

Araştırma Makalesi / Research Article

An Evaluation of India's Central Asian Policy in the Context of Regional Interests*

Ferhat Çağrı Aras**

Ekber Kandemir***

Abstract

In this study, the transformations in Central Asian policies from the post-cold war period of India to the present will be discussed. In this context, the influence of India in the power struggle in Central Asia, the basis on which India has relations with the region, and the place of this spiral of ties in India's economy will be tried to be revealed in the context of foreign policy analysis. The main determination of the study is that despite the changes in the internal and external conjuncture of India in the historical process of more than a century, their relations have not been broken, and there has always been a unique, exceptional and always special type of economic and security relations. Another finding is that it has the potential to provide strategic benefits to India in geopolitical competition. The historical development of the relations between India and Central Asian countries and how it can be shaped in the future have been tried to be revealed. This study concludes with an analysis of the current threats for India's national security policy.

Keywords

India, Central Asia, India-Central Asia Relations, Eurasia, Non-aligned Movement.

* Date of Arrival: 07 March 2022 – Date of Acceptance: 16 January 2023

You can refer to this article as follows:

Aras, Ferhat Çağrı, and Ekber Kandemir. "An Evaluation of India's Central Asian Policy in the Context of Regional Interests." *bilig*, no. 105, 2023, pp. 159-181.

** Dr., Karadeniz Technical University, Department of International Relations – Trabzon/Türkiye
ORCID: 0000-0003-2108-1981
ferhatcagriaras@ktu.edu.tr

*** Dr., Republic of Türkiye of Ministry of Interior – Ankara/Türkiye
ORCID: 0000-0001-6211-2276
ekber.kandemir@hbv.edu.tr

Introduction

The South Asian region has attracted attention throughout history due to its geographical location, natural resources, and religious and cultural structure. Because of this interest, this region has been seen as a colonial area at various times for centuries, resulting in the determination of defense-based strategies in the foreign policy preferences of the states. India's independence, the formation of a Hindu elite base, and the cold war period in the aftermath and the accompanying period resulted in India's defensive policies. Central Asia, which was under the monopoly of the USSR during the Cold War, entered into bilateral relations with other states in the context of the USSR's world policies. After the collapse of the USSR, this region participated in relations with Russia, the USA, and China, and the developing regional states established various links in the context of the policies of these major countries.

Although India does not have a common border with Central Asia, it has various historical ties due to its proximity. Central Asia was closed to the outside world during the Cold War years, as it became part of a spiral of relations with India and USRR. India, which is in the group described as 'Non-aligned' due to the conjuncture brought by the period, established close relations with the USSR due to Pakistan's proximity to the USA. It has followed various policies of rapprochement with the Central Asian states. Indian Prime Minister Nehru's visit to Tashkent and Almaty after his visit to the USSR in 1955 can be described as India's first relations with this region after its independence. However, these bilateral relations continued in cultural and economic terms in the years after this period as part of the context of bilateral relations with Russia.

After the disintegration of the USSR, the security problems that emerged in Central Asia increased the security concerns of India. After the Central Asian states participated in bilateral relations with China and Pakistan, the Taliban's expansion in Central Asia, and the rise of the Kashmir problem, India tried to prevent these developments, which it saw as a threat to its national security in the post-cold war period. So, India has cooperated with the Central Asian states to reach various bilateral agreements on counter-terrorism. Furthermore, parallel to the development of the Indian economy due to the September 11 attacks, India started to attach importance to

Central Asia in terms of energy due to its increasing energy needs. Recently, India, which has followed a policy of developing direct relations with the region due to its rapidly growing economy and regional interests, has been establishing various bilateral alliances with the states in the area in order to meet the basic needs of the Make in India program and the context of regional security.

In this study, the transformations in Central Asian policies from the post-cold war period of India to the present will be discussed. The influence of India in the power struggle in Central Asia, the basis on which India has relations with the region, and the place of this spiral of ties in India's economy will be tried to be revealed in the context of foreign policy analysis.

Limited Relations under the Non-Aligned Movement

The concept of the Cold War, which was defined as a reflection of the power struggle between the USA and the USSR after World War II, transformed the structure defined as the international system and brought along a bipolar competition. In this established system, differential groupings have emerged which follow a balanced policy to keep themselves out of polarization due to security concerns as well as ideological and economic interests. The Non-Aligned Movement emerged precisely as a result of this polarization, at a time when states followed a policy of balance. These 3rd group of countries, which wanted to determine their destiny during the period called the liquidation of colonialism to the Cold War period, focused primarily on developing their economies instead of being involved in the tense environment of the cold war. The main goal in this context was to strengthen their existing economic structures and not be a party to the conflict between these two poles.

There is lack of agreement in the literature on understanding of this period since Non-Aligned movement is perceived as defence policy rather than a block. For example, while Alam interprets this situation as a search for identity through the concepts of Self-respect, the autonomy of decision-making, and civilizational entity (Alam 284); Devdutt, in contrast, describes this environment as a reaction to capitalism and socialism (Devdutt 383). Whereas Harshe focuses on the thesis that this environment is a cultural synthesis (Harshe 401), Srivastava directs the literature with the antithesis

that the grass is crushed while the elephants are chirping (Srivastava 71). Countries involved in this movement stayed close to the East or West bloc and received various aid from time to time. However, in general terms, we can conclude that this organization constitutes an alternative other than the East/West block, which is embodied in the Non-Aligned Movement.

