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Turkmenistan's Quest for Energy Market Stability: Navigating Export Route Diversification

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Abstract

Turkmenistan is one of the leading resource-abundant nations in the world. Despite the vast reserves, the country faces the market challenges of exporting gas and the difficulty of doing business in the republic. Turkmenistan was heavily dependent on Russia for selling its gas for a long time despite the long-lasting neutrality strategy. It depended on the Soviet pipeline network, which connected the country only to European Russia through the Central Asia-Center (CAC) pipeline. Today, Turkmenistan's government is focused on developing new export routes as an essential element in its energy strategy, which boosts its national energy budget with high energy revenues. 2009-10 proved to be a turning point in Turkmenistan's energy when Russia reduced its purchases from Turkmenistan due to oversupply caused by the recession. This marked the beginning of the diversification strategy of Turkmenistan's energy policy. This paper looks into Turkmenistan efforts to diversify its export routes. It attempts to explore the strategies employed by Turkmenistan to expand its energy market, reduce dependency on a single export route, and enhance market stability. The paper analyses the shifts in Turkmenistan's energy relations with both major players, such as Russia and China, and with regional players, like Turkey and Iran.

Keywords: *Natural gas, Geo politics, Energy security, China, Export diversification*

Introduction

Turkmenistan is an important player in the global energy system, bestowed with abundant natural resources strategically located in Eurasia. Turkmenistan is characterized by an energy-intensive economy with a sizeable hydrocarbon reserve, primarily natural gas. It has gained prominence in the global energy market. It is covered around 80 % with a flat desert with slight elevation along with the bordering areas of Afghanistan and Iran. Due to its enormous potential for natural gas deposits and petroleum, Turkmenistan is known as a 'gas republic'. The primary energy shares of gas accounts to 72.4% and 27.6% of oil. The energy sector, comprising gas and oil, is the key driver of Turkmenistan's economy, which amounted to 31 percent of the GDP. The government had to cut down on

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the subsidies, spending on the social sector and public infrastructure due to the loss of revenue from the hydrocarbon resources. According to the report of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Turkmenistan's GDP growth witnessed a steep fall from 14.7 percent in 2011 to 10.3 percent in 2014 and 6.5 percent in 2015. However, in the case of Turkmenistan, due to the unavailability of specific data, an exact picture cannot be given (Stronski, 2017).

Since 1991, Turkmenistan has faced the issue of a limited level of foreign investment in its hydrocarbon sector. The huge amount of energy resources and the potential of high export value of Turkmenistan could not be translated to substantial state revenues from the hydrocarbon sector. The geopolitical rivalry in the region on the Caspian Sea's status, instability in Iran and Afghanistan, a poor track record in terms of the rule of law, and the absence of accurate data on oil and gas reserves exacerbate the unfavorable investment climate of the country. Access to global energy markets is also limited due to the country's geopolitical location, which also results in the isolation of Turkmenistan's energy market from the international market happenings (Dzardanova, 2010).

Turkmenistan adopted the old Soviet model of a 'national way of development' based on a state-led economy. The country's economy was based on the structures created during the Soviet era. The trade and transport networks were created in such a manner that isolated the countries connected with the outside world. It did not reorient its economy towards a market-oriented direction like Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. For example, post-independence Kazakhstan initiated the transition towards a free and open market economy based on the Russian model of radical reforms implemented under Yeltsin. In the early 1990s, Kazakhstan launched the privatization program targeting most medium and small enterprises. Similarly, the Kyrgyz government introduced a new legislative framework to govern the liberalized economy of the newly independent country. On the other hand, economic liberalization was never a priority of the regime, and the country was the least developed in the region (Spechler, 2008).

President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov has initiated domestic reforms in the country's energy sector. The President initiated a series of structural reforms to boost the oil and gas industry. The resolution passed by the President was renamed (The Ministry of Oil and Gas Mineral Resources) in the Ministry of Oil and Gas of Turkmenistan. Despite these reform measures, the hydrocarbon sector of Turkmenistan faces the problem of low levels of foreign investment. The dominating presence of the energy sector in the energy sector has posed a significant challenge to the private sector's development. The segment of the private sector in the economy has largely been limited due to the strict administrative structure ("Commercial Laws of Turkmenistan", 2010).

The domestic dynamics impact the country's foreign and energy policies. President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov opened up some scope for foreign investors in this aspect. He has underlined the need for foreign investment in the energy industry of Turkmenistan. Turkmenistan became reliant on Russia's existing gas and export infrastructure to get its gas to the market when it gained independence. Russia continues to have a considerable presence in the energy landscape of Turkmenistan (Milov, 2011).

Under the leadership of President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, Turkmenistan is strengthening its partnership with other countries to develop energy resources. The diversification of sources and gas supply routes has become a concern for Turkmenistan. The Turkmenistan government has been in pursuit of attracting international investment in its hydrocarbon market. In the present scenario of diversifying its export routes, Turkey offers a significant route for Turkmenistan to get its gas to the European market. Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu noted:

Having perfect political relations is not enough. There is potential for cooperation between the two countries and the other countries in the region on other important issues such as energy, economic relations, transport, and logistics. We will work harder to actualize this potential cooperation (as cited in Shlykov, 2014).

Evolution of Turkmenistan's Energy Relations with Russia

Soon after independence, Turkmenistan faced the challenge of taking over control of the industrial sector that the Soviet Union left behind. The former Soviet Union's state-planned economies relied on a barter system in which one country bartered with another

Fig.1: Showing Central Asian Centre (CAC) pipeline spans from Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia, transports Turkmen gas to the European side of the Soviet Union. Source: Stefan Hedlund, 'Turkmenistan Comes into Focus,' Geopolitical Intelligence Services, 25 March 2019.

based on Moscow-controlled demand and supply. Turkmenistan relied on the existing gas and export infrastructure to supply gas to the market while becoming self-sufficient to meet its energy needs. Thus, Turkmenistan depended on Russia's energy plans and infrastructure (Milov, 2011). Turkmenistan exported gas to Ukraine via the Central Asia Centre (CAC) pipeline on a shared income basis during the Soviet Union reign.

Turkmenistan was a significant gas provider to other republics through a system known as the 'Steel Umbilical Cord,' a network of pipelines that spanned the Soviet Union's entire territory. The CAC pipeline, which spanned Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Russia, transported Turkmen gas to the European side of the Soviet Union (Anceschi, 2017). This system was practiced in the initial years of transition, but Ukrainian non payment became a cause of worry for Turkmenistan. Until 1994, Russia operated a nominal quota system and eventually ceased allowing Turkmen gas to flow through its territory. In September 1993 and November 1994, Ukrainian enterprises and organizations illegally diverted Russian natural gas shipments from transit pipes due to a dispute over non payment by Ukraine. As a result, Russia temporarily halted natural gas deliveries three times between 1992 and 1994, adversely impacting Turkmenistan's exports (Kanapiyanova, 2020).

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Itera, an international organization of corporations, acted as an interim mediator for gas transit conflicts in the former Soviet republics. It became a source of natural gas from Turkmenistan to former Soviet Union nations. By the early 2000s, Gazprom, the Russian gas company, had replaced Itera with a new intermediary company bearing the same name. The Turkmen export to Ukraine has significantly benefited from this substitution. With the signing of a deal with Naftogaz, the Ukrainian gas company, and Eural Transgas as arbitrators, it quickly became a crucial player in the Russian gas business. Turkmenistan agreed to deliver 36 billion cubic meters of gas to Ukraine between 2003 and 2006, using the existing pipeline infrastructure (Garibov, 2019).

The East-West pipeline was proposed in 2007–2008 as an expansion route of the Central Asia Centre gas pipeline system to ensure the planned Caspian Coastal pipeline supply. Initially, it was planned to be built with the help of Russian gas giant Gazprom. However, tensions between Russia and Turkmenistan in 2009 prompted Turkmenistan to seek international bidding for the pipeline. The building process began in 2012 and ended in 2015. The East-West pipeline will increase the country's export capability by linking Turkmenistan's largest gas resources with the Caspian coast's pipeline network. The route is an essential first step toward Turkmenistan's westbound export plan. However, numerous political and financial issues must be solved before establishing a stable export route from Turkmenistan to the West (Konarzewska, 2016).

Gas pricing has traditionally been a source of contention between Turkmenistan and Russia. During the initial phase, the gas trade followed the existing pricing mechanism, and Turkmenistan could not renegotiate the fixed price. Although Russia raised the amount of gas it purchased from Turkmenistan, it had the advantage of establishing its own price compared to former Soviet Union republics. Russia adopted the strategy of purchasing Turkmen gas at a lower price and reselling it to Europe at a much higher price.

However, in 2004, things changed due to a boom in demand for oil and gas in Europe, which resulted in a sharp increase in gas prices. Turkmenistan took advantage of the changing market conditions to renegotiate gas rates with Russia.

Turkmen gas shipments to Russia, previously the primary market, drastically decreased in 2009. When demand in Europe and Russia fell, Gazprom reduced imports to 10–12 Bcm annually and sought Turkmengaz, Turkmenistan's national gas company, to alter the 2008 oil-linked price formula. Turkmengaz has traditionally been a secondary gas source for Russia, used to supplement the country's domestic supply. In 2010-14, exports were about 10-11 billion cubic meters yearly. Turkmengaz and Gazprom's relationship deteriorated in 2014 and 2015 due to a payment and supply volume disagreement. In June 2015, Gazprom filed a complaint with the Stockholm arbitration court. However, the case was placed on hold the following year 'to reach a mutually acceptable agreement on continued collaboration outside the scope of the arbitration' (Elliott, 2019).

The gas ties between Turkmenistan and Russia shifted again in 2015, when Russia reduced its purchases from Turkmenistan owing to a significant decline in oil prices. Meanwhile, Russian gas giant Gazprom filed a complaint against Turkmenistan in Sweden's arbitrary court over gas prices. Serious breaches of the bilateral agreement were placed on the Turkmen administration. In January 2016, it was announced that Gazprom's contract with Turkmengaz State Concern had been terminated (Fredholm, 2005). In 2019, Gazprom signed a five-year contract with Turkmengaz to acquire natural gas. Turkmenistan would provide Gazprom with up to 5.5 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas per year, according to the firm. The agreed-upon figure is much less than Turkmenistan's supply to Russia in the decades before the halt when yearly exports to Russia might approach 50 billion cubic meters. Most Turkmen gas presently flows to China (approximately 40 bcm out of 70 bcm), and the Ashgabat administration is constructing a pipeline from Afghanistan to India via Pakistan (Konarzewska, 2016).

Joint Projects and Initiatives Between Iran and Turkmenistan

The opening of the Bafq-Bandar Abbas and Mashhad-Sarakhs–Tajan railroads in

1994 and 1996 marked a turning point in Turkmenistan-Iran connectivity and commercial possibilities. The Bafq–Bandar Abbas track connected Turkmenistan's railway system to Iran, while the Mashhad–Sarakhs–Tajan route linked it to Bandar Abbas, Iran's Persian Gulf port city. Iran has invested in many technological projects in Turkmenistan, in addition to several border markets. It is a $1.5 billion investment in Turkmenistan that was made in 2008. The Kazakhstan–Turkmenistan–Iran project (KTI) pipeline was also proposed. This 1,500-kilometer pipeline, with a daily capacity of one million barrels, would transport Kazakh and Turkmen oil to worldwide markets through Kharg Island in the Persian Gulf. Even though the pipeline's construction circumstances were favorable, the project was hampered by the United States' continuous resistance (Atai & Azizi, 2012).

Fig.2: Shows the Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline is proposed subsea pipeline between Türkmenbaşy, and Baku in Azerbaijan. Source: Caspian Policy Center, 'Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan plan an undersea trans-Caspian oil pipeline', 2016.

The National Iranian Gas Company (NIGC) and Turkmenistan signed a 25-year Korpeje–Kurt Kuy gas export agreement for Turkmen gas to Iran in 1995. Western Turkmenistan's gas deposits are connected to northern Iran through a 200-kilometer pipeline. The pipeline cost $190 million to construct. The pipeline, which opened in 1997 and has a capacity of 8 billion cubic meters per year, is significantly less than the planned Turkmenistan–Iran–Turkey pipeline. Building a gas pipeline with Iran was

Turkmenistan's first successful attempt at export diversification in 1997. Its objective was to reduce dependency on Russia by not passing through any other countries (Chufrin, 1999).

Due to the government's stringent restrictions, major international corporations avoided investing in the country, especially in the oil industry. In early 2002, firms such as ExxonMobil and Shell lost interest in Turkmenistan's oil prospects. Despite this, Iran has only made a few investments in Turkmenistan. One such project was the installation at a Turkmenbashi refinery's gasoline-producing unit, which cost $47 million. An energy swap deal exists between Turkmenistan and Iran. Iran fulfills its northern areas' energy requirements from neighboring nations (Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and Azerbaijan) and distributes an equivalent amount of energy in the Persian Gulf on their behalf (Bayulgen, 2005). This Turkmenistan-Iran pipeline is of strategic and political significance for Turkmenistan. It surmounted both the US and Russia's challenges. The two countries' collaboration has continued. On January 6th, 2010, the Turkmenistan–Iran gas pipeline was completed. It was a 1,024-kilometer pipeline that connected the two countries' gas networks. It delivered gas to Iran's northeastern areas, had the option of gas swapping, and could trade in natural gas with East Asia and Europe. Turkmenistan's energy industry has reformed since President Gurbanguly Berdymu-khamedov took office in December 2006. The private sector's involvement in the economy has grown, while subsidies have decreased.

Both countries have the potential to cooperate in the energy sector. They have successfully cooperated in oil swaps and pipeline networks. At the same time, they face the problem of the adverse investment climate in Turkmenistan along with the Iran–U.S. confrontation. The geopolitical rivalry in the region also shapes Turkmenistan and Iran's energy relations. Turkmenistan and Iran disagreed about natural gas payments. Turkmenistan accused Iran of defaulting on payments due in exchange for Turkmenistan's natural gas. As a result, Turkmenistan chose to relocate to Iran. Both nations have agreed to take the case to an arbitration court to settle the dispute. The gas conflict between Turkmenistan and Iran is more than a bilateral issue between two neighbors; it has far-reaching implications for future global energy commerce. Both countries must agree on a solution. Turkmenistan wants to diversify its gas exports to other parts of the globe, and Iran has shown to be an excellent export partner (Nova, 2018).

Energy Cooperation Between Turkmenistan and Turkey

Turkmenistan's government has been striving to make its oil and gas markets more appealing to foreign investors. Turkmenistan and Turkey have been working hard to expand their commercial, economic, and political ties. The amount of bilateral commerce

is increasing at a rate of 30-40 percent every year. Turkmenistan-Turkey energy cooperation will bolster Turkmenistan's resource-based economy while also providing lucrative new contracts for Turkish construction firms. The agreements between Turkmen company 'Türkmengaz' and Turkish company 'Atagaz Dogalgaz A.S.,' which were inked during Erdogan's visit to Ashgabat, point to Turkmenistan and Turkey strengthening their relations (Shlykov, 2014). A trilateral framework on energy cooperation between Azerbaijan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan was established in early 2015 to highlight energy cooperation with Turkey. It planned to expand the Southern Gas Corridor and build the Trans-Caspian gas pipeline, bypassing Russia and supplying Turkmen natural gas to

Turkey via Azerbaijan and Georgia. It extends for around 300 kilometers and can carry up to 30 billion cubic meters (bcm) of Turkmen gas per year to the Southern Gas Corridor. South Caucasus Gas Pipeline (SCPX), Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), and Trans Anatolian Pipeline (TANAP) are the three pipelines that make up the project (Morrison, 2017).

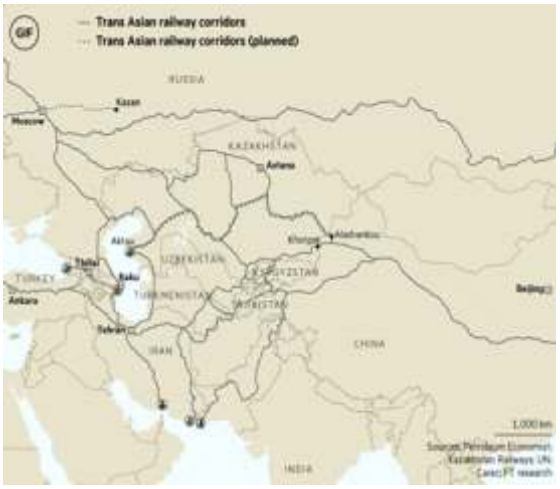

Fig.3: Shows the TANAP pipeline forms the central part of the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC) and is 1,841 meters long, passing through 20 Turkish provinces. Source: Aksam Gazetesi, Design & Translation: Necdet Pamir

The Trans-Caspian Gas Pipeline (TCP) would give significant potential for the Caspian to sell natural gas to European markets, expanding its export destinations. It would be fed by the existing inland East-West Gas Pipeline, which connects the Galkynysh Gas to Turkmenistan's Caspian Shore. The creation of new export markets for Turkmenistan's natural gas would enhance the country's natural gas output and provide another element for economic development. Russia is opposed to the pipeline. However, Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov maintains that constructing a pipeline is a sovereign prerogative of the state whose territory the pipeline will pass through.

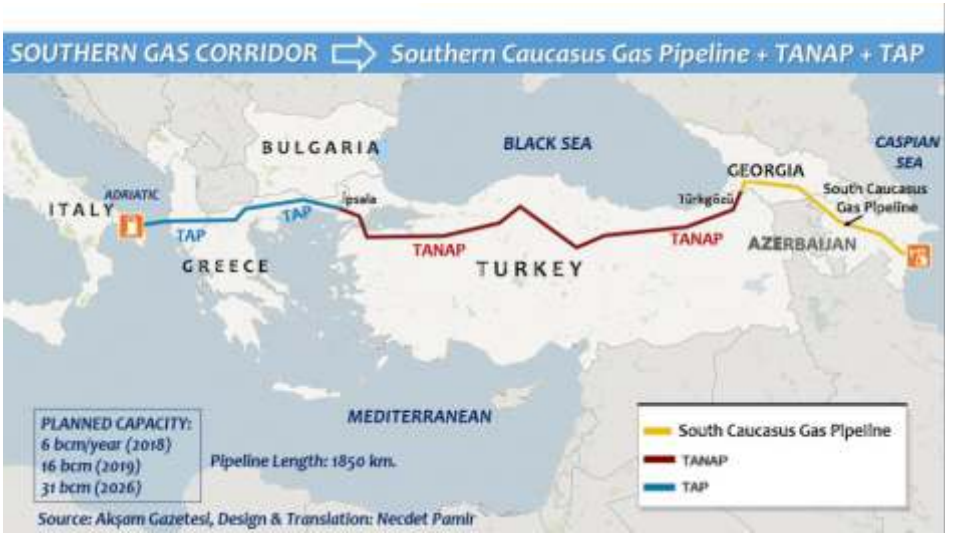

Fig.4: Shows that the Central Asia– Center gas pipeline system is a Gazprom controlled system of natural gas pipelines, which run from Turkmenistan via Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to Russia. Source: Stefan Hedlund, 'Turkmenistan Comes into Focus', Geopolitical Intelligence Services, 25 March 2019.

Russia and Iran oppose the Trans-Caspian pipeline, claiming that it cannot be considered until the geographical split of national sectors in the southern Caspian is resolved. The European Union has been working to get Turkmen gas to European markets and concentrating on accelerating TCP usage. On the other hand, the fall in natural gas prices may prove to be an impediment in making costly infrastructure investments like TCP unprofitable in the short run. TCP also has to deal with an unresolved Caspian Basin issue (Konarzewska, 2016).

Another project connecting Turkmenistan and Turkey is the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP), which intends to replace Russian gas in the European market with natural gas from Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. This initiative has received assistance from Georgia, Ukraine, the EU, and the US. The TANAP may transport Turkmenistan's resources to Southern and Eastern Europe.

While the construction of an export route between the two countries is still ongoing, Turkey and Turkmenistan signed a memorandum of understanding in 2014 under which Turkmenistan agreed to sell gas to Turkey in order to supply gas to the TANAP project and lessen European reliance on Russian gas supplies. With its vast and readily exploited gas reserves, Turkmenistan might supply global markets by establishing a transit link with Turkey. This would promote Turkmenistan's economic growth by extending and increasing Turkmenistan's involvement in a corridor connecting its gas resources in Turkey to Europe, benefiting all parties involved (Mostajabi, 2017).

Turkmenistan's Energy Relations with China

China has emerged as a crucial ally in Turkmenistan's diversification policy, which aims to lessen the country's reliance on Russia. The General Agreement on Gas Cooperation between China and Turkmenistan in 2006 solidified their commercial relations in the post-Niyazov period. This gas transaction led to the development of the Central Asia-China pipeline and paved the way for China National Petroleum Company (CNPC), China's main national oil and gas corporation, to develop reserves in eastern Turkmenistan. The completion of the Central Asia-China Gas Pipeline in 2009 enabled Turkmenistan to break Russia's monopoly on Turkmen exports (Durdiyeva, 2010). The President of Turkmenistan, Gurbanguly, hailed the construction of the gas export as the 'pipeline of the century'. The new pipeline was a respite during the critical times when the country suffered the loss from a gas export restriction after the April 2009 explosion in the Central Asia-Center-4 pipeline carrying gas from Turkmenistan to Russia, which led to a nine-month dispute over gas prices between Ashgabat and Moscow (Vakulenko, 2023).

China's decision to obtain gas from Turkmenistan was based on its industrial strategy, which included providing Turkmenistan with a large-scale credit program. In its pursuit of boosting the gas market, China has made upstream investments and built pipelines with the help of CNPC and state banks. The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) has adopted a reform plan that is the first significant step toward shifting away from the conventional regulated cost-plus pricing system to an oil-linked netback pricing system, which has been tested since November 2011. The key objective of NDRC is to replace a large number of regulated pricing systems in each province with a single city-gate price and 'liberalize well-head prices and allow the market to decide the prices' (Cheon & Urpelainen, 2014).

While Turkmenistan is China's largest gas supplier, supplying more than 40% of its total gas imports, Beijing has continuously diversified its export networks. Turkmenistan owes China billions of dollars in loans to construct gas pipes to transport gas from Turkmen's fields to China. Due to its debt trap, Ashgabat cannot fulfil China's demand to supply more gas through the pipelines (Putz, 2016). Turkmenistan has become more exposed to Chinese price pressures due to China's 2014 agreement with Russia, which has significantly influenced the country's economy. China's insistence on paying substantially below European prices for Turkmen goods, with the possibility of even lower prices in the future, has signaled the rising reliance of Turkmenistan on China (Dadwal, 2017).

Other Projects in Turkmenistan

Turkmenistan's export policy toward the European Union is geared at attempting to overcome legal and political barriers to the establishment of a TCP, as well as the

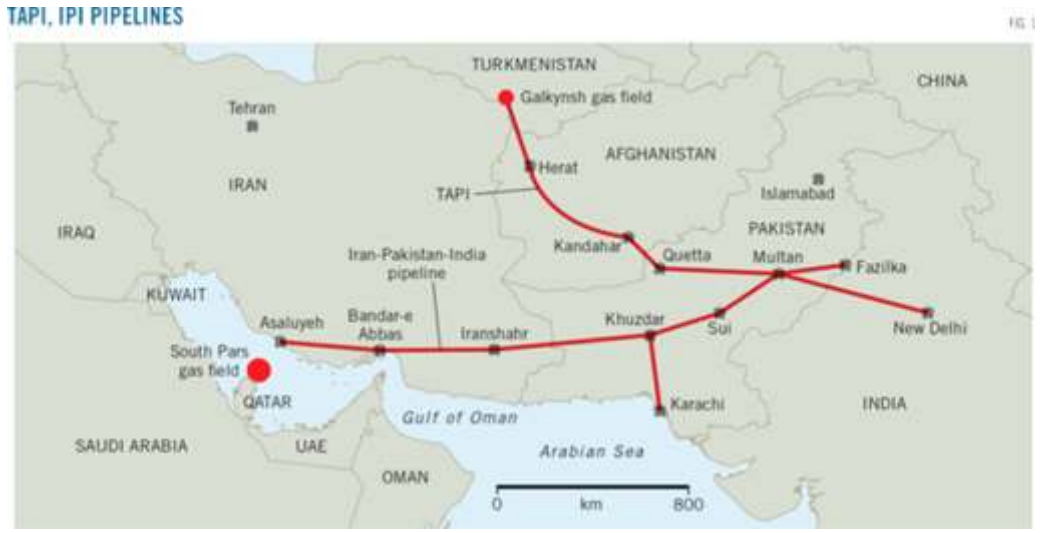

Fig.5: Shows that the TAPI pipeline that originates from Turkmenistan will transport natural gas from Galkynysh Gas Field passing through Afghanistan and Pakistan will reach India. Source: Oil and Gas Journal, 'TAPI pipeline progresses, but future uncertain', 2016

European Union's proposal in 2009 to establish the Caspian Development Corporation, which was envisaged as a single commercial vehicle capable of aggregating Turkmen gas purchases. Turkmenistan and the European Commission signed a legally binding contract in 2011 ("The EU energy policy", 2011). Turkmenistan's insistence on selling gas outside its borders and market uncertainty caused by the recession can be blamed for the failure of the Turkmen-European route. The Commission believed that single-buyer models were required to negotiate with Turkmenistan, even though they violated EU competition regulations. The necessity for a coordinated strategy to Turkmenistan and EU competition rules contrasts significantly with Turkmenistan's approach to China, where CNPC, China's state-owned business, financed a significant share of the Turkmen upstream investments required to finish the project.

The launch of the 33 billion cubic meters (bcm) TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) pipeline in South Asian markets has been delayed due to the involvement of other nations' national segment construction (only Turkmenistan finished its own), and the difficulty in securing financing, demands have been postponed numerous times–Afghanistan's government declared in February 2018 that TAPI will begin gas supplies in 2022. TAPI pipeline faces delays in construction and security issues affecting its realization (Pannier, 2010). During 2011, diplomats continued to discuss the pipeline, but no definitive decisions were taken. According to sources, Pakistan was seeking 14 billion cubic meters of gas per year in Multan at 70% of Brent oil per unit of energy. In late

2011, oil prices of approximately $100 per barrel would indicate a gas price of roughly $11/mmbtu. Other reports estimated a landing price of $13/mmbtu in India, including transportation, based on oil prices of around $100 per barrel, or almost three times what ONGC, India's state-owned oil and gas company, pays for gas produced locally ("Investment climate statement", 2012).

Conclusion

Since its independence, Turkmenistan's export policy has been consistent with its 'multi-vector' foreign policy. Though it has made no political or strategic distinctions between potential buyers, it has procedures to sell gas solely on its border, with the buyer bearing all transportation and other hazards from there. Turkmen energy exports remain the backbone of the country's economy. However, unlike other emerging countries with abundant energy resources, the money generated by this industry has not resulted in a significant increase in the country's population's standard of life. The country's small population (5.1 million) and weak government have made it vulnerable to great power politics. Other Caspian oil producers, such as Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan, benefit from more robust export alternatives or a more open economy, giving them the power to overcome the oil price drop, at least partially. Despite having vast hydrocarbon reserves, Turkmenistan lacks all of these. Turkmenistan's predicament is challenging because it relies only on China for oil money. As a result, new gas export alternatives are required, as well as the allocation of a substantial portion of its declining earnings to finance infrastructure projects to strengthen the country's economy. In such conditions Gazprom's gas purchases in Turkmenistan provide Ashgabat with much-needed foreign money and the opportunity to further collaborate with Russia on new projects that might help Turkmenistan diversify its export portfolio. It also opens up many possibilities for counteracting the country's chronic over-dependence on China. Turkmenistan seeks to diversify its energy relations in this environment of great power politics in the energy sector. Geopolitical and security concerns complicate Turkmenistan's efforts to adopt a diversification plan of export channels. In the current scenario, creating new export channels has become one of the top objectives in Turkmen's energy policy.

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Russia in Transition: A Study of Economic Reforms

Dr. Raj Yadav*

Abstract

This study tries to cognize the trajectory of economic reforms that took place in Russia from many centuries back till the present time Russia. The study also tries to trace the trend of how the Russian economy has passed from the state of a traditional economy with the agricultural sector predominating to an economy that is an upper-middle income mixed economy with state ownership in strategic areas of the economy. Economic reforms introduced from time to time have aided the country to come out successfully from difficult times. The COVID-19 Pandemic affected the global economy negatively; the Russian economy, which is the world's largest energy exporter, contracted less than many of its peers because of timely required state policies adopted to combat this crisis. Reforms in general and economic reforms in particular have and will always remain prerequisite while playing an indispensable role in the economic growth and development of any country and as well as Russia.

Keywords: *Czarist, Muscovite, Petrine, Economic Reforms, Soviet Union, Russia, Liberalization, Privatization, Economic Growth*

Introduction

Every ephemeral century has provided immense significant inventions and milestones to humanity. Mankind has passed through many testing and decisive experiences: cultural shocks, wars, religious dominations, human sufferings faced with elimination or being eaten alive against opponents, Renaissance, Industrial Revolution, colonialism, exercises of democracy, and autocracies (Bahramian, 2012). A few of the centuries are well-known, like the fifteenth century for Columbus, the Seventeenth century for the scientific revolution, the Eighteenth century for the French Revolution, and the Nineteenth century for communication. Other than these well-acclaimed centuries, it is widely recognized that the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the process of transition from a Soviet-type system to a market-oriented economy are debatably acknowledged as the most imperative development in the last phase of the twentieth century (Alexeev & Weber, 2013). One aspect that is common in this voyage of eras is that the world has continuously evolved over the ages, transforming the socio-economic and

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political topography, making it evident that reforms are crucial and influential. Russia is one such region that cannot be ignored while studying the reforms in its growth and development. While studying Russia, one can sense that undoubtedly historical developments have played an indispensable role in metamorphosing Russia into the present day. Reforms, particularly economic reforms, have been inducted that have helped Russia to evolve from Pre-Czarist, Czarist, and Soviet Russia to present-day Russia. This article, thereby, delves into Russia's noteworthy historical periods and economic dynamics that prevailed in the respective periods. Further, it attempts to understand the historical backdrop of the economy to present-day Russia. It tries to trace a trend of reforms connecting the past with the present and the role the economic reforms played in present-day Russia's development trajectory.

Accordingly, this article is divided into two broad sections. The first section provides a brief historical introduction to Russia and examines its historical backdrop of the economy and economic reforms centering on pre-czarist, czarist, Leninist, Stalinist, Brezhnev, and Gorbachev eras. The second section analyzes post-1991 Russia's journey of market economy and the role economic reforms played in its present-day growth track.

Russia's Economic Reforms: Historical Backdrop

Reforms, specifically in the economic sphere, occupy a significant place in the development of any economy. Russia's landscape, for centuries, has thrived from one form of the economic system to another form, embracing a series of economic reforms and thereby experiencing economic growth and development.

Economic growth in an economy has always been an integral part of society (Price, 1997). Rostow (1960:4). Postulated that in every country, economic growth trend moves through five basic stages: 'the traditional society, the preconditions for take-off, the take-off, the drive to maturity, and the age of high mass-consumption. It is interesting to note that Rostow (1960) illustrated that the take-off period for Russia was from 1890-1914, and the drive to maturity year was 1950. Nevertheless, Russia's historical backdrop is incomplete without the reference to Kievan Rus' and the rise of Muscovite and Petrine Russia and the existing dynamics of economic reforms that prevailed during the period expounded in a subsequent section.

The phase known as early Rus' (or Kievan Rus') and the rise of Muscovite rule dates from 900 to 1462. Kievan Rus was a loose federation of East Slavic and Finnic peoples in Europe from the late ninth to the mid-thirteenth century under the reign of the Varangian Rurik dynasty, and contemporary nations of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine claim Kievan Rus' as their cultural ancestors (Plokhy, 2006). Literature available on the pre-czarist economy is reasonably limited. Nonetheless, an edited book by Maureen (Perrie, 2006)

The existing literature narrates that historically, economy of Russia (Kievan era) was simple, and trade and transport largely depended on systems of waterways that played an indispensable part in the economy (McNeill, 1979). Hellie (1999:14), elaborately narrates that the 'people of Rus' experienced a period of great economic expansion, opened trade routes with the Vikings to the north and west and with the Byzantine Greeks to the South and West; traders started to travel south and east, eventually making contact with Persia and the peoples of Central Asia.

Franklin (2019) discusses an interesting aspect of historical Russia, emphasizing its 'long early modernity' from the late fifteenth to the early nineteenth century. He discusses that the reign of Ivan IV Vasilyevich saw the beginning of a large-scale influx of West European 'Thaler' into Muscovy. This era also saw that the Muscovy government could easily change the dynamics of price level by handling the silver currency's value and mass (Hellie, 1999).

Hellie (2006) makes it evident that the economy under the First Romanov (1613-1689) period was not simple rather it was quite sophisticated. Hellie (2006:545) further discusses that the 'leaders of the hypertrophic Muscovite state were basically monetarists like Milton Friedman' (p. 562). He also discusses the dynamics of the economy that cash or barter centered dominated all trade and business. Hellie (2006) maintains that mercantilism came to Russia in the mid-seventeenth century, and Fedor Rtishchev was the first mercantilist, and A. L. Ordin-Nashchokin, a native of Pskov, was its major spokesman who wrote the Pskov merchant charter of 1665 and the New Trade Regulations of 1667. He advocated Western-style efficiency and gaining an outlet in the Baltic to the West. Inter alia, he was a mild protectionist who advocated keeping as much specie as possible in Russia, which may have been partially responsible for the general decline in the price level between 1663 and1689.

Hellie (2006) also focuses on the dynamics of financial institution penetration and makes evident that no bank existed in Russia till mid-eighteenth century; merchant's professional norms and ethics lacked Rothschild-type characteristics accompanied by deceitful character and low credibility. The existing literature narrates that since the existence of the merchant class was in a nascent stage, monasteries acted as mercantilist centers engaging in production and trade. During a similar phase, the practice too prevailed that the government would borrow from monasteries, but there was hardly any evidence that such loans were ever repaid.

The period of the 'Russian Empire' is also known as 'Petrine Russia'. The year 1682 stands tall in history as 'Peter the Great' (1682-1725) took over as the new Tsar of all Russia. As Russian historian Nikolai Pogodin wrote:

The Russia of today, that is, European Russia, diplomatic, political, military,

commercial, industrial, scholastic, and literary - is a creation of Peter the Great…Wherever we look, everywhere we meet this colossal figure, who casts a long shadow over our entire past (as cited in Riasanovsky (1992:111).

Hughes (2009), while discussing the Petrine Russia, explains that although Russia was exhibiting the signals of modernization, it was viewed as 'backward' by West European criteria. Significant reforms were inducted by Peter the Great to develop relations with Europe, and he implemented great changes in the Russian army, which enabled him to achieve great military victories. Peter observed that the countries like Netherlands, England, and France were ahead and progressing in the field of market economy, while the Russian economy was relatively weak because of the poorly developed industrial sector and a feeble national economy management system. A reform focused on introducing new taxes on several commodities was initiated by Peter the Great to improve the condition of the deteriorating state treasury.

The existing literature exhibits that transformations accompanying reforms were introduced from time to time in the historical phase of present-day Russia, and the benchmark was largely based on the West. Alexander II, an emperor of Russia (1855-1881), receives due credit for introducing well-acclaimed reforms. Russia's defeat in the Crimean War highlighted that the Russian army and economy were highly backward in comparison to the West. Lipman (2017) elucidates that the economy that Alexander II inherited was largely disarrayed, burdened with debt, and unable to compete with foreign opponents, especially with the West. Resultantly, Alexander II, in 1861, introduced 'Great Reforms' (Field, 2009) that aided modern capitalism to develop through the policy of rapid industrialization of society. The reforms expanded the Russian industrial sector, helped economic growth to rise, and aided in catching up with leading industrial nations.

The above-mentioned literature explains that although Russia made efforts and began catching up with the West, a significant gap remained. The literature also attests that the structural composition of the Russian economy was traditional, in which agriculture dominates both in terms of the national product and in employment.

