

# LIBERAL STUDIES

*Vol. 5, Issue 1, January–June 2020*



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**Anurag Tripathi, B.M. Mandara,**  
**Anjana Mary Suresh\***

***Turkmenistan's Positive Neutrality and its  
Bilateral Relations: Special Focus on India***

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***Abstract***

*Turkmenistan is a Central Asian country which largely depends upon agriculture and is enriched with natural resources like natural gas, petroleum, salt and sulphur. The country has the sixth largest natural gas reserves. Since its independence in 1991, the country follows 'positive neutrality' policy to avoid external interference in their domestic affairs. The country always acts as a mediator to maintain peace and stability. During the period of Niyazov, he used this neutrality policy to enforce his control over the country and isolate the country from rest of the world. With the entry of Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow into the power in 2006, he tried to liberalise the economy as well as maintain the neutrality policy. So the 'positive neutrality' adopted by Turkmenistan have had different impact on its economy during different periods. Along with the isolationist policy on one hand, Turkmenistan also emphasizes on maintaining bilateral relations with other countries.*

*This study is an attempt to analyse Turkmenistan's 'positive neutrality' policy and its bilateral relations with the other countries with a special focus on India.*

**Introduction**

Central Asia is a new geopolitical creation which has an important strategic role to play in coming future. It is in the middle of three super civilisations — the Islamic, the Christian and the Buddhist and is observed by many experts as one of the most vulnerable areas in terms of instability amongst them. It can become a natural, historically formed buffer zone as well as might be a hub for Islamic extremism. Being in the middle of the Eurasian Continent, it is also one of the most convenient routes of transit. The land is rich in minerals especially

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hydrocarbons. As a consumer market it still remains unexploited. All these factors lead to increasing interest in Central Asian Republics for various countries. Experts point out that in the 21st century, Central Asia will become an important region.

Turkmenistan, one of the geographically significant countries of Eurasia, is now gaining its strategic importance in the world economy. It is a landlocked country of Central Asia bordered by Kazakhstan to the northwest, Uzbekistan to the north and east, Afghanistan to the southeast, Iran to the south and southeast, and Caspian Sea to its west. The country is enriched with various natural resources like natural gas, petroleum, salt and sulphur. Recently, the world turned its focus towards Turkmenistan because of its abundant oil and gas reserves. It has one of the largest reserves of natural gas as it borders Caspian Sea, which ranks sixth in the world's largest natural gas reserves. According to the data in 2013, gas production of the country was 62.3 billion cubic meter and oil production was 11.4 million tonnes per year. Other than natural gas, the country is deeply engaged in agricultural production, especially of cotton. It is majorly produced for export purposes and the country is placed in the top ten cotton producers of the world. In 2019, cotton production of Turkmenistan was 1000 1000 480 lb. Bales, which is of a 9.89 per cent increase from the past year. Other than cotton, the country is also involved in minor production of wheat, pomegranates, olives, dates, sugarcane and so on.

Until the disintegration of USSR in 1991, Turkmenistan was part of the larger Soviet Union. The government and economy of Soviet republics were highly centralised. Moscow did not do much for the development of Central Asian countries. Turkmenistan too was amongst the neglected republics. There were only a few industries or infrastructural development undertaken in the country during the soviet period. Once the countries got independence they started to focus on different strategies to develop their economies. Amongst the five Central Asian countries, Turkmenistan has the least changed economy. The country still sticks to strategies followed during the soviet period. After independence Turkmenistan declared itself as a neutral country i.e. the country will not join any alliances or side any party during conflicts. They will always act as a mediator. It is the first and the only country recognised by the UN as having a status of permanent neutrality (The Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan, 2015). Even though Turkmenistan is not a member of World Trade Organization (WTO), they are still a part of Economic Cooperation Organization which provides a platform to promote trade among member nations.

