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## **The Challenges Faced by Russia in Central Asia to Secure its National Interests Post-Soviet Union**

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### **Abstract**

It aims to evaluate the ongoing evolution of contemporary Russian foreign policy, which directs its domestic and global activities. Given the presence of soldiers in post-Soviet Central Asia, the rise in post-Soviet state conflict, and President Putin's geopolitical ambition, this old pattern still dominates foreign policy, which appears to be more aggressive under him. The Central Asian Republic (CAR), is economically and militarily dependent on Russia. It was mentioned that the social, political, and economic unrest in the countries of Central Asia might spread to the Russian mainland. As a result, Russia has utilized a variety of tactics to safeguard the area and has continued to play a significant external role in Central Asia after the Soviet Union. The administration of energy resources, the provision of security forces, and the establishment of regional organizations are the main concerns of this study on Russia's interests in Central Asia. The interests of CAR in Russia and those of Russia in Central Asia are somewhat complementary. The status of Russia's superpowers and the nature of Eurasia have never been contested by CAR. For the United States, China, Iran, Turkey, India, and Pakistan, however, the center of Eurasia has turned into a volatile region. Russian influence is viewed as being threatened by Western policy. Today, Russia's intentions in Central Asia are categorically described as a "new empire" policy and are considered as an effort to limit outside influences in the area. Halford Mackinder's thought, whose priorities are essentially tied to economy and security, is reflected in key ways in Russian policy.

Keywords: CAR, Russian Interests, Post-Soviet Union, Regional states, Major powers.

### **Introduction**

A new process of institutional framework conditions in the post-Soviet space were necessary as a result of the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent formation of new nations (Burda, 2023). Since gaining independence, the Central Asian Republic's (CAR) economic and security environment have altered. Newly independent states have been compelled to join forces with strong states due to a complex transformation process. Moscow was urged to continue



exerting its influence in the region by the crucial geopolitics of CAR. Without a question, CAR has helped to build bridges and barriers between the North and the South. Moscow has been able to keep up its role as a brother in Central Asia due to geopolitical circumstances. Its geopolitical strategy is mostly influenced by Eurasian presumptions, Western ideals, and ideologies that reject Russia's regional allies. It is undeniably transforming the geopolitics of Russia, and its impact is altering the direction of local politics (Burda, 2023).

But whether Russia will reclaim its former hegemonic position there is doubtful. The area resembles a game of chess where the major countries deploy pawns to control the politics of the smaller nations and engage in old-fashioned power struggles in Central Asia. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union left a power vacuum in Central Asia, CAR is dependent on Russia (Jafari & Jaanbaaz, 2019). Landlocked nations are therefore searching for strong nations to assist in bringing their goods to the global market. Additionally, a deep historical and cultural connection to Moscow is the foundation of our tight friendship with Russia. Geopolitical, economic, and geopolitical concerns of Russia are directly related to Eurasian philosophy. The Central African Republic and Russia are both part of the Central Eurasia geopolitical, cultural, and civilizational region.

The integration of the post-Soviet state into the social, economic, and cultural realms is assumed by Eurasian ideology. Although CAR previously offered riches, protection for mainland Russia, and human resources, it soon needed to set up its own democratic system and new government. Even though the majority of the Soviet political economy had previously been merged into an integrated network, it is interesting to note that CAR appeared to be more responsive to emerging trends in the region. After gaining independence, they set out to create a new foreign policy to specify their place in the world order. With the end of the Soviet Union in Central Asia, Russia is now on a long route to reclaiming its former position (Bilalov, Klepikov, & Murmantsev, 2023).

When Russia realized that its influence was drastically declining, it turned its attention to its economic and military strategies in an effort to rediscover its previous self. The Russian diaspora in the CAR is also under Moscow's control and plays a significant role in the Russian vision for the Eurasian Union for Russia's regional integration, new internal and external problems have emerged, nevertheless. Moscow was concerned about the separatist movement in Chechnya, the absence of buffer zones, the declining economy, and the disorganized government. A new international environment was emerging on the outside, where the West started to vie for a powerful position to control Central Asian policy choices. The Russian Federation was totally disregarded throughout the first ten years of the Alliance's continuing eastward expansion. In addition, local stakeholders are now involved in power politics (Zhivanovich, 2023).

Russia's involvement in the power struggles in Central Asia is a complex issue, influenced by various factors such as historical connections and geopolitical interests (Bliss, 2016). The influence of Russia on the Central Asian Republics (CAR) cannot be overlooked, as it has historical ties and strategic interests in the region. The power politics at play in Central Asia are shaped by the competing interests of various strong countries, including Russia, which employs political, economic, and military strategies to maintain its influence in the region. However, Russia's control strategies are also impacted by its own financial crisis, which affects its ability to exert influence in Central Asia. Despite these



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challenges, Russia remains a formidable rival to the CAR and continues to attract the attention of regional associations.

As outside influences continue to infiltrate the region and put Moscow's former position in jeopardy, there are problems brought on by growing economic and strategic uncertainties. The rapid expansion of extremist networks in Central Asia hinders Russia's ongoing campaign for CAR. The actions of the old Soviet authorities, which advocated dominance of Islamic lands by restricting all religious rituals, have left these republics with an amazing legacy of separatist. Islamic leaders are consequently compelled into exile, where they instigate violent underground activities that are now spreading instability in the region. In order to justify Russia's prolonged presence in Central Asia, this study identifies the Eurasian dilemma. It offers some geopolitical signs of current and potential difficulties Moscow may encounter (Akchurina & Della Sala, 2018).