The Soviet Union

The Soviet Union phase covers the First World War, the Civil War (1914-1923), Leninism, Stalinism, the policies initiated by Khrushchev and Gorbachev, and the collapse of the Soviet Union. Vladimir Mau and Drobyshevskaya (2013) reflect on the health of Russia's economic condition in the early years of the twentieth-century (1914-1921) that witnessed and dealt with the First World War and the Civil War. This period witnessed a decline in production and productivity, economic deterioration, and a degeneration of the political establishment. Centralized redistribution of scarce resources

and domination of state control, initiated during the First World War, gave rise to 'War Communism' that resulted in a catastrophic fall in output to 40 percent of the level of 1913. Davies (1998) opined that Russia's journey to industrialization was undoubtedly tough, and the First World War, the 1917 revolution, and the Civil War resulted in an appalling fall in production from which the economy did not recover until about 1927. So far as the structural employment scenario was concerned, Maddison (1995) illustrates that Russia was largely an agricultural economy, with 70 percent of the population employed in agriculture, timber, and fisheries in 1913 in comparison to the USA (27 percent) and France (41.1 percent).

Popularly, Vladimir Lenin is credited for introducing a set of economic policies known as the New Economic Policy (NEP) in 1921 that embraced a free market and capitalism, both subject to state control. However, it is interesting to note that nationalized state enterprises could operate on a profit basis. Scholars opined that the initiation of NEP was considered an essential post-Russian Civil War (1918-1922) measure to nurture the economy that had suffered seriously since 1915. Under NEP, a system of mixed economy was introduced where private individuals could own small enterprises, and banks, external trade, and major industries were kept under state control. NEP not only brought in taxation reforms by replacing 'prodrazverstka' (forced grain-requisition) with 'prodnalog', a tax on a farmer that was payable in the form of raw agricultural product, but also restored the market mechanism partially. The reforms introduced brought the economy back to the pre-WWI level of GDP per capita in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors (Markevich &Harrison, 2011).

Stalin, who emerged as a successor of Lenin, terminated the New Economic Policy with a 'Great Turn' (or a 'Great Break'), under which he introduced the five-year plans and collectivization of land. The Great Turn charted a struggle at the utmost levels of power (Khlevniuk, 2009). The policy of collectivization was crucial to Stalin's industrialization policies as those were based on the confiscation of agricultural surplus to subsidize industrialization and to move labor out of agriculture. The policy of the 'price scissors' was also introduced by Stalin, in which peasants were compelled to sell grain to the state at below-market prices, and the state then sold the grain to industrial workers at higher prices or exported grain to pay for imports of industrial equipment. The burden of the price scissors is reflected in the level of violence that was involved in implementing those policies. Cheremukhin, et al. writes: in 1929, there were 1300 peasant riots with more than 200, 000 participants. This was a significant increase compared with the New Economic Policy period when the total number of riots for the two years of 1926-27 was just 63. In March 1930 alone, there were more than 6500 riots with 1.4 million peasants participating .

The Stalinist state paid little attention to the welfare of its citizens, and the state

budget focused on the war economy. As a result, the country was too exhausted by war, terror and poverty, and there was a desire for the establishment of normality that had not existed since the 1920s. Maddison (1995) illustrates that despite Stalin's reforms, the service sector in Russia during the 1950s remained underdeveloped, with the percent of the population employed merely 25 percent, in comparison to the USA and France, where 54 percent and 37 percent of the population were employed, respectively.

After the death of Stalin in 1953, Soviet Russia experienced a political crisis over the gaining of leadership, and finally, Nikita Khrushchev attained full power in 1957-1958. Khrushchev introduced 'Sovnarkhoz' reform in January 1957 as a major organizational reform of the economic and political hierarchy (Swearer, 1959: Ballis, 1961: Markevich & Zhuravskaya, 2011) to rectify the loopholes of the ministerial system and introduce competition between local officials (Hoeffding, 1959). The spirit with which the reform was initiated was the eradication of the production branch industrial ministries and establishment of the regional bodies, called 'Sovnarkhozes', i.e., Soviet councils of the national economy, which were supposed to oversee and manage industry and construction in the regions (Markevich & Zhuravskaya, 2011).

Khrushchev initiated the route for 'de-Stalinization' to liberate the Soviet society from suppression and oppression. Accordingly, he liberated political prisoners, welcomed creativity, imposed checks on the powers of the police, allowed foreigners to visit the Soviet Union, and inaugurated the space age in 1957 by launching the satellite Sputnik. Kenez (2006) states that Khrushchev provided agriculture a higher preference, and so gave people greater independence in deciding what to plant and how to carry out their work, encouraged peasants to take advantage of the private plots, and initiated the 'virgin land program'. Results of agricultural harvest were mixed, of which weather conditions played a role, and it is interesting to note that agricultural failure was one of the contributing factors to Khrushchev's ultimate political defeat. Kenez (2006) further states that the industrial sector performed better than the ever-troubled agriculture sector during Khrushchev's era.

In the post-Khrushchev period, a treadmill of reforms was introduced by Premier Alexei Kosygin in 1965, then by Leonid Brezhnev and Yuri Andropov, and finally by Mikhail Gorbachev to reform the centrally planned Soviet economy inherited from Stalin (Schroeder, 1990). As Gorbachev took the reign as the general secretary in 1985, the soviet economy was not in crisis but was poorly managed, evident with declining growth rates. Hence, he tried to reinvigorate the economy by providing the needed energy and direction. Among others, an important effort he made was to restructure the decision-making authority through the establishment of state committees and legislation on individual economic activity. As Levine et al. (1987:41) state that the 'most striking early

moves by Gorbachev involved recentralization, together with the creation of a new level in the hierarchy: the complexes. These are either biuros or state committees. Gorbachev went for the anti-alcohol campaign to improve labor productivity by cutting down drunkenness. This policy proved useful yet met with criticism, and the biggest problem that arose was that the anti-alcohol campaign left a huge hole in the Soviet budget (Mehta, 2020). Feeling the pulse of the soviet economy that lacked dynamism, Gorbachev introduced innovative political and economic reforms in the form of 'glasnost' (openness) and 'perestroika' (restructuring) with a belief to bring the Soviet economy on a similar footing with that of Western economies.

By the year 1989-1990, people living in the USSR had completed seven decades of experiencing the ideas and ideology of socialism. During these decades, the Soviet people witnessed the fall of the czarist regime, the October Revolution, Bolshevik rule (Lenin's NEP), Stalin's policy of collectivization, Khrushchev's policy of de-Stalinization, and Gorbachev's policies of 'Glasnost' and 'Perestroika' that finally paved the way for the Union's disintegration. Besides Gorbachev's reforms, the issue of oil prices and economic inefficiency and the emergence of ethnic tensions also played a significant role in the collapse of the Soviet Union (Timofeychev, 2018).

Post 1991 Russia: Transition in the Making

In the world's history, the year 1991 stands tall for pronounced significance. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the former Soviet Union loosened the way for additional radical thinking to create a market system rather than reforming the existing socialist economy. During a similar phase, terms, namely 'market economy' or 'transition economy', became pronounced in Russia and post-Soviet states (Feige, 1991, 1994), and efforts were made to adopt the same by post-communist states. The plethora of literature on 'transition' suggests that transition in any aspect has never been an easy phenomenon. It has been argued that in any transition, the transition strategies and advocates, opponents and theoretical underpinnings in relation to a transition play a major role in its success or failure. This approach has emerged as neoliberal thinking that has dominated policymaking in advanced market economies, embracing the benefits of deregulation, privatization, greater emphasis on the use of the free market, limited role of the state, reduction in subsidies, and reduction in the level of taxation.

Against the backdrop of falling production, rising inflation, budget deficit, and liquidity crisis in post-communist Russia (Granville, 1993a), an attempt, by employing 'shock therapy' approach, was made to reform the former centrally planned system in order to change the role of the state and to embrace market economy (Wang, 1994). This was pronounced on October 28, 1991, when the elected president of post-communist

Russia.

Boris Yeltsin announced to conduct radical economic reforms decisively, abruptly, and without wavering, and the Yegor Gaidar (in consultation with IMF, World Bank and the EBRD advisors) was asked to lead the team (Hough, 2001). Privatization, which became a buzzword in the initial phase of post-communist Russia, was not a novel reform under Yeltsin's regime in that it first appeared under Gorbachev's reform policy of Perestroika that was dominated by spontaneous privatization and leasing out (including lease-purchase agreements) in an attempt to reform socialism and to build a 'mixed socialist economy' (Parks, 1988; Lieberman, et al. 2007). While making efforts to establish private ownership, Yeltsin, during the period of 1992 to 1994, privatized 75,000-100,000 small-scale enterprises and also undertook the mass (voucher) privatization of some 16,000 medium to large-scale enterprises. By mid-1994, almost 70 percent of the Russian economy was in private hands. From September 1994 to 1995, further efforts were made in the direction of privatization that focused on the sale of residual shares (Lieberman, 2007). Further, by September 1995, the Russian government partially privatized Svyazinvest (national telecommunications company) and carried out the loans-for-share auctions, utilizing the 'case-by-case method'. During 1997–2000, most privatization cases, either through loans-for-share auctions or suitable owners, were selected for state-owned companies by the government (Lieberman, 2007). The loans-for-shares program accelerated the consolidation of a few large financial groups, led by so-called 'oligarchs', enjoying great political and economic influence (Shleifer & Treisman, 2005).

The effective transition from a command economy to a market economy demands not only reforms like privatization but also stabilization and liberalization in an economy. Russia's stabilization reforms aimed at stabilizing high rates of inflation and unemployment, curbing rising budget deficits, introducing price liberalization, and balancing the currency exchange rate system. Price liberalization not only symbolized the end of the system of regulated or fixed prices but was also essential to a stabilization program concerned with fiscal consolidation and tight monetary policy. Price liberalization also meant eliminating subsidies, with an immediate effect on the budget (Granville, 1993b). Russia moved from a regulated price system towards deregulation of domestic prices through various stages. The initial stage was introduced on January 2, 1992, but proved unsuccessful, and a wide range of consumer and some industrial inputs prices remained regulated. By the second stage, during March 1992, prices that were previously regulated by the state were liberalized, and some administrative decisions were moved from central to local levels, thereby affecting the prices of consumer goods like bread, milk, etc. By the third stage, the decree of the president of the Russian Federation abolished the ceilings on the prices of oil and natural gas as of September

1992. Nevertheless, the prices of oil and gas in Russia were well below world prices.

Finally, in June 1993, prices of coal were liberalized and an important part of budget subsidies was reduced. A similar case was adopted for the prices of bread in October 1993. At the end of 1993, all margins imposed on the prices of monopolistic enterprises were abolished. This led to a sharp increase in the prices of consumer goods making life hard for consumers. According to Granville (1993a), the causes responsible for hyperinflation, which Russia experienced by the end of 1992, were an uncontrolled increase in the money supply related to budget deficit, and central bank credits to enterprises, and to the rouble zone. He (1993a:29) concludes that 'though macro-economic stabilization is not a sufficient condition for the market-oriented transformation of the Russian economy, it remains a necessary one, without which the reform will fail'. Under Yeltsin's stabilization policy, a tight and restrictive monetary policy was adopted with high interest rates to restrict credit, thereby curtailing rising inflation. To achieve fiscal stabilization and to check fiscal deficit issues, Yeltsin raised new taxes heavily, curtailed government subsidies to industry and construction, and reduced state welfare spending (Granville, 1993b; Rytila, 1994).

Besides the reforms of stabilization and liberalization at the domestic level, Russia, in the initial years, also made efforts to increase trade and balance the terms of trade and currency's exchange rate. As a result, foreign exchange policies also changed. The ruble, a currency of Russia, remained non-convertible throughout the Soviet period. However, by 1987, authorities began to experiment with multiple exchange coefficients that, too, got replaced by a commercial exchange rate on November 1, 1990, that could be used for most current account transactions. In July 1992, the exchange rate was unified, and current account convertibility was introduced. Under the Soviet Union prior to 1990, no foreign exchange markets existed, and banks were not allowed to deal in foreign exchange and to take foreign currency deposits. However, in January 1991, a presidential decree introduced a free foreign exchange market, and on January 8, 1991, MICEX began weekly auctions of foreign exchange (Balino et al., 1997).

An initial decade of post-communist Russia's transition from a command economy to a market economy experienced not only the launching of economic reforms but also Yeltsin's second term of presidency experienced a political and economic crisis when Yeltsin's government defaulted on its debts, causing a crisis in financial markets and collapse of the ruble in the 1998 Russian financial crisis (Gaidar, 1999; Kharas et al., 2001).

Contours of Economic development Under Putin

A major milestone arrived in the history of post-communist Russia in 2000 when Vladimir Putin came to power as President. Soon after he came to power, the Russian

economy started recovering from the general economic mess of transition and the financial (debt) crisis of 1998, during which GDP fell by 5 percent. Subsequently, the economy grew by more than 10 percent, largely due to rising oil prices (Becker, 2019), as Putin completed his initial years of office. Sakwa (2004) has comprehensively particularized Putin's era in Russia in various aspects. He (2004:182) writes that Putin modified 'the close and unhealthy relationship between the state and the economy that had developed under Yeltsin' . Explaining the wave of reforms introduced by Putin to bring the Russian economy on track, Sakwa (2004:206) states.

Putin built on this [advantage of high prices for oil] by ensuring greater political stability and transparency in government–business relations, new tax, labour and land codes, a new criminal code and attempts to debureaucratise the environment for small businesses. Building on the 'Moscow Consensus', he eschewed the excesses of shock therapy [oligarchic capitalism] while not reverting back to Soviet-style autarchy. His model was a controlled extension of market relations (p. 206).

The trajectory of Russia's economic growth and development since Putin took over the reign from Yeltsin has always been a focal point of discussion among scholars. Dabrowski (2019) focuses on dynamics defining Russia's elongated stint of growth. According to him (2019), Russia, since 2000, has overpowered a serious and nearly decadal transformation-related output decline. The lobal commodity boom, specifically high oil prices and structural and institutional changes in the 1990s, facilitated Russia to experience rapid economic growth in the first decade of the 21st century. Russia not only experienced a boom but also suffered blows of the 2008-2009 global financial crisis, also later hit by the currency crisis and related recession in 2014 (Dabrowski, 2016) largely due to a decline in international oil and commodity prices. In addition to the decline in hydrocarbon price, Russia's internal structural and institutional vulnerabilities and geopolitical factors in relation to Russia's engagement in territorial conflict with Ukraine resulted in international sanctions against Russia and Russian counter-sanctions. Korhonen (2019) points out that the Russian economy suffered negatively because of Western sanctions and Russia's import bans.

Thus, since 2014, the Russian economy has been in a state of stagnation (Aslund, 2020). The major macroeconomic dynamics in Russia have got affected, revealing many weaknesses in its banking sector. As a result, the number of credit institutions was reduced from 956 in 2012 to 561 in 2017, and the Central Bank of the Russian Federation (CBR) took over several faltering top 50 banks, and many more were assigned to the Deposit Insurance Authority for rehabilitation. It is important to note that the Russian banking sector was able to survive the global financial crisis with generous state support. According to Russia's official figures, real disposable incomes dropped by 13 percent from 2014 to 2018. As a result of the Western financial sanctions, Russia's total foreign

indebtedness fell from $732 billion in June 2014 to $455 billion in December 2018, which limited Russia's investment and consumption and, thus, economic growth (Aslund, 2020). Aslund (2020) states that Putin, instead of focusing on economic growth (or economic reforms) to accelerate growth, focused on macroeconomic stability. The move to a floating exchange rate from December 2014, which means the Russian exchange rate floats with the price of oil, aided this stability. Russia's budget has also stayed close to balance. The country's public debt remained unchanged. Russia has also kept its budget close to balanced. Russia steadily increased its foreign currency reserves to $560 billion in March 2020, and its public debt remained at 13 percent of GDP (Aslund, 2020). The year 2020 had been a hard year across the globe and Russia is no exception.

Conclusion

The trajectory of the contemporary Russian economy is deeply associated with economic reforms introduced by the leaders of Russia, such as Ivan IV, Romanov, Peter the Great, Alexander II, Lenin, Stalin, Khrushchev, Brezhnev, Gorbachev, Yeltsin, and leader Putin (present leader), in different epochs of Russian history. It is the result of these reforms that the Russian economy has transformed from a traditional economy with the agricultural sector predominating to an upper-middle income mixed economy with state ownership in strategic areas of the economy. Russia's progress and economic magnitude under Putin's regime can be assessed through the size of an economy and how well off the citizens are in comparison to the other countries' citizens. Russia's GDP was US $ 279 billion in the year 2000. It has increased to US $1281 billion in 2016 and to US $ 1464.08 billion in the year 2020 (Becker, 2018). In the world rankings of countries' GDP, its ranking too has improved from 19 in 2000 to 12 in 2016 and 11 in 2020. Hence, undoubtedly, Russia has progressed under Putin's regime. Nonetheless, if one compares Russia with world economies and even with BRIC countries, then the data shows that Russia is still lagging behind China and India. The second parameter is Russia's GDP per Capita, which has increased from 1906 in 2000 to 8929 in 2016 and to 9,972 in 2020 (Becker, 2018). Nevertheless, when compared with world economies, then Russia is far behind the Western and Asian high-income countries in terms of GDP per capita. Table 1 also shows Russia's growth picture for the last three decades and various macroeconomic dynamics. It shows that although Russia has achieved success in various parameters, its economic dynamics are still affected by external factors to a substantial extent. Hence, reforms in general and economic reform in particular have played a major role and will continue to play an important role in times to come for the Russian economy and the world as a whole.

Table 1. RUSSIAN FEDERATION: SELECTED ECONOMIC INDICATORS, 1990-2019

Year	**1991**	**1993**	**1995**	**1997**	**1999**	**2001**	**2003**	**2005**	**2007**	**2009**	**2011**	**2013**	**2015**	**2017**	**2019**
Economic Growth[1]	-5.05	-8.67	-4.14	1.4	6.4	5.1	7.3	6.4	8.5	-7.8	4.3	1.76	-1.97	1.83	1.34
GDP per Capita, PPP	20,402.53	15,919.29	13,349.03	13,068.18	13,230.26	15,425.27	17,488.29	20,104.3	23,719.81	23,010.07	25,048.69	26,413.18	25,566.29	26,005.98	27,043.94
Percent of World GDP[2]	2.18	1.7	1.29	1.3	0.61	0.92	1.11	1.62	2.25	2.03	2.79	2.97	1.83	1.96	--
Savings (% of GDP)	-	-	28.02	21.95	28.25	32.51	28.27	30.55	31.27	20.88	28.76	24.28	26.37	25.67	27.58
Investment as percent of GDP(Q1)	-	-	12.77	15.05	11.31	13.91	13.19	13.1	14.08	16.14	13.82	15.2	15.37	15.46	14.39
Consumption as percent of GDP(Q1)	-	-	55.54	57.44	60.95	50.52	53.08	52.5	50.85	58.85	52.46	53.61	55.53	54.6	51.68
Share of Industry	45.86	40.53	34.54	34.69	33.5	31.84	28.65	32.63	31.22	29.33	29.41	28.19	29.79	30.67	32.17
Share of Manufacturing	-	-	-	-	-	-	14.37	15.68	15.11	12.9	11.47	11.06	12.38	12.31	13.09
Share of Services	36.71	42.85	52.23	50.6	49.89	51.47	53.82	48.81	50.67	53.77	53.8	56.12	56.14	56.03	54.03

Inflation (%)	160.40	874.2	197.4	14.8	85.7	21.5	13.7	12.7	9	11.6	8.4	6.8	15.5	3.7	4.5
Exchange Rate, USD[3]	-	-	-	5.7848	24.6199	29.168	30.6920	28.2844	25.5808	31.7403	29.3823	31.8371	60.9376	58.3428	64.7376
FDI, net inflows (% of GDP)	-	0.2782	0.5222	1.2013	1.6622	0.9286	1.8423	2.0298	4.2989	2.9921	2.6923	3.0193	0.5026	1.8140	1.8697
Trade (% of GDP)[4]	26.257	68.698	55.183	47.257	69.393	61.111	59.128	56.713	51.706	48.435	48.035	46.287	49.359	46.877	49.074
Oil rents (% of GDP)[5]	4.056	3.859	4.17	4.428	7.846	9.765	10.594	13.141	10.576	8.407	11.396	9.112	5.919	6.456	-
Net domestic credit (current LCU)[6](trillion)	-	-	-	-	-	2.301	3.682	4.498	7.952	13.242	22.156	32.234	47.825	54.038	58.149
UEDI[7]	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	8.2	8.1	7.6	7	6.4	6.2	5.6
EDI[8]									3.9	4.6	4.6	3.5	4.4	5.2	4.6

Notes

1. https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Russia/Economic_growth/
2. https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Russia/gdp_share/
3. Official exchange rate (LCU per US$, period average); https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/PA.NUS.FCRF?locations=RU
4. Trade is the sum of exports and imports of goods and services measured as a share of gross domestic product. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NE.TRD.GNFS.ZS?view=chart
5. Oil rents are the difference between the value of crude oil production at world prices and total costs of production. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PETR.RT.ZS?view=chart&locations=RU
6. Net domestic credit is the sum of net claims on the central government and claims on other sectors of the domestic economy (IFS line 32). Data are in current local currency.
7. UEDI: Uneven Economic Development Index; https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Russia/uneven_economic_development_index/
8. EDI: Economic Decline Index: https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/Russia/economic_decline_index/

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Interactions of Deported Meskhetian Turks with Jews and Koryo-Saram in Uzbekistan

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Abstract

The deportation policy implemented during the Soviet Union era led many ethnic minorities to leave their homeland. As a result, Central Asian countries have experienced demographic changes in particular. Although the number of studies on inter-ethnic minority relations in Uzbekistan, where many ethnic minorities live together, has increased over time, there are very few studies on the interactions between three ethnic minority groups: Meskhetian Turks, Koryo-Saram, and Jews. This paper discusses the ethnic minority relations between Meskhetian Turks, Koryo-Saram, and Jews living in Uzbekistan. It examines the political, social, and cultural activities of these ethnic minorities and their relationship with the society of Uzbekistan as a whole. In addition, the paper analyzes, how these three ethnic groups are integrated into Uzbek society. At the same time, it examines the role and impact of Uzbekistan's institutions in promoting interethnic minority relations. The data collected in the study has been obtained from interviews and observations in the field.

Keywords: *Ethnic Minorities, Meskheitan Turks, Jews, Koryo-Saram, Uzbekistan*

Introduction

This paper examines the social interactions of Meskhetian Turks with the other minorities in Uzbekistan and their political, economic, and interethnic condition in Uzbekistani society. Meskhetian Turks are one of the deported ethnic groups of Uzbekistan's multi-ethnic society, like Koryo-Saram from the far Eastern region of the Soviet Union. During the Second World War, they were exiled from their homeland (Akhiska Meskethia, Adigon, and Aspindsa) in Georgia to the Central Asian states such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan, where they lived in peaceful coexistence with the ethnic Uzbek majority community and other minorities as well. However, in June

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1989, Meskhetian Turks were attacked and massacred in the Fergana Valley in Uzbekistan by the agitated Uzbeks. As a result of what is called 'Fergana events,' nearly 100 thousand Meskhetians left Fergana Valley.

Although a number of studies focus on the deportation process and the various facets of the life of Meskhetian people in Uzbekistan, there is almost no work in the existing literature about how Meskhetians interact with the other minorities such as Jews and Koryo-Saram in Uzbekistan and in what extent they face problems in relation to their relationship with ethnic Uzbek majority community in Uzbekistani. In this context, this paper focuses on the question of interactions of the Meskethians with the ethnic minorities such as Jews and Koryo-Saram of Uzbekistan and whether they coexisted with other minorities of the land peacefully in the post-Soviet period.

The main hypotheses of this paper are:

1: National and Cultural Centers strengthen relations between ethnic minorities and contribute to their integration into Uzbek society.

2: With the beginning of the Shavkat Mirziyoyev era, more attention has been paid to ethnic minorities.

3: Meskhetian Turks still remember the sinister events that occurred due to the Fergana events and have refrained from bringing up these issues to raise the topic.

4: Relations between these three ethnic groups—Koryo-Saram, Jews, and Meskhetian Turks—have only been at official levels.

The qualitative method has been employed to test these hypotheses. The data has been collected through the field survey conducted in Tashkent and Samarkand (2022-2023), where the authors of this paper have conducted semi-structured interviews with the authorities of the associations of the Meskhetians, Jews, and Koryo-Saram and the leading personalities of these minority groups such as local administrators. In this context, the authors have used snowball sampling to conduct as many interviews as possible.

The objective of this paper is not to explain the consequences of the deportation of the Meskethians from their homeland in Georgia to Central Asia in general and to Uzbekistan in November 1944 in particular. Instead, it focuses on the interactions among minority groups such as Meskhetians, Jews, and Koryo-Saram in Uzbekistan.

Literature Review

Asanovna (2022), analyzes the factors that socially and culturally unite the ethnic minorities living in Uzbekistan and the ethnic Uzbek majority community. She indicates that in 1989, 12 national cultural centers were established in Uzbekistan. Nevertheless, according to her deliberations, this number increased to 120 in 2002. Another critical issue in this work that she has pointed out is that, alongside Nawruz and national holidays,

Uzbeks celebrate Russians' Maslenitsa, Tatars' Sabantuy, Koreans' Sollal and Chusok, Greeks' Ohi, and Armenians' Vardavar together with the mentioned ethnic groups. Consequently, it is stated that people visit each other and exchange gifts during important religious holidays of Muslims (Ramadan and Sacrifice), Christians (Christmas and Easter), Jews (Purim and Hanukkah), and Buddhists (Donchod-Hurol). Apart from these, Asanovna emphasizes the significance of national dishes and states that different tastes are among the other factors that culturally unite ethnic minorities.

Seytimbetova (2020), reinforces the emphasis on national cultural centers. She argues that these centers enrich the relations among ethnic minorities. A further prominent point within the scope of the study is that education is implemented in seven languages in Uzbekistan. Conversely, it is emphasized that television and radio broadcasts are carried out in 12 languages, and newspapers and magazines are published in more than ten languages. She provides no information on Turkish and Jewish national cultural centers. However, it has been announced that there is an editorial office for a publication called 'Mekan' newspaper and a library in the Turkmen Cultural Centre in Turtkul in Karakalpakstan. Furthermore, she points out that more than 20 schools in the Turtkul region provide education in Turkmen.

Seytimbetova (2022), discusses the ethnic minorities living in the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, historically and demographically, in detail. In the light of the 1989 census in the Soviet Union, while 1,212,207 people were recorded to be living in the Autonomous Republic of Karakalpakstan, according to the census of January 1, 2020, this figure amounted to 686,144 increased over 31 years to 1,898,351. Nevertheless, she has argued that the factors, such as the drying up of the Aral Sea, access to clean drinking water, and deterioration of soil fertility, that affect the population and existence of ethnic minorities living in the region are very important. She evaluates the decline of the Jewish population within the context of factors such as emigration, low birth rate, and aging.

Gulkhayo (2020), emphasizes that the rights of ethnic minorities living in Uzbekistan are guaranteed under the constitutional charter. He has remarked that a total of 70 different nationalities lived within the borders of Uzbekistan according to the census conducted in 1897, while this number increased to 113 in the 1959 census and to 123 in 1989. Taking reference to Article 31 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan, stating that people's right to have a religious belief or not is guaranteed within the framework of freedom of conscience, Gulkhayo shows that 16 different sects are living in Uzbekistan nowadays and that more than 2,000 religious organizations are registered in the country. Cooper (1998), analyzes the Jews living in Uzbekistan in the context of national and religious identity. Stating that Judaism came from one's mother's lineage, Cooper interviewed some people whose fathers were Jewish and mothers were non-Jewish in the province of Samarkand. He shows, for instance, that when a man whose father is Jewish

and whose mother is non-Jewish marries a Bukharan Jewish woman, the children born of that marriage are no longer considered Jewish. According to him, although this man feels and regards himself as Jewish, the declaration of religious authorities claiming that this person is not Jewish causes a contradiction between religious and national identity. Cooper also examines the activities of Jewish organizations operating in Uzbekistan, emphasizing that they aim to encourage Jews with their legal right to emigrate to Israel to settle in that country by strengthening their national identity. The Jewish Agency, just like in other post-Soviet countries, has opened branches in Uzbekistan, where Israeli folk dance is taught alongside Hebrew lessons. Apart from summer camps, the organization also arranges seminars to strengthen the Jewish people's national identity.

Jin Chong Oh (2012) by conducting a semi-structured interview has evaluated the current situation of Meskhetian Turks and Koreans living in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in terms of cultural and linguistic identity within a comparative perspective. In his analysis, Oh argues that Koreans characterize Uzbekistan as their homeland more strongly than Meskhetian Turks. Showing that the Meskhetian Turks still regard themselves as an 'unwelcomed nation' in this country, Oh holds that this situation derives from different perceptions of identity. On the basis of interviews that he held with the representatives of Meskhetian Turks in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, Oh states that the organizations of Meskhetian Turks aim to ensure the migration of as many Meskhetian Turks as possible to Turkey. At the same time, Oh adds that unlike Russians, Germans, and Meskhetian Turks, Koreans have not abandoned Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan and have not made any such demands from official authorities. In this article, Oh has overlooked an essential point, that is, the experience of Meskhetian Turks in relation to the 'Fergana events' of 1989. during which hundreds of Meskhetian Turks lost their lives. As a result, 'Fergana events' led to the migration of Meskhetian Turks to other countries.

The misery caused by these attacks is still fresh among the Meskhetian Turks. Particularly in the research conducted by co-author Dolunay Yusuf Baltürk of this paper in Samarkand and Tashkent, it has been observed that Meskhetian Turks are unwilling to talk about the Fergana events. The Meskhetian Turks refraine from expressing their opinion on this issue due to the fear of stigmatization associated with the domestic policy of Uzbekistan that has characterized the articulation of ideas about Fergana events as 'dangerous'. In this respect, Meskhetian Turks continue to distinguish themselves as the 'other' since they have many 'security concerns.' Furthermore, due to the Fergana events, most of the Meskhetian Turks living in Uzbekistan had to emigrate to different countries. However, Oh (2012) does not distinctly state this issue and holds that the Koreans were not directly affected by the attacks in Fergana Valley.

In recent years, articles have been published in the Russian language about ethnic minorities in Uzbekistan, one of which is Baidarov (2016) Baidarov first mentions the

fundamental legal texts influencing Uzbekistan's nationality policy and then focuses on the populations of ethnic minorities living in this country according to 2015 data. In the next step, after briefly emphasizing the role of national cultural centers, he elaborates on the ethnic situation among the ethnic groups (Tajiks, Russians, Karakalpaks, and Kazaks) living in Uzbekistan. Finally, the current condition between sects is analyzed. Nonetheless, in his analysis, Baidarov does not clarify Meskhetian Turks, Jews, and Koreans who are subjects of this present paper.

Deported Nationalities in the Soviet Union

In the Soviet Union, many nationalities were deported between 1937 and 1944 from their hometowns in different parts of the country to Central Asia and Siberia. Mainly, the Second World War played a central role in the deportations of various nationalities under the Joseph Stalin regime. As a result, Central Asia became a region in which many nationalities, including Meskhetians, Koryo-Saram, Jews, and others, lived together for decades to come.

Table 1 shows that ethnic groups have resided mainly in the border regions of the Soviet Union and were suspected as potential informers and collaborators by the Soviet regime during the confrontation with the Nazis. These deportations were considered mainly as security measures of the Soviet state. These ethnic groups were accused of disloyalty to the Soviet Union, and probably, they were accused of collaborating with the German army. As a result of this policy, till October 1945, there were about 2.25 million deported people in the Soviet Union (Gumppenberg & Steinbach, 2004). This was one of the main reasons that made Central Asia a completely multi-ethnic region.

Ethnic Groups in Uzbekistan

Due to the nationality policy implemented in the Soviet Union, Uzbekistan became a multi-ethnic state like the other Central Asian republics. According to the data of the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan in January 2023, it has been officially recorded that a total of 9,769 Jews live in Uzbekistan, of which 5,088 are men and 4,681 are women. On the other hand, it has made an official statement that 1,431 Jews live in the Samarkand province, of which only 245 people live in the city center In Uzbekistan, 9,769 Jews in January 2023 amounted to 19,000 in 1995 (Dellapergola, 1997). This means that the Jewish population of this country decreased more than twofold in almost two decades. If we consider that the total population of Uzbekistan is 35.305.916, ethnic minority groups make up 15.4 percent of the total population. When the table is analyzed, it is seen that especially among these three ethnic groups—Jews, Koryo-Saram, and Meskhetian

Table 1: Deported Nationalities of the Soviet Union between 1937 and 1944

Nationality	Population	Timespan	Deported to
Koryo-Saram	172.000	September-October 1937	Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan
Poles	146.000	May 1936, September-November 1939	Kazakstan and Siberia
Fins	89.000	September 1941	Kazakhstan
Germans	850.000	September-October 1941	Kazakhstan and Siberia
Kalmyks	93.000	December 1943	Kazakhstan and Siberia
Karachais	69.000	November 1943	Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan
Chechens/Ingushs	474.000	February 1944	Kazakhstan and Kirgisia
Balkars	38.000	March 1944	Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan
Crimean Tatars	183.000	May 1944	Uzbekistan and Siberia
Greeks, Armenians, and Bulgarians	36.000	June 1944	Uzbekistan and the Republic of Mari
Meskhetian Turks	95.000	November 1944	Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan

source: Marie-Carin von Gumppenberg and Udo Steinbach, Zentralasien: Geschichte, Politik, Wirtschaft Ein Lexikon (2004), p.53.

Turks— Koreans are ahead in population with 172,934. In particular, the immigration program initiated by the State of Israel has played an essential role in the decline of the Jewish population over time. The purpose of the Jewish Agencies in Uzbekistan is to strengthen Jewish identity among Jews who are legally entitled to immigrate to Israel and to encourage them to resettle in Israel. In this context, the Jewish Agencies, in addition to being an Israeli-based organization, established a total of 4 mission offices during the USSR period (Cooper, 1998). Israel has accelerated the emigration of many people by implementing incentive programs to encourage Jews living in Central Asia to return to their homeland (Cooper, 1998). This paper's co-author, Dolunay Yusuf Baltürk, observed this situation during his visit to Jewish neighborhoods (Mahallai Sharq) in Samarkand. It is noteworthy that Tajiks now live in areas that Jews once inhabited. Tajiks who live in the region point out that many Jews have emigrated to Israel and have sold their own houses at a low price and left. At the same time, due to the increasing number of tourists coming to Samarkand, especially during the Shavkat Mirziyoyev era, many Jewish houses were converted into hotels or hostels. However, according to residents, Jews who have emigrated to Europe, the United States, or Israel return to their old neighborhoods on significant Jewish holidays and some national

Table 2: Ethnic Groups in Uzbekistan in January 2023

Minorities	**Population**
Tajiks	1,692,122
Kazakhs	824,368
Karakalpaks	763,788
Russians	711,892
Kyrgyzs	296,865
Turkmens	210,074
Tatars	185,064
Koreans	172,934
Ukrainians	67,013
Azerbaijanis	41,305
Meskhetian Turks[1]	34,620
Armenians	33,775
Gypsies	25,606
Belarusians	18,419
Jews	9,769
Moldovans	4,648
Germans	3,897
Georgians	3,371
Lithuanians	1,065
Estonians	533
Latvians	212
Others	345,164
Total	5,446,504

Source: Data obtained through the petition by the State Statistics Committee of Samarkand on January 4, 2023.

holidays.

In a similar way to the Jews, many Meskhetian Turks have emigrated from Uzbekistan to various countries. However, the Fergana events triggered the migration process of the Meskhetian Turks. In other words, the events in Fergana have not only had an impact on the migration process of the Meskhetian Turks but have also caused anxiety among other minorities. For example, while Uzbeks were reluctant to raise these issues, Koreans living in Samarkand were very concerned about the events in Fergana. They (the Uzbeks) have even said that it is too dangerous to talk about these issues at all. When such issues are discussed, this creates 'security concerns' among the local population.

