

STRATEGIC AUTONOMY IN CENTRAL ASIA: WHAT TURKEY CAN LEARN FROM INDIA'S "CONNECT CENTRAL ASIA" POLICY

Despite its NATO membership and relationship with the United States, Turkey has embarked on strategic policy of deepening its ties with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. This article analyzes the possible outcomes for Turkish policy in Central Asia through a comparative analysis with India's similar policy in the region. New Delhi has sought to maintain its strategic autonomy from both Moscow and Washington. India's policy has caused Russia, in addition to China, to marginalize India in the region. Without a strategic partnership with any of the major powers, New Delhi finds itself sidelined in several Central Asian republics in the run-up to NATO's 2014 Afghanistan withdrawal.

Micha'el M. Tanchum*



* Micha'el Tanchum is a Fellow at the Department of Middle East and Islamic Studies at Shalem College, Jerusalem, and at the Asia and Middle East Units of the Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace at Hebrew University. He also teaches in the Departments of Middle Eastern History and East Asian Studies at Tel Aviv University.

Turkey's snub by Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in September 2013 was predictable. Although an SCO "dialogue partner", Turkey was not invited to the 13th summit of SCO leaders held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Despite its NATO membership, Turkey acceded to SCO "dialogue partner" status on 26 April 2013. At the signing ceremony in Almaty, Kazakhstan, Foreign Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu proclaimed, "Now we declare that Turkey also shares the same fate as Shanghai Cooperation Organization countries."¹ Yet, just six months later, as the Turkish press observed, Ankara was given the "cold shoulder" by the SCO.²

The diplomatic slight at the Bishkek summit was further highlighted by Russian President Vladimir Putin's meeting with Hassan Rouhani, the newly elected president of Iran, which holds the higher "observer member" status in the SCO. While Turkish media and analysts speculated about which of the two SCO heavyweights, Russia or China, was to blame, the sidelining of Turkey was the natural consequence of Ankara's attempt to triangulate among Russia, China, and the United States. India, which enjoys the SCO "observer member" status that Turkey covets, has been marginalized in Central Asia for employing a similar strategic posture.

It was also in September 2013 that New Delhi's "Connect Central Asia" policy experienced the latest in a series of economic and security setbacks when India lost ConocoPhillips' 8.4 percent stake in Kazakhstan's massive Kashagan oil field to the Chinese National Petroleum Company. Officially announced by New Delhi in June 2012, India's "Connect Central Asia" policy was the formalization of New Delhi's revamped efforts to offset the strategic setback India first suffered in December 2010 with its loss of Tajikistan's Ayni airbase to Russia. Although India desires to counter-balance Chinese and especially Pakistani influence in the region, New Delhi has sought to maintain its strategic autonomy from both Moscow and Washington. This policy has caused Russia, in addition to China, to marginalize India in the region. Without a strategic partnership with any of the major powers, New Delhi finds itself sidelined in several Central Asian Republics in the run-up to NATO's 2014 Afghanistan withdrawal. As Ankara flirts with a similar triangular diplomacy in Central Asia, an examination of how New Delhi's insistence on strategic autonomy has damaged India's position in Central Asia will shed light on possible

1 "Cooperation Deal Signed with SCO," *Hürriyet Daily News*, 27 April 2013, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/cooperation-deal-signed-with-sco.aspx?pageID=238&nID=45733&NewsCatID=338>

2 Aydın Albayrak, "Turkey Gets Cold Shoulder from Shanghai Cooperation Organization," *Today's Zaman*, 24 September 2013,

<http://www.todayszaman.com/news-327278-turkey-gets-cold-shoulder-from-shanghai-cooperation-organization.html>

policy outcomes for Turkey in the region if Ankara persists in its present orientation.

The comparison between Turkish and Indian policies in Central Asia is important as India occupies a roughly analogous position to Turkey in the emerging strategic architecture of the region. Both Turkey and India view Central Asia as a critical region for their respective energy, trade, and geostrategic interests, even though each of these rising powers shares no direct border with a Central Asian nation.