Since 1991, the government of Turkmenistan isolates the country by using its neutrality status. Turkmenistan opted neutrality policy to avoid excessive

interference of major powers as well as any kind of involvement in the armed conflict between states (Saima Ashraf Kayani, Raja Qaiser Ahmed, 2018). Usually, a country having a closed economy did not benefit much like an open economy. The country which follows an open economy policy has lot of advantages such as economic growth, lower cost, availability of goods and services, research and innovation. But the case of Turkmenistan is quite different. Even though, the country follows isolationist policy and has a closed economy, it still is one amongst the fastest developing countries and ranks second in the region. Turkmenistan's neutrality does not mean that the country will never have any relation with other countries. The country always engages in making peaceful foreign relations but does not allow any external powers to control their internal affairs. Turkmenistan has commercial relationship with various countries mainly Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, US, Turkey and India. Its foreign relations are mainly based on its energy sector. One of the most important initiatives to strengthen the regional relationship is the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India pipeline (TAPI) to transport natural gas from Turkmenistan to all these countries.

Following is a table showing the GDP growth rate of all the Central Asian Republics from 2010 to 2018.

**GDP Growth (Annual %)**

<i>Country</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>2017</i>	<i>2018</i>
<b>Kazakhstan</b>	7.3	7.4	4.8	6	4.2	2.034	1.1	2.668	4.1
<b>Turkmenistan</b>	9.2	14.7	11.1	10.2	10.3	6.5	6.2	6.5	6.2
<b>Tajikistan</b>	6.521	7.401	7.486	7.4	6.706	6.008	6.873	7.617	7.3
<b>Uzbekistan</b>	8.479	8.281	8.18	8.026	7.179	7.448	6.094	4.46	5.133
<b>Kyrgyzstan</b>	-0.479	5.956	-0.2	10.9	4	3.9	4.3	4.7	3.5

GDP Growth (Annual%), 2018.

The data has been taken from the World Bank which depicts the GDP growth rate of all the five Central Asian countries from the year 2010 to 2018. From this table we can easily compare the growth rate of Turkmenistan with the other countries in the region. As per the data of 2018, GDP of Turkmenistan is \$40.761 billion, which comes after Kazakhstan (\$170.539 bn) and Uzbekistan (\$50.5 bn). Whereas, Kyrgyzstan is \$8.093 billion and Tajikistan is \$7.523 billion. The data in the table shows that Turkmenistan is one of the fastest growing economies in the region. The GDP growth rate of the country increased in the year 2011 and there was a slight decrease in the rate. From 2015 to 2018, Turkmenistan maintained a constant growth rate.

This paper mainly focuses on the 'positive neutrality' policy of Turkmenistan and the country's bilateral relation with India, particularly the TAPI project.

India as an extended neighbour of Central Asian Republics has major geo-strategic and economic interests in this region. The future prospects for cooperation between Central Asia and India in the field of energy security seem to be extremely important. Cooperation in energy sector, especially the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project, forms a key pillar of economic engagement between Turkmenistan and India.

For any country, a particular policy not only depends on a single factor but also it greatly relies on numerous determinants such as geography, natural resources, population, history and national interest. While analysing a policy of the country we should also look into other factors; and the most important is the history of that particular country and also the personality of its leaders. Historical experience does influence the policy decision making process. This paper is developed on the hypothesis that Turkmenistan's 'positive neutrality' policy plays as a catalyst in the development of the state. The first part of the paper analyses the Turkmenistan's policy during the period of 'Turkmenbashy' Niyazov and the current President Berdimuhamedow. The second part looks into the bilateral relation of Turkmenistan and India with a special focus on TAPI.

### **Positive Neutrality of Turkmenistan**

Timeline of Turkmenistan can be mainly divided into three periods to get a better understanding of the policies followed by the country: period of Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic, Niyazov era and Berdimuhamedow era. The current policies of Turkmenistan have evolved through all these three stages. Hence, it is essential to be aware of all these stages to analyse the impact of the positive neutrality policy on Turkmenistan's economy.

Turkmen Soviet Socialist Republic (Turkmen SSR) was formed in 1925, which was earlier known as Turkestan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (Turkestan ASSR). It existed as soviet republic from 1925 to 1991 till the disintegration of Soviet Union. During the period of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), communist ideology of Moscow was against the religious beliefs and practices of Turkmenistan. They attacked and banned all kind of religious activities followed by the nation and they brought atheism to sequester Turkmen from other Muslim communities. This also acts as a barrier in the development of Islam in the region. All these policies were part of Russianization, through which the Russians prompted other communities to follow Russian culture and their language. Moscow wanted all other republics under their control. Through Russification, Moscow ensured its complete control over others. Communist Party of Soviet Union (CPSU) spread Marxist-Leninist

ideology in Turkmenistan, which was then governed by the Communist Party of Turkmenistan. This in turn firms Moscow's dominance over the nation.