Although there is no geographical border between India and Central Asian countries, the Central Asian region has vital importance for India, especially in terms of security paradigms, from the independence of India to the present day. Even though the power centers in this region are generally considered to be of origin from the USA, Russia, and China. For India, stability and economic relations are also the triggers of its internal problems. Both the common cultural heritage dating back to the 16th century and the 'partial' geographical proximity are also associated with the cultural heritage of India.

The strategic importance of Central Asia forced India to get closer to the USSR during the cold war (Singh 72). The region's geographical proximity to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China aligns with India's security interests. This situation led India to take a role in peacemaking and stability establishment. Blank states that the basic level of relations in India's Central Relations in the period from the 2nd World War to the present was shaped by the threat of terrorism that may come from this region (Blank 327-328). Instability factors such as the power vacuum, ethnic tensions, sectarian conflicts, and internal conflicts that emerged in Central Asia due to the collapse of the USSR increased India's security concerns. The claims of the Taliban administration on Kashmir and the expansionist policies of China and Pakistan have also brought India into the various security norms and armament movement. In this context, India has tried to establish a balance against China and Pakistan in Central Asia by making bilateral agreements with the region's countries on counter-terrorism and technical assistance (Afzal 160). After the September 11 attacks, the US operation in Afghanistan and the subsequent developments allowed India to enter new alliances and approaches. As a result of the increasing fear of terrorism in India in the post-9/11 period, the energy supply required for the sustainability of economic development, and the search for new alliances against the bilateral integrated polarization, various partnerships and economic alliances have been opened

between India and the USA (Hathaway 7). The USA, which established close relations with Pakistan at the beginning of the cold war, started to carry out various joint activities with India towards the end of the cold war.

The power balance policy between the East/West bloc also took its place in the concept of balance politics in these two blocks in the tensions between India and Pakistan. According to Chiriyankandath, this situation indicates that it is the result of the party policies followed by Pakistan rather than the independence of India from any bloc (Chiriyankandath 205). For example, India, which initially followed a policy of neutrality between the two blocs, Pakistan's membership in SEATO, and its close relations with the Western bloc pushed India to develop bilateral joint ties with Soviet Russia. This non-alignment policy of India, which continued with the Bandung Conference in the following years, resulted in the India-USA rapprochement with the Sino-India. Even though Kennedy's visit to India was interpreted as an axis shift in bilateral relations in this region, the Pakistan-India war and the immigration waves in the 1970s and the nuclear armament moves of the USA in Pakistan kept India in ties with Russia (Chiriyankandath 205).

These bilateral relations continued until the end of the cold war. The most significant advantage of this situation for India was the development of relations with Central Asia, which was described as the backyard of the USSR at that time, and the increase of various military and economic partnerships. Mohan states that Russia considered India as the most prominent strategic partner (Mohan 27). But in the context of Central Asia, it should be noted that India's leading strategic goal is to prevent Central Asia from becoming a market for the activities of rival countries. Considering the increase in separatist movements in Kashmir, any increase in the activities of countries whose foreign policies had an 'Islamic' soft power motif meant a security risk for India. Bilateral relations with Russia were important in this respect. The religious conflict environment in the Middle East, which was another problematic region, was far from being a danger for India, brought India closer to the USSR. Central Asian countries had to deal with their national identity problems and policies (Roy 104). But theoretically, a common denominator has also been found in the relations with this closeness with Russia has also been the determinant of India's Central Asian policy after the cold war.

Changes in Indian Foreign Policy: Transition from Non-alignment to Multilateralism

The post-cold war period is generally characterized as a phase of policy change for India. The most crucial stage of this transformation is the steps taken in foreign and economic policies. India, which was involved in a balanced approach close to the eastern bloc and the Non-Aligned movement during the cold war, has determined a diplomatic vision to pursue liberal economic policies that can integrate itself into the global economy (Chiriyankandath 207). The most critical step of this process is the steps followed to solve the political problems with Pakistan and China (Mohan 28). In addition, the opening of the country's economy to the outside by focusing on Western-oriented policies and the mission of pursuing peaceful policies with all countries have also been the determining factors of India's general foreign policy. The cooperation policies with the USA, the importance given to economic integration with Central Asia, the rapprochement with China and Pakistan for security issues, bilateral relations with Afghanistan and Tajikistan for the solution of the internal security problem, and finally, the ongoing cooperation with Russia constitute the main elements of the foreign policy. It has made a significant contribution to the growth and development of the Indian economy by taking all these missions within the liberal policies desired to be undertaken. The most critical issue in the procedures followed during this period is the Kashmir issue.

The Kashmir issue is perhaps the most challenging regional issue to resolve. This issue, which is the most crucial priority of Indian foreign policy, has been the primary determinant of India's cooperation with Pakistan since its establishment. India sees Kashmir as an inseparable part of itself and accuses Pakistan of supporting the jihadist forces. The rejection of all accusations makes reconciliation and solutions impossible. There was even a nuclear crisis due to this region. This situation, known today as the Kirgil crisis, includes many tragedies, from the military coup attempt in Pakistan to the region's lack of investment to the situation of mass migration. However, there were diplomatic attempts for bilateral relations due to India's liberal policies, and as a result, a joint declaration was published. A highway connection with Pakistani-controlled Kashmir was opened, and steps were taken to develop economic relations between the two countries.