### Literature Review

This topic's mainstream literature has been examined from two distinct angles. This concept embodies the shared national identities, historical backgrounds, and economic and security concerns of Russia and the Central African Republic. In its policies regarding its "backyard," particularly in what is referred to as "near to abroad", Russia tries to regain its political and economic dominance. The material that is now accessible indicates that Russia's approach to Central Asia is heavily influenced by the region's hazy historical, economic, and cultural factors. The distinct geographical, historical, and cultural position of Russia as a bridge between Europe and Asia is emphasized by academic groupings.

Roy, O. (2009), stated that Russia's control over the region, the growing divisions among its people, and its attitude toward Russia as a patron saint. This book provides an insightful explanation of the Soviet occupation of Central Asia from a historical perspective. According to Roy, Soviet policy has always been to support local elites and establish local institutions. He makes the case that the Soviet government has always been unexpectedly decentralized throughout the far-off realm. Thus, with the help of local political leaders, Central Asia's national identity has slowly emerged. But Moscow now considers this region to be within its sphere of influence. These states now have the old Soviet system of government and the system that unifies them. However, this work is helpful for arguing that fundamentalism was brought about by the Soviet Union's dual role in the region. Even if they have forcefully manifested, these forces continue to exist and pose a threat to Russia's interests. However, these states' political leaders inherited the CAR's previous leaders because they had previously served as CPSU representatives. The culture is explained historically in this book. The nomads of the entire CAR discussed a sedentary lifestyle. This study documents the historical link between the Soviet Union and CAR. The historical connection between the Soviet Union and the CAR is documented in this paper.

The writer's prevailing presumption is that Russia and the Central African Republic have a connection that is more economic than social. The CAR has a number of issues, including poverty, illness, ethnic issues, and the return of Islam. Corruption is at the forefront of rising intergroup tensions. External actor, such as Russia, are encouraged to meddle in these governments' internal affairs by internal instability (Andrey K, 1998).

Peyrouse, S. (2009) stated that another strong justification for CAR to contact



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Russia is nostalgia for the wonderful old Soviet times. Although it has been highlighted that CAR favors relying on Moscow for security, it has also been noted that CAR wants to secede from Russian sovereignty. The economic security of CAR is in jeopardy because Russia plans to demand high shipping fees and place volume limitations on exports from Central Asia. The region is one of the most significant in the globe because of its location and abundant natural resources.

Sakwa, R. (2015) Described that by employing its military might, the Kremlin is thought to effectively contribute to conflict management and prevention. He offers a sharp critique of Western politics in the wake of the Cold War. Russia has been cut out of the new global order as a result of the East-West war, often known as the New Conflict.

The perceptions of Russia's interests and the veracity of its assertions are closely tied to how the country is perceived internationally. Russia is battling not just to maintain its hold on Central Asia, but also to have its authority acknowledged throughout the former Soviet Union. This serves as Russia's foundation for establishing ties with other nations, particularly China and the United States. The widespread colonial fall and open-border trade that characterize the so-called globalization period appear to have minimal impact on Russia. It still establishes the fundamentals of Russian foreign policy. In this setting, careful examination of rivalry relationships is required (Malashenko, A. 2013).

Russia has once more insisted on the world scene under Putin's leadership. According to Putin and the Kremlin, the inevitable decline of the West and the rise of the rest will provide Russia the chance to achieve its goal of becoming a sovereign center of world power. Russia's foreign policy has been influenced by its internal political situation as well as its exterior operational environment. It is asserted that Moscow's stance on local and international issues reflects tensions between two quite distinct realities. Their opinions on the decline of the West and the following rise of Russia reaffirm the old tenets of international politics, including the primacy of national sovereignty, hard power control, the existence of areas of influence, and group leadership by the great powers. Lo contends that Russia should remake itself as a modern nation by adjusting to shifting international realities (Lo, B. 2008).

Starr, F. S. (2014) stated that Russia's invasion of Georgia and Ukraine has inspired new ideas for international policy, and under Putin, Russia dominates both international and internal affairs. The goal is to reform and restructure politics. pursue a new kind of Russian-led alliance with the former Soviet Republic. The Russian government's foreign policy toward the CAR has undergone numerous changes. The development of Russia's efforts to resist Western influences in the region is of utmost importance. Russia has a huge impact on not just Europe and its near neighbors but also other areas like West and South Asia because of its special geographic circumstances.

Cooley, A. (2012) stated that Central Asia is crucial for the US, China, and Russia. Due to its extensive borders, the region is unstable globally. China, the United States, and Russia have all devised plans to increase their influence in the area. Russia aims to have more political sway in the area. Future Russian prosperity is primarily reliant on its hydrocarbon-based economy. Smaller Central Asian countries have, however, also picked up modern methods for coping with all three influences. Eurasianism is thought to be the centralized theory of Russia by





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some academics. The literature on Russia's hegemony and its ingrained interests in Central Asia is voluminous, but little attention is given to the CAR's own issues, which have caused Russia to become stagnant in the region. Some academics have discussed Russia's objectives in Central Asia and have advocated that the CAR should rethink its foreign policy position on Russia. The literature that is now available on Russian politics assumes that Russia is attempting to reclaim the region's economic and political dominance as its backyard by referring to it as "near to abroad."

Laruelle, M. (2010) shed light on the significance of the area and explains the geographical significance of CAR from a Chinese and Indian point of view. The prospects for Sino-Indian rivalry in Central Asia are excellent, and these countries face both opportunities and difficulties. The geopolitical rivalry between the major world powers over Central Asia is essentially what the new tycoon is.

