

Significant shifts in Afghanistan

By M. K. Bhadrakumar

THE RUSSIAN Deputy Foreign Minister, Vyacheslav Anchikov, stated in Moscow on October 17 that Russia would take an "active part" in projects such as the Trans-Afghan Gas Pipeline (TAGP) which are not only integral to Afghanistan's reconstruction but which will also facilitate the "development of regional cooperation on the whole".

The uncertainties over the TAGP had hinged, partly at least, on a perception that apart from the United States, Pakistan and Central Asian countries, other regional powers, Russia as a Eurasian power in particular, might take a dim view of it in geopolitical terms.

Significantly, three days before Mr. Anchikov's statement, the Russian Foreign Ministry warmly welcomed the outcome of the Pakistani elections. It stated that "the line announced by the administration of Pervez Musharraf towards restoring and strengthening the constitutional norms of Pakistani statehood and democratising the country's socio-political life has found its confirmation". The statement praised Gen. Musharraf's "efforts to preserve the country as a united, stable and predictable state".

Indeed, months earlier, Russia had initiated the groundwork. In May, representatives of the Russian gas company, Itera, were present in Islamabad when the agreement on the TAGP was signed by the heads of state of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Turkmenistan. In July, the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, had stated that if its interests were accommodated in U.S.-sponsored energy projects Russia would cooperate. In August, Russian oil and gas companies signed a letter of intent with the Afghan Government to survey and invest in the country's sizable gas fields (which would have a spur line to the TAGP); and offered to construct refineries in Afghanistan. Russia, as a goodwill gesture, agreed to return to Afghanistan data on its hydrocarbon reserves, which had been carted away to archives in Moscow in 1988. Separately, Russian representatives discussed the TAGP with Turkmenistan.

Russia saw that the TAGP was forging ahead, thanks to support from fi-

nancial institutions (ADB, World Bank, OPIC) and participation by the U.S., Japan, South Korea and ASEAN countries. Consistent with the philosophy of not allowing itself to be left out of energy projects in the Central Asian region, Russia appraised its stance on the TAGP. This decision constitutes a predictable move in the best traditions of the Great Game where rivalries are interspersed with detente; rivalries are never taken to a point of no return, in fact, rivalries must be calibrated constantly.

The Afghan question, which is central to the TAGP's implementa-

Russia's shift of focus from a security perspective to the economic bonanza of Afghan reconstruction should impact on regional cooperation.

tion, is indeed undergoing a significant shift. The U.S. is riveting the stabilisation of Afghan situation on its direct military control; balancing of the 'warlords'; and its intent to stay put in Afghanistan till its objectives are realised. The objectives with regard to the TAGP are: strategic development of Caspian energy sources; creation of a pipeline system for Caspian energy bypassing traditional export routes through Russian territory ('multiple pipeline strategy'); creation of a North-South transportation corridor ('Silk Road') for the Central Asian region that would substitute existing routes through Russia; and, of course, exclusion of Iran from the equation.

The power structure under Hamid Karzai is being realigned with a view to broad-basing and consolidating Mr. Karzai's authority. This involves downsizing the Northern Alliance (NA)'s influence in the power structure. At any rate, the NA, which had assisted in the overthrow of the Taliban in the early phase of the war, is no longer indispensable for the war. It is in the Pashtun-dominated southeastern regions bordering Pakistan where the war is showing mixed results, where Pakistan's cooperation becomes crucial. Moreover, the NA is falling apart. Shiite groups have settled the terms for their sectarian interests and Rashid Dostum focusses on his limited turf in the Amu Darya region. Tajiks who

constituted the NA's core previously, find themselves alone and in disarray, yet to come to terms with Ahmed Shah Massoud's assassination. Factionalism has surfaced. The Tajiks of Badakhshan and Takhar regions keep away from those from Panjshir; the Tajiks of the western provinces are maintaining a distance from 'Badakhshanis' and 'Panjshiris'; the 'Panjshiris' themselves have different outlooks; the veteran leader, Burhanuddin Rabbani, steers his own course; commanders lack sense of direction. Mr. Karzai paid an extended visit to Badakhshan recently, wad-

that could be channelled to strengthen its military and expand its influence in Afghanistan and Central Asia; Pakistan will assume the status of an export route for international energy markets. The TAGP envisages the downstream construction of a parallel oil pipeline from Central Asia to Pakistan, a fibre optics communication network and a highway system.