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Each country has a geostrategic rivalry with one of the major neighboring powers and is looked upon with suspicion by the other. Turkey’s well-known rivalries with Russia need no rehearsal. India, in territorial dispute with China, faces 400,000 Chinese troops on its border. Although not at the level of its rivalry with India, China casts a wary eye at Turkey as the center of pan-Turkic activism that threatens Beijing’s interests in the region and in Xianjiang (East Turkestan). Turkey is home to the Cooperation Council of Turkic-Speaking States (TÜRKSÖY), and, of more immediate concern to China, a sizeable and highly active Uyghur expatriate community.

Despite Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s efforts to mend fences with Beijing after his public declaration that the Chinese suppression of the July 2009 “Urumqi riots” was “a kind of genocide”, China remains cautious.³ As mayor of Istanbul in 1995, Erdoğan built a memorial monument to Isa Yusuf Alptekin, leader of the short-lived East Turkestan Republic, defying a Turkish government ban and Chinese protests. In 1992, then Turkish President Turgut Özal and Alptekin declared, “Turkic republics under former Soviet rule have all declared their independence. Now it is Eastern Turkestan’s turn. It is our desire to see the ancient homeland of the Turkic people a free country.”⁴

In his article on Turkish-Chinese relations, Yunnan University Professor Xiao Xin summarizes the Chinese apprehension, “Given Turkey’s political trend, one can

3 “Turkey Attacks China ‘Genocide,’” *BBC News*, 29 July 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8145451.stm>

4 Yitzhak Shichor, “Ethno-Diplomacy: The Uyghur Hitch in Sino-Turkish Relations,” *Policy Studies* 53 (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2009), p. 25.

never be certain about its stance on 'Eastern Turkistan'.⁵ With analogous apprehension, Russia has looked askance on its erstwhile Indian ally for developing strategic ties with the United States, particularly after Washington's 2008 agreement with New Delhi on civil nuclear cooperation.

India's Setback in Tajikistan and the Onset of the Connect Central Asia Policy

India first looked to Tajikistan to establish a foreign military presence. As India's closest Central Asian neighbor, the distance between Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe and New Delhi is approximately the same distance between New Delhi and Mumbai. More significantly, Tajikistan's southeastern border is less than 30 kilometers from Pakistani-administered Kashmir across Afghanistan's Wakhan corridor. India's only foreign airbase is located in Tajikistan, at Farkhor on the Tajik-Afghan border. India started operating the Farkhor base in May 2002, with Russian acquiescence, to support Indian relief and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Yet India's lack of broader operations at the Farkhor base renders it strategically insignificant. Without Indian combat squadrons at Farkhor, the airbase does not provide India with an alternative attack route against Pakistan or the ability to affect militant operations in Kashmir. The base's main function is to transport supplies for India's humanitarian mission in Afghanistan. India airlifts resources to Tajikistan's Ayni airforce base located about 15 kilometers from Dushanbe and then transports material approximately 150 kilometers to Farkhor, where it is then trucked to Afghanistan. Thus, the Ayni airbase had been the key to advancing India's strategic footprint in Tajikistan. The loss of the Ayni base in late 2010 due to Russian pressure represented a grave strategic setback for India.

The Ayni airbase, originally used by the Soviets during the 1980s, had been abandoned since their 1988-9 withdrawal from Afghanistan. India contributed technical assistance and 70 million dollars to renovate the airbase between 2003 and 2010. India's Border Roads Organisation (BRO), directed by India's Army Corps of Engineers, extended the main runway, built a control tower and constructed three hangars capable of housing squadrons of MiG-29 bombers used by the Indian Air Force. In September 2010, a Tajik Defense Ministry spokesman confirmed to the press that the Ayni airbase had state-of-the-art navigational and defense technology and a runway extended to 3,200 meters to accommodate all types of aircraft.⁶ Nonetheless, there are no reports of Indian combat aircraft having ever

5 Xiao Xian, "China and Turkey: Forging a New Strategic Partnership," *Contemporary International Relations* (Beijing), Vol.23 No.1 (January/February 2013), p. 123-140. [Original Chinese version: Xiao Xian, "China and Turkey: Forging a New Strategic Partnership," *West Asia and Africa*, Vol.9 (2012), p. 14-29].