Another critical policy of India in the post-cold war period was diplomatic initiatives in the border problems with China. The softening that started with bilateral relations after the visit of Vajpayee to China continued with increasing commercial ties. In this period, the trade volume between the two countries made China the largest investor in India, especially in technology transfer, and China's infrastructure and investments in India significantly increased (Dahlman 45-53). India, which wanted to break the developments in China-Pakistan relations during the cold war and gain regional power, made various cooperation in the economic field after the two countries resolved their land disputes to a large extent in the post-cold war. In this context, India became a member of the SCO and followed a policy of balancing the increasing Chinese influence in Central Asia. China's investments in Central Asia and its economic power are undeniable. Even today, a vast Chinese hegemony still dominates this region economically. India, which especially wants to improve its economic relations, has carried out its diplomatic activities to not be adversely affected by the possible Chinese influence by solving its political problems with China (Baladas 4).

India, which sees Russia as a balancing element, gave importance to the Moscow-Beijing-Delhi alliance. Thus, it tried to find a place for itself in the market by balancing the economic and demographic Chinese influence in Central Asia. In an environment dominated by liberal ideas based on political relations and economic cooperation, India's balancing of its interests with the two big giants on the same denominator is like a summary of India's policies. The most prominent example of this summary was the policies aimed at gathering these three countries on a common denominator in Central Asia.

After the Cold War, the USA was the most significant economic initiative in Central Asia. In particular, the USA, which attaches great importance to this region to break Russia's hegemony here, adopted the views of Frederick Starr, known as the 'Greater Central Asia Project', as a diplomatic mission and the 'Silk Road Paper', mainly known as 'A Partnership for Central Asia', has 36 pages. The main criterion in India's relations with the USA is policy initiatives that will subsidize its economic interests in this region by collaborating in the interests of the USA. In addition to these policies, the USA has a Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI)

Pipeline project, also known as Trans-Afghan Pipeline (TAP) project. The country that most supported the US intervention to break the influence of the Taliban was India (Aras and Croissant 140). The developments in Afghanistan during this period were the biggest obstacle to India's expansion (Kulkarni). It aimed to fasten India's import-dependent energy policies with energy from Central Asia. However, the growing fear of terrorism in the region has also reduced India's support for the TAPI project. The unstable environment in Afghanistan and the Central Asian region under Taliban rule resulted in India's redefining its Central Asian policies. This energy corridor project, which could not be completed due to geographical factors, is now interrupted by political instability.

India was the country that invested the most in Afghanistan after the Taliban regime. Stabilization in Afghanistan was key to India's national security. For this reason, India has given support to Afghanistan in many projects for its restructuring. At that time, these aids were around 588 million dollars on average (Norfolk 8). The Indian government sent its experts in various fields to Afghanistan and made many investments in developing the country and economic integration. India puts more effort into creating this region, Mullen says that India spends a lot of effort in restoring cultural ties and carrying out cultural relations together with economic developments and economic considerations in India's relations (Mullen 7). Also, the Indian government has various missions to eliminate the dangers from this region; Sharma noted that the Indian government adopted a diplomatic mission to protect itself from the adverse effects of security concerns and drug trafficking and that India made various initiatives in intergovernmental relations (Sharma 3).

High-level visits between the two countries, the fact that then-president Hamid Karzai studied in India and attached great importance to ties with India, and various mutually signed agreements on the fight against terrorism, agriculture, health, and education contribute to the development of relations between the two countries. These relations were the main guarantee of the security of the TAP project. The TAP was tried to be developed through Turkmenistan after the Taliban took over the administration in Afghanistan. With the US invasion of Afghanistan, the TAP project was further developed with Turkmenistan, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. The project was

further developed with the USA's support of India and Russia's interest in this project. However, the weak stability in Afghanistan at that time made it difficult for Russia to be included. There was an attempt to transport Iranian natural gas to India via Pakistan. However, the opposition of the USA to this development prevented the realization of this project (Motkin).

Changing Balances in Central Asia and India's Economic Cooperation

Since 2014, with the announcement of the Make in India program, India has started to follow a comprehensive path on a very different level of economic model in the world. With the Make in India program, which aims to boost India's manufacturing industry, foreign investment has been encouraged through FDI policies in several sectors that were previously dependent on imports. Additionally, new plans have been put in place to improve infrastructure and increase production capacity, which in turn will lead to a rise in living standards and decrease India's reliance on Asian-based production (Panwar 34). Aiming to break the model of Central Asia, India started to develop its policies in Central Asia. India established various bilateral relations, which is not a continuation of both the uniform bilateral relations of the cold war and the liberal policies after it. India has embarked on policies to develop and expand its relations with this region, especially within the scope of energy and security policies (Wariko 11-15). The Make in India program acts as a decisive actor in India's foreign policy and a catalyst for further developing bilateral relations.

India's first initiatives with Central Asia in this period started with Prime Minister Modi's visit to five Central Asian countries within the scope of the 'Central Asian Cooperation Policy' in 2015. The main objective of these visits is India's adopting a more provocative approach and economic cooperation. It leads to search in a new way. While China aims to realize the dream of a new and developed silk road with its projects, it uses geography and finance. On the other hand, India takes political action to improve the scope of its economic relations (Menon and Rajiv). Trying to develop the content and functionality of the Make in India program, India has followed policies aimed at increasing the security of the energy corridor and its market share.