This period can be notably marked as Brezhnev period, who was the General Secretary of CPSU from 1964 till 1982. He gave prior importance in bringing stability in the Soviet Republics. Placing this as an ultimate aim he reshuffled the leaders of the Republics and replaced them with his better known people. One such replacement was the appointment of Muhammetnazer Gapurov as the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Turkmen SSR in 1969 by changing Balyš Ovezov who acted as the First Secretary till 1964. The period of Turkmen SSR can be characterised as conflicts between the inner elite groups. The settlement of problems between these elite groups was the main reason for the replacement of Ovezov (Horák, 2017). Gapurov was a strong proponent of Russianization and strengthened the Russian culture in Turkmenistan.

Starting of 1990s was a period in which Turkmenistan faced a transition from Soviet planned economy to an independent economy. This transition was completed with the demise of USSR and by gaining independence in 1992. This was a clear transition to totalitarianism in which the First Secretary of the Turkmen Communist Party Saparmurat Niyazov from 1985-1991 took over the control of the country since the independence and continued in the position for next 15 years until his death in 2006. Even though as a successor of Gapurov, Niyazov was a strong follower of his policies, Niyazov brought out changes in the internal matters of the country as well as the Turkmen diplomacy. The significant changes implemented by Niyazov government are the 'Positive Neutrality' and the 'open door' policy. Since the independence in 1992, Turkmenistan under the Niyazov government encouraged building foreign relations, but the external influences were limited with the positive neutrality policy. They always prioritise in building healthy and equal relationship with major powers such as United States, China, Russia and European Union. Turkmenistan is also interested in building relations with the regional powers – mainly India, Pakistan, Iran and Turkey (Saparmurat Turkmenbashi The Great (1940-2006)). The country opted to be neutral during the time of conflicts to establish peace and stability in the region. By citing the neutrality policy, Turkmenistan decided not to be part of any multilateral organisations. Marked features of the positive neutrality given by the President Niyazov are respect of sovereignty and territorial integrity of other states, non-interference in their internal affairs, using no force in interstate relations, superiority of the UN in international affairs, strengthening of neighborliness and cooperation with all states (Saparmurat Turkmenbashi The Great (1940-2006)). This policy was finally recognised by the United Nations in 1995.

The principle of Turkmenistan's neutrality policy is to maintain a neutral position during the time of conflicts as well as in the times of peace. As per Article 5 of Constitutional Law of Turkmenistan on Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan, the country will never begin or enter into a war, other than in case of self-defense. This helps the country to prevent any kind of threats that affect the stability and the peaceful existence of the country. Article 3 of the Permanent Neutrality noted that the country always continues to follow the peaceful foreign policy and also respect the sovereignty of other countries. Since independence, Turkmenistan follows non-intervention in the domestic matters of other states and insisted other countries not to intervene in the Turkmen internal affairs.