6 "Tajik Military Air Base Completed with Indian Help," *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 9 September 2010, http://www.rferl.org/content/Tajik_Military_Air_Base_Completed_With_Indian_Help/2152731.html

been stationed at the base. Tajikistan's small air force does not need it. Moreover, Russia's 201st Motor Rifle Division (MRD), Moscow's largest military contingent abroad, is stationed in Dushanbe and two other Tajik cities. Moscow has been intent on preventing other foreign nations from using the base. Although the BRO began the Ayni renovations in 2004, New Delhi never developed any meaningful leverage with the Tajik government. Dushanbe may have simply used New Delhi to

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force a better deal from Moscow for Russian use of Ayni and the bases housing the 201st MRD. In December 2010, Tajikistan announced that Russia was the only country under consideration to use the Ayni airbase in future.⁷ The two countries then began negotiating the details of their future military cooperation and, most likely, Russian support for Tajik president Emomali Rahmon's November 2013 re-election bid. India was effectively closed out of Ayni.

The decision also stemmed from the powerful economic influence Moscow exerts on Dushanbe through the personal remittances of Tajik workers in Russia. According to the Central Bank of Russia, personal remittances from Tajik workers amounted 2.19 billion dollars in 2010.⁸ In the year India lost the use of the Ayni airbase to Russia, personal remittances from Russia accounted for 39 percent of Tajikistan's GDP.⁹ By 2012, the year of New Delhi's announcement of its “Connect Central Asia” policy, remittances from Russia accounted for 43 percent of Tajikistan's GDP.

Indian bilateral trade with Tajikistan does not act as a sufficient economic counterweight. Between 2010-1, India-Tajikistan bilateral trade amounted to 41.3 million dollars. In 2011-2, the year prior to India's inauguration of its India-Central Asia Dialogue, the amount of India's trade with Tajikistan dropped by 31 percent to 28.37 million dollars.¹⁰ In contrast, the sum of Chinese-Tajik bilateral trade

7 Sudha Ramachandran, “India Air Base Grounded in Tajikistan,” *Asia Times*, 1 December 2010, http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/LL01Df02.html

8 2.71 billion dollars in 2011, and 3.02 billion dollars in 2012, these figures are likely to be higher due to underreporting. “Personal Remittances from Russia to CIS Countries,” *Central Bank of Russia*, http://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/print.aspx?file=CrossBorder/Personal%20Remittances_CIS_e.htm&pid=svs&sid=ITM_43505

9 In 2010, Tajikistan's GDP was 5.64 billion dollars.

10 “India-Tajikistan Relations Brief,” *Ministry of External Affairs of India*, January 2013, http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/tajikistan_bilateral_brief.pdf

“India has been sidelined by China in the two larger, energy-rich nations of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan through Beijing’s assertive energy policy.”

amounted to 660 million dollars, a little more than half of the 1.04 billion dollars of Russia’s bilateral trade with Tajikistan.¹¹ Turkey’s bilateral trade with Tajikistan stands at a respectable 580 million dollars.¹² Combined with Chinese-Tajik bilateral trade, Turkish-Tajik bilateral trade constitutes an important emerging economic counterweight to Russia. Nonetheless, similar to India, Russia is unlikely to allow Turkey to develop significant security relations with Tajikistan.

In the wake of India’s setback in Tajikistan, India convened the first meeting of the India-Central Asia Dialogue in the Kyrgyz capital Bishkek in June 2012. In his keynote address, India’s Minister of External Affairs unveiled New Delhi’s “Connect Central Asia” policy. Among its declared objectives for “deep engagement” with the Central Asian republics, New Delhi enumerated the need for strengthened strategic and security cooperation and long-term partnerships in energy development. One year after the inaugural round of New Delhi’s India-Central Asia Dialogue, Moscow began sending the first installments of a new one billion dollar military aid package to Bishkek, effectively closing off Kyrgyzstan to India as it did Tajikistan.