India faces challenges and opportunities in this paradigm shift. "New economy" is not a zero sum game *per se*. What could be India's involvement in the TAGP? The project will materialise with or without Indian participation but India has consistently been regarded as an important market with a need of 145 billion cubic metres of natural gas by 2025 as per the U.S. Department of Energy estimates.

Second, to quote Stephen Blank of the U.S. Army War College, India must "rediscover its prior history, including that of the British 'Raj', which articulated very clear strategic concepts regarding Central Asia" (Central Asia Caucasus Analyst). Like all thoughtful protagonists engaged in the Afghan problem since the Taliban's takeover in Kabul in 1996, India could conceive that Afghanistan was not an esoteric destination by itself, but a high plateau where the configurations of post-Soviet Central Asia were being furiously debated. And, the centrality of economic dimension in Central Asia's security and stability was obvious to everyone.

Third, and most importantly, it was necessary to have devised our version of a "multiple pipeline strategy" to ensure our energy security. Much time was lost agonising over the relations with Iran. The 10-year-old Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline project proposal should have merited sustained attention. Iran's latest formula for the project reportedly contained elements aimed at addressing India's difficulties with Pakistan: 30 per cent of the gas flow would have been to Pakistan and 32 per cent of the project cost (as against India's 20 per cent) would have been borne by Pakistan, making it a stakeholder. Even during the Cold War, Russia used to be a major energy supplier for West Europe.

Kiev breaks Delhi ice with extradition pact

PRANAY SHARMA

New Delhi, Oct. 3: Ukraine, considered "persona non grata" in India for many years, made a re-entry into the country with a flourish — three different agreements and a promise from Delhi to allow Kiev to tap the Indian market in the power, steel and defence sectors.

Leonid Kuchma, the first Ukrainian President to visit Delhi in eight years, marked his country's re-entry here by making all the right noises, especially in an area to which India is most sensitive — its relations with Pakistan.

During his meetings with the Indian leadership, including President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee and foreign minister Yashwant Sinha, among others, Kuchma towed the line that Delhi expected him to.

At the meeting with Sinha, Kuchma was told about India's concerns about cross-border terrorism and the current relations

with Pakistan. The foreign minister said Delhi was always in favour of a dialogue with Islamabad but it could not begin "while the gun of terrorism was pointed at India's head."

Kuchma made it clear that disputes between India and Pakistan could only be resolved bilaterally, "in the spirit of the Shimla Agreement and the Lahore Declaration".

It was Ukraine's decision to supply TAT-UD battle-tanks to Pakistan that led Delhi to put its relations with Kiev in the deep freeze. By today's gesture, the Ukrainian President was trying to make it clear to Delhi that the two sides should recast their bilateral ties.

The two sides are expected to come out with a joint statement tomorrow where they would highlight their resolve to jointly fight global terrorism and their desire to broadbase their bilateral relations. Ukraine is likely to support India's candidature for the UN Security Council, while India will support Ukraine's

entry into the WTO.

Earlier in the day, the two sides signed three agreements — one on shipping, another on mutual legal assistance and an extradition treaty.

Kuchma, who arrived here with a 30-member business delegation, said his main focus was economic cooperation. He addressed captains of Indian industry at a joint gathering of the CII and Ficci during the day, where he stressed on the need to enhance trade ties between the two countries.

Kuchma will visit Bangalore where he will visit Infosys and Wipro, India's two leading information technology firms.

The two sides today identified steel and power as areas of future cooperation. Ukraine has promised to supply coke oven batteries for India's steel plants and also help in the modernisation of the units.

A specialist delegation from Ukraine would arrive here in the next few months to firm up specific projects for cooperation.