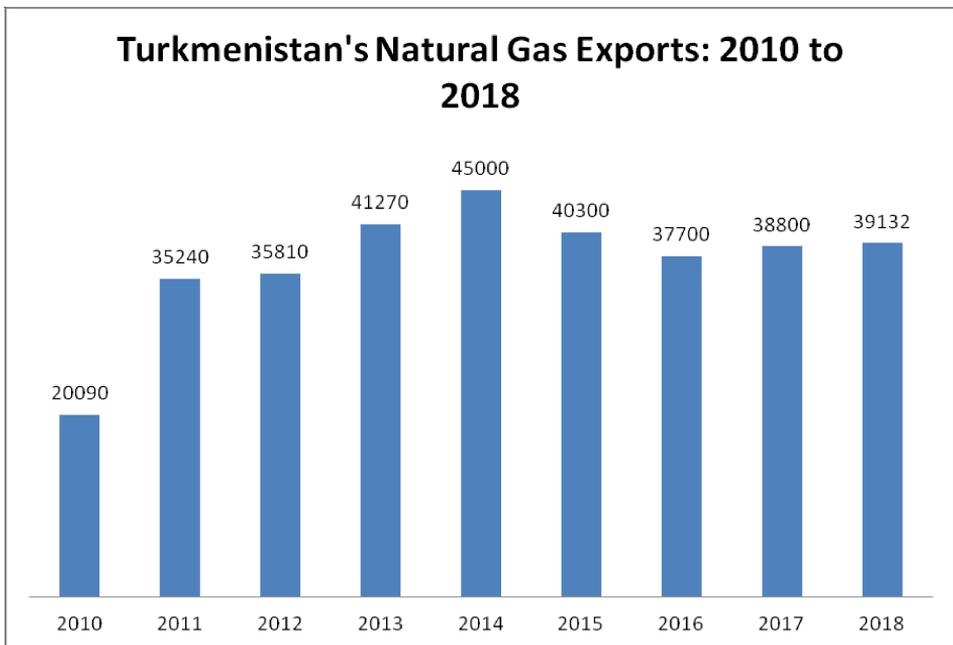
Though Turkmenistan follows isolationist policy, the country is always interested in making peaceful foreign relations. For more than two decades, neutrality policy holds an eminent position in the Constitution of Turkmenistan. Despite such a policy which isolates the country from external influences, Turkmenistan continually tried to build bilateral relations with all major powers. According to Article 1 of the Constitutional law of Turkmenistan on Permanent Neutrality of Turkmenistan:

Within the scope of realizing the integral rights of the sovereign state, Turkmenistan declares voluntarily about its permanent neutrality and will support it and put into practice consistently. The permanent neutrality of Turkmenistan is the basis of its foreign and domestic policy aimed at strengthening the stability and consent in society, developing friendly and mutually beneficial relations with the states of the region and the whole world.

Holding 'positive neutrality, on one hand Turkmenistan also carries 'open door policy' on the other hand. This shows the country's interest in building relationship with others without bothering its internal affairs. Through the 'open door policy', Turkmenistan encourages foreign trade and investments. This helped the country in making commercial relationship with many countries, mainly Russia, Iran, Afghanistan, US, Turkey and India. The foreign relations are mainly based on its energy sector. One such example is the TAPI pipeline project to transport natural gas from Turkmenistan to Afghanistan, Pakistan and India.

Although the 'positive neutrality' of Turkmenistan was successful in maintaining peace and stability in the region, it has been criticised that President Niyazov used the policy to isolate the country from any kind of external influences and to strengthen his image as "Turkmenbashi".

After the death of Niyazov, Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow was appointed as the second President of Turkmenistan in 2006 and still continues as the head of the state. He referred himself as ‘Arkadag’ which means ‘protector’ and took ultimate control over different facets of Turkmenistan. During the Berdimuhamedow period, Turkmenistan witnessed a sudden shift to a more liberal economy than during the Niyazov period. He implemented several reforms and changed various policies of Niyazov. But the isolationist policy implemented by the Niyazov still has its impact on the current Turkmenistan. It is during the Berdimuhamedow period, country started focusing on building further commercial relationships with rest of the world, especially in diversifying the country’s energy exports. At first, Russia had a monopoly over the Turkmenistan’s gas exports. It was later broke down with the pipeline explosion in 2009 and Turkmenistan started looking for other trading partners which attracted several countries from the East and West. He suppressed most of the ideologies held by Turkmenbashi and enhanced a reforming process in the political system as well as all other fields of the country. Turkmenistan’s foreign policy underwent major changes during his period in which he concentrated in enforcing the country’s relations with its entire neighbours and also with the major partners. Holding its relation with Russia, Turkmenistan also diverted its interest towards China, US and to the European countries. He referred this period as the era of “Great Renaissance” (Slavomir Horak, Jan Sir, 2009).



*Turkmenistan Natural Gas: Exports, 2019*

The chart shows Turkmenistan's natural gas export from the year 2010 to 2018. From 2010 onwards we can see continuous increase in the gas exports. In 2018, the export was 39,132,000 Cub m mn, which is more than the export reported in 2017 i.e. 38,800,000 Cub m mn.