Today, for India, there is a situation where the regional security problems in Central Asia are spreading to its own country. The increasing radical activity in this region has become a significant security concern within the states. Extreme actions in Syria and Afghanistan show that thousands of people participated in these activities, especially in Central Asia. It is estimated that close to 10% of the foreign fighters from Asia are from Central Asia (Lemon, Mironova and Tobey 17). Even the efforts of these radical groups to return to the Central Asian areas as a result of the suppression of extreme activities raises a security concern in itself. Considering ISIS's search for influence in Central Asia, cooperation with the states in the fight against terrorism makes it inevitable on India's agenda. China and India both see ties as necessary in terms of security and regional stability in the context of developments in Afghanistan. Each state is active in providing aid to the region through aid and education programs, and both are aware of the importance of the region's energy resources. This situation pushes both states to develop policy in the context of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Joshi). This and similar security concerns have paved the way for India to cooperate in the institutional structure for defense cooperation at a bilateral level. As a result, various defense and military cooperation agreements were signed with Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan. The most concrete step taken is the bilateral agreements with Kyrgyzstan. The main target of these negotiations was joint exercises with Kyrgyzstan and Mountain Training Centers established (Hussein and Kashgarian).

In addition, military exercises were held in Probal Dostyk between India and Kazakhstan (Samachar). The main objective of these exercises, which are held regularly every year, is to focus on the fight against terrorism in urban and rural areas. The two countries have been trained in joint training camps (Menon and Rajiv). The military exercises deployed in Lebanon under the command of India are a part of this program. In addition, the initiatives of the President of Uzbekistan toward military cooperation during his visit to India in 2020 are concrete steps to improve stability. During this visit, and collaboration between the two countries was conceptualized by establishing a joint working group in the military field.

Energy security for India is evolving into different dimensions day by day. Today, the concept of security is still perceived as maintaining the status quo

for India and keeping the terrorist threat away from this region. For India, maintaining the status quo is understood as internal turmoil and non-state actors and as climate change energy supply, and loss of regional control. It is thought that this situation will only be successful for India by increasing deterrence and being indispensable in international alliances. In this sense, another basis of India's relations with Central Asia is in the energy field. To secure its energy needs, India follows policies to develop civil nuclear cooperation. In this context, a contract was signed to purchase 5000 tons of uranium in Kazakhstan (MEA). Negotiations for this uranium purchase are still ongoing today. At the same time, a supply agreement was signed with Uzbekistan to purchase uranium.

With the energy resources, India aims to increase its energy security and reduce its dependence on a single country or region by spreading foreign dependency. India focuses on multilateral engagements with Central Asia at the bilateral level. India negotiated with Iran for various multilateral projects, signed a customs contract to improve the transportation network through Iran, and tried to develop an integrated system with this cooperation with Oman and Turkmenistan. Although the US-Iran tension puts these bilateral relations in danger, India aims to eliminate the embargo imposed on Iran with its diplomatic vision. While this situation still seems to be a speculation today, this cooperation is still active in the current case. Also, an essential step of dual multi-platforms has been taken economically. The 'Joint Asia Working Group' was created for a free trade agreement involving Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and India. The feasibility report submitted by this group officially put this trade agreement into operation. Because of these relations, India joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization as a full member Indian. These agendas had previously affected Russia and China. With its involvement of India and Pakistan in the SCO, this organization now represents almost half of the world's population. As a matter of fact, this situation ensures that India stays in touch with Central Asia and makes India an essential power in a platform where it can raise the economic and security trump cards it may have for the world.

The participation of Pakistan and India in the SCO was interpreted as an increase in anti-Western sentiment in this region at first (Aris 457-482). India's participation in the SCO is to realize security-oriented regional

cooperation (Nishtha 85). However, since the organization's establishment, it has been structured under the influence of two great powers, Russia and China. This situation was described as part of Russia and China's economic environmental defense policies. The SCO's anti-Western norms have placed China and Russia in a status quo against the USA, establishing hegemony. With the full membership status of Pakistan and India, this situation is no longer a fear; it has made each state a balancer in the security and economic areas of the regional states. With the rise of China in the post-cold war, Russia saw India as a balancing factor. Russia, which is afraid of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) programs, has made sales with India in military equipment, especially in defense.

Russia perceived India as an actor preventing the expansion of China rather than a market. In contrast, India viewed Russia as a guarantor under the SCO against Chinese expansion (Munir and Keshari 101). Post-Cold War China-India relations are full of border opposition (Zhu 16). Although India's security-oriented policy in its relations with China, especially with Pakistan, provides new gains to the power in domestic politics, it weakens India's influence in the global scale. Both states have stepped into various references in the post-2013 period, and border problems have caused tension between the two countries, especially in the last period. The relations between Central Asian states and India will cause a diplomatic crisis between China and India in the future due to market interests. Both countries look at as a market.