In contrast to these two ethnic groups, the Meskhetian Turks and the Jews, the Koreans who live in Uzbekistan are integrated into Uzbek society. There are also people in the Korean community who have emigrated to South Korea. However, these migrations are voluntary. In addition, some of the Koreans living in the region do not speak their mother tongue. In this regard, Choi Larisa, the Vice-chairperson of the Korean National Cultural Centre in Samarkand, explained that she was born during the Soviet Union and

did not speak Korean because the dominant language was Russian. She stated that this was not a big problem for her, but she had some difficulties when she traveled to South Korea (C. Larisa, personal communication, March 5, 2023).

National and Cultural Centers

National and Cultural Centers in Uzbekistan emerged at the end of the 1980s in the process of perestroika (restructuring) and glasnost (openness) policies in the era of Mikhail Gorbachev. Consequently, 12 National and Cultural Centers in Uzbekistan were founded in 1989, which rose to 90 at the end of the 1990s. In Uzbekistan, over 130 National and Cultural Centers were established by 2009 as part of the democratization process. Most of these centers were founded after the interdependence of Uzbekistan in 1990 ("O'zbekiston Respublikasi Fanlar Akademiyasi," 2009, p. 129). At present, there are 141 National and Cultural Centers in Uzbekistan at three levels: republican, regional, and local. The first National and Cultural Centers were founded by Koreans, Kazakhs, Jews, and Armenians in 1989 during democratic reforms in the Soviet Union (Turayeva, 2022).

National and Cultural Centers in Uzbekistan serve to fulfill the cultural needs of the different ethnic groups living in the country, which aims to develop the cultural, spiritual, and traditional life of the minority groups and promote integration into the leading society. Moreover, these centers will contribute to the participation of these minority groups in Uzbekistan's social, spiritual, and educational life. On the other hand, Uzbekistani ethnic groups would strengthen their national identity through these National and Cultural Centers. Because of the consideration of National and Cultural Centers as 'nationalistic and national identity fostering' in the Soviet era, it was hard to implement such an organization at that time ("O'zbekiston Respublikasi Fanlar Akademiyasi," 2009, p. 129)

National and Cultural Centers must contribute to the following three points: Firstly, they must serve to improve the language, culture, and customs of Uzbekistan living national minority groups and to support strengthening the ties to their historical homeland (Turkey, Korea, Israel). Secondly, they should serve Uzbekistan voluntarily and consider it their homeland. Thirdly, they should show love to Uzbekistan's culture, history, and language, and further, they should live in friendly coexistence with the Uzbekistani leading society ("O'zbekiston Respublikasi Fanlar Akademiyasi," 2009, pp. 129-130).

The International Cultural Center (Baynalmilal Madaniyat Markazi) was founded on January 13, 1992, in Tashkent as an independent institution to support national and ethnic groups in their spiritual, linguistic, and cultural life ("Respublika Baynalmilal Madaniyat Markazi," 1992). This center aims to protect the national, cultural, spiritual,

and linguistic needs of all ethnic groups on Uzbekistani soil and to bolster their customs and rituals. Moreover, this International Cultural Center supports and controls various National and Cultural Centers founded by ethnic groups, so they try to satisfy their needs ("Respublika Baynalmilal Madaniyat Markazi," 1992).

In Samarkand, 'city day' ("Samarqand shahri kuni", 1996) was created on October 18, 1996, which is celebrated annually through the participation of the ethnic groups living there. Baltürk, the co-author of this article, took part in celebrations of the Samarkand City Day on October 18, 2022, and observed that the national minority groups such as Russians, Meskhetian Turks, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Polish, Germans, Kazan Tatars, Koryo-Saram, and Jews have participated in these events. Consequently, they have organized exhibitions where they introduce their traditions, customs, and foods. Furthermore, Baltürk observed that they made national dance shows to the public. For instance, young Polish girls put on an excellent dance show. Within this context, he has found out that these celebrations have the capability to contribute to the cooperation and solidarity between the ethnic groups and leading Uzbekistan society.

Minority Rights in Legal Documents

Articles 4, 8 and 18 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan guarantee the rights of the ethnic groups residing on its territory. Article 4 states: 'The Republic of Uzbekistan shall ensure a respectful attitude toward the languages, customs and traditions of all nationalities and ethnic groups living on its territory, and create the conditions necessary for their development' ("Constitution of Uzbekistan," Article 4). Article 8 states: 'All citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan, regardless of their nationality, constitute the people of Uzbekistan' ("Constitution of Uzbekistan," Article, 8). Article 18 recognizes and celebrates this vital fact as follows: 'All citizens of the Republic of Uzbekistan shall have equal rights and freedoms, and shall be equal before the law, without discrimination by sex, race, nationality, language, religion, social origin, convictions, individual and social status' ("Constitution of Uzbekistan," Article, 18).

Under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan proposed an action plan for 2017 and 2021 to strengthen interethnic communication emphatically. Mirziyoyev issued a presidential decree on May 19, 2017, to develop interethnic ties and foster relations between Uzbekistan and foreign countries ("Millatlararo munosabatlar va xorijiy mamlakatlar," 2017). According to this decree, 'The Committee of International Relations and Friendship with Foreign Countries' was established within the framework of the International Cultural Center. The Uzbekistan administration intended to support National and Cultural Centers and foster cooperation between these cultural centers and state institutions through this instrument. Consequently, Babur Park in Tashkent was renamed the 'Park of Friendship' in 2017, and there is a statue of the Shomahmudov

family in the middle of the park that adopted orphan children during World War II. One year later, this statue was installed on the square of the 'Friendship of the Peoples' ("Toshkentda "Shomahmudovlar oilasi" haykali," 2018).

Uzbekistan's government makes enormous efforts to integrate minority groups into the leading society through annual celebration activities within the framework of the following mottos: 'We are the children of the same family' and 'Uzbekistan is our common home'. Moreover, the minority groups celebrate their national feasts, such as Maslenitsa (Russians), Sayil (Uyghurs), and Soller (Koreans). Furthermore, National and Cultural Centers would like to participate in the celebration of Uzbek national feasts such as Independence Day, Nawroz Day, and International Women's Day (Jo'rayev and Zamanov, 2018).

Meskethian Turks

Presently, in Uzbekistan, live nearly 35.000 Meskhetian Turks, from which a total figure of 17.000 are residents of the capital city of Tashkent. Since 1991, approximately 200.000 Meskhetian Turks emigrated to Turkey. In addition, according to Ömer Salman, the Chairman of the National and Cultural Center of the Meskhetian Turks in Uzbekistan, approximately 236,000 Meskhetian Turks migrated to countries such as Russia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, and Kazakhstan in the aftermath of the Fergana events in 1989 (O. Salman, personal communication, September 5, 2022). According to Resul Yalcin (2002), at the end of 1996, there were approximately 15.000 Meskhetian Turks in Uzbekistan.

Fifty percent of this minority group works in the textile sector. On the other hand, due to the farming and cattle-breeding activities as a means of living, Meskethian Turks have registered a low percentage unemployment rate compared to the other minority groups of Uzbekistan. Consequently, they sell the products earned from these activities for living expenses. In other words, Meskethian Turks had different family income sources, leading to a low unemployment rate. The fact is that unemployment is a countrywide problem in Uzbekistan. Therefore, it concerns not only Meskethian Turks but also other minority groups. This issue of unemployment is related to the underdeveloped nature of the Uzbekistani economy (O. Salman, personal communication, September 5, 2022). Registering a low unemployment rate among Meskethian Turks has also been pointed out by Randir Yashaevich, the Chairman of the National and Cultural Center of Meskhetian Turks in Samarkand (R. Yashaevich, personal communication, September 12, 2022).

In the nation-building process, Meskhetian Turks faced no direct discrimination from the state administration and society. In Uzbekistan, some initiative groups in 1991 started to act in the following year. There were no bureaucratic obstacles to registering these national and cultural associations. As of 1997, civil society associations began to

operate at the national level, and they became immediately apparent in the Uzbekistani society. On the other hand, the Karimov administration has opposed holding Uzbekistani citizenship by the reemigrated minority groups to the country who stayed for a couple of years abroad. These people want to regain Uzbekistani citizenship, so they should only get a provisional residence permit. However, at the beginning of the era of Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the people who lived abroad and returned to their country and intended to get Uzbekistani citizenship regained this status immediately. Most of these folks were Meskethian Turks. Thus, under these circumstances, nearly 1.000 Meskhetian Turks regained Uzbekistani citizenship (O. Salman, personal communication, September 5, 2022).

According to Ömer Salman, at the beginning of 1990, Meskhetian Turks did not face harsh discrimination in their social life except for events in Fergana Valley. Within this context, it can be stressed that even during this pogrom, Meskhetian Turks had no problems with the other minority groups, such as Jews and Koreans. This means that other minorities had no reason to confront the Meskhetian Turks. If Uzbek people met Meskhetian Turks at events such as weddings or funeral ceremonies, Uzbeks asked Meskhetian Turks why they had not left Uzbekistan already. On the other hand, some attacks were directed against Meskethian Turks. One Uzbek tried to attack a Meskethian family in the city of Guliston in 1994 by driving his tractor against the house of this family. As the house owner could not stop the aggressor, he was forced to shoot him. After that, the aggressor and the other aiding and abetting men were captured by the police and they were brought to court. Due to the support of Uzbekistani President Karimov, this Meskhetian Turk was spared punishment.

Moreover, Uzbek elites felt instead attracted to this attacked Meskhetian family. In other words, many Uzbeks supported emphatically attacked Meskhetian Turks. Because from their point of view, Uzbeks and Meskhetian Turks have the same ancestry. Thus, they have considered this attack as directed to themselves. Although there were some other attacks caused by militant Uzbeks against the Meskhetian Turks between 1989 and 1994, Meskhetian Turks did not face any discrimination either from the Uzbekistani people or state bureaucracy. Salman (personal communication, September 5, 2022) said that they did not hear any reports on discrimination against Meskhetian children in educational institutions such as schools and universities. He stated further that other minorities, such as Germans, Koreans, and Jews, were not involved in the events in Fergana Valley. He even indicated that no interethnic tensions could be noticed presently in Uzbekistan.

The fact is that the rights of all ethnic minorities in Uzbekistan have improved immensely under the Mirziyoyev administration compared to his predecessor, Karimov. In 2017, the Uzbekistani state decided to intensify its contacts with its ethnic minorities.

Thus, the Uzbekistani government showed its determination to support the ethnic minorities and give more attention to their needs to strengthen stability and solidarity among the people. Uzbekistan's government also started to support the registered association of the ethnic groups. For instance, for the first time in the country's history, the state has begun to pay a symbolic salary to the chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of the National and Cultural Centers. As a result of this implementation, chairpersons of these cultural associations receive 2 million som, and vice-chairpersons 1.5 million som.

Moreover, the Uzbekistani government gives financial support to the National and Cultural Centers on a project basis. For instance, Salman (personal communication, September 5, 2022) said they would become 416 $ for accepted projects from the state in 2022. He further stated that every National and Cultural Center has this financial aid if they provide projects that should be implemented countrywide. So, the National Cultural Center of the Meskhetian Turks proposed some projects focusing on introducing Turkish poets, novelists, and writers such as Mehmet Akif Ersoy to the public.

The National and Cultural Centers of the Meskhetian Turks sometimes must give humanitarian support to those in severe situations. As Salman (personal communication, September 5, 2022) said, his organization bolstered Kyrgyzstani Uzbeks with humanitarian aid as they migrated to Uzbekistan, namely to Andijan, in 2013. So, they delivered one truck full of clothes and medicines for the migrants from Kyrgyzstan. In this context, it can be stressed that Meskhetian Turks show a determined willingness to cooperate with the Uzbekistani government led by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev (O. Salman, personal communication, September 5, 2022). For instance, an accident happened in a hydroelectric power plant in the Surkhandarya region in April 2020, which caused approximately seven thousand people to become homeless, and more than 20 towns and villages overflowed ("Sardoba barajının patlamasının," 2020). The association of Meskhetian Turks supported victims (700 families) of this natural disaster with humanitarian aid. Salman (personal communication, September 5, 2022) stated that his organization cooperated with the other national cultural centers by declaring their readiness to support the victims. However, he stressed that the National and Cultural Center of Meskhetian Turks did not cooperate with Jews and the other minorities of Uzbekistan. In the aftermath of the Fergana events against Meskhetian Turks, football fanatics attacked this time Jewish people in Andican in 1990. However, Grigoriy Olvovski (personal communication, September 12, 2022) commented on these attacks and interpreted this issue as not being sure whether these events in Andijon have an antisemitic character. He sees them instead as a sign of hooliganism. However, Olvovski indicated that in 1990, in Andijon, there were organized pogroms against some small ethnic groups. These verbal attacks were not directed at the Jewish people. They had to do instead with the other non-Uzbek minorities. Although the Uzbeks attacked Meskhetian

Turks and Jews, they were afraid to speak about the events in Fergana Valley. Salman (personal communication, September 5, 2022) said that Uzbeks demonstrated in 1989 under the motto 'Russians to Ryazan and Tatars to Kazan' against other ethnic minorities such as Russians and Tatars, but this hostility in the end directed to the Meskhetian Turks. Yashaevich (personal communication, September 12, 2022) also stressed that his community did not experience discrimination in the era of Shavkat Mirziyoyev. He also stated that ethnic groups do not cooperate in any projects. Instead, they would like to strengthen their nationality and concentrate on their national issues.

Jews

Due to the continuing emigration from Central Asian countries to Israel in general and from Uzbekistan in particular in the last three decades, the figure of Jewish people in this country has decreased immensely. For instance, there were approximately 33 thousand Jews in Samarkand at the beginning of the 1990s, whereas in 2022, only 140 people of Jewish origin were in this city. Although there were severe restrictions against Jewish people in the Soviet era caused by the state authorities in the fields such as higher education, bureaucracy, the military-industrial complex, and special services, they could not face any discrimination by the men on the street in public life. The fact is that since the end of the 1980s, most of the Jewish people have left Uzbekistan because of political, economic, and religious reasons. However, in this framework, discrimination has played no essential role in emigrating the Jewish people from Uzbekistan at all.

According to Grigoriy Olvovski (personal communication, September 12, 2022), the Head of the National and Cultural Center of Jews in Samarkand, presently, there are approximately 12 thousand Jews in Uzbekistan. However, this data does not fit with that of the State Statistics Committee of Samarkand. Olvovski indicated that in the Uzbekistani capital city, Tashkent, nine thousand Jewish people live. In other words, most of these people reside in Tashkent. From Olvovski's point of view, one can meet Jewish people in the following cities and towns: Samarkand (140), Bukhara (520), Navoi (27), and Fergana (140). As stated by Olvovski, there are no Jews in the other regions of Uzbekistan. On the other hand, the data from the State Statistics Committee in Samarkand shows that 9,769 Jews lived in Uzbekistan in January 2023. As Olvovski mentioned, the figure is different from that of the State Statistics Committee.

In Olvovski's point of view, presently, the Jewish minority does not face any significant problems in public life in Uzbekistan, either in theory or in practice. That means they have no restrictions in enjoying their civil and political rights and freedoms. Regarding the nature of interethnic relations between Jews and other nationalities, Olvovski (personal communication, September 12, 2022) has stated:

We could not face any interethnic conflicts in Uzbekistan. Among ethnic groups, there have never been disagreements on important issues. As somebody who has been living his whole life in Samarkand, I can say that we could not experience any interference in our religious, cultural, and societal life by the Uzbekistani state.

Olvovski further pointed out that the National and Cultural Centers by the minorities cannot help each other financially; they supported each other instead in a spiritual manner. For instance, he stated that as Meskhetian Turks came to Samarkand in the aftermath of the events in Fergana Valley, they helped them by guiding the government offices. Olvovski (personal communication, September 12, 2022) expressed his thoughts about Meskhetian Turks and the Uzbek state in the following words:

We hold good neighborhood ties with all other minority groups and Meskethian Turks as well. The relations between our community and the Uzbekistani state nowadays seem very well compared with the past decades. At least, Uzbekistani state no longer suspects the minority groups living in the country. For instance, in the past decades, it was not easy to give an interview to foreign journalists or academics. Due to the liberalized atmosphere in Uzbekistani politics and society, we (ethnic groups) feel comfortable at present in Uzbekistan.

Olvovski thinks that National and Cultural Centers act according to the written rights and duties in the Uzbekistan Constitution. 144 National Cultural Centers in Uzbekistan are on equal terms with each other. Uzbekistan's Constitution, state practice, and legislative rules contribute to interethnic communication, tolerance, and freedom in Uzbekistan's society (G. Olvovski, personal communication, September 12, 202 2).

Koryo-Saram

Table 1 indicates that the Soviet government deported 172,000 Koreans to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan in 1937. On the other hand, according to Resul Yalcin (2002), there were 200,000 Koryo-Saram in Uzbekistan in 1997. Contrary to this figure, a total of 133,584 Koryo-Saram live in Uzbekistan. Followed by Tashkent, the second largest region is Fergana, where Koryo-Saram lives, which consists of cities such as Andijon, Fergana, and Namangan, with a total population of 10,433 (see. Tablo 3). Most of this ethnic group focuses on Tashkent city and Tashkent oblast. Koryo-Saram is very active in the country's politics, economy, education, and health care (V. Pak, personal communication, October 28, 2022).

On the question of whether Koryo-Saram faces problems in relation to their legal rights in Uzbekistan, the Chairman of the National and Cultural Center of Koryo-Saram in Tashkent, Viktor Pak (personal communication, October 28, 2022) commented on this issue as follows:

Table 3: The Population of Koryo-Saram in Uzbekistan

Oblasts	**Population**
The Republic of Karakalpakistan	5,609
Tashkent	96,916
Bukhora	1,394
Jizzakh	2,781
Novai	1,492
Samarkand	4,895
Harezm	3,743
Sırdarya	6,321
Andijon	2,520
Fergana	5,250
Namangan	2,663
Total	133,584

Source: State Statistics Committee of Samarkand, January 1, 2017.

Koryo-Saram can use all of their legal rights that are derived from the constitution of the country. I see no point in implementing the legal rights on the praxis; on the contrary, the Uzbekistani government recently created good terms and conditions for using our rights and focuses on fulfilling the duties and responsibilities of the National and Cultural Centers. Moreover, the Uzbekistani government strongly supports the activities of these National and Cultural Centers. The government established the Houses of Friendship and non-governmental organizations in regions.

Pak points out that interethnic communication among the National and Cultural Centers is limited to celebrating national holidays. Besides that, all national and cultural centers must also participate in Uzbekistani national holidays. Uzbekistan has no tradition of cooperating with minority groups about economic and social issues. Consequently, the National and Cultural Center of Koryo-Saram did not conduct any project with Turks and Jews. Pak (personal communication, October 28, 2022) further said there are no problems among ethnic groups living in Uzbekistan, and he stressed the following points regarding this issue: 'multinationality is one of the eminent characteristics of the Uzbekistani state. All ethnic groups living within the borders of this country build one united society'.

Article 4 of the Constitution of Uzbekistan guarantees the national, linguistic, and traditional rights of the ethnic minorities. In Uzbekistan, Uzbek, Karakalpak, Russian, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Turkmen, and Tajik contribute as a language of instruction ("O'zbekistonda 144-ta muassasada qozoq," 2022). These languages are compulsorily used in secondary education. For instance, 144 educational institutions in the country provide education in Kazakh according to the 2021-2022 data of the Uzbekistani State Statistical Institute ("O'zbekistonda 144-ta muassasada qozoq," 2022). There are also private language schools in Uzbekistan where one can learn Korean. Moreover, the

Korean language is scheduled for instruction at various educational institutions, such as Nizami Pedagogical University in Tashkent (V. Pak, personal communication, October 28, 2022). Under the presidency of Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan prioritized democratization, integration of ethnic groups in the leading society, and reform process of state and politics. These circumstances led to the democratic participation of Koryo-Saram in Uzbekistani's main society. This gave birth to a number of influential elites in society and politics among Koryo-Saram, such as Oleg Kogay, Alexey Kim, and Vladimir Kim (V. Pak, personal communication, October 28, 2022).

The Chairman of the National and Cultural Center of Koryo-Saram, Vyacheslav Valentinovich (personal communication, October 18, 2022), in Samarkand, pointed out that the interactions among the national and cultural centers are limited only to the official visits on holidays of ethnic groups and as well as to of national celebrations. According to Valentinovich, about 100 persons participated in the association of the Koryo-Saram activities in the Samarkand branch during the 'city day' celebration. He stated that the population of Koryo-Saram in Samarkand decreases as many emigrate to South Korea to improve their living standards. Moreover, the easy visa regulations between Uzbekistan and South Korea catalyze the emigration to South Korea. Although the National and Cultural Center of Koryo-Saram in Samarkand applied for Korean teachers from Seul, they did not arrive in Uzbekistan. On the other hand, in big cities such as Tashkent and Samarkand, there are private Korean language courses where Uzbekistani youth can learn this language. Korean National Center is supported by wealthy Korean businessmen operating in Uzbekistan. This association sometimes tries to give humanitarian aid to the armed people in Samarkand (V. Valentinovich, personal communication, October 18, 2022).

As it was determined in the field study, while most of the youth of Meskhetian Turks desire to continue their education in Turkey, the Korean youth's tendency towards this direction does not compel attention. On the contrary, university education in South Korea is prevalent among Uzbekistani young people. For example, encountering Korean courses and companies that provide consultancy services for Korean universities in Tashkent and Samarkand at every step reveals this situation.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the social interactions of Meskhetian Turks with other minorities, such as Korean and Jewish people in Uzbekistan, from a comparative perspective regarding their political, economic, and interethnic situation in this country. Although Meskhetian Turks and Jews experienced severe attacks in Fergana Valley by the agitated Uzbeks in the end phase of the Soviet Union, Koryo-Saram was not aimed at acting such attacks. In this context, life in Uzbekistan was uncomfortable, especially for

Meskhetian Turks, so they migrated to the surrounding states, such as Kazakstan and the Russian Federation. However, the Uzbekistani government has tried to create a friendly atmosphere in the country in the post-1991 era to avoid ethnic tensions. Because of the fear that ethnic conflicts could endanger the stability and solidarity of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov has supported the minority groups attacked by the Uzbeks, as in the case of the Guliston attack in 1994. On the other hand, in the Karimov era (1991-2016), the ethnic groups in the country were suspected by the Uzbekistani state because of their 'otherness'. Nevertheless, on the contrary, in the Mirziyoyev era (2016- today), the state gave many rights to the ethnic groups so that they did not feel disadvantaged in the social and political life of the country. Within this context, the National and Cultural Centers started to function correctly compared with their condition in the past. These developments signify the integration of ethnic groups into the democratic process in the country.

For the interethnic communication, we would like to make the following comment: All the interviewed chairpersons of the national cultural centers pointed out that they have not experienced any discrimination by the Uzbekistani government. In Uzbekistan, there were nearly no tensions among the ethnic groups considered dangerous for the country's security and peace. As mentioned above, ethnic tensions were registered only between one definite ethnic group and titular nation, the Uzbeks, in the case of Fergana Valley events.

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India – Turkish World Cultural Relations: History, Heritage and Possibilities

Prof. Dr. Akhlaque A. 'Ahan'

Abstract:

Indian Sub-continent and Khorasan e Bozorg which includes Uzbekistan, Central Asia and parts of the region, has been the cradle of civilization of this part of world, and produced great scholars, poets, Sufis and writers. Both the regions have been connected since the ancient period and exchanged cultural traits and trends and influenced each other. Ever since Timurid rulers converted Herat as the hub of knowledge and cultural activities, scholars and seekers of knowledge and enlightenment flocked to this place and to interact with the greats like Mawlana Jami, Amir Ali Sher Nawai and others. Among Indian scholars who came in contact with Nawai and others were from the kingdoms of Sarqi at Jaunpur, Lodhis at Delhi, Bahmanis from Deccan, and among the individuals the names of Shaikh Jamali, Mahmood Gawan, Shaikh Sadruddin and Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism may especially be mentioned. Besides this, Amir Sher Nawai was also one of the admirers and followers of Amir Khusraw, which is reflected through his writings. Earlier great scholars like Alberuni had contributed to the connect and mutual appreciation.

Key Words: *Indian Sub-continent, Khorasan e Bozorg, Uzbekistan, Central Asia, Amir Ali Sher Nawai, Timurid rulers, Mawlana Jami, Sarqi of Jaunpur, Lodhis of Delhi, Bahmanis of Deccan, Shaikh Jamali, Mahmood Gawan, Shaikh Sadruddin, Guru Nanak, Amir Khusraw.*

India – Turkish Cultural Relation: History, Heritage and Possibilities[2]

ز فرق و امتیاز کعبه و دیرم چه میپرسی
اسیر عشق بودم هر چه پیش آمد پرستیدم
بیدل

Why do you ask the one who does not care the difference between one and the other shrine, as I have always been besotted of love, and whatsoever encountered, I fell for.
Mirza Abdul Qadir 'Bedil'

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The details could be seen in the forthcoming book of the author on the subject[1]

The details could be seen in the forthcoming book of the author on the subject[2]

Since the ancient period, Khorasan e Bozorg which includes Uzbekistan, Central Asia and parts of Indian Sub-continent, has been the cradle of civilization of this part of world, and produced great scholars, poets, Sufis and writers. Before the notion of nation-state i.e. a colonial and western concept which accurately does not suite to the epistemic background of our part of world. The major part of this cultural region falls in the contemporary Uzbekistan or in its neighbourhood. India and Uzbekistan are the countries or regions, historically having the most intimate relations and therefore the two nations share many socio-cultural, and historical events unfolding throughout the history. Almost all the rulers of mediaeval India including Saltanat and Timurid era came from Central Asia. This migration happened because of the age old common borders and interchanging territories since ancient period.

Both the countries share common heritage and the soft power. Silk Route also passes through the same region. This term (Silk Route) though was first used by Ferdinand von Richthofen, who had termed the Trans-Asian overland networks as the "Silk Route" or "Silk Road" in the late nineteenth Century, which includes various primary arteries and secondary capillaries used for a range of commercial and cultural exchanges, including the diffusion of different religious and socio-cultural ideas, trends and traits including Sufism from the boarders of Europe to Eastern Asia, encompassing Central and South Asia. Roughly, this road extends from Rome to China which includes western and eastern Central Asia i.e. modern day's newly independent republics which were formerly known as Soviet Turkistan and adjoining regions which also connects North Western portions of Indian sub-continent. These routes though sometime not well defined or fixed roads were utilized for spiritual and religious interaction, cultural relations, commercial exchanges and political and military expansion. Therefore, though Silk Road commonly linked with sumptuous exchanges of commercial commodities in the region but its cultural, historical and socio-political importance has been equally significant throughout the ages; thus looking at the relevance of multi-lateral cultural and philosophical exchanges and its impact and legacy in historical context will be enlightening.

I would just highlight a few connecting points and shared soft power of both India and Uzbekistan, and aim to put into perspective the dynamics of the Indo- Uzbekistan historical, cultural and civilizational relation vis a vis the contemporary realities and to provide a realistic assessment of its importance from Indo- Uzbek's point of view. In today's context there are many common cultural symbols of Indo-Uzbekistan relation and the waves of civilizational mingling and historical interaction. To say for instance:

During ancient period Buddhism became popular in Central Asia, and probably replaced the older traditions and faiths like Mitraism and Zorashrianism. Later, its influence could be traced in the movements like Manism and Mazdakism in Persia (Zoroastrianism was declared as the state religion of Persia in 224AD). It is interesting to note that the great

cultural hub Bukhara, derives its name from Vihara (the monastery of Budhism). This also shows the role of Bukhara in the propagation of Budhism in Central and East Asia during ancient period.

There has been deep and engaging linguistic and literary interactions throughout the history between Indian sub-continent and Central Asia, which could be traced in Indo-Aryan Languages, the translation of Panchtantra (as Kartak wa Damnak or Kalila wa Dimna), the lone Uzbeki-Chaghatai words in India languages, thousands of manuscripts on the subjects and topics of common cultural and literary heritage especially to mention Amir Khusraw, Babur, Amir Alisher Nawai, Mirza Kamran, Abdur Rahim Khanekhanan, Mirza Bedil, Mirza Ghalib etc. in the oriental libraries of both countries, translation of books, poetry etc. The legends of Mahmood Pehalwan of Khiwa, Qabristan e Hindi of Bukhara, Indian traders especially from Gujarat and Rajasthan visiting bazars of Samarqand and Bukhara, Taj Mahal and contribution of Indian artisans bear fascinating stories, recounts the vibrant cultural relations throughout the ages.

Abu Rehan Al Biruni is one of the rarest prodigious minds of all time, a great writer, astronomer, scientist and Indologist, Al Biruni's writings, researches, innovations and perceptions has been beacon for the whole academic world for over a thousand years, but the greatest and most interesting aspect of his works is his incisive and deep perception about the cultural, geographical, philosophical and social contours of Indian sub-continent especially Brahminical traditions. His writings and revelation are considered to be the first which gives the real esoteric state of Indian culture and traditions, beliefs and customs and its different positive as well as the deleterious aspects.

Al Biruni, instinctively acquired an analytical mind and was irresistibly enticed to the disciplines of knowledge which suited to his disposition and areas of academic and research interest, and probably his innate leaning towards synthetic and analytical tendencies, he was first attracted to Mathematics and astronomy. It was probably one of reasons why he also got interested to study the contribution by Indian scholars to sciences and other knowledge tradition. Therefore, he decided to visit the country, and became the pioneer scholar of Indology and comparative traditions. Probably his first exposure and opportunity to learn Indian dialects or Sanskrit language happened when he encountered some Persian knowing Indian resident of Ghazna during his stay in Kabul during 1018-20 AD. This possibility is substantiated by his own statements in *Tahqiq ma lil-Hind (Indica)*.

Generally, till the period of Al Biruni, mostly political and military history of a country or kingdom was written. In this regard, Tahqiq ma lil-Hind (Researches on India) appears to be an exception and deviation from this tradition where primarily cultural, scientific, social and religious tradition and history of India was written and recorded. Though before Al-Biruni, Greek and Chinese travelers (such as Megasthenes n 3rd c BC ,

Fa Hsien n early 5th c, HuenTsang, 5th c, I-Tsing n 7th c visited, but their accounts of Indian social and cultural life restricted to Buddhism, also may be because of the Buddhism being the most dominant and apparent religion and social order, (Arab travelers like Abu Zaid Hasan Sirafi 9th, Abu Dulaf 10th, Buzurg bn Shahryar early 10th, Masud 10th, Muqaddas 10th) but most of the writing including Arab travelers contains of erroneous account as mostly based on secondary sources or hearsay and probably had not access to the original sources, while Al Biruni had expertise in Sanskrit and according to Maulana Azad he travelled around ten years in Sind, Punjab and Kashmir.

Ulugh Begh

Ulugh Begh (1394 – 1449) was a Timurid Emperor as well as a great scholar of Astronomy and mathematics. We may also notice the evident influence of Ulugh Beg's writings and contribution in the field of Astronomy and astronomical architecture especially on Raja Sawai Jai Singh's book Jeech Muhammad Shahi and the observatories constructed in Jaipur and Delhi.

Rumi's Poetry and the Silk Route

The region of origin and emergence and influence of Mawlana Rumi was traditionally to a certain extent similar to the region of Buddhist expansion alongside the great arteries of the Northern and Southern Routes of the Indian subcontinent, the Old Road to Bactria, and passageways through the mountain valleys of northern Pakistan. Mawlana's spiritual and philosophical impact centers developed distinctive spiritual cultures and played central roles in trans-regional exchanges. Though, Rumi has now a global appeal but traditionally he lived, studied, traveled, interacted, worked and left his legacy within and around the Silk route region. It is also interesting to note that the Naqshbandi Sufis of India subscribed Maulana Rumi's Masnawi as the text book for their disciples and has been the most popular text among them. Similarly Rumi's Masnawi is also popular among many other mystic and religious traditions of India like Radha Swami Movement etc.

Naqshbandia Order

The establishment of Naqshbandi Silsila or order in Timurid India, which have its roots in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, and what kind of role the silsila played in establishing the historical, spiritual and cultural connect between the two regions during the Timurid period (i.e. 16th-19th century). Khwaja Baqi Billah earned his scholastic education at Samarqand, and he was initiated in the Naqshbandi order by a leading saint of Bukhara, who asked him to make India the centre of his work. Khwaja Baqi Billah came first to

Lahore, where he spent more than a year before moving to Delhi. Naqshbandi Shaikhs came to India with the Timurid conquests in the sixteenth century, and with this a new chapter in the history of the Naqshbandiyya began. More than any other Naqshbandi after Khwaja Baha'uddin of Bukhara, Hazrat Baqi Billah and his disciple Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi were the pivotal figures to redefine Sufism's role in society and elaborated Naqshbandi mystical exercises. The Naqshbandi Silsila was introduced in India by Khawaja Baqi Billah during the late years of Akbar Shah's reign. Khawaja Baqi Billah settled in Delhi, and was seventh in the line of succession from Khawaja Bahauddin Naqshband of Bukhara, the founder. He had received full training in the principles of the order under different Shaikhs and had widely travelled in Central Asia. Besides, he proved himself to be a great organiser, and within a short span of five years, he succeeded in establishing the Naqshbandi silsila firmly and since then it continued to spread over the region without any break. Khawaja Baqi Billah appointed Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi as his Khalifa who earned more renown than any of the other disciples in the propagation and establishment of the Naqshbandi Order in India, and also played a multifarious role in the religious, social and political domains. As a result the Naqshbandi order became the principal mystic discipline for nearly two hundred years (17th-18th c) and exercised a deep influence on the religious life of the Muslims of the sub-continent.

Amir Ali Shernawai

Amir Ali Shernawai has been one of great stars of the region, who at the same time was a poet of Uzbek and Persian, a competent administrator, musician, and a great scholar, who may rightly be called as Versatile Genius. Ever since Timurid rulers converted Herat as the hub of knowledge and cultural activities, scholars and seekers of knowledge and enlightenment flocked to this place and to interact with the greats like Mawlana Jami, Amir Ali Shernawai and others. Among Indian scholars who came in contact with Nawai and others were from the kingdoms of Sarqi at Jaunpur, Lodhis at Delhi, Bahmanis from Deccan, and among the individuals the names of Shaikh Jamali, Mahmood Gawan, Shaikh Sadruddin and Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism may especially be mentioned. Besides this, Amir Shernawai was also one of the admirers and followers of Amir Khusraw, which is reflected through his writings.

Persian-Hindi-Urdu poets of India

Some of the greatest Persian-Hindi-Urdu poets of India like Amir Khusraw, Abdur Rahim KhaneKhanan, Mirza Bedil and Mirza Ghalib's ancestors came from the region falls in the contemporary Uzbekistan. They were brought up entirely in the Indian socio-cultural environment and were ethnically Turks and having no literary background but

sons of soldiers who sacrificed their life on the battlefield. In spite of the fact that four centuries separate these poets, but still we find striking similarities among them. Though all these poets closely observed and were well aware of the changing socio-political situation of their period, but infact were Sufis by heart and by disposition and their poetry reveals of their profound understanding and experimentations of Sufi way. For instance Bedil follows Ibn e Arabi's doctrine of waḥdatul-wojood in illustrating how the universe, which is not distinct from the pre-eternal divine essence, comes into fermentation like wine and finally develops into man, yet he synthesises the philosophy of Advaita. It is therefore, his works comprising complex philosophical contents, are counted among the most cerebral mystical poems in Persian literature. He also deliberates upon certain Indian beliefs and practices, such as the transmigration of the soul, and the self-immolation of widows. In his long poems or masnawis, Bedil introduces many anecdotes from Indian sources, among which the romance of Kamadi and Madan has been studied in detail by Soviet scholars and repeatedly emulated by Tajik poets. Bedil is primarily important because he refined classical Persian and Indo-Persian poetry to suit the circumstances of the era in which he lived, and one finds in him the culmination of various tendencies in Indo-¬Persian poetry. His poetry is characterized by a restive effort to realise the paradox of existence. This feature of tedium imparts it a dynamism and also a universalism. Many are of the opinion that the proto-existentialist element in his poetry, is a forerunner of French existentialism. Enlightened approach towards life combined with an intense philosophical skepticism, a distinctive of his mysticism which had deep influence on his successors and followers like Ghalib and Iqbal and reflected in their refreshed reflection on Sufi themes relating to such as the origin of man, the creation of the world, and the relationship between God, the universe, and man. Modern poets and writers like Tagore, Premchand of India, and Zulfia, Rasul Hamzatov of Uzbekistan are mutually translated in both the countries.