Turkmenistan's largest natural gas reserves and its strategic position connecting west and east attract all the major powers into the newly developed landlocked country. Interest of major powers in Central Asia is evident since nineteenth century which is termed as 'Great Game' between Russia and Britain, the great powers of the time. Both the Russian empire and British India tried to expand its territory due to fear of each-other's presence in this region. The Great Game came to an end in 1895 with the signing of Pamir Boundary Commission Protocols (Gelb, 1983). Russia always had its interest over this region as it was once an integral part of the country. Later with the independence of Central Asian states, Russia became a significant energy trading partner. But this position of Russia was overridden by China and Iran. Turkmenistan along with all other Central Asian Republics was trying to diversify its market and break the monopoly enjoyed by Russia over their exports. Presently, China plays a significant role in the region both politically and economically. Turkmenistan's foreign policy also gives priority in making relations with the regional powers.

### **Turkmenistan – India Bilateral Relations**

India is today one of the most dynamic and fastest growing economies of the world. It constitutes not only a vast and an ever growing market, but also a competitive source of technology and knowledge based services. Countries across the globe are beginning to witness India as an indispensable economic partner and also seek to build mutually rewarding economic and commercial links with its emerging economy. Today, India has good relations with the Central and South Asian nations. There are various common grounds for building Inter-regional Cooperation between Central Asia and South Asia, like economic power, diplomacy, energy projects, transport communications and improved modern technology capabilities constitute India's main strengths for promoting Inter-Regional Cooperation between Central Asia and South Asia.

India as an extended neighbour of CARs has major geo-strategic and economic interests in this region. India-Central Asia relation is not a newly developed relation. It can be traced back to the Soviet period. Since that time, India has continued to maintain relations with Central Asian region through Moscow. Hence, even as independent states, Central Asian Republics were not new to India. India and Central Asia are connected both historically and culturally. There was significant cultural exchange between both the regions.

Buddhism went to Central Asia from India and Sufi Islam came to South India from Central Asia. Likewise, the strong relation between both the regions had a great impact on their poetry works and literature. Some of the major examples are works of Firdousi, Amir Khusro Dehlevi and Biruni. (Ahmar, 1992)

The future prospects for cooperation between Central Asia and India in the field of energy security seem to be very important. Peace and stability in CARs and Afghanistan seem to be the most crucial factor for India's security (Nasir Raza Khan, 2013). There is an existing realisation by world powers of the danger posed by religious extremism and terrorism. In fact, the problem of terrorism is not only being addressed at the bilateral level but also at various regional forums like Shanghai Five and Conference on Interaction and Confidence-building Measures in Asia (CICA). Shanghai Five is a forum, which unites Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

There is enough satisfaction at the continued development of bilateral relations between India and Turkmenistan based on deep-rooted civilisational, historical and cultural linkages and a shared interest in international as well as regional peace and stability. The rapid spread of international terrorism in recent years poses one of the most serious global threats today. The leaders have resolved to deepen ongoing cooperation in countering various security threats. They have also agreed to step up efforts against cross-border threats such as terrorism, organised crime and illegal drug-trafficking. Despite a steady increase in bilateral trade over the last few years, the trade volumes between the two countries could potentially be increased manifold to the mutual benefit of both countries (David Lewis, 2008). Towards this end, the leaders of the respective Governments have agreed to actively work towards rapid enhancement in the levels of bilateral trade, investment and economic cooperation. Resolution to increase cooperation in various sectors and fields of identified energy, petrochemicals, transport, communications, information and technology, textile industry, chemical and pharmaceutical industry, construction and agro-processing as potential areas for cooperation between the two countries. Creation of favourable conditions and promoting participation of private companies from both countries, inclusive of joint ventures in various infrastructural and investment projects in the two countries (Nasir Raza Khan, 2013). Cooperation in energy sector, especially the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline project, forms a key pillar of economic engagement between the two countries. The implementation of the TAPI project would have a transformational impact on trade between the two countries and measures need to get in place for early implementation of this important regional project. Enhanced bilateral cooperation in the field of chemicals and petrochemicals.