This bilateral cooperation recently developed mutual understanding, and dialogue between India and Central Asian countries. These breakthroughs, which are a spiral of positive relations for India, have allowed India to engage with the region, not as a part of bilateral and multilateral relations. Foreign-dependent policies of the Cold War and post-war period are now of great importance for India to strengthen the uniform and independent decision-making mechanism. The India-Central Asia Dialogue held in Samarkand became the determinant of these policies. It is undeniable that the term geography has had a political and economic interest in Central Asia for centuries. India's policy of connecting with Central Asia and the EU's projects in Central Asia seems likely to be the most decisive period for the 21st century. India's diplomatic vision today is a more fluid and

dynamic environment than in the past. Today, a period of stability in which the United States is the sole superpower has ended. This period has been replaced by an environment that we can describe as the second cold war period based on friction, in which China and Russia are also involved. Developing countries are trying to stop being a pole on the side of the great powers as in the past and follow a policy of neutrality as in the cold war period in the history. In this perspective, India is trying to follow a policy to protect its regional interests by being in a strategic position in important functional groups such as SCO, BRICS, G20, etc. Although the future of such groupings brings along a geopolitical dilemma, it seems that this situation will overshadow the functionality of the security concept in the future.

India still maintains its multiple bilateral relations. At the Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) conference held in Kazakhstan in the last quarter of 2021, Indian foreign minister Jaishankar also visited Kyrgyzstan after he visited Kazakhstan and met with Raşid Meredov, the foreign minister of Turkmenistan (Menon and Rajiv). The talks in question are essential in India's steps towards improving its economic and political ties with Central Asia. In addition to these talks, it is possible to say that the relations between India and the Central Asian states have made progress recently. In particular, the India-Central Asia Dialogue meetings and the India-Central Asia Business Council support this situation.

Today, Central Asian countries follow a policy of opening up to the world after gaining independence. For the past five years, regional states have been engaging in multidimensional relations both regionally and globally. One of the countries that they want to strengthen their ties per these policies in India. India's rapidly growing economy and the search for partners at the international level for various domestic development policies is an opportunity for Central Asian countries. The economic rapprochement between India and the Central Asian countries will profoundly contribute to the development of this region. Central Asian countries, trying to increase their economic cooperation, want to reach the seas through South Asia. One of the most important examples of this is Mazari Sharif – Kabul – Peshawar Railway Project, which is planned to be realized between Uzbekistan and Pakistan. This project is a bridge designed to be established between Central

Asia and South Asia. Including India in this project may be an essential step toward improving relations between the two regions in the future. However, Pakistan does not favor this view. On the other hand, India is looking for large markets and strong collaborations for its growing economy. It is an indispensable factor for sustainable development in developing countries today for these projects. Due to the function of the established economic corridors, India attaches more importance to its relations with this region than in the past. However, the most critical problem in India's relations with the Central Asian countries is that there is no geographical connection between them. The only way to overcome this problem lies in improving relations with Pakistan.

Pakistan's current attitude does not constitute a very positive situation for the solution to this problem. Since resolving this problem is difficult today, India tries to solve its trade relations with this region through the Iranian border and air corridor. But the US's attitude towards Iran jeopardizes these plans. One of the most critical topics of Jaishankar's recent trips is security and radicalization in Afghanistan. The existence of radical terrorist organizations in Afghanistan depends on the stability and functionality of the economic corridors in Central Asia and South Asia (Rowden). Therefore, efforts are being made to solve the radical activities in this region, both in terms of the internal stability of India and the sustainability of the investments made in Central Asia. Today's Central Asian countries now have to make more efforts to reduce their dependence on Russia. China's various investments and Russian influence in this region were seriously balanced in the current political environment. The possible difficulties that Central Asian countries may face shortly also present great opportunities for China and India. In addition, with the Taliban's takeover of power in Afghanistan, India followed a policy of developing relations with the countries in this region through diplomatic relations. When the danger of economic instability is added to the increasing security concerns in the region, this situation naturally brings the threat of radicalization in the current situation. Recently, there has been a global academic interest in comparing competition between countries and regions. The Taliban's re-emergence in Afghanistan, the fact that ISIS is still effective, and Pakistan's deterrent policies in the region are among the dangers that may come to India from this region. Terrorism, a tool of violence, has not yet withdrawn from these two regions. In this case, it

still continues to be a significant risk for India today. India's multicultural structure and the fact that it controls a wide geographical area reveal the fact that order can be maintained by preserving the current status quo in this region. Even the existence of a possible danger forces India to act within this mission in its relations with this region.

One of the most critical advantages of Central Asia for India is its energy resources. Turkmenistan is one of the largest centers in the world in terms of natural gas reserves. There are also sizeable natural gas reserves in Kazakhstan. These reserves make the region more valuable for India, whose economy is increasing. In particular, implementing the TAP project further strengthens India's relations with this region. This corridor is basically a vital route of the historical Silk Road. Although the rivalry in the historical process has weakened the relations between India and Central Asian countries over time, it remains for India today.

India's diplomatic relations over security, trade, and energy resources and the versatile, balancing, and pragmatic policies of Central Asian countries are also an important opportunity for re-establishing bilateral relations. It seems that the parties will continue to develop their bilateral relations in this context in the coming periods. It is undeniable that potential cooperation will improve economic development and regional stability. One of the main methods of solving the problems in Afghanistan for the security of the economic and political stability of Central Asia and India is this regional cooperation. Therefore, this spiral of regional relations, which is followed today, is of great importance in the future.

