growing axis of Russia-China-Pakistan would limit India’s presence in Central Asia.

Guess paper MAINS 2019

- The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) and Iran-Pakistan-India (IPI) pipelines projects are not moving smoothly due to Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- India does not have institutional mechanisms to connect with Central Asia like the India-Africa forum.

Ashgabat Agreement

- Ashgabat Agreement India joined the Ashgabat Agreement in 2018.
- The aim of agreement is to establish an international multimodal transport and transit corridor between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.
- The Agreement was first signed by Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran, Oman, and Qatar on 25 April 2011.
- Qatar subsequently withdrew from the agreement in 2013, Kazakhstan and Pakistan joined the grouping in 2016.
- The Ashgabat Agreement came into force in April 2016.
- Its objective is to enhance connectivity within the Eurasian region and synchronize it with other regional transport corridors, including the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

Way ahead

- India could use its soft power to increase its acceptability in Central Asia.
- India could regularly and frequently arrange cultural events in these countries and also provide scholarships for study in India of these disciplines by young men and women of these countries.
- India has a large scope of enhancing cooperation by relaxing visa regime, Cooperation in I.T sector, medical service, etc.
- India could continue to show its faith in multilateral world order to save central Asia from a new great game.

Aspire IAS *The name associated with excellence*

Guess paper MAINS 2019

ASPIRE IAS

Aspire IAS *The name associated with excellence*

10/70 old Rajender Nagar N.DELHI www.aspireias.com 8010068998/011-47561070

©2019 ASPIRE IAS. All right reserved

Page | 6