Reaffirmation of the countries and their intention to work together in exploring alternative transport corridors for additional connectivity options between the two countries. The significance of Turkmenistan as a gateway to other Central Asian countries and the Caspian region as well as agreement to support each other's initiatives in enhancing transport corridors and infrastructure to facilitate movement of goods. President of Turkmenistan has appreciated Government of India's efforts in promoting International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) for transportation of goods between India and Central Asia, including Turkmenistan and beyond and conveyed that Turkmenistan would consider becoming party to the above-mentioned Corridor. Prime Minister of the Republic of India Narendra Modi noted that the recently inaugurated Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway line could be a linked corridor of the INSTC to streamline movement of goods and commodities between India and Turkmenistan. The air connectivity between the two countries could to a certain extent overcome this natural barrier of lack of direct surface connectivity that exists between the two countries. Despite a steady increase in bilateral trade over the last few years, the trade volumes between the two countries could potentially be increased manifold to the mutual benefit of both countries (David Lewis, 2008). Cultural exchanges have made an important and positive contribution to the development of comprehensive cooperation between the two countries and to deepening the bonds of friendship and mutual understanding between their peoples.

### **Turkmenistan–Afghanistan–Pakistan–India Pipeline**

The TAPI pipeline is a hallmark of Turkmenistan – India relations. The 1,680 km pipeline route will start from the South Yolotan-Osman field in Turkmenistan and will pass through Herat, Helmand and Kandahar in Afghanistan to Quetta and Multan in Pakistan, finally ending at Fazilka in India. The agreement signed among the four countries envisages the delivery of 90 million cubic metres per day (mmcmd) of gas from Turkmenistan to South Asia with 38 mmcmd (around 42 per cent) each going to Pakistan and India and 14 mmcmd (around 15.5 per cent) (Giampaolor Capisani, 2000), going to Afghanistan. Turkmenistan has sufficient reserves to supply the TAPI line. According to the BP Statistical Review 2011, Turkmenistan has 7.94 trillion cubic meters of reserves of natural gas ranking fourth in the world, after Qatar. The new South Yolotan-Osman field contains between 4 and 14 trillion cubic meters of gas based on an initial audit conducted by the oil advisory firm, Gaffney Cline & Associates. This field could produce about 70 billion cubic meters of gas a year which is approximately equal to Turkmenistan's current total annual production of gas from existing sources. The Asian Development Bank estimated the cost of the pipeline at

\$7.6 billion. *The Express Tribune*, Pakistan, recently reported that a formal offer was made by the ADB to work as the coordinator and financier of the project. The construction and maintenance of the project would be given to a consortium of private companies which will ensure the flow and supply of gas through Turkmenistan. ADB envisions this project to be completed by 2017.

TAPI pipeline is beneficial to both Turkmenistan and India. From the point of Turkmenistan, the successful completion and implementation of this project will have economic benefits for the countries involved. Turkmenistan has abundant gas but is land-locked with two energy giants—Iran and Russia as its neighbours (Devendra Kaushik, 2015). Its relations with Russia have cooled and the pipeline along with its other regional initiatives will help Turkmenistan diversify its markets. The pipeline provides Turkmenistan an opportunity to tap into India's large market base and would further deepen its ties with India. The support of the Asian Developmental Bank is beneficial as it represents a nod of approval from its member countries. ADB's involvement will help raise the finances required for the project and will help mitigate the political risks from an investment perspective.

For India, this pipeline will definitely be a cheaper and economically more efficient option to the import of LNG through the sea routes. The increase in natural gas supplies will help meet between 12.5-16 per cent of future demand. Also, if this project turns out to be successful, a parallel pipeline along the same route can be planned to increase the supply. The project has a special advantage as it provides a point of entry into Central Asia making it possible to have future energy deals or similar pipelines from the energy rich region. The pipeline could lead to a trade corridor between the four countries even extending up to Kazakhstan. Once a secure route and smooth functioning of the route is achieved, the same or alternate routes can be looked into building a trade corridor (Devendra Kaushik, 2015). The pipeline can play a bigger role in Afghanistan especially after the withdrawal of the NATO troupes. India can work with Afghanistan to help increase the security of the country and stabilise it. The pipeline provides a good opportunity to increase India's economic involvement with Pakistan. Perhaps TAPI can bring new energy in the relationship through a bilateral flow, where finished petroleum products can be exported to Pakistan from India and gas from TAPI can come to India from Pakistan.