To connect, revive and rejuvenate the age-old relation of the two countries the following could be observed and pursued by the two countries:

Re-connecting the Historical Link

- Both India and Uzbekistan being the cradle of the great civilizations and centres of knowledge and philosophical traditions since ancient period, with a rich culture, may harness it in strengthening relations with each other and countries of the region in tangible ways from its Soft Power. for instance:

Showcasing Culture

- There has always been mutual fondness for the cultural heritage in both countries.

This should be utilized to showcase, introduce and popularise various aspects of both cultures, like Languages and Literature, manuscripts in the oriental libraries, architecture, Knowledge Traditions especially philosophical traditions, Science,

Spirituality etc.

- Art, Music and Film, and how both countries have been the centres of variety of great art traditions

Tourism

- This is another less-explored aspect of both India and Uzbekistan. Hardly any country having such richness, abundance and charm of natural, historical and cultural heritage, beauty and grandeur which these two countries have, which should be widely introduced. The maps of the two countries are full of attractions, Incredulities, amazements, wonders as well as connecting points and places which needs to be promulgated.

Educational and Academic Interaction

- Educational and IT institutions, universities, research centres, colleges, schools of excellence should be introduced which would certainly be a source of economic as well as goodwill capital.
- Seminars, symposiums, talks should be arranged for a vibrant and mutual interactions.

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Studying Nagas of Kashmir: An Inquiry into Place Names

Afaq Aziz

Abstract

In Kashmir, Whether the name is from an inhabited or uninhabited place, the story of its origin is sometimes recorded in history and sometimes history remains silent. If history does not reveal place names, it is necessary to turn to the languages. In the remote past, the names used to be one-syllable. In each region, new tribes and languages were introduced, influencing the place names. New settlements and their names came into existence. The tone of the old names changed, and the name became more than one word. Therefore, revolutionary changes took place in the toponomy. In this light, this paper attempts to analyze the place names in Kashmir related to the pre-historic Naga era, on which no detailed research has been done so far. The paper is based on an examination of ancient historical texts from Kashmir, like Nilamata Purana and Rajatarangini, and is supplemented with interviews conducted by the author of this paper during field surveys.
Keywords: Kashmir, Nagas, Place Names, Nilamata Purana, Language, Rajatarangini

Introduction

Everything that exists in the world has a name. Trees, land, fruits, vegetables, flowers, herbs, mountains, fields, forests, Karewas, or anything else is not without a name. Streets, roads, highways, streams, springs, rivers, seas, lakes, ponds, buildings, and places also have names. If things did not have names, the world would seem deaf and dumb. Due to this, not only would there be difficulties in managing the world, but the administration of the world would be in chaos at every level. That is why names have played a key role in running the system.

A name can be a single word, compound, or more than two words. A study of the names reveals that there is a long history behind them. In order to explore history of names, experts have brought into existence the field of knowledge called Onomastics, which has two parts, anthroponmstic and toponomastic. Personal names and topographical names are studied in the anthropomorphic. Scholars have branched out the said subjects in order to advance qualitative research. If the names of the mountains are to be studied, the Department of Oronomy has been identified for it. Hydonymy has been designated for the study of names of roads and lanes. The names of streams, lakes, ponds, rivers, and seas are studied in Hydronmy. In microtoponymy, uninhabited places and in

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toponymy, inhabited places are studied. However, scholars are convinced that amongst all the branches of the Onomstics have an indispensable relationship. For this reason, their study is impossible without mutual support. George (1986) states: "Though such divisions are possible and useful up to a point, the different categories are usually studied together as they are inter-related and sometimes combined together" (p. 17).

The trans disciplinary research concept is neither too old nor too new. For the past six decades, this research has become the center of attention in general and for forty years in particular. Trans disciplinary research is most important in modern times. This method is considered standard and authentic in terms of several aspects of research. With this type of research, the researchers should be multilingual experts and have a reasonable knowledge of more than one subject. Then, the objectives for which trans disciplinary research is emphasized will be fulfilled. One of the great qualities of this research is that it explores all aspects of a problem. And its merits and demerits are distinguished. This paper attempts to analyze the place names in Kashmir related to the pre-historic Naga era, on which no detailed research has been done so far. The paper is based on an examination of ancient historical texts from Kashmir, like Nilamata Purana and Rajatarangini, and is supplemented with interviews conducted by the author of this paper during field surveys.

Importance of Place Names

There is a long story behind the names, in which historical and semi-historical elements are preserved. Uncovering what is preserved in these names is a very complex and difficult task, particularly in old place names. Place names help to remove the stigma from old monuments, reveal the migration of tribes in ancient times, and indicate ancient industry, trade, and craftsmanship. Geographical names and names of agricultural crops, plants, and flowers are memory of place names. They also provide information about different religions, beliefs, and customs, even revealing the stories of ancestors and myths related to them. By taking a critical and analytical assessment, the hidden story behind the place names can be revealed quickly. Place names are the living evidence of ancient languages, which help us to know the past. For example, many elements of the ancient subcontinent languages like Austric, Mandari, Dravidian and Pisacha appear in the place names of most Aryan languages. The place names witness when and what kind of phonetic change has occurred in the languages.

Principles of Studying Place Names

1. To explore the ancient form of the names and take their historical and linguistic evaluation.
2. Due to the non-availability of written evidence related to the names, we have to study the names of the tribes living in the respective settlements.

3. In the study of names, comparative literature and its analysis, which removes the mask from similar names, are very important. The sameness and basic relationship between the two languages is revealed. However, it is necessary to be familiar with the evolution of languages because there must be a change in the tone of the language from one place to another. It is also true that two people living in the same place pronounce the same word in different tones and manners.
4. The most important principle in the study is the speedy occurrence of linguistic shades in which words, consonants, vowels, prefixes, and suffixes play a significant role.
5. While studying the names, it is important to keep in mind the evolution of cultural history as well as the geographical situation of the area.

Linguistic Study of Place Names

Linguistics is a tool of study that brings out information that is impossible to find in ancient monuments and history. There are certain rules for studying place names. However, linguistic principles are more important. A good knowledge of phonetics, sound changes in language, and grammatical structure is also necessary for the study. The insertion of new letters, obsolescence of some letters in place names, and addition of prefixes and suffixes make the study more productive and interesting.

Place Names Structure

Place names have a lot of natural and cultural shades in which genetic, relational, material, physical, economic, religious, and political characteristics are particularly noteworthy. It is very difficult for the study to line up these diverse groups and evaluate them with a single research rod. That's why linguists have emphasized the study of phonetic principles, including structural aspects. Some experts give great importance to prefixes and suffixes in toponymy because they divide the analysis into two and sometimes three parts—for example, Nag+ar. Nag is the prefix, and 'ar' is the suffix, which means habitation or city. Simply, one part of the name describes the attributes and the other indicates the attribute location. This system of research and analysis has been named by experts as 'generics' and 'specifics'. The study of generic and specific elements is considered very useful. As far as generics are concerned, a good number of names are associated with it. If we talk about the specifics, the Encyclopedia of Britannica lists them as nine: descriptive, incidental, possessive, commemorative, euphemistic, manufactured, shift, and mistaken names, and the last one is designated as folk etymology (George, 1986).

A careful, in-depth study reveals that many place names have lost their meaning hundreds of years ago. Still, there are thousands of names, so an interesting story can be expected. As far as the topic at hand is concerned, it will focus only on research studies of place names. Attention will be given particularly to the origin of place names and their history. If it is possible to study history carefully, this writer will have to take the help of ancient sources and folk traditions. And sometimes, the old land records have to be analyzed. However, for ease of study, place names will in all cases be treated as generics and specifics.

Place Names in Kashmir

Whether the name is from an inhabited or uninhabited place, the story of its origin is sometimes recorded in history and sometimes history remains silent. If history does not reveal it, it is necessary to turn to the languages. In the remote past, the names used to be one-syllable. In each region, new tribes and languages were introduced, influencing the place names. New settlements and their names came into existence. The tone of the old names changed and the name became more than one word. Therefore, revolutionary changes took place in the toponomy. In this background, no formal research has been done on Kashmir place names related to the pre-historic Nag era.

Generally, the population of Kashmir knows that the 'spring' in the Kashmiri language is called 'Nag'. However, most people do not know that the word Nag is associated with the name of a place. Lexicographers believe that a word has more than one meaning. Some words have dozens of meanings in many languages of the world. The surprising thing is that the word 'nag' has been enshrined as a spring in the hearts of Kashmiris for thousands of years. But they have no conscious or unconscious knowledge of the association of the word Nag with the place names. There are several reasons for this. One of the main reasons is that the material that has come out about the Nagas mentioned them semi-humans, imaginary humans, poisonous snakes, dragons, barbarians, faithless, non-believers, and so on. It is certain that Nag tribes, along with their families, lived near springs. So, a person of the Nag tribe and the spring had a close relationship. Wherever there was a spring, Nag tribes used to live near it. In the same way, when the population around water reservoirs, including springs, would have increased, the Nagas turned to those foothills, valleys, and Kerawas where there were no springs. Some of the Naga tribes would have moved to Kashmir's upper and forest regions to save their ancestral religion, Nagmat, even when Buddhism knocked on their doors in the third century B.C.

It is not a presumption but a reality that Nag tribes and the places have been amalgamated in such a way that their separate identification has become more difficult. But a careful critical analysis concluded that most of the springs where the Nag chieftains

used to be abode, known by the name of the head of one or the other Nag clan, elder, chief or minor and major Nag raja. Then, it can be said without any doubt that these Nagas made the early settlements of Kashmir. Viyogi (2002) wrote: "There are several towns in Kashmir having their names after some Nagas, such as Ver Nag, Anant Nag, Shesh Nag, etc." (p. 19). These Nagas were considered among the chiefs of the Naga clan (The Nilamata Purana, 1973). The Nilamata Purana mentions some Nagas with particularity, which perhaps indicated that such Nagas were kings or chiefs of tribes living in small settlements. Bhatt (2008) asserts:

Mention of Naga Kings Nile, Vasuki as the most important ones indicate nagas hamlets being grouped under a king. The Nile and Vasuki must have been controlling larger groups of hamlets and their own hamlets must be fairly large to enable to exert influence over other hamlets (p. 226).

Exploring and studying the ancient literary sources of Kashmir, including Sanskrit, Persian and Kashmiri, reveals hundreds of names associated with many things as well as humans and places. However, here, first of all, the names mentioned in Nilamata Purana will be discussed. The Nile, himself, was a preacher of Nagmat. The study shows that Nile was the first great king of the Nagas of Kashmir in his timeline. He was as reliable, dignified and respected King as Karkotak Nag, the King of Nepal, was considered to be at that time (Viyogi, 2002). If these names are seen from the mirror of generics and specifics, then the word Nag is generic, and the Nile is specific. The generics are usually considerable elements and specifics are adjectival elements; hence, the structure of the languages justified this kind of prefix-suffix position.

There are more than five hundred names in the Nilamata Purana that do not seem right to suspect snakes. The proof of this is found in the discussion that took place between Janamejaya and Vaisampayana Janamejaya asked Vaisampayana that 'the instructions which King Gunanda of Kashmir heard from Brhadasva and which he had to follow. Tell what the Raja said in response' (The Nilamata Purana, 1973:231). Vaisampayana replied that the Raja of Kashmir told Brhadasva, 'Tell me the names of the Nagas who especially inhabit Kashmir. I want to hear and know about them' (The Nilamata Purana, 1973:231). After this, Brhadasva tells the Raja Gunanda the names of hundreds of Nagas who lived in Kashmir at that time. If the Nagas really would have been snakes, with whom did Janamejaya, Vaisampayana, Gunanda, and Brhadasva talk? According to the famous Nag expert and well-known medical officer of the British Army, (Oldham, 1905): "Nagas were not savage and aboriginal tribes, but a civilized people who had cities and castles" (pp. 31-32). (Oldham, 1905) further opines: "not only were the Asuras or Nagas a civilized people, but were a maritime power" (p. 58).

Moreover, in the month of Kartik , 252 B.C, when a Buddhist monk, Madyantika, reached Kashmir to spread Buddhism, he thoroughly discussed the basic principles and

values of the Buddha faith with the Nag scholars, including the Nag king of Kashmir Aravāla. After much debate and discussion, eighty-four thousand Nagas accepted Buddhist doctrine (The Mahavamsa, 1912). As soon as the Kashmiris converted to Buddhism, Madinthika immediately urged them to abandon traditional dress and adopt a Buddhist dress code such as yellow robes (The Mahavamsa, 1912). Not only this but it is also recorded in the Mahavamsa that the entire Kashmir was glowing with the application of the yellow robes of the Buddhist dress code (The Mahavamsa, 1912).

If the Kashmiri Nagas who converted to Buddhism were snakes, in what language did Madyantika converse with them? It is also worth noting what the need to argue with animals was. The surprising thing is that even after applying the new dress code, if the first and ancient people of Kashmir, the Nagas, are recognized as snakes, in today's scientific age, it can only be interpreted as bankruptcy of intellect, mind, logic and reason. Anyhow, a good number of names are listed in the Nilamat Puran, but very few have been identified by scholars like Hargopal Kaul Khasta, Charles Bates, A. Cunningham, and M. A. Stein. Interestingly, the identified names are associated with Inhabited and uninhabited places (The Nilamata Purana, 1973: 38-41).

Keeping the readers' and scholars' interests in mind, there is room for further discussion on these entries, but some light shall be thrown on a few names that do not exist at the place of identification. Such names have either been destroyed or changed, or their identity has been mistaken. There is also the scope for clarification and increasing information on the existing names. For example, the 'Ailapatra-naga' is localized by the identifiers in Nowshar Srinagar, and the 'Akshpal-nag' is the modern Achwal-nag in Anantnag. Similarly, the 'Bahrupa' has been identified as Bëru in district Badgöm, and the 'Bhima-devi' as the Brain village in the east of Dal Lake Srinagar. Likewise, the 'Chakra-dhara-tertha' was marked as the present-day 'Tsukdar/Sakdhar Veder' in Yach-brour tehsil of Anantnag and the name Devasara' with the town of Devsar in Kulgöm district. In addition, the present 'Kothir' village of Kothār area in Anantnag is the changing shape of 'Kapates-vara'. Equally, the Nārāyana-sthāna has been identified with the 'Narastān' village of Tral tehsil in district Pùlvöm, while the 'Panchasta' was related to the present 'Pānzath' of Kulgöm district. By the same token, the term 'Pöskara' was recognized with the 'Pöshkar' village in Khāg tehsil of district Badgöm and the 'Sudora-nag' was confessed with the habitation of 'Sadrbal' near Hazratbal Srinagar.

The first name on the list is 'Ailapatr-nag'. This name has been identified by M. A. Stein as being close to Vitsar-nag Srinagar (The Nilamata Purana, 1973: 38). However, during my field survey and interaction with older people on September 13, 2022, no Ailapatr-nag was found at Vitsar-nag or in its neighborhood. Instead of Ailapatr-nag, there is Dod-pokher-nag in Puj-Mohall, Nowsher, Srinagar, as reported by the 80-year-old Ab. Gani Ganaye . On October 25, 2022, I visited the area again and met some elderly locals at

Sofi Mohall, Nowsher. Among them Ab. Aziz Sofi said:

"In my childhood, there were 21 springs at Nowsher. A canal twenty-five feet wide used to irrigate the paddy fields came from Ganderbal via Nagbal, Pāndach, Ahmednagar and entered Khushāl-sar near Púj Mohll of Nowsher Payën—the water of the twenty-one springs used to enter into this stream. Due to the negligence of the government, people filled the springs and canal with soil, stones, and mud and erected various types of constructions on them, including residential houses. Thus, all the other springs except Vitsār-nāg disappeared. You are seeing that the Vitsār-nāg also is in very bad condition".

Sofi further remembered a few names of the disappeared springs like 'Viri-wār Nag', 'Chitār Nag', 'Seki Nag', 'Sone Pokher', 'Brane Pokher' and 'Wal Köt Nag'. Nisar Ahmad Sofi, a resident of same area, also supported the view on the same day . According to a prominent writer A. A. Farhad, the canal that passed through Vitsār-nag Nowsher was known as 'Pātshah Kól'.

Most probably among those twenty-springs, the Ailapathir-nag would have also been destroyed by the accidents of times. However, one 'Ailapatr-nag' is situated on the Afarvath hill of the famous tourist destination Gulmarg. The historian Hassan Shah Khuihām has identified the Ailapathr-nag at the upper reaches of Gulmarg (Tarikeh Hassan, 2002), while as the author of 'Beautiful Kashmir' says that 'from Gulmarg it is a long day march to Alipathir'. The famous Kashmiri poet Mehjoor mentioned the Ailapathr in this verse:

Gulmargi Aelpathray Nile-nag Gog-ji pathray

Makhmal bahār vathräy Gulshan watan chu sonui (Kuliyat-e-Mahjoor, 1982: 245).

(Trans: Gulmarg, Aelpather, Nile Nāg and Gogji Pathar will lay velvet as soon as spring begins. When the flower buds begin to open, the same voice echoes everywhere that this homeland of flowers is ours).

The Aelapathr-nag is 15 Km from Gulmarg. This triangular spring of blue water is about 16,000 feet above sea level. The Nag remains frozen until the month of Hār (June) begins. This Nag is the source of many large Nallas, the most famous of which is Nalla Nengli, which travels through forests, slopes, Karewas, plains and settlements and finally joins the 'Veyath' near Sopore . In this regard Tarikh-I-Hassan (1998:170) mentions:

"The heart-pleasing Aelapatr-nag is situated on the Afarvath mountain. It has three branches in the south of Gulmarg. One goes to Poonch, which is called "Batāri". The other goes to Búnyār, which is known as "Haft Khai" and the third one is "Nengli", which flows from Gulmarg, irrigates the then Parganah Króhún and enters the Volar Lake near Tārzu village Sopore".

It is also known from the Epics and Puranas that during the reign of the Nagas, the powerful Nag chiefs used to guard the four sides of the country of Kashmir. Bindu-sar was in the east, Srimadak was in the south, Uttarman-sar was in the north, and, according to

Vogel (1926), the Aelapatr-nag was the guardian of the west side.

There was a shrine of Ailapatr-nag at Takshila (present area of Rawalpindi), where the crowd often prayed for rain (Tsiang, 1906). It is retrieved from Buddhist folk stories that the Ailapatr-nag converted to Buddhism and took multiple births (Beal, 1875). This means that the Ailapatr-nag was alive when Buddhism was widespread in the subcontinent. The said Nag was also known by other names like Erapata and Airavata. Apart from those attributes, it was also a belief that he was a well-known Nag deity. It too is possible that as the Nag priest or a spiritual figure, Ailapatr-nag might have visited those places where the names of the places are similar to his name, including the Arpal of Tral Pùlvöm and the Aripanthan of Bëru Badgöm. The Arpal Nage is mentioned in a folk song in the following words:

Ãérpal kay nag radü Shahzādo prarān chas
Düri vuchmakh nag radu Trësh cheān cham ābi-hayāt
Chy-nai gàye-so bay-tābo Shahzādo praran chas

(Trans: 'O spring of Arpal, the Prince is waiting, I see from afar that your water is like "Ābi-Hayāt" for me, I am eager to drink it').

It is also said that Erapatha was a Nag king of the Ahiraja-Kulani tribes (Panda, 1970). However, it is not known over which region of the subcontinent this king ruled. A superficial observation suggests that there is much similarity between the names 'Arpal' and 'Erapatha'. It is possible that the 'Arpal' settlement was settled by 'Arapath' Raja. However, it would be premature to be confident about this. It is about the difference between 'L' and 'Th' in these names, which is clear from historical observation that such mutual changes keep happening in social and historical linguistics.

When we talk about 'Akshipal-nag', whoever has written about this place, all of them unambiguously agreed that he was a king who founded Akshavāl city, which Francois Bernier, G.T. Vigne, Hargupal Kaul Khasta, Hassan Khuihami, Mohammad-u-din Fouq and others have identified as Achval or Achbal city in district Anantnag. Furthermore, in other names identified by Stein, there is no dispute to date.

Now an attempt will be made to identify some important names from the list of Nialmata Purana which have not been touched to date, including Anantnaga, Bhava, Bindu, Cikura, Chitura, Danaev, Dadhivhana, Ghasa, Gosa, Hari, Hara, Habaka, Haluas, Helyara, Indra, Khaga, Kheda, Khedima, Khadanyar, Kuhara, Kulusa, Lolabha, Malyavana, Naghamsara, Picchala, Pradyumna, Vira, Vata, Vihangama etc. In the first opportunity, the word Ananta will be discussed.

Anantnag

Besides the prominent Anantnag of south Kashmir, one more spring named Anantnag emerges near a place called 'Hāpath Zel', which is located in the forest 7

kilometres away from the village of Khul (Gulshanpur) of Tral tehsil. In ancient times, a mill used to grind flour and other life items with the waters of said Nag. But the traces of the mill have completely disappeared. At present, there has been a significant reduction in water drainage . Among the famous springs of Tral are Gur Nag, Naristan, Kachmul Nag, Kausar Bal, Goph Bal, Konji Bal, Dil Nag, and Ponzi Nag, which are also worth mentioning .

Bhava

From the study of ancient religious literature, 'Bhava' is derived from the word 'Bhavayanti'. This word has been used to mean gods, especially Rudra, Shiva, King, son of Kashpa, etc. Bhava was a type of temple known as 'Prasada', whose structural shape was round and rectangular. These temples were 'Prasadas' of God and dwelling places of God. In Mahabharat, Bhava is a word used for human beings and places. Scholars and critics believe that the word 'Bhū' is an abbreviated version of Bhava, which is mentioned in most Hindu, Buddhist and Jain literature. Bhava was also the name of a clan of Nagas who ruled parts of India during the 3rd and 4th centuries A.D (Viyogi, 2002). According to the Nilamata Purana, "a Nag named Bhav lived in Kashmir too" (The Nilamata Purana, 1973: 237). The oral history of Kashmir is evident that the word Bhū rather 'Bov' was used till the recent past throughout the valley . Basically, 'Bov' was the name of a place situated near the then Qasba Yār on the way from Pulwöm to Keller-Mtspur via Shaji-marg. A. K. Naz , a Kashmiri Pandit resident of 'Bov', who is living in exile in Jammu, says:

Bov consisted of four mohallas, Mallapur, Bongām, Pethgām, and Batpur. There is also a spring of 'Shiv-shët' in Mohalla Batpur. The people of Dar, Wani, Drabu, Mir and Bhat caste live here. The Zaldār, 'Haslāl-i-Bov' of the Dogra period, was the most famous and influential person of the area. It is unknown when the name of 'Bov' was changed to Rājpur. Perhaps much time has not passed about the name change because above fifty years old people still call the village Bov.

From this discussion, it can be inferred that this settlement, known as Rajpur today, would have been inhabited by a Nag named 'Bhava' or 'Bov'. The said nag could be either a chief of a Nag clan, an elder or a Kutta Raja of the area.

Bindu

In the revenue records, Kokarnag's real name is Bindu-Zalingöm. Earlier, the distance between the village (Bindu-Zalingöm) and the spot spring was not more than one kilometer. But now, the area's population has spread to the peripheries of spring. This tourist place consists of four hundred kanals of land, of which three hundred and seventy-one kanals are devoted to trotting farms and one hundred and nine kanals are under the

gardens. Bindu was the name of a Nag in the Nilamata Purana. He may be the same person who built a Bindu settlement.

Cikura

The name 'Cikura' recorded in the Nilamata Purana was originally 'Cikur', which is not only listed as an important name in the Epics and Puranas but also the name of a Nag king (Mani, 2015). In addition to this, 'Cikura' has also been used as the name of a settlement. There is one more form of 'Chikur' prevalent in Sanskrit and Pali as well, which most probably was a derivation of the Prakrit era. Regarding Kashmir and the Kashmiri languaged, 'Cikur' is written as 'Tsokur' and its accent is also the same. If we talk about the spotting of 'Tsokur', it is difficult to identify as there are many settlements named after it. For example, Tsokur (Chakora) Pulwöm, and Tsokur (Chakora) Patan Varmul. But it is estimated that these settlements must have been settled by the Cikura Nag.

Chitura

A small village called 'Tsitur' is one and a half km away from the ancient settlement of Godsoth in the south of Damodar Veder in central Kashmir. Elderly people speak the village's name as 'Tsitud' and the younger generation as 'Tsitur'. It is quite possible that this is the name of a Nag 'Citra' mentioned in Nilamaat Purana, who would have populated the place. The word 'Tsitur' is probably derived from 'Citra' of Nilamata Purana.

Danaev

Danaev is a very old village in Kolgöm district, which is similar to the word 'Dānava' of Nilamata Purana. It will not be wrong to say that 'Danaev' is derived from the word 'Dānava'. This means that the village must have been settled long back by the Dānava Nag in his name.

Dadhivāhana

When we accept the theory of historical linguistics that the consonant 'D' changed into 'R' through the ages, then it is certain that the name of Nag Dadhivāhana mentioned in Nilamata Purana would have been changed into the 'Darhivāhana'. Subsequently, the name might have been 'Daravana' and then 'Darvan'. A village of this name is situated 15 km away from Tsār (Chrar-i-Sharief). There are eight hundred householders and the village's population is nearly eight thousand. Today, the area is famous by the name Darvan-nowgām.

Ghasa

A village named 'Ghòs' is located on the Neu-Pakharpur road in Pulwöm district. To the west of this village is a table-land called 'Ghòs-veder' in ancient writings. The ancient Shahrah-e-Namak (or later Mughal road) passes through the center of this village, which goes towards the upper side of the west and reaches Hayatpur, Wahtor, Kralpur, Chānpur, Rāmbag and finally to Lal Chowk, Srinagar. History shows that between 'Ghòs' and Hayatpur Veder, many battles were fought among the soldiers of the two sides over the struggle for power in the pre and post-Islamic period. The famous historian Shrivar has written the name of this village as Gashika , which most probably has been derived from the name 'Ghasa' of Nilamata Purana (The Nilamata Purana, 1973: 234). One more village named Ghòs is in the Lolab area of Handvõr (Kapvõr). Besides this, there is another village named 'Ghòs' near Rishpur in Dòr-Shahabad (Anantnag) on the bank of Sāndran river. But it is very difficult to say that in the above-mentioned villages which one was founded by the 'Ghasu' (or Ghòs Nag) of Nilamata Purana. However, taking the topography and the reign of the early Nag tribes into account, it is estimated that the village located in Dòr-Shahabad may have been settled by the Ghasu or 'Ghòs Nag', and definitely the 'Ghòs' is an altered form of Ghasu word.

Gosa

There is one more habitation, namely 'Gös', which is situated on the Tailbal-Khimar road in the Srinagar district. The name closely resembles the name of a Nag 'Gosa' mentioned in Nilamata Purana.

Hari

Hari, an ancient village, is ten km from tehsil headquarters Vòntipür in Pulwöm district. From the study of history, observations, estimations and analysis, it is inferred that the village 'Hari' must have been settled by a chieftain of the Nag tribe, whose name was 'Hari-nag'. There also was a spring named 'Hari-nag' in this settlement. Over time, people polluted the spring and built structures over it. There is a village called Pērgõm in the neighborhood of 'Hari'. Its population spread to 'Hari', and the village's name became 'Hari Pērgõm' (Raina & Sadhu, 2000). Today, the population of the village is about five thousand.

Hara

Historical linguistics shows that 'R' and 'L' are interchangeable in words, especially in nouns. This changing environment of consonants could not fail to influence the name 'Hara' of Nilamata Purana as well. When the 'R' consonant changed to 'L', it gave rise to a new word 'Hala', which subsequently has taken the form of the word 'Hāll'

in Kashmiri language. A survey of place names in Kashmir reveals that a village named 'Hāll' is located in Pulwöm district. It is believed that this village would have been settled by 'Hara' Nag (The Nilamata Purana, 1973: 239).

Habaka

The name of a famous Nag Habka has been mentioned in the Nilamata Purana, who mostly probably populated a place and named it after him. When the name came into writing in the 6th century A.D., the author of the Nilamata Purana wrote it as 'Habka' according to the spelling and pronunciation of the Sanskrit language. There are two villages of this name in Kashmir. One is 5 km away from tehsil Patan (Varmul), which comprises two words 'Habak' and 'Tango' (Habaka Tango) . The second one is located near Nasëm Bāgh at a distance of one kilometer from Hazratbal (Srinagar). According to my speculative opinion, the village that prominent Nag had established after his name is the 'Habak', next to Nasëm Bagh Srinagar. The name of the village 'Habak' (Nasëm Bāgh) was changed to Rognāthpur during the Dogra period (Khastah, 1986), but this name did not last long. In the past, there were many traditional paddy mills and silk manufacturing centers in 'Habak'.

Halusa

In contemporary official records, the name of a village is recorded as 'Alusa' and sometimes as 'Aalusa'. The analysis shows that both these word forms are derived from the 'Halusa' mentioned in the Nilamata Purana. The study and observation have revealed that the initial letters 'A' and 'H' of the Sanskrit words are interchanged, which is not often but sometimes happens in historical linguistics. Following this principle, perhaps the word 'Halusa' has taken the form of 'Alusa' or 'Aalusa'. This type of change is also demonstrated by the place name 'Ahirbal', known as 'Haribal' until about a century and a half ago (Neve, 1913). However, in Kashmiri society and language, it is customary to say and speak neither 'Aalusa' nor 'Alusa' but 'Õlus', which is in accordance with the Kashmiri system of phonetics and accent.

Ölus is an ancient village which is 8 km away from the district headquarters, Bandpur. This village, consisting of a dozen mohallas, is between Bandpur and Sopur. A part of the population of Ölus lives in the foothills of the NagMarg mountain in the north-west and the other part on the banks of Wolur Lake. Long ago, an incidental excavation of Nag Marg slopes yielded huge vessels that proved the historical and archaeological importance of the village . A road from Ölus passes through Manglu-Rāmpur, joins the Lölāb Valley, crosses the forests and goes to the Nëlam Valley and Sharda Pëth. The population of Ölus is around fifteen thousand. A large number of Ganaye (caste) population lives here, who are engaged in the business of making Kānger (Fire Pot) apart

from zamindari. In 1947, some Pandit families lived here. But due to tribal invasion, they migrated from Õlus and settled in Kôlus Bandpur. There was a large spring in Ölus, which was long ago obliterated due to the people's negligence.

Hëlyār

History shows that most of the world's civilizations emerged on the banks of rivers and seas. The Nilamata Purana, Rajatarangani, Mahatmehiyas and other sources show that the ancient places of worship in Kashmir were built on the banks of different water bodies. The traces of this are still present near water sources and on the banks of Veyath from Vërnag to Uri in Kashmir. Apart from the material evidence, the names of worship places that existed on the river (Veyath) bank speak a lot about their remote past, e.g. the place names like 'Ganpat-yār', 'Khar-yār', etc. In both places, the suffix of the name is 'yār'. Historical linguists, Prakrit scholars and Apbhransh analysts believe that the word 'yār' is originally derived from 'Vihara'. Prof. K N Pandita, a world-renowned scholar and historian of Kashmir, writes: 'the place-name suffix 'yaar' or 'haar' is actually the corrupted abbreviation of Sanskrit vihar' (Khastah, 1986: 158).

Of course, over time, 'Vihara' took the form of the words 'Vihār', 'hār' and then 'yār'. All these words are associated with some place names to date. Then there came a time when another word, 'Bal', was added with 'Yār'. It is prevalent in the whole Kashmir, especially in areas where people live on the banks of streams and river 'Veyath'. Regarding the suffix 'Yār', it is important to mention that there are some holy tirthas of Kashmiri Pandits at these places, which are uniformly known by the same names (i.e. place and tirtha). C. L. Kaul put it this way: 'the shrines on the right bank are Shurahyar, Ganpatyar, Mallayar, Kharyar, Sapruyar, Soomyar, Madanyar, Sheshyar, Qaziyar, Kutwalyar, Razdanyar and Batayar and those on the left bank are Purshyar, Drabiyar and Sehyar' (Stein, 1979: 74).

As far as 'Shurahyār' tirth is concerned, it is situated opposite to then GB Pant Hospital, Guzarwān Mohall, Sonwār Bāgh, Srinagar. 'Ganpat-yār' is a Shiva temple in Habkadal. This temple was built by Raja Sindhimat in the 5th-century AD (Stein, 1979). Taking into account the antiquity of the temple, it was rebuilt with great splendor by the minister Pannu in 1854 during the Dogra Raj. A temple called 'Malyār' is located very close to the Ganpat-yār temple. Similarly, Söm-tirth is located on the right bank of Veyath at a place called 'Söm-yar' or anciently 'Söm-vihar' in Chtsbal (Srinagar). There is an ancient vihār 'Pursh' or present-day 'Pursh-yar' on the banks of Veyath in Chtsbal itself, where there is a tirth of the same name. According to limited field surveys and information collected from other sources, there are dozens of place names with the suffix 'Yār' in Kashmir, which includes Shāll-yār, Safri-yār, Lokhri-yār, Wani-yār, Naid-yār, Kral-yār, Moti-yār, Gasi-yār, Malik-yār, Dalhassan-yār, Zeath-yar (Mata Zeashta), Khan-yār, Seh-

yār (Jamālot, Ailkadal), Gad Yar (Zain-Kadal), Abi-yār (near Khoshhāl-sar Zadibal) and Badyar in Srinagar and in its peripheries. Similarly, there are other place names with the suffix 'yār' in different areas of Kashmir, on which there is scope for separate discussion, like Kha-yār (Pahalgām), Ha-yār, and Dupt-yār (Yechbeyör), Lāri-yār (Tral Pulvöml), Rai-yār Dodhpather (Badgöm), Suras-yār Tsodur (Central Kashmir), Khe-yār (Bandpur), Bon-yār (Kapwõl), Kham-yār, Khādan-yār and Zògyār (Varmul).

Hocara

'Hocara' is the name of a Nag in Verse 950 of Nilamata Purana. A settlement similar to this name is known as 'Hokur'. This township is situated 11 km away from Anantnag on Kokarnag road. This oldest village is attached to tehsil Shahabad Dùr. The literacy rate of this village is 88%. Larikpur, Kāba Marg, Pithbug, Bon Dayalgam and Kothar villages are in its neighbourhood. There is a close resemblance between 'Hocara' of the Nilamata Purana and 'Hokur', a settlement on the Anantnag-Kokarnag route. The Hocara Nag would have undoubtedly inhabited this town.

Indra

'Inder' is a village derived from 'Indra' situated about one kilometer from the right bank of Nala Römash flowing in Pulwöm district. The village is about two and a half miles from Muran Chowk of Pulwöm. There is also a spring in the village, whose water is used for drinking. In the village is a pilgrimage of the great Sufi and poet of the Kashmiri language, Swach Krāl, where a festival is held annually. The village's name suggests that it was inhabited by the Nag Indra, who is mentioned in the Nilamata Purana. The sociolinguistics of Kashmir proved that most people speak the word 'Inder' as 'Yander'. For example, 'Inder' near Pulvõm is called 'Yander'. In Kangan tehsil of Ganderbal District, there is a village and forest known as 'Indervan'. In the back of the same forest, the beautiful 'Mohand Marg' is located, where M. A. Stein, the translator of Rajatrangani, spent years together. It was the place where Stein heard the stories from Hatam and penned them down, entitled the Hatam tales.