Conclusion

In this article, India's relations with the states in the Central Asia, its policies from the cold war period to the present, are evaluated in the context of regional interests. This evaluation was made over three periods, India's relations with the Central Asian states were examined as the Cold War, post-Cold War, and last periods. During the Cold War, India's policies of the non-alignment period, the influence of the USSR in this region, the effect of geographical factors on the policies of the period, and Indian foreign policy within the framework of Nehru principles were examined. In the post-cold war period, India's adaptation policies, India's relations with

Central Asian states within the scope of liberal economic policies, India's search for regional alliances, the US-India relations after the September 11 attacks, India's Central Asian policy, India's bilateral relations with Central Asian countries within the scope of Shanghai Cooperation Organization and various military and economic cooperation of India with Central Asian countries were examined. In the last chapter, in which India's current foreign policies are analyzed, the scope of India's Make in India program, its economic relations with Central Asian states within this scope, the effect of India's foreign policy change on its relations with Central Asian countries, India's relations with the Central Asian countries, the impact of the recent high-level meetings and conferences at the ministerial level and the regional competition in India's relations with the Central Asian states were analyzed.

India's Central Asian policies in the post-cold war period carried out bilateral relations in the context of the USSR, since the Central Asian region was closed to the outside world in this period, and this region was partially open to India because of the USSR-India rapprochement. The origins of the sympathy of the Central Asian states towards India also come from this period. In addition, due to the proximity of this region to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and China, India's interest in Central Asia was only on a cultural scale. Security dimension is also of great importance in India's view of Central Asia. The possible terrorist threat to India from this region, claims of Pakistan and China on Kashmir led India to seek various alliances to eliminate such problems in its relations. Although India took part in the non-aligned movement during the cold war, as a result of the Pakistan-USA rapprochement, India started to get closer with the USSR. In this rapprochement, the Central Asian region, which was closed to the outside world, pushed closer to India.

The power vacuum, ethnic tensions, and internal conflicts that emerged in Central Asia in the post-Cold War period also increased India's security concerns. In addition, China and Pakistan's close relations with Central Asian countries during this period, the Taliban's attempt to establish an activity in Kashmir increased security concerns in India's security concerns and pushed India to develop relations with this region within the scope of security paradigms. In the post-September 11 period, India's close stance to the United States in its relations with this region can also be evaluated as

a reflection of these security concerns. However, to meet the energy need arising due to the rapid increase in the growth of the Indian economy, the fundamental economic approach in its relations with this region has been in the context of energy. Although India's lack of direct transportation channels such as land and railway between India and the Central Asian region hindered India's trade relations with the region's countries, India's inclusion in the SCO, free trade zone formations, and various cooperation conferences. This collective situation enabled India to join the natural gas pipelines, and cultural and commercial ties with this region were strengthened with the Great Central Asia Initiative. Moreover, India entered into various military alliances with the countries in the region, and in this context, India established an army base in Farkhor, Tajikistan. The primary purpose of the military partnerships established is to follow a policy of balance against the military alliances of China and Pakistan and to take security measures against terrorist attacks that may come from this region.

With the Make in India program, India has started to follow a comprehensive path on a very different economic model in the world. In this context, it has started to make various policy changes in Central Asian relations. India, which attaches great importance to its relations with this region due to meeting the basic needs of its economy and the market need to be brought by economic growth, has preferred to establish direct bilateral relations with the states of the region instead of various triple alliance searches in the past. India's relations with Central Asian countries developed significantly in the context of diplomatic, economic, and security. As a diplomatic initiative, the trust conferences of the foreign ministers and the India-Central Asia dialogue programs have a great importance in the relations of India-Central Asian countries. With the new energy and economic corridors that were established, economic alliances were found with other states. The influence of Pakistan and China in the markets in this region was tried to be broken. The transformation of the scope of the Make in India program from a development policy to a regional development policy, especially in the last period, is another development observed. Finally, security concerns arising from Kashmir and Taliban influence are overcome with military alliances and joint military operations established with regional states.

Today, India continues to maintain relations with the Central Asian region amid such developments. Although India places great importance on these relations, it appears that India's policies towards the region and the challenges it faces may become increasingly difficult to address in the future. There is a lot of regional competition, and geographical factors significantly hinder India's influence. Today's regional cooperation of India is not very effective compared to Türkiye, Russia, and China. Türkiye's relations with this region have increased significantly, especially in the cultural, economic, and military fields. In addition, Türkiye's regional cooperation with Pakistan and China affects even India's relations with Central Asia. Even in Kashmir, it cannot be said that India has found support.

On top of that, the change of government in Afghanistan and the increasing terrorism and internal conflicts in the Central Asian regions in the last period seriously threaten the security of India. However, it is evident that India's influence in the market is also disruptive, especially since India's high-tech production capacity and R&D ratios have not reached the desired levels, the foreign dependency in the military field is increasing day by day, and the market's efficiency is shifting from finished goods to semi-finished goods and raw materials. Once for all, the fact that the borders started to close together with the pandemic process and the emerging global economic crises seem to affect India's foreign policy relations with this region in the future. But no matter what, the fact that India has now taken a unique diplomatic stance and steered its economic and political relations in this context indicates that India has taken a different perspective on a global scale and that it has a crucial importance with its rapidly growing economy. These developments will increase the reputation of India.

Bibliography

- Afzal, Amina. "India's Growing Influence in Central Asia: Implications for Pakistan." *Strategic Studies*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2003, pp. 155-167.
- Alam, Anwar. "India, Non-alignment and Emerging Global Governance." *India Quarterly*, vol. 73, no. 3, 2017, pp. 273-291.
- Aras, Bülent, and Micheal P. Croissant. *Oil and Geopolitics in the Caspian Sea Region*. Greenwood Publishing, 1999.