Allison, R., & Jonson, L. (2001). Said, about central Asian states that these states are east, west, and south of Central Asia, and Russia is growing more and more isolated. The author assesses these states' internal security issues. Conflicts are more likely to develop, for instance, because of a population that is multiethnic, a shortage of resources, or the so-called Islamic renaissance. Additionally taken into account were the activities, objectives, and strategies of the United States, Turkey, Iran, China, and Russia in Central Asia. Nevertheless, efforts to shield it from outside influence form the foundation of Russian strategy. Russia is exploiting geography as a tool for its national technology, which has prompted China to counterbalance American influence. According to some academics, Russia's energy policy move is congruent with changes in the country's political climate brought on by outside interference. Economic interests rule politics, which are interpreted in light of US threats. It was acknowledged that the US invasion of Afghanistan aided Russia's post-Soviet Central Asian efforts.

Johnson, L. (2004), provided a 1999–2003 overview of Russia's four key neighbors to Afghanistan: Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Kyrgyzstan. explains why foreign policy changed so suddenly. President Putin's support of US forces using the Central Asian airport during US military operations in Afghanistan and the deployment of Western troops in the region have completely changed Russia's approach to the region. The evolving dynamics of the Kremlin's increasingly assertive strategy in Central Asia are also being studied by academics. Nevertheless, restoring lost influence was challenging in the 1990s as Boris Yeltsin was preoccupied with rebuilding internal politics. In the twenty-first century, Russia and Central Asia's policies changed, primarily as a result of Afghanistan-related events. The literature's indices provide insight into its former predominance and the region's lost impact as a result of the presence of diverse perspectives from the United States, China, and India. However, it is now obvious that both domestic and global challenges affect relations between Russia and the nations of Central Africa. It is anticipated that regional economic and strategic turmoil would spread to the mainland. Vigilant security circumstances have become a major issue for the neighborhood since NATO withdrew from Afghanistan. China's cooperation is therefore essential. New players are playing Old Great Game as New Great Game and there are security problems on the local level.

Cooley, A. (2012) demonstrated how crucial Central Asia is to Russia as well as to



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China and the United States. The United States has taken the place of the United Kingdom in the New Great Game of today. CAR successfully interacted with key players and outsiders for the benefit of the neighborhood. Cooley looked into a few of the non-Western nations looking to extend their influence beyond Soviet Central Asia. His writings are a valuable addition to the body of knowledge on Central Asian politics, post-communist states, and international events. This book's theme emphasizes the ongoing rivalry between the Big Three (the United States, China, and Russia) and the potential for conflicting interests. The United States' entry into Central Asia undoubtedly increased the region's strategic significance. The worldwide advances have significantly benefited the local elite, who have sparked geopolitical rivalry to claim even greater gains. China has succeeded in achieving this objective and has solidified its influence in the region.

Kleveman, L. (2003) detailed the politics and history of oil and gas resources as well as state attempts to control them in significant regions of the world. increase. He asserts that a "new great game," a contemporary take on traditional games, and a conflict of goals between Britain and the Russian Empire had started in the area. This book is the result of the author's in-depth investigation and travels around the Caucasus, the Caspian Sea region, and particularly Central Asia. He does, however, provide a sharp critique of the fundamental power battle over energy resources. He thinks that the CAR will find it difficult to escape Russia's sway. Overall, Kleveman's work concentrates on the competition between Russia, the United States, and China as a result of the presence of oil, Islam, and terrorism in this region. Cooperation has given way to rivalry in the discussion of how CAR should handle US-Russian ties. The need for Russia to maintain a balanced stance in Central Asia is a key theme of The New Great Game.

Kubicek, P.(2013) emphasized how Russia's strategic goals are causing it to become more involved in the Caspian Sea region. A crucial component of the strategic mapping of energy resources is regional rivalry. In the Caspian Basin, geopolitical competition between Russia, China, and the United States is being explored. The local states in these circumstances are mostly dependent on outside parties and are quite passive. As a result, the conflict between cooperation and competitiveness predominates in diverse Eurasian countries' foreign policies. During the first ten years of its independence, Moscow ignored CAR. It was mostly caused by the Soviet system's conversion to a free enterprise. However, following 9/11, the US military's presence has altered the overall scenario, causing new players to become more active in the area. The global community has given the Central African Republic (CAR) another chance to restructure its political and economic system. Old security threats have a strong historical foundation. Threats to regional and international security are posed by the resurgence of terrorist groups. Therefore, this study covers Russia's interests in Central Asia and adds to the body of existing knowledge. This is done to portray Russia as a player pursuing the regional countries' national interests. Economic and military involvement are examples of material and normative interests. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Russia's power initially dropped, but Vladimir Putin's arrival into politics transformed it, and his seeming success presented significant threats to both Russia's neighbors and the West. Russia created informal alliances based on shared business interests, cultural affinities,



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linguistic linkages, and other factors to entice the nation to join its "common neighborhood." The main driving force behind Russian policy was to forge a world order where its interests could be safeguarded.