As in Tajikistan, India’s economic relations did not serve as a consideration for Bishkek. Between 2011-2, India-Kyrgyzstan bilateral trade amounted to 30.05 million dollars. Despite the Bishkek round of the India-Central Asia Dialogue, Indian-Kyrgyz bilateral trade rose to only 37.12 million dollars in 2012-3.¹³ In contrast, Chinese-Kyrgyz bilateral trade in 2011 amounted to 4.98 billion dollars.¹⁴ In 2012, Chinese-Kyrgyz bilateral trade grew to 5.97 billion dollars, accounting

11 “Tajikistan, China Boost Economic Cooperation,” *New Europe Online*, 11 March 2012,

<http://www.neurope.eu/article/tajikistan-china-boost-economic-cooperation> ;

Russian-Tajik Bilateral Trade was 1.04 billion dollars, according to the Central Bank of Russia,

http://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/print.aspx?file=credit_statistics/trade_new_2011_e.htm&pid=svs&sid=itm_60750

12 “Relations between Turkey and Tajikistan,” *Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Turkey*,

<http://www.mfa.gov.tr/relations-between-turkey-and-tajikistan.en.mfa>

13 “India-Kyrgyzstan Relations,” *Ministry of External Affairs of India*, July 2013

http://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/India-Kyrgyzstan_Relations_EN.pdf

14 “Trade turnover between Kyrgyzstan, China increases 18.5 %,” *Universal Newswires*, 1 August 2012,

<http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/kyrgyzstan/viewstory.aspx?id=12527>

for half of Kyrgyzstan's total trade.¹⁵ Although Russian-Kyrgyz bilateral trade accounts for 17 percent of Kyrgyz trade as compared to China's 50 percent, Moscow also exerts considerable economic influence on Bishkek through the personal remittances of Kyrgyz workers in Russia.¹⁶ Although Kyrgyz dependence on the remittances from Russia is less than that of Tajikistan, remittances still account for a large portion of the Kyrgyz economy – 23 percent of Kyrgyzstan's 2011 GDP and 25 percent of its 2012 GDP.¹⁷

As with Indian-Kyrgyz bilateral trade, Turkey's 212 million dollars bilateral trade with Kyrgyzstan pales in comparison to China and Russia's economic influence. In April 2011, Turkey cancelled 51 million dollars of Kyrgyz debt and gave Bishkek 10 million dollars in grant assistance.¹⁸ Turkey has aspired to a major role in the operation of the "Transit Center" at the Manas airport outside of Bishkek after the July 2014 expiration of the U.S. lease on the airbase. The U.S. military installation at Manas has been used to support ISAF forces in Afghanistan. However, not to be outdone by Turkey, Russia cancelled 500 million dollars of Kyrgyz debt in May 2013.¹⁹ Russia had already promised Bishkek two billion dollars for terminating the U.S. lease on Manas to compensate for the loss of the annual 60 million dollars in rent Bishkek received from Washington. Having lost Tajikistan which India regarded as its "gateway" to Central Asia, New Delhi has no chance for a significant presence in Kyrgyzstan in the foreseeable future. For similar reasons, Ankara will be excluded from a meaningful stake in the Manas Transit Center or any other significant strategic presence in Kyrgyzstan.

“New Delhi's lack of strong defense cooperation with Washington means Turkmenistan can exclude India at relatively little cost.”

15 “Kyrgyz Republic: EU Bilateral Traded and Trade with the World,” *European Community*, 5 July 2013, http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113409.pdf

16 “Remittance Man: Russia Attempts to Draw Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan Back into its Orbit,” *The Economist*, 7 September 2013, <http://www.economist.com/news/asia/21584999-russia-attempts-draw-tajikistan-and-kyrgyzstan-back-its-orbit-remittance-man>

17 “Kyrgyzstan GDP figures,” *Trading Economics*, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/kyrgyzstan/gdp> ; In 2011 and 2012, personal remittances from Russia were 1.4 billion dollars and 1.6 billion dollars, respectively, though these figures are likely due to underreporting, *Central Bank of Russia*, http://www.cbr.ru/eng/statistics/print.aspx?file=CrossBorder/Personal%20Remittances_CIS_e.htm&pid=svs&sid=ITM_43505

18 “Kyrgyzstan, Turkey Agree to Eradicate Kyrgyz Debt and Work on Visa Regime,” *Universal Newswires*, 27 April 2013, <http://www.universalnewswires.com/centralasia/kyrgyzstan/tourism/viewstory.aspx?id=3925>