- Aris, Stephen. The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation: 'Tackling the Three Evils'. A Regional Response to Non-Traditional Security Challenges or an Anti-Western Bloc?" *Europe-Asia Studies*, vol. 61 no. 3, 2009, pp. 457-482.
- Baladas, Ghoshal. *India and China: Towards a Competitive-Cooperative Relationship?* IPCS Issue Brief. Hawaii: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2010.
- Blank, Stephen. "Central Asia and The Transformation of Asia's Strategic Geography." *The Journal of East Asian Affairs*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2003, pp. 327-328.
- Chiriyankandath, James. "Realigning India: Indian Foreign Policy After the Cold War." *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 93, no. 374, 2007, pp. 199-211.
- Dahlman, Carl J. "China and India: Emerging Technological Powers." *Issues in Science and Technology*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2007, pp. 45-53.
- Devdutt. "Non-Alignment and India." *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, vol. 23, no.1/4, 1962, pp. 380-397.
- Harshe, Rajen. "India's Non-Alignment: An Attempt at Conceptual Reconstruction." *Economic & Political Weekly*, vol. 25, no. 7/8, 1990, pp. 399-405.
- Hathaway, Robert M. "India Transformed: Parsing India's New Foreign Policy." *India Review*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2003, pp. 1-14.
- Hussein, Rikar, and Asim Kashgarian. *Analysts: Central Asian States Must Learn From IS-Linked Citizens*. 17 June 2019. March 2022. <<https://www.voanews.com/a/analysts-central-asian-states-must-learn-from-is-linked-citizens/4963231.html>>.
- Joshi, Manoj. *Playing a Losing Game*. 1 February 2022. 5 March 2022. <<https://www.orfonline.org/research/playing-a-losing-game/>>.
- Kulkarni, Sanket Sudhir. *Wait and watch: The Most Optimal Strategy for Sustaining Indo-Turkmen Energy Ties*. 13 August 2019. 5 March 2022. <<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/wait-watch-most-optimal-strategy-sustaining-indo-turkmen-energy-ties-54385/>>.
- Lemon, Edward, Vera Mironova, and William Tobey. *Jihadists from Ex-Soviet Central Asia: Where Are They? Why Did They Radicalize? What Next?* 07 December 2018. February 2022. <<https://www.russiamatters.org/analysis/jihadists-ex-soviet-central-asia-where-are-they-why-did-they-radicalize-what-next>>.
- MEA, Government of India. "'India-Kazakhstan Relation', Ministry of External Affairs." December 2018. *Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India*. March 2022. <https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/december_2018.pdf>.

- Menon, Rhea, and Sharanya Rajiv. *Realizing India's Strategic Interests in Central Asia*. 1 December 2019. March 2022. <<https://carnegieindia.org/2019/12/01/realizing-india-s-strategic-interests-in-central-asia-pub-80576>>.
- Mohan, Raja C. "India and Balance of Power." *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 85, no. 4, 2006, pp. 17-32.
- Motkin, Anatoly. *Western Tech can Protect Central Asia from the Afghan Scenario*. 18 December 2021. March 2022. <<https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/western-tech-can-protect-central-asia-from-the-afghan-scenario/>>.
- Mullen, Rani D. "India in Afghanistan: Understanding Development Assistance by Emerging Donors to Conflict-Affected Countries." Research Report. 2017.
- Munir, Zeeshan and Raju Keshari. "Russia As A Factor In India–China Relations." *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*, vol. 22, no. 2, 2018, pp. 94-105.
- Nishtha, Kaushiki. "The New Great Game and India's Connect Central Asia Policy: Strategic Perspectives and Challenges." *Journal of International and Area Studies*, vol. 20, no 2, 2013, pp. 83-100.
- Norfolk, Daniel. "India's Engagement with Afghanistan: Developing a 'Durable Policy Architecture'." *Institute of South Asian Studies (ISAS) Working Paper* 138, 2011.
- Panwar, Mahendra. *Make in India, Opportunities and Challenges*. New delhi: Prajjwal Books, 2018.
- Rowden, Rick. *India's Strategic Interests in Central Asia and Afghanistan Go Through Iran*. 18 December 2020. March 2022. <<https://newlinesinstitute.org/iran/indias-strategic-interests-in-central-asia-and-afghanistan-go-through-iran/>>.
- Roy, Oliver. *The New Central Asia: The Creation of Nations*. New York Univ. Press, 2000.
- Samachar, Sainik. *Indo-Kazakhstan Joint Exercise 'Prabal Dostyk 2017'*. 1 December 2017. March 2022. <<https://carnegieindia.org/2019/12/01/realizing-india-s-strategic-interests-in-central-asia-pub-80576>>.
- Sharma, Raghav. *India & Afghanistan: Charting The Future*. Special Report. New Delhi: Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, 2009.
- Singh, Anita Inder. "India's Relations with Russia and Central Asia." *International Affairs*, vol. 71, no. 1, 1995, pp. 69-81.
- Srivastava, Monika. "India as an Emerging Power: A Report." *India Quarterly*, vol. 62, no. 1, 2006, p. 59-79.
- Warikoo, Kulbhushan. "Central Asia and South Asia: Opportunities and Challenges." *India Quarterly*, vol. 72, no.1, 2016, pp. 1-15.
- Zhu, Zhiqun. "China-India Relations in the 21 st Century: A Critical Inquiry." *Inian Journal of Asian Affairs*, vol.24, np. 1/2, 2011, pp. 1-16.