### **Methodology**

In order to completely comprehend the study's dilemma, historical records are provided for crucial contextual backgrounds. In certain cases, this results in the repetition of prior research because historical materials are frequently used to solve mysteries. It has been established that historical evidence is crucial for validating data. This survey uses a combination of selective primary sources, including government documents, non-textual data, and direct interviews, to support its claims using secondary sources. In order to get the answers to our research questions, we looked at secondary sources such journals, reports, books, records, and archives. Interviews were done with well-known academics, students, and members of the general public in the Central African Republic using a qualitative methodology. We contacted renowned scientists via email and Skype to get their opinions. For governmental records and political comments, the Internet was widely used. However, there was no scholarly motivation behind the conduct of this investigation. To synthesis these conversations, many books, periodicals, and newspapers from the East and the West have been cited, but with utmost objectivity. There is no denying that theoretical and personal perspectives are offered, sometimes separately and other times together. In addition, references are used to credit other people's efforts, such as the appendix.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Neuman, W. (2003) stated that the International relations (IR) is a subject that involves both analytical and theoretical understanding. The details of the examination of world events become suspect without the addition of theoretical studies. The development of theory's senses allows for the explanation of state policy and the comprehension of state trends and problems. This notion is useful in contemporary politics and is crucial to the investigation process. In fact, because it may make reality simpler, it is a crucial ally of researchers . Using international relations, one can critically analyse a certain phenomenon. Additionally, they provide explanations for why certain international events occur in a particular way, why particular states take particular measures, and the precise safeguards that need be taken in order to attain particular objectives. It can be challenging to anticipate or rationally defend the acts of some states due to the complexity of the globe. An "analytical level" approach to international affairs (IR) enables academics to evaluate governmental action at the individual, state, and global levels in order to comprehend world politics. You can examine the situations through these levels and acquire objectivity to comprehend the complexity of Russia's interests in Central Asia. Realist theory is undoubtedly always vulnerable to home political factors, and later iterations of neorealism concentrate on how global dynamics shape national foreign policy. The internal mechanisms that make up the international system. As a result, the "analytical level" approach offers several justifications for the international system and tries to explain global events from various perspectives (Ruggie, J. G. 1983).



## **Challenges to Russian Interests**

Light, M. (1988) defined in setting foreign policy decisions was typically the domain of the Communist Party's limited elite core during the Soviet era. among the CAR states. The objective was to keep control over the area because only the established order could strengthen geopolitical integration. But a direct threat has emerged for former communist countries as a result of the strong wave of globalization, which has brought some unpleasant (and sometimes favorable) things.

Jonson, L. (2006) stated that Russia, like many other old powers, will adjust to its new status as a fading nation in the international system and choose a course of action that is consistent with it when faced with a new, dynamically rising threat. I had a difficult task. In this respect, Russia's issue was not exceptional. Moscow has also come with a number of fresh rivals that are strategically using their influence in the area. Along with this issue, the civil war gave rise to a traditional Islamic faction, some of which threatened violence. Their bonds are strengthened by their shared ethnicity, yet the local elite must be alert due to the local population's expanding cultural impact. It's a problem. New problems emerged and the old ones were fixed once CAR gained independence. There are now some stimulants. announcing the Chechnya war, the Moscow coup attempt, the absence of democratic abilities, and the departure of the international coalition forces from Afghanistan. The heroin trade, the smuggling of people and weapons, and other illegal activities are only a few of the radical movement's many funding sources. Following 9/11, state-sponsored terrorism decreased, and terrorist groups started looking for alternative revenue streams. Because these regions served as safe havens for these organizations, unstable states were particularly vulnerable to organized terrorist activities.

## **The challenge of non-regional major powers: Sino-Russia Nexus and the USA**

As many non-regional entities pursue national interests in Central Asia, this results in a direct struggle between these external forces. It is challenging to foresee the specifics of the relationship between powerful and active individuals in this situation and CAR. The philosophy guiding the three (considered) states' interests may vary, but it is essentially the same. The United States is still present in the area in quest of oil, and security needs take precedence over economic concerns and human rights. China is now returning to the region, and its interests are founded on long-standing patterns of international trade. Not to mention, as a previous supporter, Russia still tries to push the limits of its ideology in an effort to maintain control in the area.

## **The USA in Central Asia**

The United States made little to no effort to oppose Soviet influence in Central Asia throughout the Cold War, and its backing for the Afghan resistance after 1979 was a response to the Soviet invasion rather than an effort to reinforce its own strategic presence (Lo, B. 2008). Washington paid relatively little attention to the region even after the Soviet Union's fall and concentrated only on its relationship with Moscow. However, the outlook for the region's peace and stability was far from hopeless. In fact, only after the invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 did American interest in Central Asia quickly change. The US military had





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not anticipated staying a long time, and the political issues also came as a surprise. As a result, Washington decided it was important to start fresh programs targeted at building partnerships with Central Asia and the CARs on the political, economic, and security fronts. These actions understandably concerned Moscow and Beijing, who feared that the United States would expand its influence beyond Afghanistan to include the entire region. As the fight with the IMU rages on, the Uzbek administration was extremely eager to establish security cooperation with Washington. As a result, Americans supplied military and logistical support to Uzbek responders in order to train and equip them to combat extremists. Islam Karimov, in the opinion of the Uzbek administration, was at its strongest during the conflict with Namangan. This was crucial in encouraging the extreme Islamists in Uzbekistan to resist. The United States was able to purchase air rights from Uzbekistan thanks to the strong strategic cooperation that resulted. Since then, Uzbekistan's domestic political climate has evolved. This is most likely a result of Islam Karimov's attempts to use this strategic alliance as an all-encompassing weapon against his political adversaries and dissidents. A new US military facility to combat the Taliban has been established thanks to the escalating cooperation between the US and Central African nations.

As a result, Uzbekistan has determined that Americans will restrict K2 base-related activities and increase rent for their use. The relationship between the US and Uzbekistan's military appears to be on the edge of implosion. Requested. A US military base in Uzbekistan appears to be closing as a result of tensions between the two nations. In 2005, a crowd of people gathered in Andijan, a city in southern Uzbekistan, to call for political and economic changes as well as the eradication of corruption. When security forces opened fire on the gathering, hundreds of demonstrators were slain America's participation in Uzbekistan came to an end as a result of this incident in 2005. The Uzbek government's attention was once again directed toward Russia, which changed the geopolitical landscape. The fact that Uzbekistan joined the Collective Security Treaty Organization, which is supported by Moscow, provided evidence of a new trend in Tashkent (CSTO). Some, however, believe that this rearrangement of the strategic partners is only transitory. The SCO has been attacked for its international meddling in domestic politics, as have Russia and China (Peimani, H. 2009).