4 OCT 2002

THE TELEGRAPH

India opts for major investment in four Kazakh oilfields

By Rajesh Ramachandran
TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Almaty: India has decided to make major investments in four Caspian Sea oilfields in Kazakhstan. Other sectors that promise lucrative markets for Indian businesses are information technology, pharmaceuticals and small-scale industries.

ONGC Videsh will invest in Kurmangazai and Darkhan exploration blocks and will buy out the Alibekmola

and Kozhasai fields when they get disinvested. Petroleum ministry and ONGC officials are expected to work out the details soon, minister of state for foreign affairs Omar Abdullah said on Monday.

After signing three bilateral agreements with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazerbayev, Prime Minister A.B. Vajpayee told reporters, "India is prepared to make a major investment in the oil and gas sector in Kazakhstan, as we did last year in the Sakhalin oilfield of

Russia. We have agreed to promote joint ventures in IT. India will extend full support to the establishment of a software technology park in Kazakhstan. We have also agreed to upgrade our cooperation in the pharmaceuticals sector and in small-scale industries."

According to Mr Abdullah, agro and food processing industries have been identified as potential sectors for immediate investment. The local processing and manufacturing industries are in a shambles and multinational brands

lord over a country that has hardly any consumer brands of its own.

There is a growing realisation in this country of its dependence on imports for all manufactured goods. Even before the oil economy takes off, there is a fear that hydrocarbons might disappear soon and that the country should not pursue the Gulf oil economy model.

The state of "devastation of the national processing"—as a pro-government Kazakh Internet site put it—has indeed presented a great opportunity for Indian

industry. Mr Nazerbayev recently held talks with Slovenia to set up a pharmaceutical plant in Kazakhstan. Most medicines are currently imported and local industry obviously hopes that prices will come down when plants are set up locally. It is in this context that a mutual understanding for economic cooperation in IT and pharma has been achieved at the highest level between India and Kazakhstan. Mr Nazerbayev had visited Bangalore in February and shown keen interest in Indian IT investment.

THE TIMES OF INDIA

04 JUN 2002

India set for greater role in C. Asia

By Atul Aneja

NEW DELHI, MARCH 8. After several false starts, India may be getting ready to acquire greater influence in its resource-rich Central Asian neighbourhood.

There is optimism in official circles here that India's engagement with Central Asia, especially its oil and gas rich areas, may expand. The recent visit by the Kazakhstan President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, to India appears to have contributed to the enthusiasm.

Among the five Central Asian republics, Kazakhstan has huge reserves of oil, mainly around the periphery of the Caspian Sea. Its Tengiz basin has an estimated deposit of six to nine billion barrels. The Kashgan basin around the Caspian Sea has reserves of around 10 billion barrels.

Officials say that with India poised to become the fourth largest consumer of oil in the world, its stake in the Central Asian reserves, especially in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, is considerable.

India also has substantial political stakes in some of the other republics. India's interests are partly determined by Central Asia's geographic location. India, analysts say, cannot ignore Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan as both border China. Tajikistan, which is not far from Kashmir, shares a

frontier with the restive Afghanistan.

Keen on engaging Central Asia as a trading partner, India has an interest in its political stability. That would mean keeping it insulated from terrorism. The Uzbek dissident, Juma Namangani, supposedly a close associate of the terrorist mastermind, Osama bin Laden, was spearheading the Islamic militancy in this region, mainly along the strategic Ferghana valley. Radicalisation of the Ferghana affects Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan as the valley passes through all the three countries.

While the goodwill for India in Central Asia is palpable, New Delhi is yet to acquire enough concrete leverages that would help stabilise its political influence there. After investing nearly \$ 1.7 billions in Russia's Sakhalin oil fields, India, analysts say, has to 'bite' into Central Asia's critical oil and gas sector to draw political influence there. Aware of this, India appears to have successfully persuaded Kazakhstan during Mr. Nazarbayev's visit to provide it access to a proven oil and gas field, which may be as big as Sakhalin, sources say.