Kanāra

'Kanāra' occurs as a name in Nilamata Purana. A Raja of this name is mentioned in Pandit Kalhan's Rajtarangani, with whom some European scholars have associated a settlement called 'Kanaragram' in Central Kashmir's Tsodur tehsil. However, M. A. Stein did not consider this opinion because Kalhan himself associated this settlement with a Raja named 'Narpur' in Shloka 244 and 'Kanarpur' in Shloka 274 of Tarang first. Both these names refer to the same settlement. Because in Rajtarangani, the said king is remembered by both names. Scholars like Stein have identified the city (basti) of Raja

'Kanar' or Raja 'Nar' at the Chakdar Veder of Yajbiyur, which was burnt in the thorn conflict in the past (Stein, 1979). However, the identification of the village that was settled by Kanar Nag is very difficult, but the mental axis of the research elements is still focused on the village called 'Kāner' located in Tsodur tehsil. The place is situated at a distance of about 9 km from its tehsil headquarters.

Khaga

Khāg is situated at the foothills of Tòs Mádān, 35 km north-west of Srinagar. Khāg was given the status of tehsil in 2005, which includes 48 villages. This town has many springs, among which Ganj-nag and Nārayan-nag are famous. Apart from drinking water from both springs, they irrigate the fields. In upper Tòs Mádān of Khāg, there was the fort known as 'Lal Khan Gadi'. Lal Khan was the protector of the north-western border crossings of Kashmir during the Afghan rule. There are ruins of Lal Khan Gadi near Drang village in the foothills of Tòs Mádān. In ancient times, Khagendar was a king of Kashmir. It is reported that he had established the two Agrharas named Khāgi and Khonamusa (Stein, 1979). The history also mentioned that another Raja Gopadtya of Kashmir built an Agrhara called Khāgikā. Of course, there is a similarity between the Khāgi of Khagendar and Khāgika of Gopadtya. On this basis, M. A. Stein has identified Khāgi and Khāgika with the present Khāg.

Interestingly, 'Khaga' in the Nilamata Purana is the name of a Nag, who originally was the name of either the chief of the Nag tribe or a dignified figure of the Nag population. It is quite possible that the last consonant 'a' of 'Khagā' is not part of the original word. The consonant 'a' would have been added to the word when the Nilamata Purana was written down some fourteen hundred years ago. Indeed, the original word was not 'Khagā' but 'Khāg', which was probably used during the Nag era of Kashmir. However, the Nilamata Purana was written in the 6th century A.D. in Sanskrit, indicating that teaching and written works were done in the same language then. Therefore, when the common familiar words were written in Sanskrit, they were necessarily recorded according to Vedic Sanskrit linguistic norms and tone.

Kheda

It is difficult to say what the origin of the word Kheda is. Scholars have linked this word to Sanskrit and Pali language. According to the meaning attached to this word, a place surrounded by rivers and mountains, a settlement, or a small village is called Kheda. As mentioned earlier, each word's suffix 'a' or 'ā' is related to the Sanskrit and Pali sound and spelling systems. It is quite possible that the Kashmiri word 'Khed' was suffixed according to the same linguistic system. According to the field survey, the village 'Khred' is located on a hillock in Tsodur tehsil of central Kashmir, some 12 km below the historical

site of Nile-nag. In the west, the village is surrounded by small mountain offshoots of Pirpantsā. In the northern foothills of this village, the famous Nala 'Chtskol' (Dùd Ganga), and in the southern foothills, the Nala 'Apzaër' flows. Now, let's talk about the word 'Khred' and how it came into being. Basically, the addition or dropping of syllables from words is an ancient principle of historical linguistics. By the addition of 'r' to the word 'Khed' of the same rule, 'Khred' came into existence. Such changes in historical linguistics started during the Prakrit period.

Khedima

According to Nilamata Purana, a famous Nag named 'Khedima' lived in ancient Kashmir. The name consists of the letters K+h+e+d+i+m+a. Over time, the letter 'D' of 'Khidema' became 'R', and a new word, 'Kherima', came into existence. Another change occurred in linguistic history when the word 'Kherima' dropped the letters 'e' and 'a', from which a new word, 'Khiram', came into existence. It can be believed that this Khiram may be the settlement that Khedima Nag settled in his name. This historic village is located at a distance of six kilometers from the tehsil headquarters, Srigofvõr (Anantnag). If you have to come from Yajbeyor (Anantnag), then it is a sixteen-kilometer journey and ten km from Sangam bridge via the Mirhõm route.

Khadanyar

According to Hargopal Khasta, 'Khādanā', one of the queens of Raja Meghavāna, ascended the throne in 91 Bikrami (34 C.E.) (Kaul, 2022), and built a Buddhist temple called 'Khādanāvihāra' in her name. Pandit Kalhan mentions the name of this place as 'Khadna Vihara,' and in Vitastāmāhatymya, its name is 'Khadnahara', which has been identified as 'Khadanyar' situated on the left bank of Veyth in Varmul district.

Kuhara

In ancient Kashmir, a Nag named Kuhara lived, who perhaps had built a town named after him. From the similarity of the name, it can be inferred that Nag's abode might have been the 'Khore' village located in Patan tehsil of Varmul district. It is also assumed that the ancient word 'Kuhara' has given rise to the village name Khòr. However, some 44 years ago, Khor was named 'Sher-abad' after the most stalwart leader and architect of modern Jammu and Kashmir, Sher-e-Kashmir Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah.

Kulusa

A small village commonly known as Kôlus in Kashmiri and Kalusa in Nilamata Purana is about one kilometer away from Bandpur. The Muslim and Kashmiri Pandit

population of the village is around five hundred. When the gun was introduced in 1990, Kashmiri Pandits had to leave their native village (Kōlus). However, some Pandit families were unwilling to leave their village and were living a peaceful life with their Muslim neighbors as before. There were five springs in Kôlus, four of which were filled and constructions were erected on them. Now, only one spring survived, adjacent to which an ancient Sharda temple has been built. According to the Nilamata Purana, Kulusa was the name of a Nag who might be the founder of Kulusa village.

Lolabha

In the north of Kashmir, there is a beautiful valley 16 km long, 5 km wide, and 6 thousand feet above sea level in the district of Kapvör, which has been the abode of humans since ancient times. Both the valley and the settlement are known as Lolab. Some scholars have derived the word Lolab from words like Lolora, Lava, Lolava, and Lavlaha. It is also suggested that Lolab was settled by Raja Lava (Stein, 1979). But the word or noun 'Lolabha' mentioned in the Nilamata Purana was either overlooked or ignored as a myth or baseless view. If Lolab can be derived from the words Lolora, Lolava and Lavlaha or similarly Raja Lava was considered to be the settler of the said settlement, then what is wrong in deriving the 'Lölāb' word from' Lolabha' of Nilamata Purana which is 100% closer to the above words and is also correct. The 'Lolabha' was originally the name of a Nag who would have settled the said settlement during the reign of the Nagas. There are also many ancient springs in Lölāb Valley, whose water is crystal clear and bright like a mirror. Among them, Lav-nag and Gour-nag are worth mentioning. Lal Kol also passes through the Lölāb Valley, which irrigates the fields. Historical places like Satbaran and Kalaròs Cave are worth visiting here. Surrounded by dense forests, the Nag Marg is a charming and extremely beautiful place for camping. Presently, Lölāb, 9 km from Kapvör, has a sub-district status.

Malyavana

The name Malyavana is identified from the present village 'Mālvan' of Kolgōm tehsil. No doubt the village name 'Mālvan' is a derivation of the 'Malyavana' word mentioned in Nilamata Purana. Basically, 'Malyavana' was the name of a Nag in the pre-Buddha era of Kashmir, who probably had founded the 'Malyavana' habitation at present Malvan. The village is 10 km from its tehsil headquarters, surrounded by Qaimuh, Qāzgund, Devsar, and Kolgõm.

Nāghamsār

'Nāghamsār' or Nāgùm is a historical place situated on the southwest of Srinagar-Tsrar road. It is 18 km away from the summer capital of Jammu-Kashmir. Apparently,

Nāgùm is a compound word, Nāg+gùm. Nāg is the name of a tribe and the meaning of gùm is to be lost or in other words, the Nāg people disappeared. From a superficial and semantic point of view, this meaning seems absolutely correct. But among the hundreds of names listed in the Nilamata Purana, the word 'Nāghamsār' has a close resemblance with Nāgùm, or there is an indication of similarity in texture or Nāghamsār smells of Nāgùm. A careful study of ancient and modern history suggests that Nāghamsār might have been the head of the Nag tribe, who probably laid the foundation of Nāghùm and its upper settlements. Perhaps, this historical-linguistic environment strongly influenced Nāghamsār and this word would have been split into two parts 'Nāgham' and 'Sār'. As time went by, the consonants and vowels of words should have started changing, and the differences in accents prevailed. Due to this, words started to become obsolete, and new words started to appear. In this way, two separate settlements, Nāgham and Sār (Nāgham+Sār), would have come into being. Gradually, Nāgham changed to Nagām, and later in, Nāgùm and Sār to Tsar (Charar).

In pre-historic times, there were two places in Nāgum area occupied by the Nag tribe. One lived between the villages of Buzgù and Gogji Pather, known as Nile Nag, and the residence of the other was right next to Nāgum, which is famous nowadays as Chhāne Nile Nag. According to Hasan Shah Khuyham, there was another Nile-nag on Nāgùm Veder, which dried up during 1878 AD. The author of this paper has heard from the elders of Nāgum since childhood that they heard from their ancestors that a huge gathering of the Nag people in ancient times was held in Nāgum every year, where they used to discuss their problems .

In Nāgum, a place called Tákiya, was inhabited only by a few families fifty years ago. This small settlement was adjacent to a vast field above the Nāgum. Adventurers and soldiers camped in this field and proceeded according to their engagements and programs. Common travelers breathed a sigh of relief in this field, too. On the occasion of relief from famine and the need for rain, all the people from central Kashmir in general and from the area around Nāgum in particular used to gather and pray in this field first, and then in the form of a grand gathering, they would go to Tsār where those learned men used to pray in the courtyard of Alamdar-i- Kashmir for relief from troubles. Elders of the area and especially the Bhagat families of Wahtór village played a key role in people's gatherings by playing their musical instruments. According to folk traditions and oral accounts, Nāgùm had great historical significance from the rule of Nag nation till date. There has been no decline in the historical importance of Nāgùm during the Buddha, Brhamana, and Shivit period. The clear proof of this is dozens of cultural artifacts found during accidental excavations on the Nāgúm Veder and in its peripheries.

The critical review of history shows that on the night between 5th and 6th June 1320 A.D., a Ladakhi refugee, Renchan, took control of the government as soon as he

killed Rawan Tsander (Chandra), the army chief of Kashmir. He adopted the faith of Abdur Rahman Bulbul and became a Muslim. Then, he changed his name from Renchan to Sadr-u-din. He built a monastery for Bulbul Shah on the right bank of the Veyath along with a langar-khana, commonly known as Bulbul-Langar, where common people used to get acquainted with Islamic teachings. Renchan dedicated a few villages in Pargana Nāgùm to bear the cost of the langar (Fauq, 2003). The income that came from the moveable and immovable property of these villages was used to meet the needs of the Bulbul-Langar located in Aali Kadal Srinagar. These villages remained under the custody of said langar until the end of the Mughal era. Similarly, during the time of Sikandar Shah, Syed Muhammad Ali Balkhi made Kashmir his homeland and settled in Pakharpur, and again, some villages of Pargana Nāgùm were dedicated to his expenses.

After the death of Zain-ul-Abidin alias Badshah, his son Haji Khan alias Hyder Shah ascended the throne of Kashmir in 1531 Bikrami. He immediately appointed his brother Bahram Khan (Shah) as his minister and gave him Pargana Nagum as a fief. In 1544 Bikrami, when Muhammad Shah, the son of Hyder Shah's son Hasan Shah, ascended the throne, the family struggle for power, which had subsided to some extent during the reign of Badshahi, resurfaced. A great battle of which also happened in Nāghum Veder. Hundreds of lives were lost in this battle. Even during the reign of Sikandar Shah, Nāgùm fort became a base for bloodshed. Similarly, some of the zamindars of Nāgúm, especially Bahram and Ahmad of the Nayak family, supported Yakub chak in the fight against the Mughals. In the Afghan era, when Amir Khan Jawan Sher was the governor of Kashmir, a warrior named Lal Khan raised a revolt at Nāgúm but was defeated by the government warrior Mir Fazil Kant. Nowadays, Nagam has emerged as an important town with a dense population and a thriving market.

If all the names mentioned in Nilamata Purana are examined and judged according to the principles of historical linguistics, the dust of thousands of years will be cleared away. There will be hope for these names to get freedom from the clutches of mythology and will reveal the original form of these names. However, due to the length of the chapter, the discussion was confined to some more names and their current geographical identification only. For example:

The word 'Patna' mentioned in Nilamata Puran can be identified from 'Patan', the present town of Varmul district, while the word 'Picchala' would have given rise to 'Pichal', a village near Malangpur in district Pulwöm. The word 'Pichal' is commonly pronounced as 'Pitshal' in Kashmiri language. Similarly, the word 'Sömbûr' may be a derived form of 'Sambhara'. The word 'Sambhara' has been identified as the village 'Sömbûr' situated on Srinagar-Pulwöm highway in Pompur. The another word 'Satura' can be identified from 'Sotur', a well-known village of the Tral area where the prominent sufi poet late Rajab Hamid had its residence. Without going into their details, the words,

especially the 'Uttaripasha', 'Vihanagama' and 'Vira' mentioned in the Nilamata Purana can be identified respectively as 'Verpash' (village in Ganderbal district), a corrupt form of 'Uttaripasha', and 'Vohangām' in Bandpur district, which could be the derivation of 'Vihanagama'. Lastly, the word 'Vir' is mentioned in verse 955 of Nilamata Purana as a name of Nag. The complete word is 'Vira-nag', which has close resemblance with 'Veri-nag' of Anantnag district. According to the Kashmiri accent, common people pronounced the name as 'Ver-nag'. It was the abode of Nile Nag and the earliest capital or Rajdhani of Kashmir.

Conclusion

This paper has analyzed the place names in Kashmir related to the pre-historic Naga era. The critical examination of the ancient historical texts from Kashmir, like Nilamata Purana and Rajatarangini, and the interviews conducted by the author of this paper during field surveys have suggested that the Naga tribes were the ancient inhabitants of ancient Kashmir who had settled cities and villages in their names, dozens of names of which still exist. Furthermore, the paper has suggested that if all the names mentioned in Nilamata Purana are examined and judged according to the principles of historical linguistics, the dust of thousands of years will be cleared away. There will be hope for these names to get freedom from the clutches of mythology and will reveal the original form of these names.

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New Dynamics of India-Uzbekistan's Economic Relations

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Abstract

India–Uzbekistan economic relations are the outcome of the visits of the various highest-level officials and political leadership. In 2015, after becoming Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi visited Tashkent. In a press conference, he said, 'I have begun my journey in Uzbekistan underling its importance for India, not just in this region, but also in Asia'. In a joint statement, he emphasized on building strategic partnerships, combating terrorism, stability in regions, regional integration, and economic cooperation. Before PM Shri Narendra Modi's Tashkent visit, Uzbek President Islam Karimov paid an official visit to India in 2011, during which 34 agreements were signed. More than 30 projects were designed in the area of exploration and production of hydrocarbons with leading Indian oil and gas companies like ONGC, manufacturing optic-fiber cables at the Navoi free industrial-economic zone (FIEZ), projects in the field of pharmaceuticals and medicine production, communication technology, textile, cotton, silk, smartphones, and chemical industries. The visits of two leaders of India and Uzbekistan have boosted the trade and commercial relationships between the two countries. Therefore, in the last two decades, the relationship has been considered a new dynamic of India-Uzbekistan's Economic Relations. In light of the above agreements and pacts, this paper mainly discusses to what extent the economic relationship between India and Uzbekistan has improved and what should be the way forward for future course of action. The paper is divided into three sections. The first section discusses Uzbek–India relations in a historical-cultural context. The second section analyzes Uzbek–India relations in a geopolitical and economic context. The third section examines the challenges before the relations of India and Uzbekistan.

Keywords: *USSR, India, Uzbekistan, Central Asia, Entrepreneurship Development Centre, Economic Cooperation, Indo-Uzbek Inter-Governmental Commission*

Uzbek–India Relation in Historical-Cultural Context

Uzbek–India relations can be explored through historical evidence. There are

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frequent references of Kamboja in Sanskrit and Pali literature, which claim the inclusion of various parts of present-day Uzbekistan in the kingdom. There are many references about the ancient trade route Uttarapath that passed through present-day Uzbekistan. Modern cities of Uzbekistan, including Fergana, Samarkand, and Bukhara, had emerged as prominent towns on the Uttarapath trade route, mainly connecting India with China and Europe. Bongard-Levin (1971) has mentioned that at various times, the empires such as Saka, Macedonian, Greco- Bactrian and Kushan Kindom of both India and modern-time Uzbekistan, and at other times were the parts of neighboring kingdoms. He further opines that Buddhism had also traveled to China through Uzbekistan and Central Asia. Ranjana Mishra (2012) is of the view that Emperor Amir Tamir and Babur both came from modern Uzbekistan to India.

Trade and commercial relations of the two countries were an integral part of the local economy, the Indian merchants based in Samarkand and Bukhara contributed a lot in that period. The close cultural linkages can be observed in architecture, dance, music, and cuisine. Well-known Indian poets Mirza Ghalib and Amir Khusrau are of Uzbek Ancestry (Singh, 2016). Uzbekistan-India relations were based on consistency, faith and mutual understanding during the Soviet era. During that period, Prime Ministers, including Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Sastri, visited Uzbekistan to strengthen bilateral relations. Uzbekistan had emerged as an independent State after the disintegration of the Soviet Union. Since 1991, various ups and downs were observed between Uzbekistan and India.

India had good relations with Uzbekistan during the Soviet era. Pt Jawaharlal Nehru (Sahai, 1990) and Lal Bahadur Shastri visited Tashkent and other places in Uzbekistan. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, for the promotion of cultural activities in Uzbekistan, the government of India inaugurated the Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre, working under the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR). The cultural center is involved in organizing seminars, conferences, Kathak classes for the enrolled students, yoga and Hindi language classes for the registered students at the center. In the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent, the Government of India established the India chair in 1996.

In Uzbekistan, Indian movies and serials are more popular than in other parts of Central Asia. Islam Karimov, former president of Uzbekistan, had maintained good ties with India, and his five visits to India may be witnessed as of healthy bilateral relations. He visited India in August 1991, and his visit opened doors to cooperation in the areas of science, technology, culture, economics, and investment (Pandey, 2012). After the independence of Uzbekistan, Shri P.V. Narsimha Rao was the first Prime Minster who visited Uzbekistan in 1993. In 2015, Indian Prime Minister Shri Narender Modi's visit further improved the relations. After Islam Karimov's

death, President Shavat Mirziyoyev is trying to establish fruitful ties with India. His two visits in 2018 and 2019 to India within a short period may be considered a landmark in the relationship between the two countries. During his visits, he signed seventeen agreements with India in various sectors. These recent visits and bilateral ties between India and Uzbekistan have improved relations between the two nations. Consequently, these visits have opened new doors for partnerships in the fields of economy, trade, energy, pharmaceutical, IT, and culture.

Uzbek–India Relations in Geo-Political and Economic Context

Before the independence of Uzbekistan, there were few visits of the dignitaries of India as well as of Uzbekistan, which had witnessed the political ties. After the disintegration of the erstwhile Soviet Union, visits to India by President Islam Karimov in 1991, 2000, 2005 and 2011 were the landmark in the bilateral relationship. In 1993, Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao visited Uzbekistan and made efforts toward healthy and cordial relations with the newly independent state.

Table: 1

Visits of the Political Leaders of India to Uzbekistan Vise – versa

Year	**PMs visit to Uzbekistan**	**Year**	**President of Uzbekistan visit to India**
1993	P.V. Narasimha Rao in	1991	Islam Karimov
2006	Manmohan Singh	1994	Islam Karimov
2015	Narendra Modi	2000	Islam Karimov
2016	Narendra Modi	2005	Islam Karimov
		2011	Islam Karimov
		2018	ShavkatMirziyoyev
		2019	ShavkatMirziyoyev

Source: https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral- documents.htm?dtl/30454/IndiaUzbekistan

After Manmohan Singh's visit to Tashkent in 2006, PM Narendra Modi visited Uzbekistan in 2015. The visit was fruitful in terms of building mutual relationships and trade relations with Uzbekistan. In 2016, the second visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Uzbekistan was to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit. In response to the visits of the Indian Prime Minister and other dignitaries, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev made two visits to India in 2018 and 2019 within six months, showing how the leadership of the two countries are willing to build a productive

and conducive atmosphere in the region for trade and commercial activities.

Uzbekistan is the 12th largest oil producing country in the world . Uzbekistan possesses proven oil reserves to the amount of 0.6 billion barrels and 630 million tonnes of natural gas (Abduraxmonovich, 2003). The main reserves of oil and natural gas are in Ustyurt, Bukhara-Khiva, and Ferghana region. In India, the mineral resources are very low in comparison to its requirements. Consequently, dependency on foreign countries is obvious. India produced 30% of total demand, and the remaining 70% of dependency is fulfilled by foreign imports. India's geo-strategic interests in Uzbekistan are based upon various factors, such as the demand for natural resources. According to the 2002-2007 Five Year Plan, in 2002, the oil demand was 78 million barrels a day. In 2015, it was 103 million barrels, and by 2025, it may reach up to 119 million barrels per day. The demand for natural gas will also increase at a level of 2.5% a year till 2025.

The above facts show the need for India to build a healthy relationship with Uzbekistan. The efforts in this area were made in May 1993 when the Agreement on Trade and Economic Co-operation was signed by India and Uzbekistan. It was trade agreement between two countries. The agreement mainly aims to provide MFN treatment and smooth trade activities between the two countries. In 1993 both countries had signed an agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation. In 1999, the same was canceled, and India proposed a Bilateral Investment Treaty with Uzbekistan.

For the trade, economic, scientific and technological cooperation, the Indo-Uzbek Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) has met ten times. The last session of the Indo-Uzbek Inter-Governmental Commission was held in New Delhi in March 2014. Since independence, Uzbekistan has been very keen on expanding cooperation with India in various sectors, including information technology, automobile, pharmaceutical, light industry, computer programming, banking, etc.

Trade: India-Uzbekistan (Import-Export: 2008- 2019)

Table- 2 below shows that the value of bilateral trade between India and Uzbekistan has increased from a mere US$ 91 million in 2008 to US$ 355.5(Million) in the year of 2019.

Trade: India-Uzbekistan (Import-Export: 2008- 2019)

From diagram- 1 below, it can be seen that from 2008 to 2019, the volume of trade turnover in 2008 was US$ 91 million, and it increased in 2019 to US$ 355.5 million. From 2014 to 2019, most of the years' total turnover was more than three hundred million (US$), except the year 2018, which was less than 300 US$ (million). Which speak the volume of the trade between Uzbekistan and India is about US$ 264.5, a healthy sign of

the economic relationship. All these improvements are due to the efforts made by the leadership from 2011 onwards of both countries.

Table- 2

Year	Export from India (in US$ million)	Import from Uzbekistan (in US$ million)	Total trade turnover(in US$ millions)
2008	79.9	11.1	91
2009	101.8	23.1	124.9
2010	123.8	27.2	151.0
2011	137.6	22.2	159.8
2012	163.4	37.8	201.2
2013	217.4	42.2	259.6
2014	249.0	67.0	316.0
2015	260.6	58.7	319.3
2016	318.1	51.9	370.0
2017	291.0	32.6	323.6
2018	261.4	25.1	286.5[1]
2019	330.5	20	355.5[2]

Source: Uzbekistan's State Statistics Committee.

Export From India (in US$ million)

From diagram-2 below, the diagram indicates that from 2008 to 2019, export from India to Uzbekistan in 2008 was 79.9 US$ (million), and in 2019 330.5 US$ (million). The total increase in exports from 2008 to 2019 was 250.9 US$ (Million). A huge jump in export was observed after 2013 onwards; in 2013 it was 217.4 (Million US$), and in 2014-

249 (Million US$), 2015- 260.6 (Million US$), 2016- 318.1(Million US$), 2017-291(Million US$), 2018-261.4 (million US$) and in 2019, it was highest i.e., 330.5 (million US$).

Diagram -1

Source : Uzbekistan's State Statistics Committee.

Diagram -2

Source: Uzbekistan's State Statistics Committee.

Import From Uzbekistan from 2008-2019 (in US$ million)

Diagram-3 below shows the imports from Uzbekistan from 2008 to 2019. In 2008, it was 11.1 (Million US$), in 2014- 67 (Million US$), a year of highest import from Uzbekistan, and in 2019 it was 20 (Million US$).

Diagram- 3

Source: Uzbekistan's State Statistics Committee.

Diagrams 1, 2, and 3 indicate the last 11 years' trade turnover between India and Uzbekistan. From 2020 to 2022 date, there have been no such improvements in trade and commercial relations of both countries due to COVID-19, despite in 2021, US$ 259.61 Million trade turnover happened. India's main export to Uzbekistan can be observed in sectors like mechanical equipment, vehicles, optical instruments, pharmaceutical products and equipment. India's main imports from Uzbekistan are juice, fertilizers, fruits, vegetable products, lubricants, etc.

Outcomes of the Last Two Decades in Mutual Cooperation

The facts speak about the Indian investment in Uzbekistan has increased in various spheres. The Uzbek Ministry of Foreign Economic Relations, Trade and Investment has indicated that in Uzbekistan, there are 113 companies from India that are established with Indian capital, out of which 19 companies have 100% Indian investment. In the automobile sector, the Indian company Minda established UzMinda in 2001, located in the Nvaoi region. The company mainly manufactures spare parts for General Motors of Uzbekistan. The Minda group has invested approximately US$ 5 million in the Navoi Free Economic Zone. In 2011, for the children and youths in Uzbekistan, Polo Amusement Park and Fun and Food Village were set up by Gurgaon-based Company, the company invested around US$ 4 million.

India is known for the less expensive and best quality products in the pharma and healthcare sector, and as far as the economic relations between India and Uzbekistan are concerned, the pharma sector is a key sector. There are, in the pharma sector, prominent pharma companies from India, such as Nova Pharma, Brava Pharma, and Shayana Pharma, which have established their ventures in various prominent locations in Uzbekistan. Nova Pharma is the first pharmaceutical company from India that has established a joint venture with an Uzbek company in Termez City of Uzbekistan. Nova Pharma has initially invested around US$ 8 million in the production of pharmaceutical

and healthcare products. After Nova Pharma, Bravo Pharma was the second company in diagnostic and another healthcare service with an investment of US$ 5.5 million. Another company called Shayan Pharma opened some units in Uzbekistan; the second unit of the company was operationalized in March 2017. Annual turnover of the company is US$ 30 million. For less expensive and advanced healthcare facilities for the Uzbek people, one of the best hospitals affiliated with the Medanata the Medicity, Gurgaram, India, is Orien Medicity, which was established in 2011. Ramada Hotel in Tashkent has been functional since 4th July 2009; the owner of the hotel is a Delhi-based businessman, and the hotel has 120 rooms. In the hotel, there is one Indian restaurant, and all modern facilities are provided in the hotel, along with the two business centers as well.

For a healthy relationship with Uzbekistan, the Government of India in 2006, during Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's visit, gave a total grant of Rs 3 Crore to Jawaharlal Nehru India-Uzbek (JNIU) Center for IT. Established in Tashkent, the JNIU center mainly helps the students of Uzbekistan in IT sector, computing facilities, Hi-tech computer labs, and video conferencing facilities as well. After five years of the inauguration of the center on 11 October 2011, for the promotion of activities in the center, Ministry of Foreign Affairs sanctioned Rs 4.212 cores to upgrade the center. The Centre also facilitated ten Uzbek Master Trainers to get training from the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC), Pune. CDAC also conducted workshops from 26 January 2014 to 26 July 2014 for the Uzbek students in Tashkent. The motive of the Center is to create a good atmosphere among Uzbek students, and the Center also involves them in helping various consultancy and economic activities between both countries.

Challenges Before the Economic Relations of India and Uzbekistan

In this way, Indian attempts to access Uzbekistan were too late in the first two decades after the independence of Uzbekistan. One can say that it was because the Indian as well as Uzbek economies were in a transition stage. The major challenges before the two countries to invest and explore the areas of mutual confidence building are the issue of currency, too high exchange rates of the currency in Uzbekistan, transitional economies, common problems of developing a free market, a stronger legal system, tag of an authoritarian regime, weak opposition, international terrorism, extremism, organized crime, drug trafficking, and other challenges and threats to security. In the last two decades in the region, the increasing role of the China is one of the prominent challenges before India-Uzbek economic relationship. According to a report from the Uzbek State Statistics Committee, in 2020, China was the largest trade partner. In 2020, Uzbek–China bilateral trade reached US$ 6.4 billion ("Despite drop", 2021). At present, there are 1800

companies in Uzbekistan from China operational in various sectors ("Around 1,800 enterprises", 2021). The lack of direct connectivity with Uzbekistan is another key challenge in the economic relations between the two countries. There are a few efforts made by the government of India, such as Chahbar port, through which India can access the Uzbek market along with other Central Asian countries.

Conclusion

Regarding the cooperation in the economic sphere, the facts of trade and investment between India and Uzbekistan do not project the potential of both countries. The lack of political willpower regarding the relationship with Uzbekistan's initial two decades had limited access to the Indian investors in Uzbekistan. However, the changes at the national level leadership in Uzbekistan as well as in India have made efforts to strengthen the relationships. Two visits within six months to India by the current President of Uzbekistan and the historic visit of Prime Minister Modi to Uzbekistan have opened the doors to access to the region and cooperation in cultural, economic, and political spheres. The March month of 2022 was a historic month for both countries; first time from India, private traders transported goods to Uzbekistan via Pakistan and Afghanistan. The recent virtual meetings of the officials of both countries, as well as political leadership, will be a good sign for the improvement in trade and commercial relations between Uzbekistan and India.

Notes

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Media in Kazakhstan: Between Democratic Emancipation and In-build Authoritarianism

Dr. Shazia Majid

Abstract

The freedom of the press is a crucial element of a democratic society. The right to communicate and express oneself through diverse forms of media, encompassing both traditional print and modern electronic platforms, is considered a fundamental entitlement. It acts as an educator and a watchdog, guarding the public interest. It is vital to ensure the protection of human rights. Sharing information with the public is the first step in addressing grievances and holding governments accountable. The Constitution should protect this freedom and be free from interference from an overreaching state. However, in Kazakhstan, the freedom of the press is severely restricted. The Kazakh government's control over the media threatens democratic norms in the country and destroys the process of democratization initiated by Kazakhstan after the collapse of the Second World. This paper examines how restricting press freedom alters Kazakhstan's democratization process and how Kazakhstan has shifted from its commitment to democracy on paper to authoritarianism in practice.

Keywords: *Kazakhstan, Authoritarianism, Decriminalization, Democratization, Freedom, Press, Transition.*

Introduction

The countries in different regions—Asia, Africa, Latin America, Middle East, Southeast Asia and Central Asia—have witnessed political, economic, and social transformations in the wake of democratic transitions experienced by them. However, these democratic transitions have produced varying outcomes according to the socio-economic and political context of the particular country. The global political landscape changed democracy worldwide, starting in the middle of the twentieth century. The democratic transitions happened in waves because they were concentrated in time and place rather than spread randomly. Samuel Huntington mentioned three waves of democratization. The first wave started from 1826 to 1926 during which there was a gradual and uneven spread of democracy through most industrialized Western European

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countries. Nevertheless, the progression was disrupted by the emergence of authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, which surfaced globally during the interwar period, extending even into Western nations. The subsequent wave of democratic transformation occurred following the removal of authoritarian rule in countries such as Germany, Italy, Japan, and others. This phase spanned from World War II to the mid-1960s. The third wave of democratization commenced in the mid-1970s with the downfall of dictatorial regimes and the establishment of democratic governments in Portugal, Greece, and Spain. By 1973, only 45 out of 151 countries met the criteria for political/electoral democracies. The global trend of democratization regained momentum with the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the collapse of communist regimes in Eastern European countries. Since the close of the twentieth century, democratization has persisted without interruption. The third wave of democracy reached both post-communist and post-colonial nations in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Consequently, the last three decades have witnessed widespread transitions to democracy on a global scale, transcending specific geographical or political regions. Simultaneously, democratic transformations across the world have exhibited notable distinctions from one another (Heywood, 2013).

After years of Communist rule, the democratic wave influenced politics in newly independent Central Asian countries. The Central Asian countries vehemently adopted the democratic principles. However, the political leaders and the authoritarian institutions were reluctant to accept and apply the principles of democracy in practice. More specifically, the freedom of speech and expression remained a vital concern as it directly intersected with their dominance and power. Kazakhstan has been a unique case of the regular violation of freedom of expression and public opinion by political leadership. This paper aims to analyze the events that reflect how the government and political institutions in Kazakhstan have led to the sabotage of media, which constitute a significant instrument of citizen-government communication.

Freedom of Press in Kazakhstan: A Historical Overview

Many countries have transitioned from autocratic to democratic regimes during the past two centuries. Generally, we measure the existence of democracy in these countries on the basis of how their different institutions function there in practice. In this respect, the transition to democracy can only be said to have occurred when democratic institutions are established in the form of open competitive elections, civil and political rights and freedoms, effective opposition, effective political institutions, minority rights, democratic governance, and all other principles associated with the tradition of democracy, and all these institutions are practically functional (Bratton & Van de Walle, 2012).

While conceptualizing democracy, Robert Dahl (1971) has used ‘polyarchy’ as opposed to the term ‘democracy’ to differentiate between the democracy that is currently

in practice, which he characterizes as a polyarchy, and the true or ideal theory of democracy. A country that practices polyarchy, which is an important part of democracy, achieves a certain level of democratic development. According to Dahl (1971), for a system to be a polyarchy, the people must be able 'to formulate their own preferences'; 'signify their preferences to their fellow citizens and the government by individual and collective action'; and 'to have their preferences weighted equally in the conduct of the government, that is, weighted with no discrimination because of the content or source of preference' (p. 2). For these three conditions to be achieved, the government must fulfill eight requirements to qualify for polyarchy: the freedom to form and join associations, the right to freedom of speech and expression, the right to vote, eligibility for public office, the right of political leaders to compete for support and votes, the availability of alternative sources of information, free and fair elections, and presences of institutions that allow citizens to express their preferences through voting and other means (Dahl, 1971). Civil liberties are a vital component of the Dahlian foundation (polyarchy) for a healthy democracy and are essential for democratization. This paper, by analyzing freedom of the press in Kazakhstan, attempts to see whether Kazakhstan adheres to Robert Dahl's conception of polyarchy.

Kazakhstan is one of the Central Asian republics located in the north. Russia borders it to the north, China to the east, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan border it to the south, and the Caspian Sea, along with a portion of Turkmenistan, connects it to the west. The current population of Kazakhstan reflects both the Russian expansionism of the 19th and 20th centuries and the Turkic penetration of Central Asia. The Russian Empire had established settlements in Kazakh territory by 1718. Before that, in 1713, a Kazakh Khan (leader) made a featly commitment to the Russians, and by 1740, all of the Kazakh Khans had made a featly commitment to Russia, which was unknown to the average Kazakh. As a result, many Soviet historians assert that the 'voluntary unification' of the Kazakh and Russian people began around 1730. On the other hand, contemporary nationalist historians in Kazakhstan contend that these alliances were intended only as a temporary, strategic response ("Kazakhstan: Political conditions", 1994).