Tanrisever, O. (2013 ) stated that when Operation Enduring Freedom was launched in 2001, Central Asia welcomed the United States (OEF). Beyond the formal baseline agreement, the United States utilizes CAR infrastructure in a number of additional ways as well. Moscow, which is reportedly concerned that the US military presence in Central Asia could disturb the region's strategic balance, appears to be alarmed by the rising US presence there. Yes, it demonstrates the decline in US-Russian ties. However, the United States' presence in this area contributes to the region's stability and advances Russia's goals for the security of the region. Russia opposes the quick departure of US forces from Afghanistan. Russia actually contributed to the seamless operation of NATO's Northern Distribution Network (NDN), which provides supplies and supplies to the Allied Forces in Afghanistan. The risk of international terrorism, criminality, infestation, and illegal immigration can all be raised by the general fear in Central Asia. Nevertheless, Central Asia will never be as important to



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Washington as Russia. However, Russia continues to work to reduce US involvement in the region in an effort to increase its own advantages.

### **China in Central Asia**

China managed its own civil war after dealing with the fight with Japan (for 20 years Beijing and Tokyo saw each other as an existential danger) until 1949. It was impossible to confront the Soviet Union after 1949. Russia's hegemony in the region was thus accepted by Beijing powers, who were also unwilling to question it, and Mao and his successors had similar worries about instability in Central Asia. In fact, this threat caused the interests of these two powers in the region to collide, which in turn sparked "later terrorism, hegemony, and separatist (Lo, B. 2008). of China's foreign policy." The nation's physical and psychological transformation is emphasized in the key components. The difference in development between the United States and China is still decreasing, despite resource depletion and the challenge of balancing economic liberalization and political authoritarianism. As a result, Beijing is a likely candidate to work with Russia to advance the region's economic and physical security while also having the potential to have a significant global impact.

### **Energy Cooperation**

The development of a new oil pipeline to transfer Central Asian resources to the east is the most spectacular example of China and the automotive industry's energy collaboration (Li, Zhao, & Fu, 2023). Perhaps Beijing has a preference for creating access to the pipeline network in the Central African Republic over reliably transiting through the Straits of Malacca (the transit corridor connecting the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean) from interference and taking time and distance into account. China has thus become a key player in the region in this regard and seeks to safeguard the energy infrastructure in Central Asia. China has a significant stake in the hydrocarbon and electrical supply, and the acquisition of oil is a significant component in determining Beijing's foreign policy. Kazakhstan has grown in significance in terms of China's oil supply in this regard. In the sphere of power production, China has also made large investments in hydroelectric projects in Kazakhstan (Wu et al., 2022). As a key supplier of uranium to China's nuclear power reactors and a country with the potential to increase its electricity exports, Kazakhstan has grown in significance in China's calculations. Moscow's interests have been harmed by China's aggressive entry into the Central Asian gas market. In addition to undermining Russia's pipeline monopoly, the building of a new pipeline from CAR to China also ushered in fresh competition.

China's funding supports CAR independence and sovereignty while also being in line with plans to safeguard the world's energy supply (Fu et al., 2023). In fact, the People's Republic's entry into this region significantly altered the region's energy landscape, and the energy supply provided to China may in the future affect the proposed pipeline to the west. Meanwhile, Western-backed initiatives like the Trans-Afghanistan Pakistan-India Pipeline (TAPI) could turn China into an American rival in the region.

### **Strategic Alliance between China and Russia**

Over the past 20 years, China-Russian ties have changed substantially. This



reunion was motivated by mutual interests and a deep-seated knowledge of the threat posed by the United States in particular, rather than by shared strategic objectives and cooperative principles. Beijing and Moscow have both rejected Western engagement in the debate over a new sovereign state because they are both concerned about the likelihood of US hegemony in the region (Peterson and Barysch, 2013). China and Russia's trade ties have quickly expanded since the turn of the century. It is crucial to note that up until the middle of the 1990s, Russia was China's sixth-largest oil supplier; but, since 2010, trading has steadily increased (Peterson and Barysch, 2013).

The Chinese also attempted to convince Russia that their approach toward Central Asia did not have a hegemonic goal at the same time. Beijing frequently emphasises the value of China-Russia relations since it is well aware that Moscow will continue to have a special interest in this region. Cooley, A. (2012) says however, China has actually damaged Russia's economic hegemony in the CAR. "China has constructed the fence in Central Asia, which was once Russia's backyard."

### **Some major regional states:**

There are significant, enduring historical connections between Central Asian nations and their neighbors. Afghanistan, Iran, Pakistan, India, and Turkey are important nations for regional economic growth and security. All of these auxiliary Asian armies are crucial for China, the US, and Russia. The fight on terrorism, non-proliferation regimes, and economic ties are the three main focuses of their cooperation.

### **Iran**

The security of CARs has been shown to be directly related to developments in Afghanistan, and regional instability generally has an effect on development projects like the proposed pipeline, which involves four TAPI (Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India) nations. For all of them, the TAPI project's implementation is crucial, which emphasizes the significance of Afghanistan as a bridge between the CARs South and West Asia and for the security of the area (Laruelle et al., 2010).