19 Erica Marat, “Kyrgyzstan's Decision to Renounce Manas Transit Center Favors Russia,” 26 June 2013, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/publications/analytical-articles/item/12764-kyrgyzstans-decision-to-renounce-manas-transit-center-favors-russia.html>

Strategic Autonomy and Indian Setbacks in Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan

India has been sidelined by China in the two larger, energy-rich nations of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan through Beijing's assertive energy policy. India's loss of ConocoPhillips' 8.4 percent stake in Kazakhstan's Kashagan oil field to the Chinese National Petroleum Company (CNPC) in early September 2013 was an embarrassing blow to New Delhi's "Connect Central Asia" policy. In late November 2012, ONGC Videsh Limited (OVL), the international arm of India's Oil and Natural Gas Corporation concluded an agreement to purchase ConocoPhillips' 8.4 percent interest in Kashagan, pending Astana's approval. Considered the largest oil discovery in the last 30 years, the five billion dollars stake in Kashagan was perceived by New Delhi as a significant foothold in Kazakhstan's oil industry. The second round of New Delhi's India-Central Asia Dialogue was held in Almaty in June 2013. In addition to being held in Kazakhstan's commercial center, the India-Central Asia Dialogue II featured a special session focused on the bilateral relations between India and Kazakhstan. About one month prior to this second round of New Delhi's India-Central Asia Dialogue, the Indian government announced it had received positive indications from Astana that it would approve the sale to OVL.²⁰

However, one month after the Almaty round, ConocoPhillips was notified that the Kazakhstan Ministry of Oil and Gas would invoke Kazakhstan's Subsoil Law to pre-empt the proposed sale to OVL.²¹ Instead, the state-owned Kazakh energy firm KazMunaiGas bought ConocoPhillips' 8.4 percent stake in the Kashagan field and then sold an 8.33 stake in Kashagan to China's CNPC for the same five billion. The head of KazMunaiGas informed the press that the CNPC also promised up to three billion dollars to cover half the cost of Kazakhstan's financing Kashagan's second phase of development.²² In a public display of China's diplomatic triumph, Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Astana in early September to sign the acquisition agreement with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev, one of 22 agreements concluded between China and Kazakhstan worth 30 billion dollars.

Kazakhstan's economic boom is the result of its relations with China. China-Kazakhstan bilateral trade accounted for 23 percent of Kazakhstan's total trade in 2012 whereas Turkish-Kazakh bilateral trade accounted for 2.8 percent.²³ Although

20 "Kazakhstan Positive to India's Hydrocarbons Quest," *The Hindu*, 28 April 2013,

<http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/kazakhstan-positive-to-indias-hydrocarbons-quest/article4661271.ece>

21 "ConocoPhillips Notified of Republic of Kazakhstan's Intent to Pre-empt ConocoPhillips' Sale of Kashagan Interest," *ConocoPhillips News Release*, 2 July 2013, <http://www.piersystem.com/go/doc/5451/1825027/>

22 "UPDATE 4-China Buys into Giant Kazakh Oilfield for \$5 bln," *Reuters*, 7 September 2013,

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2013/09/07/oil-kashagan-china-idUSL5N0H302E20130907>

23 "Kazakhstan: EU Bilateral Traded and Trade with the World," *European Community*, 5 July 2013,

http://trade.ec.europa.eu/doclib/docs/2006/september/tradoc_113406.pdf

a member of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), energy-rich and economically prospering Kazakhstan is seeking to counter-balance its security relations with Russia by developing relations with the U.S. and NATO. India's strategic distance from Washington thus does not serve New Delhi in its relations with Kazakhstan. Turkey's flirtation with the SCO at the expense of its standing within NATO similarly undermines Turkey's position in Kazakhstan.

Turkey did not participate in NATO's August 2013 Steppe Eagle military exercises in Kazakhstan. Steppe Eagle has been run as a NATO Partnership for Peace exercise since 2006 when Kazakhstan signed an Individual Partnership Action Plan with NATO. Kazakhstan's NATO trained and equipped airmobile forces brigade KAZBRIG (formerly KAZBAT) as well as Kazakh army and air force units participated in Steppe Eagle 2013, which involved the largest number of participating countries to date.²⁴ By not forming a strategic partnership with the U.S. as Washington seeks to implement its New Silk Road initiative, India finds itself left out in the cold in Kazakhstan. Turkey's non-participation in Steppe Eagle may indicate that Turkey will suffer a similar marginalization if Ankara's relations with the SCO undermine Turkey's participation in NATO's Central Asian partnerships.