Over time, by the late 18th century, Russia began to impose centralized and direct administration across the Kazakh territories despite Kazakh's resistance and intermittent uprisings. To establish strongholds in Kazakhstan, Russia increased its involvement by settling Russian and German colonies, making Kazakhs a minority in their own country. To compensate for the Russian casualties during World War I, the Tsarist regime attempted to conscript over 3 million Kazakh teenagers into the Russian army in 1916 ("Kazakhstan: Political conditions", 1994). The Bolshevik seizure of Russia's major cities in 1917 led to the emergence of Kazakh nationalists who demanded complete autonomy from Russia. Such events led to a civil war, during which the Kazakh national government, known as the Alash Orda, was established. Although many Kazakhs and

non-Kazahs, including Russian nationals in Kazakhstan, supported the Soviet Union, the Ordas and anti-Bolshevik groups temporarily retained power in Kazakhstan. Nevertheless, as the civil war raged on, alliances changed along ethnic lines, with Russians and other Slavs fighting the Turkic peoples (Kazakhs and Kyrgyz) until the mid-1920s, when the Soviets forcibly subjugated all of Kazakhstan. Many Kazakhs emigrated to China and other countries during and after the revolution ("Kazakhstan: Political conditions", 1994).

Before the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, the concept of 'freedom of the press' in Kazakhstan, as well as in other Soviet republics, was significantly different from the Western understanding of press freedom. The Soviet government tightly controlled the media, and press freedom was virtually non-existent in the way it exists in democratic countries. The Soviet government, under the leadership of the Communist Party, controlled all forms of media, including newspapers, radio, and television. These media outlets were considered the mouthpieces of the Communist Party and the government. Journalists were expected to adhere to the official party line, and censorship was pervasive. The media's primary function was to disseminate state-approved propaganda, promote the Soviet ideology, and maintain the image of the Soviet government and its leaders. This meant that the media was often used to suppress dissent and any information that was critical of the government. Independent journalism and investigative reporting were practically non-existent. Journalists were closely monitored, and any deviation from the official narrative could result in severe consequences, including imprisonment. The Foreign media was also subject to strict control, and access to information from the outside world was heavily restricted. This contributed to a largely isolated and controlled media environment. Censorship was a fundamental aspect of media control in the Soviet Union—all content, whether print or broadcast, had to be approved by government authorities. Editors and journalists were expected to self-censor their work to avoid trouble with the authorities. The public's access to information was limited, and state-approved content dominated all media channels. This lack of access to diverse information and alternative viewpoints was a defining characteristic of the media landscape in Kazakhstan and other Soviet republics (kangas, 2018).

As a positive development, the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the subsequent collapse of communism added new horizons to global politics. Experts in international relations were optimistic about the transition from communism to democracy and the drafting of the Kazakhstan national constitution. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, Central Asia gained its independence. It began to reform its political system with the universally recognized democratic principles enshrined in their respective national constitutions. These principles included respect for human rights, legislative elections, institutions of the presidency, and the supremacy of international law.

By the mid-1990s, the institutionalization process had successfully implemented

democratic governance, eliminating obstacles to establishing regional democracies. However, these Central Asian nations received heavy national and international criticism for not fully upholding democratic norms. One of the reasons for this could be the shorter span of transition. Central Asian people had no time to imbibe or inculcate these principles gradually (Kukeyeva & Shkapyak, 2013). A decade later, as some democratic states displayed a comeback of authoritarianism, this democratization euphoria was replaced with mounting anxiety over the retreat of democracy. Despite promising to foster democracy, these republics adopted non-democratic practices characterized by personal dictatorship and authoritarian presidentialism. The scholars initially approached the study of regimes in Central Asia through the prism of transitology, which viewed democratization as a linear process aided by political elites and civil society actors. The Central Asian leaders, who saw democracy as the primary threat to their political and personal survival, were now directly accountable for the current situation (Omelicheva, 2013).

This pluralist and tolerant culture of the valley was further developed by Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin whom all Kashmiris usually call *Bud Shah* (great king). He ruled over

Media in Post-Soviet Kazakhstan

The role of mass media is integral to the functioning of a democratic society. It serves as a vital conduit for political information, shaping voters' decisions. Beyond being an information source, media outlets are crucial in identifying societal issues and facilitating public discourse. They act as watchdogs, uncovering errors and wrongdoings among those in positions of power. Given the pivotal functions of the media, it is justifiable to expect them to adhere to specific standards in fulfilling these roles. The foundation of our democratic society relies on the premise that the media effectively performs these functions (Fog, 2013).

In Central Asia, laws safeguarding freedom and regulating media activities share notable similarities with those that have long existed in Western democracies. However, in practical terms, substantial differences exist concerning constitutional protections and the specific legal frameworks addressing various aspects across different republics. In the Soviet Republic, the Central Asian region experienced considerable advantages from Gorbachev's Glasnost policy. An inevitable by-product of this policy was the establishment of a diversity of newspapers designed to challenge the communist authorities by capitalizing on the national sentiments of the masses. Eventually, it led to the changing political atmosphere in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan with the rise of several political movements. Consequently, newspapers like Mustaqil Haftalik, Erk, Tumaris, and Munosobat in Uzbekistan, and Jami-i-Jam, Charogi Ruz, and Adolat in Tajikistan with other newspapers in Soviet Central Asia region played a significant role in

channeling the adoption of national language laws in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan, making Russian the language of inter-ethnic communication. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, the newly founded newspapers in post-Soviet Central Asian states gradually expanded their focus to include matters closely related to the substance and method of their respective governments. After this qualitative change in the orientation of these newspapers and their supporting organizations, the Central Asian governments initiated stringent restrictions on the activities of both independent and state-operated media.

Although the Constitution of Kazakhstan provides for freedom of speech and media, Kazakhstan, like other Central Asian countries, has adopted extensive legislation to control media-related activities. The Law on Press and Media in Kazakhstan, which came into effect on August 1, 1991, imposes severe undemocratic restrictions on media. Article 5 of the law, titled 'Inadmissibility of Abuse of the Freedom of Speech', straightforwardly prohibits the use of mass media in promoting the 'change in the existing state and social order'. Further, Article 32 stipulates that 'the legal position and professional activity of correspondents and other accredited representatives of mass media which reaches an all-union audience, as well as mass media of other union republics shall be regulated by government legislation'.

Apart from a set of legislative restrictions, institutionalized corruption, which has become a permanent feature of Kazakhstan state, has deeply reduced the space for independent media. The democratic institutions in Kazakhstan are in crisis because the people at the helm of affairs do not allow these institutions to function in accordance with democratic norms. In 2001, Emma Grey made a critical remark on the media of Kazakhstan by asserting that, except for a few independent newspapers, television, and radio stations, the media in Kazakhstan is firmly under the influence of individuals who are either loyal or related to the then President, Nursultan Nazarbayev (Irwin, 2000). As she has argued: 'the striking feature of media in Kazakhstan is the way in which Nazarbayev and his family and business associates have taken control of all of the most influential organs of the media in the republic' (as cited in Pannier, 2007).

Shortly after Kazakhstan gained independence in 1991, Nazarbayev's friends and relatives started acquiring media outlets. The most notable instance of this was Dariga Nazarbayeva, Nazarbayeva's daughter, who once headed 'Khabar', a leading state news agency. She resigned as head of the news agency in 2003 and launched her own political party in the same year, although she retains significant influence in the agency (Pannier, 2007).

Independent media in Kazakhstan experienced a further setback when its economy began to flourish due to increasing oil exports. The President's friends and

associates make up a large portion of Kazakhstan's robust business community, and they invested their newly acquired wealth in previously independent newspapers and radio and television stations. For instance, for most of the 1990s, the KTK Television Station and the weekly newspaper 'Karavan' were just two of the several media outlets that published news stories highlighting the administration's shortcomings and governmental atrocities (Pannier, 2007). In 1998, a media consortium spearheaded by Rakhat Aliev, Dariga's husband, acquired both the television station and newspaper. However, on May 24 of that very year, the Prosecutor-General's Office halted the activities of both organizations following criminal charges against Aliev (Pannier, 2007).

Another aspect of Kazakhstan state's undemocratic strategy towards the media is that the independent media outlets are being closed down, either temporarily or permanently, by the government. The official reason that the government often gives for this suspension is procedural violations. However, the press and media, supported by international organizations like the International Press Institute (IPI), Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and Radio Free Europe (RFE), Eurasianet, claim that the political motives are behind the suspension and shutdown of native media outlets in Kazakhstan (Merritt, 2004). The nature of political sabotage via continuous media oppression remains significant. In Kazakhstan, a few native independent media outlets experience a different threat in the form of closure or fines by the courts, as Tamara Kaleeva, the head of the Adil Soz, Kazakh-based media-freedom group, has stated: We have a serious problem with judicial persecution of the media; these are criminal cases and the biggest obstacle we see from year to year is the civil and administrative cases [against the media], mainly accusations of insulting the honor and dignity [of government officials] and the crazy, astronomical fines imposed for moral damage (as cited in Pannier, 2007).

The practice of media crackdown was continued by the Kazakh government in 2013 in the form of censorship and intimidation, prosecution of journalists for defamation and libel, imposition of severe penalties for content violations, and a set of other undemocratic legal restrictions on media and journalists ("Freedom of the press", 2015). While the Constitution of Kazakhstan provides for freedom of speech and the press, these rights are often, in practice, undemocratically restricted by the Kazakh government. Defamation continues to be treated as a criminal offense, with harsh penalties for those involved in defaming the President, members of parliament, and other state officials. Such laws are often used against journalists, who are critics of the government and its policies, and independent media ("Freedom of the press", 2015). Kazakhstan remains one of the few member states of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) without a freedom of information law, despite the ongoing discussion in 2010. In 2013,

President Nursultan Nazarbayev signed amendments to the country's counterterrorism legislation against government critics. The amended bill provides expanded authority to security entities, mandating all media outlets to collaborate with state bodies engaged in counterterrorism. However, the legislation does not specify the nature of the assistance required ("Freedom of the press", 2015).

In May 2016, Kazakhstan created a new Ministry of Information and Communication. At that time, it looked like the country's media had found itself an institution that could stand up for its interests inside the state structure. But it was just an illusion as 37 amendments in Kazakh's media law have done nothing to improve the media situation. On the contrary, these newly accredited rules forever tied the media's hands. The Kazakh government is continuously bringing the work of independent media under the control of the government.

Furthermore, any media outlet whose editorial policies do not meet the criteria of the relevant state ministry can be closed by a court order when it is allegedly involved in spreading fake news or in the case of libel. For instance, the online new site 'Ratel. Kz' was prosecuted on charges of disseminating false information as it had reported on alleged corrupt business practices by businessman and former Finance Minister Zeinulla Kakimzhanov ("Kazakhstan shuts down independent news site", 2018). Criminal liability for defamation has become an important feature of the Criminal Code in Kazakhstan, and it is being regularly strengthened. The serious problem associated with the criminalization of libel in Kazakhstan is that 'it is not only a crime and criminal liability "on paper," but as monitoring has shown, cases of defamation and insult have been actively instituted, investigated, and brought to trial' ("Decriminalization of slander: the best solution", 2020). It was only during Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's Presidency that several new measures were taken in relation to liberalizing the media. Seemed to be a step in the right direction towards a free press. Throughout his election campaign, he has focused on the freedom of expression and speech, the undemocratic curtailment of which has remained a big hurdle in Kazakhstan's democratization process. Accordingly, in June 2020, a new law aiming to Decriminalize defamation was implemented during his presidency. This new legislation states that defendants can face fines and up to 30 days in administrative detention if they are found guilty of defamation under the new administrative code. According to the previous criminal code, defamation was a criminal offense punishable by large fines and up to 3 years in jail ("Kazakhstan decriminalizes defamation", 2020).

Despite the positive step of reforming defamation laws, Kazakhstan still has a long way to go if the government is seriously concerned about freedom of the press. Alongside progress in the laws on paper, however, the Kazakh government continues to

employ coercive measures against journalists, the recent example of which is the installation of secret spyware on their phones in 2023 (Sorbello, 2023). Furthermore, new legislation, which is seemingly unrelated to press freedom and instead targets cyberbullying, was passed in 2022. While this legislation is less stringent, it still holds the potential to block internet resources that fail to curate their content appropriately. On January 7, 2022, amid Qandy Qantar's harshest days of violence, including highhandedness against journalists, Tokayev sent a clear message of warning against journalists by saying that 'the so-called independent mass media have played an accessory role and, in some cases, an inciting role in violations of law and order' (as cited in Sorbello, 2023). Characterizing independent media as an enemy, Tokayev has threatened the existence as well as the legitimacy of journalism in Kazakhstan.

Out of 180 surveyed countries for press media in 2021, a media watchdog known as 'Reporters Without Borders' ranked Kazakhstan 122nd. The country's score in 2022 demonstrated a decline compared to the previous year. While the quality of online news is improving, repression is modernizing. The Kazakh authorities have adopted a reformist discourse since Nursultan Nazarbayev's resignation as President and 'Leader of the Nation' in 2019 after a 30-year reign. However, at the same time, they have readily resorted to arrests, curbs on internet and telecommunications services, and even violence to prevent coverage of significant events ("Heading for reelection", 2020). Likewise, during the 2022 elections, political activities (campaigning, formation of new parties, participation of independent candidates, and their open engagement with the people) made it seem like the political regime was indeed becoming democratic. However, the course of voting and its results showed that the speed of the shift of democratization should not be exaggerated. The campaign did not generate much public interest, and elections took place with electoral fraud and the use of administrative resources (Abishev, 2023).

The Kazakh government's track record in upholding political and civil liberties is disconcerting, as it consistently falls short of meeting its commitments under international agreements and domestic laws, including its constitution. The elections, rather than being authentic expressions of democratic choice, are meticulously orchestrated. Both de jure and de facto constraints on press freedom and freedom of expression prevail, creating an oppressive environment where citizens who express dissenting opinions, be it online or offline, face severe consequences, including imprisonment. Legislation with undemocratic restrictive provisions hampers the right to freedom of assembly, leading to the arrest and detention of peaceful protesters. Civil society groups, trade unions, and religious congregations experience curtailed freedom of association. Instead of being impartial, the judiciary is manipulated for political

objectives. Western governments, historically, have been hesitant to confront Kazakhstan on human rights issues, inadvertently contributing to a sense of impunity among the authorities.

The international community has a constructive role to play in supporting the positive steps that Kazakhstan has recently taken in relation to its laws on the media and democratization. Global actors can foster a more inclusive environment by endorsing and assisting Kazakhstan in pursuing enhanced human rights standards. This involves advocating for legal reforms and actively engaging with the government to ensure the effective implementation of these reforms. Ultimately, such collaborative efforts can encourage Kazakhstan to respect and safeguard its citizens' fundamental rights and freedoms.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the condition of media, which is a vital component of democracy, in Kazakhstan from the perspective of Robert Dahl's conception of polyarchy. The paper has found that although the Constitution of Kazakhstan satisfies the requirements and conditions necessary for the existence of polyarchy (or modern democracy), the Kazakh state in practice regularly violates these conditions and so its democratic transition has taken the form of authoritarianism. While the system of elections and checks and balances exist, they are not implemented democratically. Opposition political parties are forbidden by the government to form and compete in elections. Instead of acting as a check on the executive, the judiciary often aligns with the ruling government. The country's constitution provides for safeguards for human rights, but they are systematically suppressed. Freedom of speech and expression is subjected to unreasonable restrictions and is regularly muzzled for political motives. The government exercises complete control over print and broadcast media and so limits the press, forces the media into self-censorship and regularly bans foreign media outlets. For these undemocratic (or authoritarian) practices, Kazakhstan's commitment to democratic principles is vociferously questioned. The paradox of Kazakhstan engaging in democratic rhetoric while exhibiting authoritarian tendencies raises intriguing questions. Following the ideology of modern authoritarianism, Kazakhstan's apparent commitment to democracy is a strategic move to gain international legitimacy, that is, to legitimize its practices on the international stage. Kazakhstan exemplifies how authoritarianism can be veiled under the facade of democracy. The challenge lies in distinguishing between democratic rhetoric and persisting authoritarian realities. The international community has a constructive role to play in supporting the positive steps that Kazakhstan has recently taken in relation to its laws on the media and democratization.

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China-Kazakhstan Relations: An Analysis of Kazak People's Perception of Belt and Road Initiative

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Abstract

Kazakhstan shares a long border with China and is one of the five most important Central Asian countries with the closest ties to China. At the state level, both China and Kazakhstan share a view that strengthening relations between the two countries is mutually beneficial. As a result, the Kazakhstani state generally holds a positive perception of China. It actively supports the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) launched by China in 2013 as an ambitious framework of projects offering infrastructural interconnectivity. Kazakhstan was the first country to confirm its participation in the Chinese BRI initiative, and both countries have enthusiastically identified more than 55 joint projects related to BRI, collectively valued at over $21.2 billion. These projects are being implemented in Kazakhstan in the following areas: oil and gas, engineering, agriculture, energy, construction, and chemicals. However, unlike the Kazakhstani state, the Kazakhstani public perceives Chinese BRI-related projects and investments negatively, seeing Chinese political, economic, and cultural engagement in their country as China's 'creeping expansion'. Focusing on analyzing China-Kazakhstan relations from the perspective of Kazakhstani people's perception, this paper attempts to identify the areas related to BRI where Kazakhstani people experience fears and examine how anti-Chinese sentiments and activities that are present in the country pose a significant challenge to the realization of BRI dreams. Furthermore, it examines the nature of soft power diplomacy employed by China to improve its negative image within Kazakhstan and analyzes to what extent China has succeeded in it.

Keywords: *BRI, Central Asia, China, Kazakhstan, Sinophobia, Perception, Soft Power, Culture*

Introduction: Chinese Engagement in Post-Soviet Central Asia

After the Soviet-Sino split in the early 1960s, China-Soviet Central Asian relations became practically nonexistent. Following the collapse of the Soviet Union,

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China and Central Asian countries experienced deep mutual suspicion as the former feared the latter's support for Uighur separatists, and the latter had the fear of an influx of millions of Chinese. In the early 1990s, negotiations on border delineation and demilitarization laid the foundations for confidence-building that was institutionalized in 1996 in the Shanghai Five and, subsequently, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) (Pomfret, 2019). In other words, the Central Asian countries' perspectives of strategic and economic cooperation with China became more enticing after the conclusion of the bilateral agreements on border conflicts and the formation of the SCO.

Since the independence of Central Asian Republics (CARs), China-Central Asian relations have been governed by many factors. The social, political, and economic landscapes of CARs have been profoundly and subtly altered by Chinese engagement in the region. The economy has been the most deeply affected of all the other spheres. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, the local economy of CARs has become increasingly dependent on China (Peyrouse, 2007). Beijing's first strategy in the region was to entice the CARs with economic lures and incentives to stabilize the newly independent CARs, given that there would be a significant impact on Xinjiang and China's economic development if the CARs became unstable (Shichor, 2005). Accordingly, it developed a transnational regional development plan to keep Xinjiang separatism under control. Financial inducements have greatly helped China to establish and strengthen friendly ties with newly independent CARs (Cooley, 2012).

Furthermore, the strategic position of the Central Asian region not only presents a new market for Chinese commodities but also the opportunity for new highways, railroads, and infrastructure upgrades. The CARs have realized that the trans-Eurasian corridor would bring their weak economies closer to countries like Iran, Turkey, and Russia, which would help them to promote accessibility and development (Jonson & Allison, 2001). Chinese technology transfer is another significant advantage of Sino-Central Asian cooperation. China has also long been the world's largest importer of raw commodities from the Central Asian region. In addition, for CARs, China has become an enticing partner as, against the West, Chinese investments and loans have never been made contingent on political conditions, making China a 'popular' economic partner with various developing nations (Gyene, 2020).

China has a strong presence in international politics (Zhu, 2016). Recently, China has stepped up its efforts to reinforce its grand strategy of becoming a real global superpower, the vital component of which is the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) launched in 2013, and the first and foremost stretch included in it is towards Central and Western Asia. The BRI (or New Silk Road) aims to integrate transnational infrastructure and massive transportation projects across land and water via a concerted plan (Lain, 2018).

Under it, China invests extensively in the Central Asian region in infrastructure, oil and gas, energy, engineering, communication, and interconnectivity. As of March 2023, China has invested almost $1 trillion into BRI (Satubaldina, 2023). Over the past ten years, 'China has signed more than 200 cooperation documents related to the BRI with 152 countries and 32 international organizations, covering 83% of the countries with which China has diplomatic relations' (Satubaldina, 2023). China has also surpassed Russia as the most potent economic player in the region and world. Although using a 'very compelling narrative', China has been able to promote the BRI ("Interview: Theresa Fallown", 2017), its engagement with CARs through BRI is ridden with several political, social, environmental, and economic challenges. However, so far, China has, to some extent, successfully prevented any such problem from getting out of hand (Szilagyi, 2018).

This paper aims to analyze China-Kazakhstan relations from the perspective of Kazakhstan's people's perception of the BRI. To achieve this objective, the paper is divided into two broad sections. The first section attempts to identify the areas related to BRI where Kazakhstani people experience fears and examine how anti-Chinese sentiments and activities present in the country pose a significant challenge to realizing BRI dreams. The following section examines the nature of soft power diplomacy employed by China to improve its negative image within Kazakhstan and analyzes to what extent China has succeeded in it. The main findings are summarized in the conclusion.

China and Kazakhstan: Kazakhstani People's Perception of BRI

Xi Jinping announced the BRI in Kazakhstan in 2013 as an ambitious framework of projects offering infrastructural interconnectivity, and the most important stretch included in the BRI is towards Central and Western Asia. The BRI, which is about to establish connectivity across Central Asia and onward through the Mediterranean and Gulf region with Europe, has five cooperation priorities: policy coordination, connectivity and infrastructural projects, financial integration, unimpeded trade, and people-to-people bonds (Szilágyi, 2018). Kazakhstan, which shares a long border with China, is one of the most important five CARs with the closest ties to China. Kazakhstan's foreign policy has always remained tilted towards China owing to the presence of a sizeable Uyghur population in Kazakhstan and a large Kazakh minority in the Xinjiang region of China, among other reasons. China surpassed Russia as Kazakhstan's top trading partner in 2010, and before the launch of BRI, China had already made an investment of US$19 billion in Kazakhstan's economy. China-Kazakhstan bilateral trade hit a record high of $31.2 billion in 2022 (Nuryshev, 2023). Kazakhstan was the first

country to confirm its participation in the BRI project, and both countries have signed many agreements for the BRI. Welcoming the BRI, Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev stated in 2014 that the BRI is a 'wonderful concept', and unity will be our strength to establish regional cooperation among countries along the New Silk Road (Shi, 2014). Kazakhstan is the only country in Central Asia that has by 2014 already started an 'all-round strategic partnership' with China. It is a determined supporter of China's securitization-oriented development of the Xinjiang Autonomous Republic, a vital supplier of main mineral resources and energy to China, and now a critical transit corridor connecting China to Europe. Several projects, like the '2050 strategy' and the '100 concrete steps' that include Chinese investments, have been launched by the government of Kazakhstan to strengthen the credibility of the BRI further (Frolovskiy, 2016). Beijing is Kazakhstan's most significant strategic ally, with a $20 billion-plus economic turnover between the two nations. More than $30 billion in investments have already been made by Beijing in the country's oil, mining, transportation, and agricultural sectors. These investments have added to Kazakhstan's own $9 billion stimulus package for the country's development and modernization. Construction of special economic zones, such as the Khorgos dry port on the Kazakhstan-China border, is also underway. Plans for a logistics center in Kazakhstan's Khorgos special economic zone, Khorgos-East Gate, linking China, Central Asia and the Middle East were announced in November 2011. (Frolovskiy, 2016). The first freight trains from Beijing to Tehran via Kazakhstan that have already begun are seen to invigorate Kazakhstan's infrastructure further. Kazakhstan is looking to develop and modernize its available locomotives and repair 460 miles of rails to get 10% of China-Europe's $600 billion trade volume (Frolovskiy, 2016). Although, like other CARs, Kazakhstan has closest ties with China and has welcomed BRI-related investment plans from China as it has a relatively underdeveloped infrastructure, the civil society in Kazakhstan mostly experiences Sinophobe. Kazakhstan's rapidly widening economic ties with China through BRI have intensified fears among Kazakh people about China's political and economic ambitions, the influx of Chinese migrants, and the attraction of the country's natural resources and raw materials. The logic put forth behind the BRI project is that it carries mutual economic benefits for nations participating in the BRI. However, this logic has been questioned regarding whether participating nations risk acquiring unreciprocated Chinese business and tourism (Sternberg et al., 2017). For participating countries, the inevitable risk of their BRI obligations to China is, for instance, related to oil contracts, loan payments, and rentier bureaucracies, which may not eventually offer a fair share of the benefits. As a result of the BRI's relatively constrained role for local stakeholders and communities and China's supervision of the investment plans, the people of Kazakhstan feel that their country's

sovereignty and local autonomy are under threat. Under projects related to BRI, no information is available about the conditions of credit, and the contracts are not published (Dave, 2018). Due to this lack of transparency, Kazakhstan's civil society has expressed skepticism over whether the BRI's modernization and infrastructure developmental project will lead to the country's future debt to China. As Syroezhkin has stated:

There is no clarity yet about the share of Chinese investments and their credit obligations—there are various statistics but it is not clear how to make sense of these. China is spending US$2 billion from its US$40 billion Silk Road infrastructure fund on a new investment fund to support 'capacity cooperation' with Kazakhstan, but all the remaining ones are credits (as cited in Dave, 2018, p. 104).

This means that the people of Kazakhstan perceive investments and loans related to BRI as 'debt traps'. They have fears 'that China would seize land or natural resources in exchange for its loans' (Ryskulbekova, 2023). Furthermore, they perceive the influx of Chinese goods into their country as a threat to local products (Burkhanov & Chen, 2016).
In addition to the dangers of managing and enforcing a transnational megaproject, China's BRI also carries specific threats to local communities along the route. Criminality related to international mafia groups that trade in narcotics and human trafficking is on the rise as a result of more flexible immigration regimes and the building of new highways and railway lines. Kazakhstan's government has strengthened the implementation of its anti-trafficking laws to check human trafficking after facing severe criticism attacking Kazakhstan as a 'sex tourism hotspot' ("Kazakhstan's new concept", 2014).

Kazakhstan and all other CARs are also concerned that the expansion of trans-border corridors and linkages by BRI projects may result in a rise in terrorist and radical Islamist activities as well as the formation of safe havens for Uighur separatist and foreign militant groups (Amighini, 2017). Further, there is a perceived risk that multiple transport corridors may 'turn the entire territories of Kazakhstan and adjacent states into major transport corridors, fulfilling China's needs' (Dave, 2018, p. 104). Due to the lack of uniform and fixed customs fees on goods that pass through Central Asia trade corridors, skimming off customs fees has become common in Kazakhstan and four other CARs (Feng & Foy, 2017). This practice of widespread corruption poses a significant challenge to the realization of BRI dreams and makes Kazakhstani people further Skeptical about its promised benefits.

Most importantly, the Kazakhstani public views Chinese migration to Kazakhstan with suspicion. The projects related to BRI have led to a rapid increase in Chinese migration to Kazakhstan. These projects are largely carried out by Chinese workers and companies (Akmadi, 2021). The increasing presence of Chinese workers on railway, road, and port building projects has bolstered Kazakhstani people's fears about losing

local employment to Chinese workers and so has widely contributed to the growth of anti-Chinese sentiment among the Kazakhstani people (Burkhanov & Chen, 2016). Similarly, the Kazakhstani public characterizes Chinese BRI-related initiatives to boost Kazakhstan's tourism industry as an attempt to 'conquer the land of Kazakhstan without a war' (Burkhanov & Chen, 2016, p. 14). Another cause responsible for anti-Chinese sentiment is the practice of wage disparity between Kazakhstani and Chinese workers in local infrastructure industries. Local laborers employed by Chinese companies in Kazakhstan get lower wages and experience poor working conditions than Chinese laborers (Akmadi, 2021). The influx of Chinese migrants and labor issues accompanied by repeated attempts by Kazakhstan's government to lease some portions of the country's agricultural land to Chinese companies and other foreigners have, from time to time, sparked widespread protests and anti-Chinese rallies in Kazakhstan (Burkhanov & Chen, 2016; Dave, 2018; Ryskulbekova, 2023; Szilágyi, 2018).

Kazakhstan's anti-Chinese sentiments and attitudes are stoked by other factors as well. The ruling elite and other elite groups in Kazakhstan are primarily interested in using investment flows related to BRI for their own purposes at the cost of questioning the uncontrolled Chinese investment that encourages anti-Chinese sentiment. The country's various nationalist groups exploit the anti-Chinese sentiment for their own agendas that contribute to further strengthening the roots of Sinophobia. The general lack of awareness regarding China, its culture, language, and customs among the common population hampers the interpersonal relationships and communication between the local people of Kazakhstan and Chinese migrants, such as employers, in many ways. Among other things, China's inability to successfully address and respond to local citizens' concerns and apply corporate social responsibility methods to solve the problems of local workers working with Chinese companies is a contributing issue (Akmadi, 2021).

Thus, on the one hand, both China and Kazakhstan, at the state level, hold that strengthening relations between the two countries are mutually beneficial. In the sphere of regional security, both countries are fully conscious of the benefits of cooperation to keep extremist (or separatist) movements at bay. In Central Asia, China needs Kazakhstan to realize its hegemonic ambition as among the five CARs, Kazakhstan is the closest neighbor of China, while, in turn, Kazakhstan needs China to realize its goal of becoming a central player in Central Asia. In the economic domain, China, for its own development, needs natural resources and raw materials from Kazakhstan and access to new markets for its commodities via Kazakhstan, while, in turn, Kazakhstan needs China for the development of infrastructure as well as requires finished products and basic consumer goods from China. Accordingly, as a part of the BRI initiative, both Kazakhstan and China have enthusiastically identified more than 55 joint projects, collectively valued at over

$21.2 billion (Satubaldina, 2023). These projects are being implemented in Kazakhstan in the following areas: oil and gas, engineering, agriculture, energy, construction, and chemicals. On the other hand, due to Kazakhstani public distrust of China caused by the above factors, anti-Chinese rallies were launched by Kazakhstani public first in 2019 and then again in 2021 against the realization of these Chinese projects (Akmadi, 2021; Ryskulbekova, 2023). During these rallies, the key slogans were 'we are against Chinese factors', 'no Chinese expansion', and other similar anti-Chinese slogans. Although these anti-Chinese rallies have failed to produce a strong influence on the implementation of BRI-related Chinese projects as Kazakhstan's government brutally and quickly suppressed them, anti-Chinese sentiments and activities are still present in Kazakhstan that pose a significant challenge to the realization of BRI dreams.

Chinese Recourse to Soft Power Diplomacy

Currently, in Kazakhstan, the Chinese government is actively engaged in using soft power to promote a positive image among the people of Kazakhstan by removing their fears and skepticism about the projects related to BRI in particular and China's political and economic involvement in Central Asia in general. Chinese soft power strategy is aimed at eliminating what the Kazakhstani public perceives as China's 'creeping expansion' by negating their perception of BRI-related projects and investments as tools of China's political and economic ambitions through interpreting and presenting them as positive collaborative initiatives for achieving complementarity and mutually economic development (Akmadi, 2021; Burkhanov & Chen, 2016; Dave, 2018; Frolovskiy, 2016; Sternberg et al., 2017). As Bhavna Dave (2018) has summed it up well:

Since the launch of BRI, China has reinvigorated its global public diplomacy. The Chinese political establishment is taking determined steps to alter notions about it held in the West which have become hegemonic and been shared widely around the world. China wants to be seen as a reliable economic partner interested in the mutually beneficial pursuit of shared objectives but without any political goals. Chinese soft power strategy promotes an image of Beijing as a reliable and pragmatic economic alternative to the West and Russia. In promoting its traditional emphasis on infrastructural development and economic growth as prerequisites for security and political reforms, China is seeking support and legitimization for its development strategy by procuring wider public support in the region (pp. 104-105).

To improve its image within Kazakhstan, China is actively engaged in implementing BRI's important component of people-to-people bonds that, as soft power initiatives, aim at developing and promoting people-to-people relations through the promotion of cultural and educational exchanges, art, tourism, youth and women

exchanges, health care, sports exchange, political trust, science and technology collaboration, cooperation among non-governmental organizations, cooperation and communication between legislative bodies, political parties and political organizations, and media cooperation (Sadovskaya & Utyasheva, 2018). As a part of this soft power initiative of BRI, China has established thirteen Confucius Institutes in Central Asia, where students study Chinese language as well as are introduced to Chinese culture, with five in Kazakhstan, four in Kyrgyzstan, and two each in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (Akmadi, 2021; Dave, 2018; Ryskulbekova, 2023). At Kazakhstan's five Confucius Institutes, 14,000 students are enrolled and study (Akmadi, 2021). Furthermore, China has been enthusiastically providing scholarships to the students of Kazakhstan for study in China, and these scholarships are annually increased by China. As a result, students from Kazakhstan are actively interested in getting an education in China (Jiang, 2021; Ryskulbekova, 2023). This is clear from the fact that from 2003 to 2020 the number of students from Kazakhstan in China increased 750 times (Ryskulbekova, 2023). As of 2023, almost 15,000 Kazakhstani students are studying in China, making Kazakhstan among the top ten countries sending the largest number of students to China. China's use of education as a soft power diplomacy contributes to making the Chinese language increasingly popular among youth in Kazakhstan as well as in the other four CARs. In 2016, Dariga Nazarbayeva, daughter of Kazakhstan's former president Nursultan Nazarbayev, stated that 'Kazakh children should learn Chinese in addition to Kazakh, Russian, and English' (as cited in Dave, 2018, p. 106). Most importantly, it widely contributes to softening, if not eliminating, stereotypical anti-Chinese perceptions that Kazakhstani people hold about China. As Zhanibek Arynov, an associate professor at Nazarbayev University, states:

People who have studied and worked in China for some time have a positive attitude toward the country. Once they arrive, they know more about China, they don't have one-sided stereotypical perceptions that China is a threat, that you have to distance yourself from it, fence yourself off. These students have a more comprehensive perception of China, and that's a good thing (as cited in Ryskulbekova, 2023).

Like education, China is also using tourism as a soft power strategy in Kazakhstan to strengthen the cultural bonds between the two countries and promote people-to-people contacts and networking, besides focusing on boosting Kazakhstan's tourism industry (Sadovskaya & Utyasheva, 2018). Justifying China's investment in BRI projects, Chinese discourse holds that the tourism industry has the potential to significantly contribute to human development in Kazakhstan by creating jobs and improving local social and civic facilities. Supporting this Chinese discourse, in 2013, shortly after Kazakhstan was declared as the venue for the exhibition EXPO-2017, the government of Kazakhstan

declared 2017 a year of Chinese tourism in Kazakhstan and stated that five million Chinese people would attend this exhibition in 2017 (Burkhanov & Chen, 2016;

Sadovskaya & Utyasheva, 2018). Since 2013, both countries have been actively engaged in facilitating visa regime for group tourism from China and online tourism services, making information about tourist attractions easily accessible, promoting air traffic, and increasing the quantity as well as the quality of Chinese-language tour operators.