Bringing the drug flow from Afghanistan would significantly improve stability in Iran and Pakistan, both of which are geographically adjacent to Afghanistan. The two biggest risks to this extremist terrorism and drug trafficking come from Afghanistan. Nevertheless, Iran has been successful in forging significant commercial ties with the CARs; the importance of its transportation infrastructure is acknowledged; and routes are being constructed through Afghanistan to link Iranian ports with Uzbekistan, which is landlocked (Rollilie., 2006 ). Iran has also collaborated with other regional players, including India and Russia, in an effort to establish sway in any Afghanistan that emerges after the United States. In order to jointly face future challenges, Kabul, Tehran, and New Delhi have come to a trilateral agreement. Additionally, Iran and Afghanistan have agreed to work together to combat the drug trade since both of these countries are involved in the export of Central Asian goods to other parts of the world. Iran and Central Asia would both benefit much from stability in Afghanistan. Iran has actively participated in the resolution of regional conflicts; the Civil War in Tajikistan is a striking example. Iran is an observer-member of



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the SCO and shares a religious affinity (albeit Shias are more prevalent in Tajikistan) with CARs. Russia and Iran have occasionally expressed their unhappiness with one another's position on Tajikistan (Cronin, S. 2013). Once more, Iran at first backed the Islamic Renaissance Party. Later, the pursuit of regional security and stability became crucial for Teheran, and the major tenet of Iranian policies in building its relations with the CARs was cooperative security. Iran and Russia are thought to be working together to keep the US at bay, and their nuclear collaboration could prove disastrous for the CARs. In actuality, both nations have worked to reduce Western influence in the area. Iran and Russia, however, played distinct roles and had different goals. It is erroneous to believe that Russia can sway the CAR at Iran's expense. Russia faces a significant challenge as a result of Iran's expanding influence in Central Asia. Russia is also disputing Iran's claim to a portion of the Caspian Sea. Turkey, another Iranian rival, faces somewhat comparable circumstances, and the disparities in the two nations' perspectives make regional exchanges and relations with Central African nations more difficult.

### **Turkey**

Turkey was formerly thought to be a crucial player in halting the development of Iran's influence and deposing Russia by serving as a model for secular democracy. Turkey is regarded as the main route for the West to access Central Asia because it is a member of NATO. The focus of the US and other foreign financial institutions has actually been on Turkey's funding of CAR. Political scientists in Central Asia held the view that Turkey was being used by the West to find new states. By serving as a model for secular democracy, Turkey has been anticipated to play a significant role in reducing Iran's influence and neutralising Russia's impact (Rumer., 2002).

Through this nation, banking institutions have provided financial support to Central Asia. As a result, trade and telecommunications have significantly advanced, and economic ties between Turkey and Central African nations have grown quickly. Turkey is happy to have established solid links with these nations as the first state to recognize independent CAR and to have done so in order to advance the economic prosperity of the region. Ankara's decisions were influenced by geostrategic factors in addition to economic ones. Turkish businesses are enthusiastic in trading CAR, and trade volume is rapidly rising. Due to their landlocked status and the limited ability of airlinks to access closed markets, these nations have developed their transportation and telecommunications networks. Because of Turkey, Central Asia is kept outside of Russia's sphere of influence (Menashri., 2013 ). Moscow views Turkey's regional dominance as being comparable to its own, and Central Asian nations are centered on Moscow. We are adamant on sticking with the larger CIS group. Since it was commonly believed that Russia would not quickly give up its interest in the area, Turkey gained US support for the program's implementation. The Turks use their shared race, language, and past to forge ties with the United States, and they are likely motivated by the storied ideals of Pan-Turkism. They do have CAR, though. They have been successful in their attempts to influence them, probably because it is known that they are Washington's agents. Furthermore, it is challenging to demonstrate that Turkey had a discernible impact on Central Asia.





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Turkey and CAR have a cordial relationship that is unusual in many ways. First, Turkey is offering support to the nations in these areas. Second, Turkey can serve as an energy terminal due to its geographic circumstances. Thirdly, it offers these states political, social, and cultural collaboration, frequently in the goal of resolving local problems. Fourth, Turkey helped CAR develop ties with other nations in the region. Turkey has been able to arbitrate between Pakistan and Afghanistan in order to advance peace thanks to its relationship with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) of Turkey. Moscow's position may be complicated by Ankara's ties to Beijing and Washington. The integrity of these links to regional issues has not yet been seen, and they are not based on well-defined strategic priorities. Moscow is aware of the delicate nature of the relationship between Turkey and the Central African Republic and is also aware of how well-liked Turkey is among Sunni Muslims and people from West Asia in that region. As a result, purchasing Russian lenses through CAR presents a hurdle due to the company's well-known Turkish model.

### **Pakistan and India**

India is another another newcomer in the area. India has demonstrated extraordinary growth in its military and political clout after the 1998 nuclear test, and its improved regional reputation has made it an appealing role model for the Central African Republic. Of certainly, India wants to reduce Pakistan's influence in Central Asia. India intends to have a significant voice in Afghanistan in the future, thus this area is crucial. Building energy ties, boosting trade and investment, and fostering military ties with these nations are some of New Delhi's other objectives. In its attempts to cooperate with the nations of Central Africa, India sees Pakistan as a significant obstacle. The position of Pakistan within the region undoubtedly supports this. But like India, Pakistan is working to reduce the regional might of its adversaries, and Afghanistan is at the heart of their rivalry. Russia has little interest in Pakistan and views Afghanistan largely from a containment standpoint, thus Islamabad is seeking an ally to neutralize the possible threat from Afghanistan and control the menace of India (Krause and Mallory., 2014 ). In a similar vein, India has improved trade ties with Afghanistan and nations in Central Africa. We aim to be as influential as possible. However, in order to lessen their reliance on Russia, Central African nations have established links with the southern nations, namely H. India and Pakistan.