Apart from engaging political heads, such as Mr. Nazarbayev, India has also decided to build close inter-personal ties with officials, parliamentarians and opin-

ion-makers in the region. Not surprisingly, it had recently invited senior foreign office officials from all the Central Asian republics to visit its industrial, technological and political hubs. A similar collective visit of Central Asian parliamentarians is expected early next month. That will be followed by a tour of India by a group of artists, journalists and other 'opinion-makers' in these countries.

India's new political initiative has been partly driven by the recent geopolitical realignment in the region, following the war against terrorism. With Afghanistan and China in mind, the U.S. has established an air and military base in Kyrgyzstan. It also appears to have consolidated its influence in Uzbekistan.

Russia also continues to remain an important player with key leverages in countries such as Tajikistan and Kazakhstan. For instance, Kazakhstan is dependent on the Caspian Pipeline Consortium, which terminates in the Russian port of Novorossysk for its oil exports. Ethnic Russians with strong links to Moscow form the core of the country's skilled manpower base.

But with Indian ties with Moscow on an even keel and its relationship with the U.S. growing, New Delhi has sensed that its bid for a higher profile in the region is unlikely to be resisted.

THE HINDU

7 3 MAR 2002

INDIA AND CENTRAL ASIA

No Option But To Join An Alliance

By JK DUTT

524 2/2

Central Asia has been rejuvenated after the successful conclusion of Operation Enduring Freedom. In truth, the region has got "freedom" from the ubiquitous Taliban-Wahabi scourge. Consequently, the region's potential—now unfettered by terrorism—is increasing by leaps and bounds and several major powers are trying to capitalise on this. India unfortunately, has preferred to be a by-stander, being content with rebuilding only our erstwhile Afghan links. It would be prudent for India to widen the ambit but this will call for some radical modifications of our foreign policy.

Rich dividends

Central Asia presents a confluence of three predominant land masses namely, Europe, Russia, and South West Eurasia, with the confluence buttressing one of the world's most productive water bodies, the Caspian Sea. The region offers a vital geo-strategic pivot in terms of politico-military manoeuvrings and there is no gainsaying its geo-economic clout of abundant oil and natural gas whose availability is virtually unlimited.

The Caspian Sea and its adjacent localities are very rich in this precious commodity. And investment in this region is sure to fetch long term dividends beyond compare. India must not get sidelined in this opportunity.

However, India has to realise that it cannot go it alone in Central Asia. It has no option but to join an already existing alliance or a grouping of nations if it is to cut any ice. Some time back, five countries that have been keenly interested in Central Asia contracted a mutual border agreement known as the Four Plus One Agreement: "Four" referred to Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan while "One" referred to China.

This agreement was further amended to include ingredients like security, economic development, political bloc sharing, border management with Afghanistan and so on, and was subsequently renamed Shanghai Five. It is understood that both Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan are also in the process of joining up and new nomenclatures of the grouping vary from Shanghai Forum to Shanghai Cooperative Organisation to Central Asian Forum. The last name

The author is Lt. Col. (retd.), Indian Army.

seems the most appropriate.

As a first step, India needs to seek membership of the CAF and thus be in a position to attend all its meetings and deliberations. To facilitate our entry, New Delhi has to seriously reconsider the very substantive suggestion reiterated by Russia's Foreign Minister Igor

can also be coopted so that the CAF's overall political credibility when equated with its geographic extent can become strategically attractive. Incidentally, Pakistan's application for entry into the Shanghai Five was rejected outright.

India has to address several issues if it



Ivanov during his recent visit here — India, China and Russia should form a strategic triangle. One might recall that Russia's then Prime Minister Yevgeny Primakov had mooted this when he came to New Delhi in December 1998.

As expected, we remained unresponsive. It is high time for us to exercise the Nehruvian foreign policy spectre that has been haunting our polity for the past five and a half decades. We need to imbibe and exercise ongoing trends in International Relations if we intend to uplift ourselves from our non-entity locus standi in the emerging global scenario.