India's land locked refinery in Bhatinda, Punjab can find a convenient market in land locked Lahore for its excess production. India can look at increasing trade ties and reviving negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement involving Pakistan, Afghanistan and perhaps expanding it to Turkmenistan. India can also

use it as a basis to be more involved in the development and capacity building of Afghanistan and Pakistan by extending credit lines and support in return for guaranteeing the safety of the pipeline. Despite the many benefits of this pipeline, there are some major obstacles, the solutions to which, though not impossible, are very difficult and require negotiations, sustained efforts, a strong will on the part of the individual governments facing the problems and a lot of time.

### **How TAPI Benefits Member States**

This gas project can be of various privileges for the participating nations. The first and the most important benefit is of various positive economic advantages. In the first place, the project is tremendous and will create job opportunities and push down the unemployment rates in all the four countries. The project, some economists suggest, can push up the participating countries' gross national product (GNP). Amongst the three others, the economists add, Turkmenistan, in this case, can benefit the most.

Mohiuddin Nouri, the deputy governor of Herat, has pointed to the advantages Afghanistan can take from this energy project, adding that once the project is operational, the country can on one hand produce Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and on the other hand produce power. In the two cases, he continued, the industrial parks and gas and power consumers can enjoy cheaper energy. The same case is also true when it comes to Pakistan and India. Moreover, the TAPI-transferred gas will be cheaper than before. Additionally, the experts maintain that the Afghan government will make \$500 million per year from the transit duty.

Besides job creation, by facilitating a regional economic cooperation corridor the pipeline project will yield other achievements including regional partnership expansion, peace, trade and energy links between Central and South Asia. For example, Pakistan, India, and Afghanistan can check further tensions between the three countries whose relations have historically been subject to persistent friction.

India's aspirations of establishing gas pipelines have remained pipe dreams, while China has made considerable strides in this area. China signed a deal with Kazakhstan in 1997 for an oil pipeline which was completed in July 2009. In December 2009, it tapped into Turkmenistan for a new natural gas pipeline travelling 1,833 km through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to reach western China where it will connect with the Chinese line east to Shanghai. Then in 2011, China commissioned an oil pipeline which will come through Russia. In addition to providing an energy source, these deals have helped China further enhance

their bilateral relations with the different countries. For example, along with the gas deals, China has deepened its economic engagement with Myanmar by offering lines of credit for trade. Similarly, TAPI is an extremely important, not only to meet some of India's energy needs and requirements but also to establish India's geostrategic presence (Devendra Kaushik, 2015). It could be a means of extending India's presence and improving relations with the Central Asian countries. Other than the energy resources, there are many other potential areas where India could invest such as transport, pharmaceutical industry, textile industry and India's agro industries have wide opportunities in Central Asia. Most importantly India and Turkmenistan can cooperate in defense sector to prevent the spread of terrorism and both the countries had a discussion on the matter during the visit of Indian Prime Minister Nerandra Modi in Turkmenistan in 2015. They also discussed all the possible sectors where both the countries can strengthen their relation. Even though India does not have a geographical advantage in Central Asia, India always tried to maintain healthy relations within the region since the period of USSR.

## **Conclusion**

Central Asia is an important region in the world arena because of geopolitical location and rich energy resources. At the same time, the region is confronting a number of security challenges. Regional cooperation in Central Asia and Eurasia can become an important factor in the maintenance of peace and security in the region, which are necessary for stable economic growth and development. Prospects of economic and political cooperation, speed and scale of these processes will depend on the readiness of national economies to carry out the proper reforms and introduce the forms and methods of institutional, political and economic regulation adopted in the world practice. Different international experience in economic and political transformation is relevant for Turkmenistan. Central Asia republics such as Turkmenistan consider development of alternative regional transport communications as important for the national regional strategy and as results it developed new transport communication to the East and South and link it with the transport systems of neighboring countries. A well-developed regional transport system in Central Asia is potential for regional prosperity and good opportunity develops regional and international transport network and substantial trade relations and will facilitate foreign investment from foreign countries. Pursuing their mutual objectives of economic growth and stable neighbourhood, India and Turkmenistan, by deepening their partnership and understanding, can help bring stability in Afghanistan and emerge as two nodes connecting the peoples and businesses of Central Asia and South Asia to bridge the divide created by colonial-era policies.

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