For this reason, Washington is pressing New Delhi to take on a more significant economic and political role in Central Asia by helping India. But in this case, it was India and Russia's cordial relationship, which peaked in the years of non-alignment. India might potentially serve as the cornerstone for a neutral security organisation that has substantial influence over other states in this area. Although Pakistan's position is helpful, India's proximity to Central Asia is another significant barrier. Pakistan opposed Soviet participation in Afghanistan during the 1980s due to the historical role of its regional rivals in that country. It was difficult to understand how India and CAR related. Pakistan may use Afghanistan as a tool to strengthen its strategic position against India. Then, the Tullivan movement shattered the peace and stability of the region, and the perceived incompetence of the surrounding nations sharpened the knife. As a result, Central African nations, particularly those in southern Central Asia, are



concerned about how the emergence of the Taliban may affect the security of the area. Afghanistan has strained ties between Pakistan and the nations of Central Africa (Anwar, 2006). Taliban-related claims of support were made.

Pakistan's contribution to the management of Islamic extremist organisations is essential. For instance, several Uzbek extremists were apprehended in South Wajiristan in early 2004, and President Pervez Musharraf and Islam Karimov granted Pakistan a port of Gwadar for CARs, electricity supply, and highway links in 2005. Significant attempts have been made to improve ties with CAR, with an emphasis on access to other commercial accords and Pakistan and Baluchistan.

The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline deal is progressing quickly. Turkmen natural gas will be shipped through Pakistan, then through Afghanistan, to India. The lack of security in the area, however, makes it difficult to carry out this project, and the absence of direct land links makes it difficult to boost trade volume. Regardless of who has power in Afghanistan, Turkmenistan is prepared to cooperate with Afghanistan despite the uncertainty (Malashenko, 2013). Although the increased political stability that should result from the new convergence of interests among diverse countries in and around Central Asia is absurd, that is exactly what will happen. Despite this, the financial support provided to Central African nations is insufficient, and high levels of corruption have made interstate collaboration difficult. Understanding the engagement of new parties in CAR requires an understanding of the fragility of Central Asian regionalism.

### **Islamic Revival: A Threat to Russian Designs**

Because it is the historical epicentre of classical Islam and a crucial strategic location, Central Asia has always piqued the curiosity of traditional Muslims. Islam played a significant role in how Russia and the Central African Republic interacted. Islam continues to play a significant role in providing a justification for Russia's prolonged presence in Central Asia. Islam's past is rife with adjustment and synchronisation. Throughout history, a number of movements have appeared in an effort to alter the political and social lives of believers. In the majority of Islamic governments, the interaction between secular government and Islam has turned into a historical issue. Despite the fact that this campaign has gotten a lot of academic attention, less is known about the interactions between Islam and democracy in the region as a whole and the Central Asian regimes in particular.

The Communists set out methodically to prohibit all forms of religious expression within the USSR because it was one of the fundamental beliefs of the Soviet system that religion was incompatible with Communism (Ahmed, 2002). All of the CARs are currently establishing stronger ties with other Islamic nations and joining Islamic organisations. As a result, the area has evolved a hybrid, moderate form of Islam influenced by both the still-recent experience of Communism and the nomadic lifestyle that long-distance spread over the historic Silk Route and encouraged the blending of various ideas (Olimova and Tolipov, 2011).

Through trade along the Silk Route, nomadic Muslim tribes had already begun to peacefully spread Islam throughout Central Asia. Additionally, the expansion of Islam throughout the region was aided by geographic conquest. The idea of armed Jihad, which has continued to be a popular trend in Islamic doctrine, has



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been strengthened by this. The concept of jihad has always been portrayed as an Islamic offensive against unbelievers (Ahmed., 2002).

The tale of Islam's ascendance in Central Asia includes this. The reasons why fundamentalism is pervasive in the area and why it seems to pose a direct danger to Russia's interests in Central Asia are then questioned. While the Soviet Union forced people to give up their religion or practise it covertly for 74 years, the Russian Empire has always repressed Islamic resistance. However, Moscow once more acknowledged Islam as a threat to the Soviet Union during the Islamic Revolution in Iran in 1979. A robust anti-Islamic resistance to Afghanistan's Marxist government also formed at this period.

Such rumours undoubtedly persisted under Gorbachev and even during Boris Yeltsin and Vladimir Putin's post-Soviet rule (Gorodetsky., 2004). As a matter of fact, "the liberalisation programme of 'perestroika', where his Islam was perceived as an opponent of modernity and a rally of anti-Russian feeling among Central Asian ethnic groups. It was challenging for these recently independent countries to navigate two quite different universes. Muslim and secular, in other words. The second-largest ethnic group in the Russian Federation is the Volga Tatars, who make up the majority of the country's Muslim population. There are also a sizable number of Bashkirs, other Muslim ethnic groups from the North Caucasus, and more recently Crimean Tatars. Indeed, it appears that some of the racial conflicts that erupted in Russia in the 1990s were influenced by religion. In addition to the obviously Chechen episode, there was also an Ossetia-Ingush fighting. There were also well-known instances of disputes between Tatars and Russians that were primarily motivated by religious disagreements.

### **Discussion and Analysis**

As was previously indicated, Russia had governed Central Asia for nearly a century, but this dominance had been repeatedly contested by other parties, most notably by Britain. The rivalry between Britain and Russia in the 19th and 20th centuries was marked by British actions to thwart what London saw as Russian aggression and Russian expansion. While the rest of the world showed little interest in the region, both countries wanted to protect their colonial possessions (Hanks., 2010). Russia used Afghanistan as a point of entry into the subcontinent, and Britain used it as a point of entry into Central Asia. Russia's dominance in Central Asia is founded on the idea of "uniting and ruling" as opposed to "dividing and conquering" (as it was during Soviet period). Any instability of the most fragile or dangerous states, such as Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, can have an immediate impact on Russia (Peyrouse.,2011). Because of the difficulty of securing the 7000 km (roughly) border with Kazakhstan, which runs through the center of the Eurasian steppe, Moscow has long viewed Central Asia's security as a problem of domestic security (Pavlovic., 2012) Additionally, the internal strife in CAR during the Soviet era may have foreshadowed Moscow's future difficulties in collaborating with Central Asia after independence.