Another important aspect of China's BRI-related soft power diplomacy is its focus on digging into the deep historic cultural connections between China and CARs and then urging the latter to continue and strengthen that shared history of cultural bonds by presenting itself as a historically tolerant, multicultural, peaceful, and Muslim-friendly country (Dave, 2018). Chinese authorities accept that a lack of awareness and proper understanding of China and China-Kazakhstan relations generates myths, stereotypes, and Sinophobia that might hamper the realization of BRI dreams. Accordingly, China has taken many initiatives to implement the cultural component of BRI with the belief that it has the capacity to remove Kazakhstani people's negative perceptions of the Chinese political and economic engagement in Kazakhstan. The 'Non-governmental Organization for Cultural Cooperation Eurasia–Silk Road' was created during the Second Great Silk Road International Cultural Forum held in Moscow in September 2015, the central theme of which was 'Developing Partnership: Planning of Joint Projects for Cultural Cooperation' ("The great Silk Road forum", 2015). This organization aims to serve as a tool for international collaboration between Eurasian countries and as a mechanism for the implementation of recommendations adopted by the Forum, such as the implementation of Silk Road's tangible and intangible heritage as a resource for cultural tourism development, Museum of XXI Century, Silk Road's spirit and prospective collaboration in Eurasian space, and use of advanced science and technology in cultural preservation. Organized by China's Silk Road Fund, China's Foundation of Culture and Arts of Nations, the Fund of Spiritual Development of People of Kazakhstan, and the Intergovernmental Foundation for Humanitarian Cooperation for Commonwealth of Independent States, this Forum was attended by around 300 leading personalities—artists, scientists, businessmen, media representatives, and politicians—from nations along the New Silk Road and representatives from both the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and UNESCO ("The great Silk Road forum", 2015). In this Forum, during the cultural program, within the framework of the event called 'Silk Road Pearl', various projects organized by China, Kazakhstan, and Russia meant to preserve the folk traditions of these three countries were presented. Furthermore, Kazakhstan has actively supported and joined several other collaborative cultural projects

launched by China in association with other partners, such as the International expedition titled 'Thousands li Along the Silk Road' launched in 2014 to strengthen cultural and economic ties and revive the ancient Euro-Asian transport corridor. Kazakhstan was the first country to visit the expedition. China and Kazakhstan also started a walking friendship and cooperation caravan titled 'China-Kazakhstan: Tea Culture of the Great Silk Road', which, while carrying Deyang treating tea Fuca grown in the Chinese Shaanxi province, arrived in Kazakhstan in 2015 from Xian (Nurlanuly, 2015). It was directed to ancient trade routes.

Thus, while China's use of soft power diplomacy has brought about some positive shifts in Kazakhstani people's attitudes and perceptions about China, it has not entirely led to eliminating anti-Chinese perceptions. Even it is being argued that a further increase in Chinese involvement in the economic, political, and cultural spheres of Kazakhstan through soft power diplomacy is bound to strengthen anti-Chinese sentiments and attitudes and reinforce the fears that Kazakhstani people have about the projects and investments related to BRI. As about China's use of the tourism industry as a soft power strategy, the Kazakhstani local newspaper 'Zhas Alash' in an article titled 'What If Chinese Came' has stated:

The government wants to attract up to five million Chinese tourists. Why don't they try to attract English or French tourists? Of course, since China is way overpopulated, they advise its citizens to go and settle abroad. To let them all in would be a dangerous policy for us since many of them come on fake documents and remain unaccounted . China's proposal to adopt visa-free travels for tourists is hence unacceptable for us. It is a way for them to conquer us without a war (as cited in Burkhanov & Chen, 2016, p. 14).

Similarly, regarding the educational component of Chinese soft power, an associate professor at Nazarbayev University, Zhanibek Arynov, states:

Confucius Institutes and scholarships at Chinese universities are a strong tool of China's soft power, but not long-term. All these students come back to Kazakhstan and work in Chinese companies, it's hard for them to find a job afterwards. I'm not quite sure that a Chinese education is a ladder to a career. In the mid-2000s and early 2010s, there was a need for specialists who knew the Chinese language and had the skills to work with China. But now the market is already crowded, so I don't think China has a long-term influence in education (as cited in Ryskulbekova, 2023).

Many fears, such as fears of debt traps, loss of the country's sovereignty, Chinese migration to Kazakhstan, land leases to Chinese companies, lack of transparency in Chinese projects and investments, increase in crimes, human trafficking, corruption and extremist movements, Chinese goods as a threat to local products, and wage gaps between

local and Chinese laborers, that Kazakhstani people have about Chinese projects and investments related to BRI pose a significant challenge to the realization of BRI dreams. China's soft power strategy cannot help it to comprehensively improve its image among the Kazakhstani public unless the Chinese and Kazakhstani governments take concrete steps to remove these fears.

Conclusion

Analyzing China-Kazakhstan relations from the perspective of Kazakhstani people's perception, this paper has found that while, at the state level, the Kazakhstani state generally holds a positive perception of China and actively supports the BRI, the Kazakhstani public perceives Chinese BRI-related projects and investments negatively, seeing Chinese political, economic, and cultural engagement in their country as China's 'creeping expansion'. It has identified that Kazakhstani people experience many fears about Chinese projects and investments related to BRI, such as fears of debt traps, loss of the country's sovereignty, Chinese migration to Kazakhstan, land leases to Chinese companies, lack of transparency in Chinese projects and investments, increase in crimes, human trafficking, corruption and extremist movements, Chinese goods as a threat to local products, and wage gaps between local and Chinese laborers. All these fears have contributed to the growth of anti-Chinese sentiments and attitudes among the local people of Kazakhstan. The paper has found that although China's use of soft power diplomacy has brought about some positive shifts in Kazakhstani people's attitudes and perceptions about China, it has not entirely led to eliminating anti-Chinese perceptions. This paper has also found that the Kazakhstani people's fears about Chinese projects and investments related to BRI pose a significant challenge to realizing BRI dreams. China's soft power strategy cannot help it to comprehensively improve its image among the Kazakhstani public unless the Chinese and Kazakhstani governments take concrete steps to remove these fears.

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Barriers and Bias:
An Overview of the Status of Women in Central Asia

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Abstract

*Women's daily experiences in Central Asia are not frequently reflected in laws about equal rights and opportunities for men and women. In the region, many countries lack efficient systems to keep an eye on the application of national legislation promoting gender equality and human rights treaties. Certain governments overlook the established connections between gender disparity and public policy and economic and social development issues. On average, women make up almost 80% of what males do worldwide. However, in Central Asia, the disparity is more pronounced. In Tajikistan, it is 61%; in Uzbekistan, it is 75%; in the Kyrgyz Republic, it is 78%; and in Kazakhstan, working women make up around 60% of what males do. Throughout Central Asia, there is a trend of low pay and low employment rates among women, which immediately shrinks the economies of the region and raises the poverty rate. It has been surveyed in Central Asia that national income would vary from 27% in Kazakhstan to 63% in Tajikistan if women participated in the same proportion as men. Raising the average salary of working-age women and men in Uzbekistan would lift almost 700,000 people out of poverty. Nations with more gender equality also tend to expand quickly and have substantially higher per capita national incomes. This paper examines how these potential economic benefits are massive in Central Asia and what measures are needed in the region to achieve them. It attempts to address the question as why achieving true gender equality remains a major challenge in Central Asia, even though legal protections in the region are generally strong and women are relatively well-represented in secondary education and the workforce***.**

Keywords: *Central Asia, Women, Political Participation, Gender Disparity, Education, Development, Soviet Union, Religion*

Introduction

Gender equality has long been a goal of nations in regions like Central Asia and Europe. However, there have been significant gender-related effects caused by three decades of unparalleled political, economic, and social transformations, which differ

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nation by nation. Gender gaps continue in earnings and labor force participation ("Gender equality in Europe and Central Asia", 2022). In Central Asia, for men, the labor force participation rate is 66%, while for women it is 50.6%. Women face many obstacles, such as the lack of quality and affordable childcare and access to safe transport, social pressure to adhere to gender-related norms and roles, and the dual burden of professional and household work. The gender salary gap is around 30% ("Gender equality in Europe and Central Asia", 2022). In addition, there are other constraints, such as women's limited access to markets, information, financial services, and assets, that prevent women from holding top business management positions and contribute to low female entrepreneurship. For the World Bank, the main developmental priority is to assist the Central Asian countries in achieving their full economic potential by empowering women through support to female entrepreneurs and business leaders ("Gender equality in Europe and Central Asia", 2022).

One of the various forms of living that existed and continues to exist along the Silk Roads is Nomadism. An important role in the cultural exchanges that took place along these historic routes was played by the nomads of Central Asia. The nomadic communities that inhabited the regions of modern Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, and Turkmenistan had highly specific social systems centered on pasturing herds across vast stretches of desert and grassland and traveling very large distances on horseback ("Did you know?", 2018). Throughout Central Asia, they coexisted with sedentary inhabitants dispersed across areas of cultivated land in oases and river valleys.

In Central Asian nomadic societies, women were actively engaged in a wide variety of tasks like nurturing and rearing children, housework, crafting, riding, and setting up and taking down tents. Furthermore, they were well-known for handling household matters like purchasing or selling the family's livestock. Moreover, at community meetings, women's opinions and views were often considered, particularly when it came to matters of common interest. In the steppes, women used to participate in a variety of sporting and cultural events and rode freely in the steppes ("Did you know?", 2018). However, there were many restrictions imposed by men upon the roles women held within Central Asian nomadic societies. These restrictions were justified by associating them with religion. Thus, from the 18th century, the gender stereotypes rooted in both religious and cultural beliefs and practices led to the worst form of female subordination in the Central Asian region.

Women in Post-Soviet Central Asia

The women in the Central Asian region experienced unprecedented changes when the region was made a part of the Soviet Union in the 1920s. Women were viewed as an

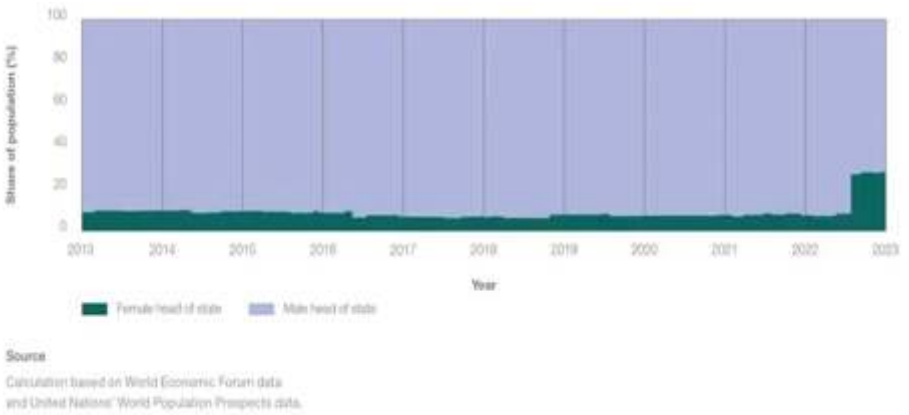
oppressed class throughout the Soviet era, and the state's primary objective was to free them and bring them up to parity with males in all aspects of society, including the legal, economic, social, and political ones (Ulugova, 2020). Against the backdrop of the Soviet state's introduction of equality before the law, equal gender rights, and quotas in public institutions, Central Asian women stopped to wear 'paranja', an Islamic dress covering a woman from head to toe, female education got momentum, and many inegalitarian socio-religious customs and practices responsible for women subordination were challenged ("Women and power", 2006). However, the rights acquired by women and the positive social, economic, and political changes that occurred during the Soviet era began losing ground after the collapse of the Soviet Union. In the structures of post-Central Asian republics, the traditional gender stereotypes came back again. As a result, gender stereotypes rooted in both religious traditions and lifestyles continue to prevent Central Asian women from participating in and pursuing careers in business, politics, sports, and many other fields ("Women and power", 2006). In Central Asia, many families have deeply prescribed gender norms and roles. Women are subservient, and abuse and violence from in-laws and husbands are regular occurrences in their lives. In addition to the burden of stereotypes, Central Asian women are also burdened with economic hardships, including poverty and unemployment. Many women have become the sole breadwinner for their families. In some cases, this has encouraged women to do jobs in business, a domain in which, so far, women have progressed more than politics ("Women and power", 2006). Historically, in Central Asian States, particularly in Kyrgyzstan, women have been active in politics. However, following the 2005 parliamentary elections in Kyrgyzstan and the subsequent revolution that overthrew President Askar Akaev, no single woman assumed a key government position and took up a parliamentary seat. Human rights activist Kerez Japakbaeva from Kyrgyzstan points out that three out of sixteen cabinet ministers were women under the government of Akaev. But she claims that the newly elected all-male parliament 'voted them all out' after 2005 ("Women and power", 2006). Before the country's legislative elections in December 2004, Uzbekistan introduced a 30 % gender quota. However, some impartial observers see this step as a 'formality' devised to mollify the global community without giving women a proportional voice in decision-making and public policy formulation. As Uzbek women's rights activist Marfua Tokhtahojaeva states:

A quota was introduced because the Uzbek government signed an international convention on eliminating all forms of discrimination against women. This document requires the political participation of women. But in the case of Uzbekistan, I am afraid it is just a formality. The government wants to say to the international community, 'Yes, we respect women and their rights. Look how many women we have in the parliament'. But most voters do not trust women or the parliament itself (as cited in "Women and power",

2006). The present-day gender inequality in Central Asia is largely the product of the historical interaction between the Soviet Union's project of modernization, the vital component of which was female emancipation, and customary practices of the Central Asian region (Kane & Gorbenko, 2016). The Soviet state, for instance, initiated a colossal unveiling campaign in Uzbekistan following the failure of other initiatives in the region that caused considerable opposition and resistance, including a wave of killings of women who did not veil. The resistance made gender conservatism a national virtue when it was organized along religious lines, which created a wave in defense of religion and socio-religious customs and practices. Furthermore, the Soviet state, for political purposes, expediently did not touch the local patriarchal networks that it wanted to abolish. As a result, this further strengthened the roots of gender conservatism in the region (Kane & Gorbenko, 2016).

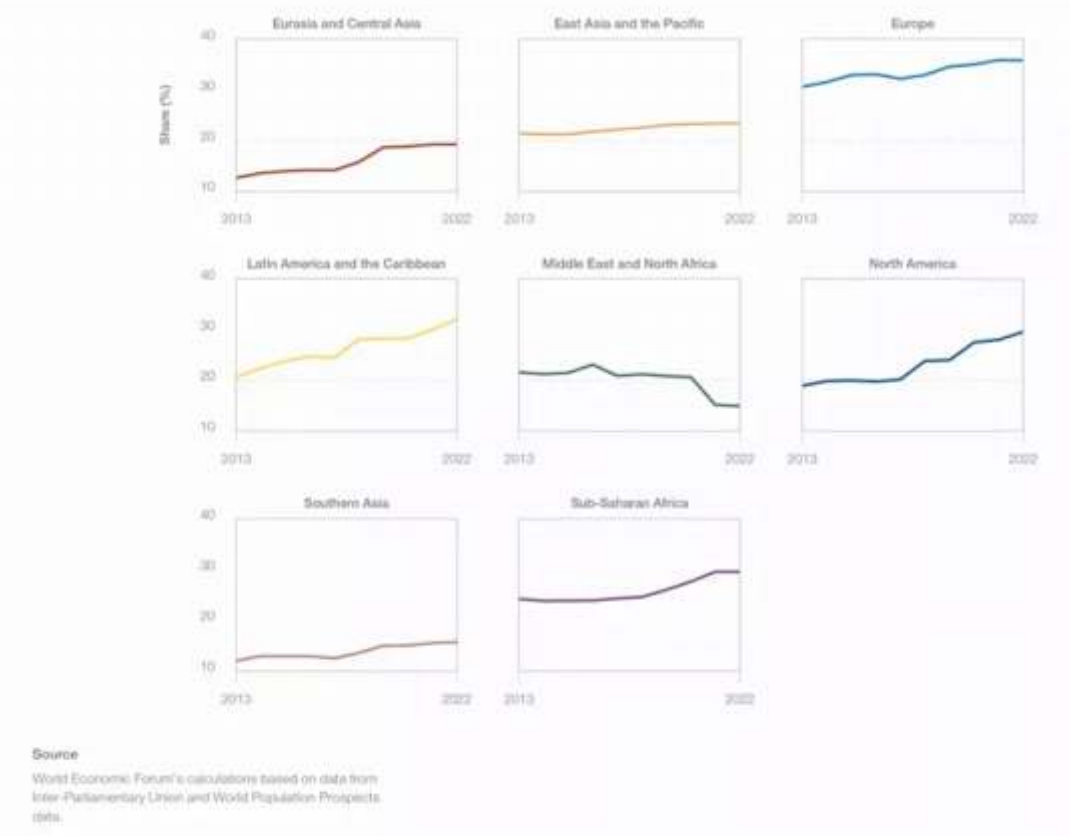
Although Central Asian states share some similarities, they differ in many aspects owing to their different cultural and geopolitical contexts. This region in the field of post-secondary education might be the only world's region where female participation rates both significantly surpass and significantly fall short of the global average of 50% (Sabzalieva, 2016). Compared to males, women are more likely than men in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan to pursue post-secondary education, while less than 40% of their neighbors in Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan are doing so. However, things are not static in this scenario. While Uzbekistan is seeing a slowdown in female enrollment, Tajikistan has seen a nearly 10% rise in the percentage of women obtaining post-secondary education (Sabzalieva, 2016). Due to this gender gap in higher education, gender disparities in political leadership continue to persist. While the proportion of women holding positions of political authority has increased globally, regional differences are still substantial, and gender parity is still a long way off ("Global gender gap report", 2023). Figure 1 below examines the global population under a female head of state from 2013 to 2022.

Figure 1



By December 31, 2022, 2.12 billion people, or around 27.9% of the world's population, live in nations with a female head of state. While this number witnessed stagnation between 2013 and 2021, 2022 experienced a substantial increase. This increase is mostly due to India, the most populous nation on earth, where a female president took office after the 2022 presidential election. Eight of the nine women who have gained power since January 2022 are still in their positions as of March 2023 ("Global gender gap report", 2023). In terms of representation of the state and national agenda setting, these heads of state hold varied degrees of authority depending on the nation's political system. Figure 2 below shows Women's representation in parliament (weighted by population) by region from 2013 to 2022.

Figure 2



Gender disparities in school enrollment have steadily decreased in every region over the previous three decades. While gender disparities in primary school enrollment have mostly closed between 1990 and 2015, three regions—Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia, and the Western Hemisphere—remain without parity ("Pursuing women's", 2018). In addition, progress has been achieved in reducing enrollment discrepancies in secondary schools. Gender parity in secondary education has been achieved across Asia

and the Pacific, which is remarkable considering that in the early 1980s, there were only 65 female registered students for every 100 male students in the region. Compared to the early 1980s, in Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia, there are currently 35 more girls enrolled in secondary education for every 100 boys ("Pursuing women's", 2018).

Zere Asylbek, who has become a central figure in relation to the emergence of Central Asian feminism, released many titles in 2021, one of which condemns domestic violence and the other of which opposes the practice of giving orders to females (Mattei, 2022). More generally, in recent years, in Central Asian states like Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, women have been organizing to make their views known by going to the streets and spreading their actions on social media. An increasing number of them observe the feminist agenda's key anniversaries, condemn violence against women, or start initiatives to promote gender equality (Mattei, 2022).

Within the largely Muslim-dominated patriarchal communities of Central Asia, the roles of men and women, as discussed above, were specifically defined prior to the Soviet era, with women being prohibited from several domains and only males occupying positions of authority. Notwithstanding their primary occupation in agriculture, they contributed significantly to the economy. Women's liberation programs and a discourse on the 'modernization' of women's position were instituted throughout the Soviet period. The laws of the republics even included provisions promoting gender equality. Despite this optimistic outlook and few exceptions, particularly in the artistic and scientific spheres, male dominance persisted in Central Asian Soviet culture. While males possessed political and economic power positions, the great majority of women continued to be restricted to the home and mother-wives (Mattei, 2022).

This historical practice of male domination and female subordination continues to exist in the present socio-economic and political structures of Central Asia. In Central Asian societies, the perception of feminism is inadequate (Ulugova, 2020). Some see it as a threat to the patriarchal institution, arguing that the practice of a woman, who in the family is responsible for too many things, going beyond control negatively impacts the country's demographic development and, therefore, damages the nation. Some people hold that women in Central Asia have already achieved a high level of freedom, so their excessive demands for liberation contribute to the region's instability (Ulugova, 2020). Thus, in light of this context, the Central Asian states have a long way to go to liberate women from male domination and exploitation. There is a need for what Anna Bjerde (who is a vice-president of Europe and Central Asia, World Bank) states: 'we must accelerate action towards gender equality and engage women as agents of change for peaceful, green, resilient, and inclusive development' (as cited in "Gender equality in Europe and Central Asia", 2022).

Conclusion

In the Central Asian states, the prospects for inclusive, healthy, and sustainable growth are limited by the phenomenon of gender disparities. This article found that over the last 20 years, men's and women's employment and labor force participation rates have either decreased or remained stable. However, These rates for women are still lower than those for men. Women are disproportionately underrepresented in the workforce as employers and wage earners. In Central Asia, self-employment is highly prevalent, and women are overrepresented in the category of contributing family workers. The gender wage inequality, which is present in the region, is associated with factors like the practice of women to work fewer hours than males and occupational and industrial segregation. Although female-owned enterprises have more significant scale economies and employ proportionately more women, they often have smaller operations than their male counterparts. Therefore, promoting the growth of female-owned businesses can have a bigger positive impact on overall development, especially on employment for women. Regarding educational achievement, there is a gender gap at the elementary and secondary levels. The share of female students in higher education is over 50%. However, the share of women varies significantly by subject, underscoring the high level of specialization that perpetuates the gender-based division in the corporate and occupational spheres. Although, in recent years, Central Asian states have taken measures to promote female political participation, women are still underrepresented in the political sphere.

The process of equitable development and advancement in the Central Asian region and the accomplishment of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals of poverty and inequality reduction can be achieved by reducing these gender disparities in the region. A thorough, evidence-based strategy is required to realize such reductions. According to Tamar Khitarishvili (2016), It should include the following components.

a. Check blind-traditionalism and remove laws and rules that prevent women from exercising their powers and achieving political, economic, and educational empowerment.
b. Formulate and implement policies like childcare subsidies, affordable and reliable childcare, and public childcare provisions that would improve women's earnings and their labor market outcomes as well as encourage respectable employment opportunities for them.
c. Improve the rural economy and agricultural output.
d. Leverage the green economy's capacity to create jobs to lessen industrial segregation by gender.

e. Encourage substantial investments in education and focus on a gender-balanced system of educational attainment.

f. Incorporate impact evaluation elements into the suggested policies designed for female empowerment.

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Social Adaptation and Resilience in Social Orphans of Kyrgyzstan: A Systematic Review of Effective Strategies and Practices.

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Abstract *:*

This systematic review aims to explore the effective strategies and practices that can foster social adaptation and resilience in social orphans of Kyrgyzstan, a country facing political, economic, and social challenges. The review analyzes three main aspects of the orphanage environment: enrichment activities, programs and practices, and care giving relationship. The findings suggest that enrichment activities can enhance the children's social and emotional competence, socialization and identity formation, life skills and purpose, teamwork and communication, and cultural relevance and expression. The programs and practices can facilitate the children's rites of passage and mental strength, socio-emotional behaviour and resilience, life skills and adjustment, participatory socialization and inclusion, and educational space and family values. The care giving relationship can influence the caregivers' mental health and well-being, and their training and education. The review concludes that the orphanage environment can play a vital role in promoting social adaptation and resilience in social orphans of Kyrgyzstan, and provides recommendations for future research and practice.

Keywords: *Social Orphans, Social adaptation, Resilience, Kyrgyzstan and Orphanage environment.*

Introduction

In every country and in every society there will always be orphans and children who, for various reasons, are left without parental care. The society and the state take care of the development and education of these children. A child, who lost his parents, lives in a special and truly tragic world. The need to have a family, a father and mother is one of the strongest needs of the child. One among group are "Social Orphans". Social orphans are children who have been separated from their biological parents due to various reasons, such as death, abandonment, abuse, neglect, poverty, or migration (Ross, 2011). They are often placed in institutional care or foster families, where they may face challenges in their psychosocial development and well-being (Giese, 2002). Social orphans are a

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vulnerable group that requires special attention and support from various stakeholders, such as caregivers, social workers, educators, health professionals, and policymakers (UNICEF, 2019). According to UNICEF, there are more than 140 million orphans in the world , in which Kyrgyzstan has a high rate of social orphan hood.

Kyrgyzstan is a landlocked country in Central Asia, with a population of about 6.8 million people1. It is one of the poorest and most remittance-dependent countries in the world, with many of its citizens migrating to neighbouring countries or beyond to find work. This has resulted in a large number of children who are left behind by their parents, or who are abandoned or neglected due to various family problems. These children are often referred to as social orphans, and they constitute 80 percent of the total number of orphans in Kyrgyzstan. Social orphans are children who have at least one living parent, but who are deprived of parental care and protection for various reasons. According to the National Statistical Committee of the Kyrgyz Republic, the population of Kyrgyzstan was 6.7 million in 2023, of which 23.6% were children under 15 years old. However, over 11,000 children, or about 0.2% of the child population, lived in 117 children's homes, sometimes called orphanages, in 2016. Most of these children were admitted for one of three reasons: the death of a parent (22%), a family's difficult financial situation (21%), or divorce (14%). Only 6% had no living parents. These children face many challenges and risks, such as poverty, violence, lack of education, and social exclusion. They are often placed in institutional care or foster families, where they may not receive adequate support and attention. Therefore, it is crucial to understand and enhance the factors that contribute to their social adjustment and resilience, which are the abilities to adapt and cope with the adversities and changes in their lives.

In this systematic review, we adopt the definition of social orphans as children who have at least one living parent, but are not under their care and custody, and live in institutional or alternative forms of care. We exclude children who are adopted, in kinship care, or in independent living arrangements. Our main research question is: what are the effective strategies and practices that enhance the social adaptation and resilience of social orphans in Kyrgyzstan? We aim to answer this question by reviewing the existing literature on the topic, and conducting a narrative synthesis of the findings. We focus on the following aspects of social adaptation and resilience: social skills, Intra-personal and interpersonal intelligence, Socio-emotional behaviour, family values, adjustment and coping with adversities. We also examine the role of various activities, programs, and caregiver-child relationships in the orphanage as potential sources of support and influence for social orphans. This systematic review aims to provide best practices and recommendations for the social adjustment and resilience of social orphans of Kyrgyzstan. The existing literature on this topic is insufficient and inconclusive. There is also a shortage of reliable and comprehensive research on the outcomes and durability of

the interventions that target these aspects. Additionally, there is a need for more comparative and contextualized studies that reflect the diversity and specificity of the social orphans and their circumstances.

Social adaptation and resilience : A conceptual framework

Social adaptation is a complex and multidimensional concept that refers to the process of adjusting to changing social environments and conditions .It involves both individual and collective aspects, such as norms, values, behaviours, skills, and attitudes, that enable people to cope with and benefit from social changes .Social adaptation is relevant for various fields and contexts, such as education, health, migration, development, and climate change, where it can enhance the well-being, resilience, and sustainability of individuals and communities (Punia & Sangwan, 2011). However, social adaptation is not a static or linear process, but rather a dynamic and iterative one, that depends on multiple factors and interactions, such as motivations, capacities, opportunities, barriers, and feedbacks .Therefore, social adaptation requires a comprehensive and systemic approach that considers the diversity, complexity, and uncertainty of social systems and their responses to change .Orphans face many challenges and risks in their socialization process, such as the lack of parental care, the experience of trauma, the stigma and discrimination, and the transition to independent living (Merkul & Volchanskaya, 2021). Therefore, it is important to identify and implement effective strategies and practices that can foster their social adaptation and resilience, which are defined as the ability to overcome difficulties and achieve positive outcomes in life (Masten, 2014). Some of the factors that have been found to enhance the social adaptation and resilience of orphans are the quality of caregiver-child relationships, the participation in various activities and programs, the support from peers and mentors, and the preparation for adulthood (Telitsyna, 2021; Merkul & Volchanskaya, 2021; Masten, 2014). However, there is a need for more rigorous and comprehensive research to examine the mechanisms and outcomes of these interventions, and to tailor them to the specific needs and contexts of different populations of orphans, such as the social orphans of Kyrgyzstan, who are the focus of this systematic review.

In addition, social adaptation of orphans can be influenced by the type and duration of alternative care they receive, such as institutional care, foster care, or adoption (Browne et al., 2005). Institutional care, which is the most common form of alternative care in many countries, has been associated with negative effects on the physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development of orphans, especially when they are exposed to poor quality care, overcrowding, and staff turnover (Browne et al., 2005; van Ijzendoorn et al., 2011). Foster care and adoption, which are considered more preferable

forms of alternative care, can provide orphans with more individualized attention, family-like environment, and stable attachments, which can facilitate their social adaptation and resilience (Browne et al., 2005; van Ijzendoorn et al., 2011). However, foster care and adoption also pose some challenges and risks for orphans, such as the possibility of multiple placements, the loss of cultural identity, the adjustment to new norms and expectations, and the discrimination and stigma from the society (Browne et al., 2005; van Ijzendoorn et al., 2011). Therefore, it is essential to ensure that foster care and adoption are well-regulated, monitored, and supported, and that orphans are given adequate preparation, information, and counselling before and after the placement (Browne et al., 2005; van Ijzendoorn et al., 2011).Furthermore, social adaptation of orphans can be affected by the characteristics and needs of the orphans themselves, such as their age, gender, ethnicity, health status, and educational level (Browne et al., 2005). Orphans may have different experiences and outcomes of social adaptation depending on their developmental stage, biological factors, cultural background, physical and mental conditions, and academic performance (Browne et al., 2005). For instance, younger orphans may have more difficulties in forming secure attachments and trusting relationships with others, while older orphans may have more challenges in developing self-reliance and independence skills (Browne et al., 2005). Orphans may also face different types and levels of discrimination and marginalization based on their gender, ethnicity, or health status, which can hinder their social integration and participation (Browne et al., 2005). Moreover, orphans may have different opportunities and aspirations for education and employment, which can affect their social mobility and economic security (Browne et al., 2005). Therefore, it is important to recognize and address the diversity and complexity of the orphans' situations and needs, and to provide them with appropriate and individualized support and services that can enhance their social adaptation and resilience (Browne et al., 2005).

Resilience is the ability to adapt positively to adversity, stress, or trauma (Herrman et al., 2011). Resilience is not a fixed trait that some people have and others do not, but rather a dynamic process that can be influenced by various personal, social, and environmental factors (Herrman et al., 2011). Resilience can be enhanced by interventions that target different domains of life, such as emotional, cognitive, behavioural, and relational skills (Herrman et al., 2011). Resilience can also be fostered by supportive relationships and networks that provide emotional, informational, and instrumental resources (Cross et al., 2021). Resilience is especially important for vulnerable populations, such as social orphans, who face multiple challenges and risks in their lives (Herrman et al., 2011). Resilience can help them overcome the negative effects of institutionalization, attachment disruption, and social stigma, and improve their well-being and functioning in society (Herrman et al., 2011). Resilience can also enable them to

cope with the transition from institutional care to independent living, which often entails new difficulties and uncertainties (Herrman et al., 2011). Therefore, resilience is a key concept and outcome for research and practice in the field of social orphan hood. A conceptual framework for social adaptation and resilience helped us to identify and analyse the key elements, processes, and outcomes of social adaptation and resilience, as well as the challenges and opportunities for enhancing it in different settings and populations (Punia & Sangwan ,2011).Such a framework can also guide the design, implementation, and evaluation of effective interventions and policies that foster social adaptation and resilience in the face of social change.

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Methodology:

The aim of this systematic review is to examine the effective strategies and practices that enhance the social adaptation and resilience of social orphans in Kyrgyzstan. The specific objectives are to:

- Identify and appraise the relevant studies on the topic, using predefined inclusion and exclusion criteria, and following the PRISMA guidelines for reporting.
- Extract and synthesize the data from the included studies, using a narrative approach.
- Analyze the findings and discuss the implications for policy, practice, and research.

To conduct this review, we searched and selected 16 studies that met the following criteria: they were published in English or Russian between 2000 and 2023; they focused on social orphans, aged 6 to 18 years in Kyrgyzstan,; they used quantitative or qualitative methods to measure or explore their social adjustment and resilience; and they reported on the outcomes or impacts of specific activities, programs, or caregiver-child relationships that aimed to improve these aspects. We searched the following databases: Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar, and eLibrary.ru. We also used snowballing and hand-searching techniques to identify additional sources. The search terms included: social orphan, orphan, institutional care, orphanage, boarding school, Kyrgyzstan, social adaptation, social adjustment, resilience, coping, and well-being. We appraised the quality and rigor of the studies using the Mixed Methods Appraisal Tool (MMAT), and extracted the data using a standardized form. We then performed a narrative synthesis of the data, using thematic analysis.

Findings

The search of databases provided a total of 3204 articles. After duplicate removals 1802 articles remained. Of these, 1786 were removed after title and abstract screening, as

they did not meet the eligibility criteria. The research question guiding this review was: What are the effective strategies and practices for improving the social adaptation and resilience of social orphans in Kyrgyzstan? To answer this question, the selected articles were analyzed using a thematic synthesis approach, which involved extracting, coding, and synthesizing the data from each article and identifying the main themes and subthemes that emerged from the literature. The analysis revealed three main themes: Enrichment activities, Orphanage programs and practices, and Care giving relationships. These themes represent the different types of strategies and practices that have been implemented or investigated in relation to the social adaptation and resilience of social orphans in Kyrgyzstan. The following sections will present the findings of each theme and discuss how they answer the research question.

Enrichment activities provided by the Orphanage:

- **Social and Emotional Competence:**

Social and emotional competence is one of the key outcomes of enrichment activities for social orphans, as it enables them to cope with the challenges and opportunities of their lives. Enrichment activities can foster the development of intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences, which are essential for self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, and social skills (Azid & Yaacob, 2016). Moreover, enrichment activities can enhance the resilience of social orphans, which is defined as the ability to overcome adversity and thrive in spite of it (Ungar, 2011). Resilience is influenced by both individual and environmental factors, such as personal traits, social support, and cultural resources (Bunea & Cojocaru, 2015). Enrichment activities can provide social orphans with positive experiences, meaningful relationships, and a sense of belonging, which can buffer the negative effects of trauma and deprivation (Worku et al.,2018). Therefore, enrichment activities can improve the social and emotional competence of social orphans, which can facilitate their adaptation and well-being.

- **Socialization and identity formation:**

Socialization and identity formation are key aspects of human development that influence one's well-being, but social orphans often struggle with them due to the lack of parental care and stable relationships (Muli, 2010). Child-centered play and games, based on child-centered play therapy (CCPT), can help social orphans to overcome these challenges. CCPT is an approach that blends Rogerian tenets with the natural way children communicate through play (Rezaee Rezvan et al.,2022). Through child-centered play and games, social orphans can express themselves, explore their feelings, resolve

their conflicts, enhance their social skills, boost their sense of identity. (Aghaei et al., 2022; Deepa, 2012; Durualp & Aral, 2010; Rezaee Rezvan et al., 2022). Role modeling and identification can also be a beneficial strategy for social orphans. Role modelling and identification can help the children develop their self-esteem, identity, and resilience, as they can learn from the experiences and coping strategies of others who face adversities and who can inspire them and guide them in their social adaptation and resilience (Skovdal & Andreouli, 2011).Therefore, child-centered play and games can be a participatory socialization strategy that can improve the social adaptation and resilience of social orphans in Kyrgyzstan.

- **Life skills and purpose:**

One of the enrichment activities that can foster social adaptation and resilience in social orphans of Kyrgyzstan is life skills and purpose. This sub-theme refers to the benefits of engaging in sports and education for the development of practical abilities and personal goals. Playing sports can be a way of enhancing the social identity of the children, as it can foster their self-confidence, self-expression, and social interaction (Aghaei, Shomali, & Zarei, 2022). It can also be a source of fun and enjoyment, which can reduce their stress and trauma. Life skills training can also improve the life quality of the children by teaching them how to cope with problems, make decisions, and communicate effectively (Sadeghi, Alipour, Abedi, & Ghasmi, 2013). For instance, encouraging pro-social peer activities ,rewarding the good behaviour etc...can build a sense of sociability and life skills in them. Therefore, life skills and purpose can be regarded as a vital sub-theme of enrichment activities that can support social adaptation and resilience in social orphans of Kyrgyzstan.