Soğuk Savaştan Günümüze Hindistan'ın Orta Asya Politikasının Bölgesel Çıkarlar Bağlamında Değerlendirilmesi*

Ferhat Çağrı Aras**

Ekber Kandemir***

Öz

Bu çalışmada Hindistan'ın Orta Asya devletleri ile olan ilişkileri Hindistan'ın bölgesel çıkarları bağlamında değerlendirilmiştir. Bu bağlamda, ilk bölümde soğuk savaş döneminde Hindistan'ın Orta Asya politikası analiz edilmiş olup, bağlantısızlık politikası kapsamında SSCB bağlamındaki ilişkileri ve Orta Asya'nın güvenliğindeki rolü değerlendirilmiştir. İkinci bölümde ise Hindistan'ın bağlantısızlık politikasının Orta Asya devletleri ile olan ilişkilere ne gibi etkiler yaptığı analiz edilmiştir. Mevcut durumun tartışıldığı son bölümde ise Orta Asya'daki ülkeler ile ikili ilişkilerin yanı sıra çeşitli diplomatik konferanslar, antlaşmalar ve Şangay İşbirliği Örgütü kapsamında serbest ticaret bölgeleri ve ekonomik koridorların gerekliliği değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın temel çıkarımı tarihsel bağlamda Hindistan'ın iç ve dış politikasında meydana gelen değişikliklere rağmen Orta Asya ülkeleri ile olan kültürel, ekonomik ve askeri ilişkilerin kopmamış olması üzerinedir. Diğer bir bulgu ise jeopolitik rekabette Orta Asya ülkelerinin Hindistan'a stratejik fayda sağlama potansiyeline sahip olduğudur. Bu çalışma, Hindistan'ın ulusal güvenlik politikasının karşı karşıya olduğu güncel tehlikelerin analizi ile sona ermektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Hindistan, Orta Asya, Hindistan-Orta Asya İlişkileri, Avrasya, Bağlantısızlar Hareketi.

* Geliş Tarihi: 07 Mart 2022 – Kabul Tarihi: 16 Ocak 2023

Bu makaleyi şu şekilde kaynak gösterebilirsiniz:

Aras, Ferhat Çağrı, and Ekber Kandemir. "An Evaluation of India's Central Asian Policy in the Context of Regional Interests." *bilig*, no. 105, 2023, ss. 159-181.

** Dr., Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi, Uluslararası İlişkiler Bölümü – Trabzon/Türkiye

ORCID: 0000-0003-2108-1981

ferhatcagriaras@ktu.edu.tr

*** Dr., Türkiye Cumhuriyeti İçişleri Bakanlığı – Ankara/Türkiye

ORCID: 0000-0001-6211-2276

ekber.kandemir@hbv.edu.tr

Оценка центральноазиатской политики Индии в контексте региональных интересов*

Ферхат Чаыры Арас**

Экбер Кандемир***

Аннотация

В этом исследовании рассматривается трансформация политики Индии в Центральной Азии с периода после окончания «холодной войны» в Индии до настоящего времени. В этом контексте делаются попытки проанализировать с точки зрения внешней политики и раскрыть влияние Индии в борьбе за власть в Центральной Азии, анализируется основа, на которой Индия строит отношения с регионом, и место этой спирали связей в экономике Индии. В рамках политики неприсоединения Индии оценивались ее отношения с СССР и роль Индии в обеспечении безопасности в Центральной Азии. В последней части, где обсуждается текущая ситуация, оценивается необходимость зон свободной торговли и экономических коридоров в рамках различных дипломатических конференций, соглашений и Шанхайской организации сотрудничества, а также двусторонних отношений со странами Центральной Азии. Основное определение исследования состоит в том, что, несмотря на изменение внутренней и внешней конъюнктуры Индии в историческом процессе более чем за столетие, их отношения не были нарушены, и всегда существовал уникальный, исключительный и всегда особый тип отношения в сфере

* Поступило в редакцию: 07 марта 2022 г. – Принято в номер: 16 января 2023 г.

Ссылка на статью:

Aras, Ferhat Çağrı, and Ekber Kandemir. "An Evaluation of India's Central Asian Policy in the Context of Regional Interests." *bilig*, no. 105, 2023, pp. 159-181.

** Д-р, Черноморский Технический университет, Международные отношения – Трабзон / Турция

ORCID: 0000-0003-2108-1981

ferhatcagriaras@ktu.edu.tr

*** Д-р, Министерство внутренних дел Турецкой Республики – Анкара / Турция

ORCID: 0000-0001-6211-2276

ekber.kandemir@hbv.edu.tr

экономики и безопасности. Еще один вывод заключается в том, что он может обеспечить стратегические преимущества Индии в геополитической конкуренции. Предпринята попытка раскрыть историческое развитие отношений между Индией и странами Центральной Азии и то, как они могут складываться в будущем. Это исследование завершается анализом текущих угроз, стоящих перед политикой национальной безопасности Индии.

Ключевые слова

Индия, Центральная Азия, отношения Индии и Центральной Азии, Евразия.