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India was similarly outmaneuvered by China's energy and trade diplomacy in Turkmenistan. India has placed great hopes on the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, for which construction has still not yet begun. The stalled TAPI pipeline is intended to transport gas from Turkmenistan across Afghanistan and Pakistan to the Indian town of Fazilka on the Indo-Pakistani border. During the same Central Asian tour in which President Xi signed the Kashagan acquisition agreement in Astana, he also inaugurated the operations of Turkmenistan's Galkynysh gas field, the world's second largest gas field. A highly symbolic accomplishment for China, the Galkynysh field was developed by a CNPC-led consortium without the participation of a major Western energy company. As a potential source for the TAPI pipeline, the Galkynysh field now provides

²⁴ Farida Ahmetov, “NATO Experts Praised Kazakhstan's Military Servants,” *Kazakhstanskaya Prvada*, 4 September 2013, <http://kazpravda.kz/eng/?p=1081%23more-1081>

Beijing with significant influence over the future of the TAPI project. Perhaps tellingly, Turkmenistan sent no delegation of experts to New Delhi's June 2013 India-Central Asia Dialogue. Turkmenistan, which is not a member of the CSTO, seeks to use its energy wealth to maintain its independence from Russia and prevent itself from being dominated by a Russo-Iranian bloc. Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdymukhammedov changed course from his predecessor's strict neutrality and has been developing security relations with the U.S., NATO, and Israel. New Delhi's lack of strong defense cooperation with Washington means Turkmenistan can exclude India at relatively little cost.

From Turkey's May 2013 framework agreement with Turkmenistan on the transport of gas to Europe to *GAP İnşaat's* August 2013 two billion dollar contract to construct a new Caspian port in Turkmenbashi, Turkey's economic and energy relations with Turkmenistan are inextricably bound to Ashgabat's need to protect its strategic assets in the Caspian from Moscow and Tehran. If Ankara compromises its standing within NATO through deepening Turkey's ties to the SCO, Ankara will likely diminish its own strategic value for Ashgabat.

Uzbekistan and the post-2014 Regional Architecture

India's only remaining option to gain a significant strategic presence in Central Asia is to develop a strategic partnership with Uzbekistan as Tashkent moves to deepen its ties with Washington. In June 2012, Uzbekistan's President Karimov withdrew his country's membership in the CSTO and has been pushing for closer ties with NATO. As Afghanistan's Central Asian neighbor to the north, Uzbekistan will play a crucial role in a post-ISAF Afghanistan. Like India, Uzbekistan is keen to prevent the resurgence of Pakistani-sponsored, Islamist proxies in Afghanistan. Moreover, India's grand North-South Transit Corridor depends on Uzbekistan for its northern outlet to Central Asia. Despite sharing vital interests with Uzbekistan, India's insistence on strategic autonomy from Washington will render New Delhi an unattractive strategic partner for Tashkent. As the most populous country in Central Asia, energy-rich Uzbekistan is an essential player in the future security and prosperity of Central Asia. Ankara's already severely deteriorated relations with Tashkent are further weakened by Ankara's overtures to the SCO at the expense of its standing in NATO.

With NATO's 2014 Afghanistan withdrawal, Russia and China are well placed to prevent India from projecting power in Central Asia. Unless India can act as a strategic partner in an Indo-American "New Silk Road" framework, it will watch from

the sidelines as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization constructs its own New Silk Road. If Ankara continues to deepen its ties with the SCO at the expense of Turkey's participation in NATO's Central Asian partnerships, Turkey may be similarly marginalized. Russia and China would be just as well placed to prevent Turkey from projecting power in Central Asia or stifle its economic relations. If Ankara does not join in Washington's efforts to counter-balance the SCO, Ankara also may watch from the sidelines as a Russo-Chinese dominated trade, transit, and security corridor emerges from the Baltic to the Pacific.