India's task

Having joined the CAF, India can suggest that the forum be expanded by taking in the three nation states located on the western flank of the Caspian Sea namely, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Iran and the "new" Afghanistan

is to make any meaningful contribution to the forum. For starters, New Delhi should upgrade its missions in the region and request reciprocal measures from the concerned countries. A few core issues are worth examining. Although Islamic fundamentalism has been drastically curtailed after Afghanistan's rehabilitation, this threat still harbours pockets in Uzbekistan, along the Tajikistan-Sinkiang boundary, and in Chechnya.

A concerted effort is therefore necessary to wipe it out altogether. India can provide considerable expertise in counter terrorism to the anti-Terrorist Training Centre that has been established at Bishkek, besides recommending the raising of a special CAF regiment for combating terrorism.

A major problem with drugs prevails in the region. India can help in arresting this by boosting industry especially small scale industry with the objective of

weaning away the people from the profession of drugs to a more respectable one. SSI enhances employment.

For instance, Uzbekistan's range of cotton, Kyrgyzstan's bee-keeping culture, and Turkmenistan's quality grapes make eminently suitable items for SSI. Our chambers of commerce can be instrumental in raising the CAF's capacity of a flourishing SSI.

Pro-active stance

India can preach the themes of peaceful coexistence and unity in diversity for checking demographic destabilisers like clan wars, Christian-Muslim disturbances, politico-ethnic pressures and the like. Similarly, we can show the way for strengthening democratic methodology specifically in local self-governance, freedom of the media and the judiciary, and educational infrastructure. We can assist in the management of water resources especially in arid areas like Kho-rozen.

We have a good record of constructing roads, railways and river transport which we can put to suitable use in Central Asia. A pathbreaking feature would be our setting up a CAF shipping line, the exit route for ships being from the Caspian Sea to the River Volga then through the connecting canal to the river Don, southwards to the Sea of Azhov and finally to the Black Sea.

China is arranging an oil pipeline from Central Asia across its mainland to the Pacific Coast. We can secure a branch line from this which can be structured to enter India from our northern side. A great deal of uranium and nuclear waste is for the asking in the region ex Russia which India can direct towards peaceful utilisation thus removing any misgivings and wrong notions about what is being done with these.

There is unending scope for India to derive multifarious benefits via a two-way union with Central Asia. We have to shed our stereotyped pro-static stance and adopt a pro-active one for this venture.

A number of lifetime chances have been missed due to our statism; we cannot afford to carry on in this fashion in the new millennium. Shakespeare's maxim is a wake up call in this regard: "There is a tide in the affairs of men which taken at the flush, leads on to fortune..." Such a tide is beckoning us in Central Asia.

THE STATESMAN

21 FEB 2002

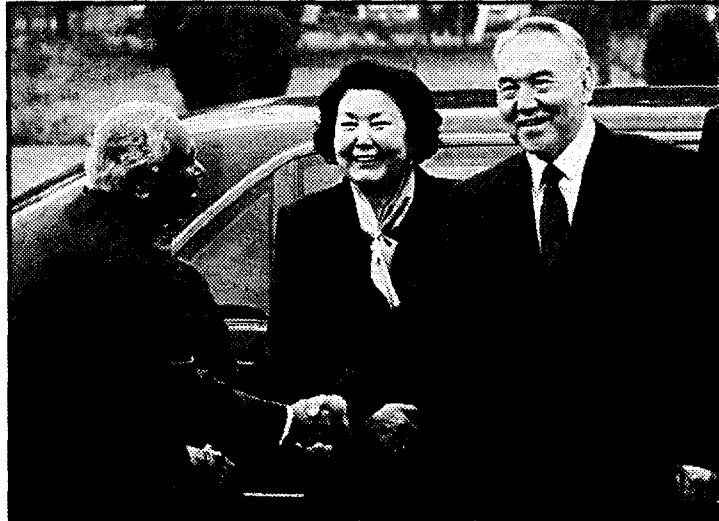
Kazakhstan ready to fight terrorism

New Delhi
12 FEBRUARY

INDIA AND Kazakhstan agreed on Tuesday to set up a bilateral forum on counter-terrorism, as the latter supported New Delhi's stand that the global fight against terrorism must address not only those who instigate but also those who perpetuate the scourge.