Military cooperation between the CAR and its neighbors, including Russia and China, has also stalled and is now limited to a broader framework (Peyrouse., 2011). A series of bilateral agreements led to the creation of these multilateral institutions. As a result, Moscow's position is under pressure from global geopolitics and no longer seems to be a monopoly. When they sought to exploit



the region's oil and gas riches, the Big Three countries—Russia, the United States, and China—began to contend. In order to promote American oil corporations' operations in the region, Washington opened embassies in every nation of Central Africa. The distance between the three powers decreased, as the term "triangle" first originated and the strategic triangle acquired a new meaning (Lo.,2008). To prevent and influence competing political ideologies, China has implemented a "soft" approach. Defy the US and let Russia lead the anti-hegemonic movement. China's triangular strategy has been effective thus far. Early on, Russia paid little attention to Central Asia in terms of its foreign policy. Security and economic concerns have become more crucial as Russian intervention in Central Asia has resumed. The reality is that Russian foreign policy continued to be situational rather than preventative.

Due to the civil war in Tajikistan, which finally resulted in the deployment of security forces on the Tajikistan-Afghanistan border, Russia's first steps of direct participation in the area had started in 1992. Later, in 2001, the US war on Afghanistan caused a geopolitical change that opened the door for Russia's expanding economic and military involvement in Central Asia. The formation of alliances in the region, however, evolved into a method of exercising political control and containment of other states in the goal of a dominant position in Central Asia. Russia has discovered how to accomplish its objectives by creating new institutions and regional alliances.

Local leaders in the CARs came from a variety of backgrounds, but although not being open to outside influence as a whole, they never contested Russia's standing as a Great Power. Following independence, the CARs became familiar with both the Muslim and Western worlds. The previous, strong regional position of Russia has been called into question as a result of the East-West rapprochement. Despite Russia's acceptance of US involvement in the region, the emergence of arrogant policies gave rise to a "new great game" in the area. The complexity of the area has increased as a result. The growing influence of the EU and NATO on Russia's western border has put its interests in the post-Soviet region, and especially central Asia. China is significantly expanding its economic sway in Central Asia from the east. Russian investments in Central Asia have already been eclipsed by Chinese capital. Moscow has developed the ability to counter the tide in this struggle, maintaining its economic and military superiority in Central Asia. In the meantime, Western countries have retreated into Russia's backyard, enlarging NATO to the east and endangering vital interests in the post-Soviet region by assimilating the EU since 1990. Moscow, Washington, and Beijing therefore share some regional interests. First, all parties are actively engaged in measures to combat terrorism and the illicit traffic in narcotics and weapons. Second, since everyone is equally engaged in the energy industry, there is competition between the three states for more energy supplies. Third, the local administrations in these states have figured out how to promote any kind of rivalry amongst the Big Three. The oppressed people in the area now feel secure and confident as a result (Martin C Spechler and Diana R Spechler,.2009). On the other hand, it is evident that other states in the area, such as Turkey, Iran, India, and Pakistan, lack the ability to curtail Russia's influence. Putin decided on opposing US military installations in Central Asia.

Instead, it bolstered the Russian military force there to demonstrate real concern about Washington's presence there (Musa and Korobko,.2013). Nevertheless,





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CAR continues to participate in a number of organizations that aim to secure the region's economic, political, and security stability since poor state management and instability can spread across borders into a hurricane. Therefore, all Central Asian nations are increasingly at risk from the epidemic of terrorism, economic instability, and poor management. However, the CAR's inability to reach the necessary level of regional cooperation appears to have made it easier for outside forces to intervene in the area.

### Conclusion

Numerous historical discussions and accounts of Russia's involvement in Central Asia offer genuine justifications for geopolitical conflicts, explain epic games, and describe regional geopolitical and strategic rivalry. Realists contend that acquiring power can aid in securing national objectives. The mix of geopolitical situation and some sort of economic and military setup determines the research's fundamental orientation. In the modern world, geopolitics serves as a potent metaphor for realpolitik. As a result, Russia will need to consider the potential energy of Central Asia when determining its security. Russian economic and physical security depend on post-Soviet Central Asia. CAR likewise depends on Russia for the similar reason. Due to its need for security and energy, CAR also draws other nations. Russia's position was in jeopardy on a geopolitical level under this circumstance. Kirghistan's colours, along with those of other post-Soviet countries, were gradually revolutionised by fierce anti-government animosity, which was driven by developing anti-hegemonic attitude and state-controlled policies. Additionally, the efforts to restore Russia's reputation are threatened by the presence of other regional powers in CAR. The increased risk of terrorists interfering with CAR management in Moscow is another factor. Western countries are taking action to combat terrorism and extremism since the region is afflicted by several extremist groups. Other partners are necessary for the security effort in Russia to succeed. Since September 11, 2001, Russia has worked with the West to reduce terrorist activities in the area and has aided Western operations in Afghanistan. Similar support was supplied by CAR. On the SCO platform, the President of CAR engaged in conflict and shown unity, but his fiery demeanor altered the cooperative atmosphere and fostered combative activity. The goal of this study was to pinpoint obstacles to Russia's policy goals, interests, and interests in Central Asia. Certain security facets of the revived level of Russian cooperation mirror Moscow's historical worldview. In addition to its natural resources, Central Asia is strategically significant to Russia due to its worries for regional and global security. Therefore, the security and stability of CAR in the foreseeable future have been significantly impacted by Russia's policies in Central Asia.

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