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## India's Central Asian Outreach

### What is the issue?

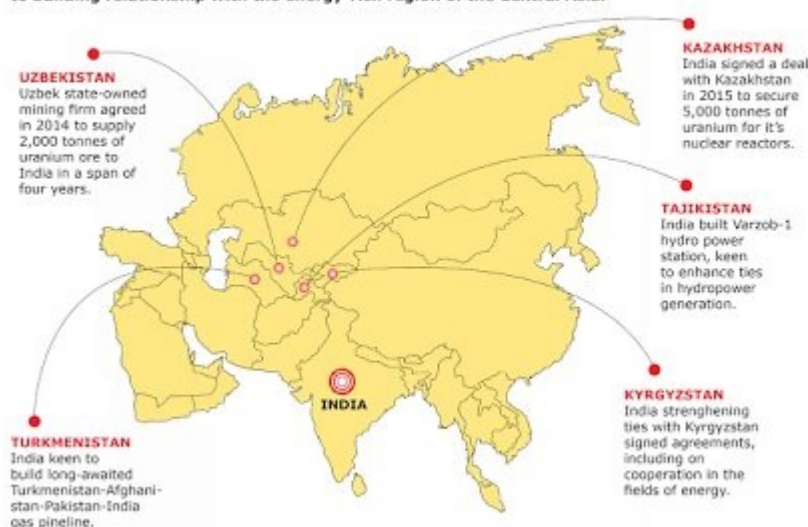
The dramatic developments in Afghanistan have thrown up renewed challenges for India's regional and bilateral ties with Central Asia.

### Why is Central Asia significant to India?

- The Central Asian region is considered to be the part of India's "**extended neighborhood.**"
- Over the past decade, the region has become the site of great power tussles over energy resources.
- At the same time, the world witnessed India's rise as an economic power and a regional power.
- China's deep inroads in the Central Asian republics in terms of investment is also a concern.
- Central Asia is geostrategic position as an access point between Europe and Asia is of greater significance in terms of trade.

### INDIA'S FOOTPRINT IN THE CENTRAL ASIA

India has a special focus on the importance of energy diplomacy, specifically with reference to building relationship with the energy-rich region of the Central Asia.



Source: The MEA, Government of India

## What interventions were made by India in Central Asia?

- After the breakup of the Soviet Union and the formation of the independent republics in Central Asia, India reset its ties with the strategically critical region.
- New Delhi signed the **Strategic Partnership Agreements** (SPA) with Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to stimulate defence cooperation and deepen trade relations.
- India formulated its **Connect Central Asia Policy** which is a broad-based approach including political, security, economic, and cultural connections
- India signed MoUs with Iran in 2015 to develop the **Chabahar port** in the Sistan-Baluchistan province to diversify the export markets and control China's ambitions.
- The government has also proposed to include the strategic Chabahar Port in the International North-South Transport Corridor(INSTC).



- The Central Asian countries have admitted New Delhi into the **Ashgabat Agreement** allowing India to facilitate trade and commercial interactions with Central Asia and Eurasia.
- India has extended a credit line of \$200 million for the support of development projects in Kyrgyzstan.
- It has signed an memorandum of understanding (MoU) on High-Impact Community Development Projects (HICDP).
- Mr. Jaishankar has become the first Indian External Affairs Minister to visit Armenia.
- India has supported efforts for a peaceful solution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

## What are the present challenges in the relation?

- **Re-establishment of Taliban** - The Taliban re-gaining its supremacy over Afghanistan has exposed the weakness of coalitions such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization whose major aim is to counter terrorism.
- **Chinese presence** - There are growing geostrategic and security concerns regarding the BRI's China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and its violation of India's sovereignty.
- India needs clear recalibration of its regional engagement with Central Asian countries.

## Reference

1. <https://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/indias-central-asian-outreach/article37156042.ece>
2. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/jaishankar-stresses-on-connectivity-proposes-that-chabahar-port-be-included-in-the-north-south-transport-corridor/article36992666.ece>



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