A joint declaration signed by visiting Kazakh President, Nursultan Nazarbayev and Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee, after wide-ranging discussions followed by delegation-level talks, said: "Terrorism cannot be justified in any form, for any cause or for any reason used as an excuse." The two sides stressed that the fight against terrorism has to be "global, comprehensive and sustained for the objective of total elimination of terrorism everywhere." Kazakhstan, which has been also been a victim of terrorism, joined India in recalling their commitment to the UN's security council resolution 1373.

The resolution makes it mandatory for all member states



LET'S JOIN HANDS: President K.R. Narayanan greets his Kazakhstan counterpart Nursultan Nazarbayev in New Delhi on Tuesday. Nazarbayev's wife Sara looks on. — AFP

to take action against terrorist groups in their countries as also to initiate steps to freeze their assets and finances.

"We reiterate that the global fight against terrorism must also address those who instigate, assist or acquiesce as much as those who

perpetuate terrorism," the declaration said. The two sides also agreed on the need to give impetus to regional economic cooperation for the common benefit of the people of the two countries and the region. During the parleys, Prime Minister Vajpayee apprised the Kazakh lead-

er of the Indo-Pak developments and the rationale behind New Delhi's stand that Pakistan must take concrete action to end cross-border terrorism. Kazakhstan was among the first countries to come out with a forthright condemnation of the terrorist attack on Parliament on December 13. The two leaders expressed their common resolve that the two countries should further enhance their cooperation and mutual consultations on bilateral, regional and international issues and continue to contribute towards stability and prosperity of their common neighbourhood in Asia and the world.

They noted with satisfaction the developments in Afghanistan, the elimination of the oppressive Taliban regime and supported the resolve of the international community not to allow Afghanistan to be used as a safe haven for terrorism. The two sides agreed that further efforts needed to be made by the international community for the long-term establishment of a broad-based multi-ethnic government in an independent Afghanistan. — PTI

The Economic Times

13 FEB 2002

India, Pakistan asked to exercise restraint

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
BEIJING, JAN 7

CENTRAL Asian nations, including China and Russia, today asked India and Pakistan to exercise restraint in view of the escalating tension and urged both the sides to resume dialogue to settle their disputes.

The six countries, members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), expressed serious concern at the heightened tension between the neighbours, calling upon them to prevent the situation from deteriorating.

In a joint statement at the end of the one-day SCO Foreign Ministers' meeting, they opposed use of terrorism for political ends.

China and Russia issued a separate joint statement in which they condemned the December 13 Parliament attack.

"The People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation express serious concern over the rising tensions between India and Pakistan," the statement issued by Chinese Foreign Minister Tang Jiaxuan and his Russian counterpart Igor Ivanov said.

"China and Russia express strong indignation over the terrorist incident in New Delhi on December 13, 2001, and resolutely condemn terrorism in any form," it said and called on India and Pakistan to find a "political settlement to the current crisis through diplomatic efforts."

China and Russia hold that a solution acceptable to both India and Pakistan will also facilitate the mediation process after the Afghanistan conflict," it said.

The SCO, set up by China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in 1996 was formerly known as Shanghai five. It was expanded and renamed as Shanghai Cooperation Organisation in June last year to include Uzbekistan.

In their statement, the six Foreign Ministers said "the collapse of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan does not mean that international terrorist organisations and groups have gone forever automatically.

"The SCO members believe that terrorism does not limit itself to specific ethnic groups and

religions and the fight against terrorism should be separated from opposition to any religion, freedom of worship or country and nationality."

It said the SCO will continue their maximum efforts to get rid of the terrorism threat in the territories of the six nations. The ministers stressed on the need to crack down on the "three vices" — terrorism, separatism and extremism, Xinhua news agency reported. They also discussed regional security and cooperation and the development of the organisation, the statement said.

The Ministers said that anti-terrorism campaign should be carried out at all levels — internationally, regionally and nationally, and should not be prejudiced or have double standards.

INDIAN EXPRESS

8 JAN 2002