- **Teamwork and communication:**

One of the enrichment activities that can foster social adaptation and resilience in social orphans of Kyrgyzstan is teamwork and communication. Teamwork and communication skills are essential for developing positive relationships, self-esteem, and coping strategies among children who have experienced trauma and loss (Barnsley, 2011). By engaging in team building activities, such as sports, games, or group projects, social orphans can learn how to communicate effectively, cooperate with others, and achieve their goals. For instance, how they can calmly explaining their points, keeping eye-contact, understanding the feelings of others, turn-taking, empathizing and sharing. These activities can also provide opportunities for social orphans to receive feedback, support, and encouragement from their peers and guardians, which can enhance their psychological resilience (Sewasew et al., 2018; Bunea & Cojocaru, 2015). Moreover,

teamwork and communication can help social orphans to overcome social isolation and stigma, and to integrate into the wider society (Muli, 2010). Sociability and adaptation can help the children improve their social skills, social competence, and social adaptation, as they can communicate effectively, cooperate with others, and adjust to different social contexts. This can also reduce the socialization problems and deprivations that are common among orphans and children without parental care (Aleksandrov et al., 2021). Therefore, teamwork and communication is a valuable subtheme for enriching the lives of social orphans in Kyrgyzstan.`

- **Cultural relevance and expression:**

This subtheme refers to using culturally relevant stories and games to engage the children and build social skills in them. Stories and folktales are forms of enrichment activities that can enhance the children's cognitive and emotional development, as well as their cultural awareness and respect. According to Wood, Theron, and Mayaba (2012), cultural stories can boost the positive adjustment of children orphaned by AIDS by providing them with a sense of identity, belonging, and hope. Similarly, Maree and Du Toit (2011) argue that the oral tradition can play a role in counselling people of African ancestry by facilitating communication, healing, and empowerment. In the case of Kyrgyzstan, stories and folktales can also help the children form ideas about the family and their role in society, as suggested by Skova et al. (2020). Moreover, Mayaba and Wood (2015) highlight the value of using folktales as an intervention tool to enhance resilience for children orphaned and rendered vulnerable by HIV and AIDS, as they can offer moral guidance, emotional support, and coping skills. Therefore, cultural relevance and expression is a subtheme that can contribute to the social adaptation and resilience of social orphans of Kyrgyzstan.

Orphanage 'programs and practices:

- **Rites of passage and mental strength:**

Rites of passage are ceremonial rituals that present a person with a challenge that needs to be overcome in order to grow or progress in life. The concept of rites of passage was first proposed by the French sociologist and folklorist Arnold van Gennep, who identified three stages in these rituals: separation, transition, and reincorporation. According to Thamuku and Daniel (2013), rites of passage can also strengthen the psychosocial wellbeing of orphaned children by enhancing their self-reliance, cooperation and coping skills. For instance ,The Ark for Children is a therapy for traumatized children who leave their normal life and enter a retreat of healing and bonding

activities (Ark & Mark, 2011; People and Nature Trust, 2007). There, they undergo a luminal transformation of their identity and meaning (Ark & Mark, 2011). They emerge with a new sense of self and community, and a restored hope and resilience (Ark & Mark, 2011). Therefore, rites of passage can be seen as a valuable tool to support the social and emotional development of social orphans and prepare them for the challenges and opportunities of adulthood.

- **Socio-emotional behaviour and resilience:**

Socio-emotional behaviour and resilience are important aspects of social adaptation for orphans, who often face multiple adversities and challenges in their lives. Research has shown that various programs and practices can foster positive socio-emotional outcomes and resilience among orphans in different settings. For example, Barnsley (2011) found that supportive relationships, meaningful activities, and positive self-concept were key factors contributing to resilience among children and youths in out-of-home care in Ontario. Sadeghi et al. (2013) reported that life skills training improved the life quality of adolescent orphans in Iran by enhancing their, social skills, and coping strategies. These studies suggest that socio-emotional behaviour and resilience can be nurtured in any institution, such as orphanages, schools, or communities, as long as they offer orphans a safe, caring, and stimulating environment.

- **Participatory socialization and inclusion:**

Participatory socialization and inclusion is one of the effective strategies and practices that can enhance the social adaptation and resilience of social orphans in Kyrgyzstan. According to Feliksovna et al. (n.d.), socialization of orphans left without parental care can be improved by involving them in physical culture and sport activities that foster their physical, mental, and emotional development. These activities can also help them to form positive relationships with their peers, mentors, and volunteers, who can provide them with guidance, support, and role models. Similarly, (Uskova et al. ,2020) suggest that forming ideas about the family in preteen youngsters at orphanages can be facilitated by creating a family-like environment and encouraging their participation in various social events and celebrations. These interventions can help the orphans to develop a sense of belonging, identity, and attachment, which are essential for their resilience and well-being. Moreover, (Muli ,2010) argues that the influence of institutional care on the socialization of teenagers can be reduced by providing them with opportunities to interact with the outside community and to learn life skills that can prepare them for independent living. By doing so, the orphans can gain confidence, self-esteem, and social competence, which can enable them to cope with the challenges and risks that they may face in the future. Therefore, participatory socialization and inclusion

is a key factor that can promote the social adaptation and resilience of social orphans in Kyrgyzstan.

- **Educational space and family values:**

One of the effective strategies to enhance the social adaptation and resilience of social orphans of Kyrgyzstan is to create an educational space within the orphanage where family values are instilled, such as love, care, respect, and responsibility. According to Uskova et al. (2020), forming ideas about the family in preteen youngsters at orphanages can help them develop positive attitudes towards family life, foster their emotional and moral development, and prepare them for future social roles. Similarly, Sadeghi et al. (2013) found that life skills training, which includes teaching family values, can improve the life quality of adolescent orphans by increasing their self-esteem, social skills, and coping strategies. Therefore, providing an educational space that promotes family values can be beneficial for the social orphans of Kyrgyzstan, as it can help them overcome the challenges of living without a family and integrate into the society.

Care giving relationship:

- **Caregivers' mental health and well-being:**

Caregivers of orphans play a crucial role in fostering the social adaptation and resilience of these children, who often face multiple adversities and risks. However, care giving can also be a stressful and demanding task, which can negatively affect the caregivers' own mental health and well-being. According to Proeschold-Bell et al. (2019), caregivers of orphans experience higher levels of depression, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion than the general population, and these factors can impair their ability to provide quality care and support for the children. Therefore, it is essential to address the mental health needs of the caregivers, as well as the children, in order to promote positive outcomes for both groups. Proeschold-Bell et al. (2019) suggest that caregivers of orphans need access to psychosocial interventions, such as counselling, peer support, self-care strategies, and spiritual resources, to enhance their coping skills, emotional regulation, and sense of meaning and purpose. By caring for themselves, caregivers can also model healthy behaviours and attitudes for the children, and create a more nurturing and supportive environment for their social adaptation and resilience.

- **Caregivers' training and education:**

Caregivers' training and education is an important factor for enhancing the social adaptation and resilience of social orphans in Kyrgyzstan. According to Bettmann,

Mortensen, and Akuoko (2015), orphanage caregivers in Ghana have a basic understanding of children's emotional and interpersonal needs, but they lack the training and support to fully attend to them. The authors suggest that caregivers need to learn about children's attachment needs and the specific emotional challenges of orphaned children, as well as their own feelings and coping skills. Similarly, in Kyrgyzstan, caregivers may benefit from training and education on how to provide sensitive, responsive, and consistent care for the social orphans, and how to foster their social skills, self-esteem, and identity. Such training and education may improve the quality of the caregiver-child relationship and the well-being of both parties. Moreover, caregiver-child relationships are crucial for the orphan resilience, as they can offer the children the support of their friends and guardians, who can act as positive role models and sources of affection.

Conclusion:

The orphanage environment can play a vital role in promoting social adaptation and resilience in social orphans of Kyrgyzstan, a country with many difficulties. The review analyzed three main aspects of the environment: enrichment activities, programs and practices, and care giving relationships. The review showed that these aspects can improve the children's social and emotional skills, identity, life skills, communication, cooperation, culture, diversity, coping, mental toughness, resilience, adjustment, inclusion, empowerment, family values, bonds, attachment, trust, security, self-esteem, regulation, support, quality of care, and outcomes. The review also emphasized the significance of the caregivers' mental health, well-being, training, and education.

Implications and recommendations of the Study:

The implications of these findings are that the social adaptation and resilience of social orphans in Kyrgyzstan can be enhanced by providing them with a holistic and supportive social environment that addresses their needs and potentials in multiple domains. The enrichment activities, the orphanage programs and practices, and the care giving relationships can work together to create such an environment and to facilitate the positive development and well-being of the children. However, more research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness and the sustainability of these strategies and practices, as well as to explore the contextual factors and the individual differences that may affect their implementation and outcomes. Furthermore, more research is needed to compare and contrast the experiences and the perspectives of the social orphans in Kyrgyzstan with those of other countries and regions. Also, we suggest some recommendations for future research and practice, such as: conducting more experimental and longitudinal studies; using mixed methods and participatory approaches; exploring the diversity and complexity of the experiences and needs of social orphans; and engaging and supporting

social orphans as active agents of change.

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China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: A New Great Game in South Asia

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Abstract

The paper deliberates on the most controversial projects like the 'New Silk Road Initiative' (NSRI) and the 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI), which have brought South and Central Asia into the limelight, and the stage has been set for the New Great Game. The NSRI is intended to integrate South and Central Asia with conflict-ridden Afghanistan so that the country can achieve economic sustainability and lasting peace. It seeks to renew the Ancient Silk Route to open up new markets and economic opportunities for boosting economic growth, creating new jobs, attracting foreign investment, and ensuring regional stability in Afghanistan and Central Asia. However, the BRI is intended to ensure a strong economic and political position for China in South and Central Asia. China's BRI became a big challenge to the United States NSRI and is emerging as more productive, beneficial, and successful. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a 'flagship project' of the BRI, which can promote economic integration between South, Central, East, and West Asia. This bilateral agreement has the potential to become a multilateral project as the corridor has the prospective road extensions to link Afghanistan, Iran, and India for regional integration.

Key Words: *Economic Cooperation, New Silk Road Initiative, Afghanistan, Stability, Central Asia, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, Belt and Road Initiative.*

Introduction

The geopolitical realignments in the South Asian region have altered the security paradigms for China and Pakistan. India and the US have developed a robust strategic partnership based on common interests of the 21st century, and there is a broad consensus in India that Washington and New Delhi are 'natural allies' or 'indispensable partners' (Teja, 2014). India is determined to achieve high economic growth and become a regional hegemon, whereas Washington's strategic interests in the region are bound to include maintaining de-facto hegemony, eradicating extremism from Afghanistan, and containment of rising China through shaping alliances with the regional powers.

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President Bush called Beijing a ‘strategic competitor’ rather than a ‘strategic partner’. Thus, the China factor has been playing a fundamental role in strengthening the Indo-US strategic partnership (Fani, 2009). China possesses a growing leverage in the emerging geo-political and geo-economic spheres of Central and South Asia. Beijing has placed huge investments in mining and construction in Central Asia and Afghanistan. China’s role is crucial and linked to its internal energy deficiency. The 'Silk Road Economic Belt' and the 'Maritime Silk Road,' collectively known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), also referred to as the 'One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative,' is the main expression of China's 'New Silk Road' strategy. Central Asia, which is in the heart of the Silk Road, is experiencing diverse economic, political, and ideological revivals in the transitional development context. At the geopolitical level, Central Asia once again has become the center of the global powers' attention. Redistribution and control of the world resources are the top priorities as in earlier times with the consequence that the ‘Great Game’ has transformed into the ‘New Great Game’. The Chinese believe that Central Asia was not only a part of the post-Soviet system but also of the Muslim world. Beijing increasingly cherishes building a privileged partnership with Central Asia (Peyrouse et al., 2012) as well as with Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan (Kemp, 2010) to diversify its role in the newly growing regional competition and cooperation setups. The BRI aims to increase connectivity so as to enhance trade flows and spur long-term regional economic growth and development, benefiting all those involved (Bandey, 2011). Although China rejected the geopolitical connotations of the project by illuminating geo-economic aspects, the skeptics contend that it would trigger geopolitical conflict. So, the US and Japan are reluctant to join BRI, and simultaneously, India raised its apprehensions over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Hussain, 2017)

The New Silk Route

Silk Route is a network of interlinked trade routes across the Afro-Eurasian landmass connecting East, South, and West Asia with the Mediterranean and European world, as well as parts of North and East Africa. Besides commodity exchange, the Silk Route was instrumental in linking peoples, communities, and nations with one another for artistic, scholarly, cultural, religious, and spiritual pursuits. The New Silk Road as an idea of integration and cooperation, peace and mutual understanding, has been well received by various international conferences and seminars at scientific institutions. As a result, the theme of the revival of the Silk Road corresponding to contemporary needs is gaining popularity in the international arena. Moreover, the Silk Road represents a symbol of a unique way to build dialogue and communication systems in sociocultural, economic, and political spheres. There is a strong momentum for the re-opening of the Silk Route.

One of the responses to the new century’s challenges is to create networks of new

infrastructural and trade linkages on both regional and macro-regional levels and conceptualize them in new geo-political and geo-economic settings. Expanding markets and input sources beyond national boundaries is one of the key characteristics of regional integration. One can expect higher economic growth and improved human welfare through expanded and shared markets for goods and services. The objective of inter-state integration is to establish a framework for coordination and greater integration for mutual benefits, including security (Mill, 1948). Multi-dimensional cooperation, both at the state and non-state levels, is essential for jointly addressing economic, political, social, cultural, environmental, security, and other issues. Regional integration initiatives, according to Luk Van Langenhove and Philippe De Lombaerde (2007), should fulfill the following few important conditions: strengthen trade integration at the regional level; create an appropriate environment for private sector development; develop infrastructure for economic growth; develop strong public sector institutions and good governance; reduce social exclusion and promote an inclusive civil society; contribute to peace and security in the region; create awareness about clean environment; and strengthen intra-regional interaction within the global orbit. The revival has become most important for physically reconnecting Central and South Asia over Afghanistan to boost regional and global peace and development. The geo-strategic importance of Central Asia, the heart of the Ancient Silk Route, has enormously increased over the past few decades. The revival of the Silk Route has gained importance because of economic, political, and security-related reasons.

The US aimed to end the Afghan conflict through the country's economic empowerment. This is why Washington managed, amid conflict, to provide billions and billions of $USD for the country's economic reconstruction. The US also encouraged international tendering for the exploration of Afghanistan's mineral wealth worth trillions of $USD. The New Silk Road Initiative (NSRI) is a part of the US scheme to integrate energy-rich Central Asia and energy-deficient South Asia through and over Afghanistan and to reconstruct significant infrastructure links broken by decades of conflict. The US has funded university studies for hundreds of Afghan students across Central Asia, sponsored the Central Asia-Afghanistan Women's Economic Symposium and the South Asia Women's Entrepreneurship Symposium in support of thousands of women entrepreneurs and business owners, and organized trade delegations, meetings, and conferences in Almaty, Islamabad, Kabul, Mazar-i-Sharif, and Termez - resulting in over $15 million in trade deals ("US Department of State"). However, China came forward with Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to enhance connectivity with neighboring countries. Beijing has been trying to reduce its exposure to security risks and possible disruptions to its oil and resources supplies from its eastern coastal regions and beyond by building east-west pipelines such as the Kazakhstan-China and Central Asia-China pipelines (Rana &

Chia, 2014).

The Belt and Road Initiative

The Chinese New Silk Road policies aim to enhance connectivity with neighboring countries. In 2013, Chinese President Xi Jinping proposed to build the strategic idea of the 'Silk Road Economic Zone' and 'Maritime Silk Road' in the twenty-first Century with Central Asia, collectively referred to as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Under this strategy, energy and transport infrastructure projects are to be developed in cooperation with neighboring countries. A Maritime Silk Road is also to be developed, focusing on the littorals of Southeast Asia (Rana & Chia, 2014). There are important differences between the Belt and the Road with implications for both Chinese and foreign firms. The Belt is a land corridor that crosses Central Asia, reaching Europe and connecting two of the world's largest economies, China and Europe. The route will emerge as a major logistics corridor and create new opportunities for both Central Asia and Eastern Europe. The Maritime Road is a densely populated consumer and industrial opportunity. Like the landlocked Belt, it also connects China and Europe, yet it crosses Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Middle East, and East Africa. Multinationals from all countries will find significant opportunities over the coming decades (Mckenzie, 2017). The rationale for 'Go West' and the New Silk Roads policies is not solely economic. China has also been trying to reduce its exposure to security risks and possible disruptions to its oil and resources supply from off its eastern coastal regions and beyond by building east-west pipelines such as the Kazakhstan-China and Central Asia-China pipelines. The Sino-Burma gas pipeline has been inaugurated. In both goods and energy trade, the overland transport corridor is unlikely to account for more than 5-7 percent of China's total trade with Europe for a long time in the future. It will, however, certainly curtail China's over-reliance on China's dependence on sea lanes in the South and East China Seas.

The idea of the BRI was to forge closer economic ties, deepen cooperation, and expand development in Eurasia. In early 2015, the contours of Beijing's strategy began to emerge as China's leadership laid out plans for this 'Silk Road Economic Belt' crossing through Central Asia, and a 'Maritime Silk Road' crossing through Southeast and South Asia. Both have been portrayed as an opportunity to reshape the economic and political order in Central Asia and the Asian Pacific by promoting a network of trade routes, political cooperation, and cultural exchanges. The BRI constitutes an effort to counterbalance the US 'pivot to Asia' and American attempts to 'dominate' the region. Chinese policymakers consider the BRI as a mechanism to promote peace and stability in the region by strengthening China's bilateral relations with its neighbors and developing international organizations not dominated by Western powers (Zimmerman, 2015). The Chinese vision of the BRI has been depicted by regional economic integration theorists.

Charles Pentland (1968, p. 10) states that integration is 'the process whereby two or more actors form a new actor… Original actors were taken to be nation-states, but the 'new actor' needed not to be a state in the same sense.' Nevertheless, the most important objective of political integration was to establish flexible, task-oriented international organizations, which could better fulfill human needs than the direct needs of the nation-states and, thereby, scale down the scope of international conflicts (Heinonen, 2006). According to the Chinese President Xi Jinping as of January 2017 over 100 countries and international organizations have responded well to the initiative and over 40 have signed cooperation agreements. Already, BRI-related projects involving over $900 billion are underway. However, it is worth noting that the Asian Development Bank estimates that by 2030, the initiative will cost over $22.6 trillion. In any case, the Initiative has received an immense amount of positive reactions ("The Belt and Road Initiative", 2017).

China uses the BRI to increase its regional influence and play a larger leadership role. It was around mid-2014 that President Xi Jinping began pushing the mantra of 'Asia for Asians.' China began invoking a sense of regionalism and creating a space for itself to lead by presenting new solutions to regional issues. China stressed on the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia (Baruah, 2018). The objective of inter-state integration is to establish a framework for coordination and greater integration for mutual benefits including security (Mill, 1948). Karl Deutsch (1968) defined this regional integration as a relationship among units in which these are mutually interdependent and jointly produce system properties that they would separately lack. Luk Van Langenhove and Philippe De Lombaerde (2007) describe it as a worldwide phenomenon of territorial systems that increases interactions and creates new forms of organization that co-exist with traditional forms of state-led organization at the national level.

The regional development aspect of the BRI is one of China's most important economic policy objectives. In 2014, the BRI was officially incorporated into China's national economic development strategy at the Central Economic Work Conference, the annual agenda-setting economic summit for policymakers (Cai, 2017). One can expect higher economic growth and improved human welfare through an expanded and shared market for goods and services. Economic integration encompasses measures designed to abolish economic discrimination between partner national states. It can also be represented by the absence of various forms of discrimination between national economies (Balassa, 1961). According to Allen (1963), the basic ingredient of any integration is the elimination of barriers to trade among two or more countries. There is a demand in both China and South Asia for gas and electricity, which is abundant in Central Asia. Therefore, energy cooperation and energy infrastructure connectivity have been important topics under the BRI, which already provides other infrastructure (both hard

and soft) for regional and extra-regional connectivity. Afghanistan will certainly have a significant role in energy cooperation between Central Asia and South Asia - a role that has been recognized, with several energy transmission projects underway. China's trade with the Central Asian region has grown dramatically in recent years, from roughly $1 billion in 2000 to over $50 billion in 2013. China identifies transportation bottlenecks as a primary barrier to regional economic integration. In its initial stages, the Silk Road Economic Belt is being framed as a series of transportation, energy, and telecommunication infrastructure projects. According to Wang, the BRI is both 'much older and much younger' than the Marshall Plan, older in that it embodies the 'friendly exchange' of the ancient Silk Road and younger because it is 'born in the era of globalization,' and is thus 'not a tool of geopolitics' (Wuthnow, 2012: 7).

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which links Kashgar in Xinjiang with the Port of Gwadar, has been called a 'flagship project' of the BRI. This project is also the clearest example of how the BRI's geo-strategic rationale intersects with its economic drivers (Cai, 2017). A strong realist, Grieco, holds that states share common interests and undertake negotiations on rules constituting a collaborative arrangement. The weaker partners look to it for the expression of their voice and invocation of protection from their strong partners (Grieco, 1995). Chinese experts characterize the CPEC as an effort to increase Pakistan's economic resilience and encourage stability, as well as a way to reduce China's dependence on petroleum passing through the Malacca Straits from the Middle East to China. China has also long worked with Pakistan to isolate Uighur militant groups in the region and dissuade other extremist groups from supporting them. As China has increasingly developed an Afghanistan policy outside its relationship with Pakistan, it has also started to pursue more direct methods for applying pressure to Uighur militants in the region, including direct engagement with Afghanistan (Zimmerman, 2015). China can address the internal security problems in Xinjiang through economic development - as Gwadar is the closest seaport to the landlocked western region. Beijing realizes that substantial investment and trade will promote economic growth and stability, thus alleviating socio-economic disparity in the region (Bhattacharjee, 2015).

Besides peace and economic stability in Xinjiang, the Gwadar port offers Beijing an advantageous position in the energy-rich Caspian Region. The corridor provides an important trade route linking Xinjiang to the energy-rich Central Asian states through the Gwadar port for energy and trade exchange (Cai, 2017). Professor An Ran, Director of the India-Pakistan Research Centre, made the following statement:

CPEC determine to minimize security threats, especially stemming from the western

region of Xinjiang. China hopes that economic and infrastructure development can achieve security in the vulnerable region. Investment in infrastructure intends to create jobs, reduce anti-state sentiments and generate public resources for additional improvements in law and order. By tackling the threat of terrorism in Pakistan, Beijing hopes to bolster security on its territory (as cited in Hussain &Jamali, 2019: 306).

The success of China's regional economic ambitions depends on stability within Afghanistan. There is a general agreement over the importance of stability in Afghanistan to the success of Beijing's regional economic ambitions. China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi articulated during his visit to Kabul in 2014 that China believes peace and stability in Afghanistan to have an impact on the security of Western China and the tranquility and development of the entire region (Zimmerman, 2015).

The corridor has various projects, including electricity generation, development and rehabilitation of road and rail infrastructure, the establishment of special economic zones, educational and health institutions, and port development. The investment in CPEC-related projects is equivalent to Pakistan's total inward investment since 1970 and is nearly six times the $7.5 billion US aid package. A 5-year plan of CPEC revealed that it would value 17% of Pakistan's GDP and would enhance the existing strategic cooperation between China and Pakistan (Hussain & Jamali, 2019). The proposed corridor enhances the connectivity options of China and Pakistan with the Middle East, West Asia, Central Asia, and ultimately Europe (Rizvi, 2015). The major routes in this project include the western route, which runs through Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces via Turbat, Panjgur, Qalat, Quetta, Zhob, Dera Ismail Khan, and then to Havelian. This route can be linked to Afghanistan and Iran through Chaman and Taftan, respectively (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). The eastern route originates from Gwadar and runs through mainly Sindh and Punjab via Karachi, Hyderabad, Sukkhar, Rahimyar Khan, Multan, and then Havelian. The central route crisscrosses the country from Gwadar until Havelian via different cities of Baluchistan, Sindh, and Punjab provinces, including Khuzdar, Sukkhar, D.G. Khan, Mianwali, and Taxila. An extension from Taxila via Peshawar and Torkham will eventually connect Jalalabad in Afghanistan. From Havelian, a northern route that is common to all connects Kashgar via the Karakorum Highway (Hussain, 2016). Besides these physical links, the officials and stakeholders have identified over 40 sites from Khunjarab to Gwadar for establishing Special Economic Zones and industrial parks along the CPEC routes. These zones are expected to encourage foreign investment and boost the industrialization process by helping to generate local employment (Hussain, 2017). Gwadar Port holds the central place of this project as the port would only enable the project to become an energy corridor (Hussain, 2016). The CPEC connects China directly to the Indian Ocean and the region of the Middle East from the deep Gwadar Port, reducing its dependence on the South China Sea as it is becoming a contested territory

between various regional and global actors and can be choked any time by the competing powers in the Asia-Pacific region. The CPEC trade route will reduce the existing maritime distance of 12,000 kilometers between Beijing and the Persian Gulf by shrinking it to a 3000-kilometer land route from Kashgar to Gwadar (Ali, 2016). The new routes will enable China to import oil from the Middle East and Africa in 10 days as opposed to 45 days shipping time (Hussain, 2016). The project is expected to reduce transportation costs to 1/3rd, and China can save about US$6 million every day, amounting to $2 billion for one year, even if it uses the CPEC route for only 50% of its oil imports (Hussain, 2017). Gwadar port offers Beijing an advantageous position in the energy-rich Caspian Region. The corridor provides an important trade route for linking Xinjiang to the energy-rich Central Asian states through Gwadar port for energy and trade exchange (Perveen & Khalil, 2015).

CPEC is also very important to Pakistan for moving out of economic stagnation as this project (US$46 billion) offers a special opportunity for Pakistan to address some of the main roadblocks to its economic growth like the energy crisis, poor communication and infrastructure, and less foreign investment. There is a broad consensus across the society in Pakistan on the enormous potential of CPEC for promoting economic growth in the country (Hussain, 2017). The persistent energy crisis in Pakistan affects the overall economic growth of the nation. The energy shortage causes a loss of about 2% of GDP annually (Aziz & Baseer, 2015). The establishment of new power plants with US$34 billion will also revive existing industries such as textile and agricultural activity and thus can contribute to alleviating the strained socio-economic conditions of the people (Hussain, 2017). The project will prove a game changer and will make China a real stakeholder in Pakistan's stability and security. It is a win-win situation for both China and Pakistan. Pakistan would also benefit from the Special Economic Zones being established along the planned routes. The infrastructure and social development Projects under the CPEC will start a new chapter of economic development in Baluchistan, which is ranked second with an estimated $7.1 billion under the initial CPEC investments in transportation, energy, and development of Gwadar city and port. CPEC will thus transform Pakistan into a gateway of trade and energy supplies to and from Central Asia, West Asia, and Europe via overland routes (Khetran, 2017). These

Special Economic Zones could become competing places for manufactured goods, agriculture, and the services sector. Likewise, by drawing investments into more export-oriented industries and internationally competitive manufactured goods, Pakistan will be able to turn the existing trade deficit in its favor. As CPEC routes pass through the backward and remote areas, especially Baluchistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Gilgit-Baltistan, they will receive progressive development. The mining industry of Baluchistan can grow as Baluchistan is rich in mineral resources. Likewise, the region of Gilgit-

Baltistan, known for its fresh fruits, such as cherries, apples, and apricots, would be able to export the perishable items by making use of the upgraded transport infrastructure. Similarly, the development of the infrastructure will help to boost the tourism sector (Hussain, 2017). The promotion of socio-economic development through this project could bring peace and stability to Pakistan in general and specifically to the backward province of Baluchistan, making it economically viable and sustainable. The separatists of Baluchistan have been using resource exploitation and deprivation slogans as a major tool for mobilizing public support for sub-nationalism. The development of communication infrastructure will facilitate the socio-economic development of the local people by supporting medium and small-sized industries. This boost promises to reduce unemployment and improve the literacy rate and living conditions of the local populace (Perveen & Khalil, 2015).

The CPEC offers the best opportunity for Pakistan to grow its trade with Central and South Asia, including India. Besides serving as a gateway and thus realizing huge transit revenues, Pakistan can fulfill its energy needs from resource-rich Central Asia via Afghanistan. Similarly, through improved infrastructure, this project can provide landlocked countries the shortest access in comparison to Iran and Turkey, for transporting their goods and power resources to the regional and world markets. (Ali, 2016). Hasan Daud, Director of CPEC, says:

The corridor is beneficial for regional countries including India and Central Asia. CPEC is highly beneficial for its trade expansion to access the markets of Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics. For the transportation of their natural energy resources, CARs can be facilitated with transit trade and pipeline routes by Pakistan; and their goods can be smoothly exported to the Middle East and European states via Gwadar Port (as cited in Hussain, 2019, p. 321).

Thus, CPEC, which is a bilateral agreement at the moment, has the potential to become a multilateral project as the corridor has the prospective road extensions to link Afghanistan, Iran, and India for regional integration. The Chinese Ambassador is very optimistic about CPEC's potential for socioeconomic development. He stated that CPEC projects-related jobs will transform the living standards of local inhabitants and will empower them to stand against terrorism. He advised that officials in the Pakistan government take a holistic approach to the distribution of projects among provinces. The constructive and positive approach will mature the unity and cohesiveness among federation units, and prove to eliminate the misperception that CPEC is a China-Punjab project (Jing, 2019). Ahmar (2015) has evaluated the strategic meaning of CPEC in three aspects. In his opinion, the corridor is the brightest example of the long-lasting friendship between the two countries to help bond and strengthen the China-Pakistan time-tested relationship. The strategic location of the economic corridor will be an efficient and

capable source in the shipping of millions of tons of goods from China to Africa, the Middle East, and Europe via the Gwadar Port. Similarly, the economic corridor will pave the way for billions of dollars in investments in the country, including the most deprived areas of Pakistan (Ahmar, 2015).

Implications of Regional Integration

South Asia is considered to be the least developed region based on socioeconomic and infrastructure development indicators, this region somehow has not witnessed the potential foundation to enhance regional stability and integration for boosting its economic cooperation and infrastructure development. The geo-strategic position of the region makes it vibrant for regional and global powers. Since the commencement of CPEC in April 2015, geopolitics has taken new directions in South Asia. The former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, termed it a 'Game Changer' for Pakistan and the entire region. Similarly, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi described it as a 'flagship project' of BRI (Hussain & Jamal, 2019, pp. 311-12). The nascent BRI illustrates the transformative geopolitical implications of China's rise. Beijing has played an active role in the run-up to the Afghan endgame, as it has aspired to assume a greater role in Afghanistan after the U.S. military withdrawal. China is likely to deepen its strategic partnership with both Pakistan and Afghanistan to form a 'Pamir Group' and establish a new Silk Road linking the Caucasus to western China (Haider, 2020). China has emerged as a dominant stakeholder in regional politics and Security. Beijing initiated and hosted the foreign minister-level trilateral dialogue among China, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The meeting was held in Beijing to discuss counter-terrorism efforts, peace, and regional connectivity. In the end, the Chinese foreign minister stated that Pakistan and Afghanistan had agreed to increase cooperation and address their differences appropriately. The trilateral dialogue reflects that being a responsible regional player, China wants to restore peace and stability in the region through holding peace conferences and economic development (Hussain & Jamal, 2019).

The Indian observers believe that CPEC is a Chinese move to expand its influence in the wider Indo-Pacific region to achieve a strategic hold of India in South Asia (Ranjan, 2015). India, as a regional power, has raised concerns over Chinese involvement in Pakistan. New Delhi argues that China is violating its sovereignty and territorial integrity by investing money in projects running through the disputed territory, 'Pakistan Occupied Kashmir' and Gilgit Baltistan (Ishaq & Ping, 2017). To reverse Beijing's decision, Indian leadership has strongly objected to the project, which is rejected by China through highlighting the economic aspects of CPEC (Hussain & Jamal, 2019). India fears that to provide the CPEC project with legal cover, Pakistan is looking to upgrade the constitutional status of Gilgit-Baltistan and legally admit the region as the fifth province

of Pakistan. Although Pakistan has not yet affirmed the legal integration of Gilgit-Baltistan into Pakistan, such statements have been jotted by Pakistan. Moreover, India views Chinese firms' involvement in development projects in Pakistan-administered Kashmir as Chinese support of Pakistan's claim on the territory. Thus, India is worried that this project in Gilgit-Baltistan will give legitimacy to Pakistan's control over this area. Indian analysts also claim that several thousand Chinese personnel working on these projects belong to the engineering corps of the People's Liberation Army. India views the presence of these personnel as another potential military threat to India's security interests and considers it as a Chinese expansionist agenda in the region (Hussain, 2017). It is (Gwadar Port) viewed with suspicion regarding its effect on the maritime balance of power in the Indian Ocean. India also fears that China wants access to the hot water of the Indian Ocean to take control of the trade routes and South and Central Asia energy resources. China can also use the Gwadar Port as a naval base to contain Indian influence in this region. Chinese investment in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Nepal increases Indian concerns (Ishaq & Ping, 2017). Moreover, India fears the encirclement of India by the so-called 'string of pearls strategy' through China's involvement in the development of a series of strategic naval ports in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Bangladesh (Hussain, 2017). China's proceedings and objectives in this direction are seen as a deliberate attempt to encircle India (Ishaq & Ping, 2017). Parallel to the CPEC project, China has assured Pakistan of a supply of eight submarines around US$4 billion to $5 billion in military hardware.

However, this project became the cause of the dissociation between the US and Pakistan. However, President Trump took the most stringent approach to deal with Pakistan. He claimed, 'we have been paying Pakistan billions and billions of dollars. At the same time, they are housing the very terrorists that we are fighting. But that will have to change. And that will change immediately' ("The Atlantic", 2017). He categorically stated that the US administration would not 'be silent about Pakistan's safe havens for terrorist organizations, the Taliban, and other groups that pose a threat to the region and beyond' (Bhattacharjee, 2017). On the other hand, Trump announced to further strengthen the American strategic partnership with India and requested New Delhi to play a greater role in restoring peace and stability in Afghanistan. India and the US have common interests to constrain the rising Chinese threat, and Trump has amplified the Indo-US strategic partnership. His speech to American soldiers deployed in Japan recognized the Indian greater role in the region. He implanted the idea of the Indo-Pacific by accepting the Indian influence far beyond the Chinese backyard and the tiger economies of East Asia. The new rhetoric of American foreign policy can be seen as the Trump administration's interest in engaging New Delhi for its ambitions to encircle Beijing (Khan, 2017). Before the visit of President Trump to New Delhi, the U.S. Secretary of

State Rex Tillerson presented the idea of 'Road and Port Connectivity' to his Indian counterpart. The fundamental motive behind the 'Road Connectivity' is to connect India with Central Asia and the rest of South Asia, while the port connectivity is planned to be implemented through the Indo-Pacific strategy under the strategic partnership of Washington and New Delhi. The reason for the D'état of Indo-Pacific strategy is to gear up the role of India in the regional political and security affairs of the Asia-Pacific. The conceptualization of the Indo-Pacific would mean the beginning of a new wave of conflicts in the Asian region where India would act as the major US ally (Khan, 2017).

Conclusion

The Silk Road is an idea of integration and cooperation, peace, and mutual understanding. Moreover, the Silk Road represents a symbol of a unique way to build dialogue and communication systems in sociocultural, economic, and political spheres. The revival of the Silk Road depends on cultural and economic integration as well as globalization. Central Asia is experiencing diverse economic, political, and ideological revivals. At the geo-political level, Central Asia has once more become the center of the world powers attention as redistribution and control of the world resources are the top priorities. Central Asia and its counterparts are primarily concerned about stability and peace in this geo-political space. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor carries greater geo-political and geo-strategic implications for regional and global actors. It has altered the geo-political dynamics of South Asia, where new alliances are in the making. India and the US have devised strategies to contain expanding Chinese influence and compete with the CPEC.

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