The relevance of the topic of the present article is specified by the level of relations between India and Kazakhstan, which nowadays have increased in importance. It is defined not only by mutually beneficial bilateral economic and political relations but also by growing possibility to influence the situation in the region. Both countries seek to develop an extensive strategic partnership in the Central Asia. The roots of our friendship go deep into centuries. India was among the first country to recognize the independence of Kazakhstan.

The state visit of the President Nazarbayev as the Chief Guest of the Republic Day of India in January 2009 shows the importance India attaches to developing cooperation with Astana. During that historic visit, a Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership was adopted which foresees comprehensive cooperation in all spheres, including political, economic, science and technology, military and technical cooperation, counter-terrorism mechanism, education and human resources development.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the partnership of Kazakhstan and India on the modern period.

**Background.** India-Kazakhstan contacts go back to the days of the Great Silk Route which passed from China to the Western world through the Central Asian region touching Southern Kazakhstan especially Shymkent and Zambul regions. The Silk Route played a seminal role in this cooperation, transporting not only commodities for trade, but more importantly knowledge and ideas. The flow of Buddhism from India through Central Asia to China and the flow of the ideas of Sufism from Central Asia to India are but two major examples of this phenomenon. Indian scholar K. Warikoo notes that in spite of physical barriers like Himalayan Mountains and mountainous steppes of Hindu Kush, there exist close social-economic and cultural ties between the people of India and Central Asia (Warikoo 1995: 58).

After India got independence Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, considered Kazakhstan (then part of the Soviet Union) to be of great significance for India.
He welcomed the former Soviet Central Asian delegation at the first Asian Relations Conference held in New Delhi in 1947 and also visited Kazakhstan during his trip to the Soviet Union in 1955 (Movlonov, Ibrokhim 2006: 426). After the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the re-emergence of Kazakhstan, India-Kazakhstan relations have been re-established on the new geopolitical situation.

Diplomatic ties between India and Kazakhstan were established on 22nd February 1992. India was the first country outside CIS region, visited by President Nursultan Nazarbayev after independence of Kazakhstan. The declaration on Principles of Mutual Relations between Kazakhstan and India was the basic document in which both sides confirmed their aspiration to establish relations based on respect for sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of each country. This visit in 1992 followed by the visit of then Prime Minister of India Narshimha Rao in 1993 gave impetus to India-Kazakhstan relations. President Nazarbayev also visited India in December, 1996, February, 2002 and January 2009.

**Multi-vector foreign policy.** The formulation of conceptual basis and principles of Kazakhstan’s foreign policy was started after Kazakhstan gained its independence on December 16, 1991. The first President of the independent Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev has clearly determined the main strategy of diplomacy – creating and maintaining favourable conditions for the steady development of the country on the basis of political and economic reforms. Kazakhstan’s multi-vector foreign policy stipulates that it will develop friendly relations with all countries in the world. It has greatly contributed to preserving international peace by abandoning its nuclear arsenal, the 4th biggest at that time.

Based on their experience to foster inter-religious dialogue and promote tolerance, Astana has initiated the Congress of World and Traditional Religious, where spiritual leaders are gathered. The purpose here is to avoid the clash of civilization and spread the message of peace and understanding among the world citizens through the religious leaders. India is an active participant of this process.

Kazakhstan’s foreign policy with regard to India is based on traditions of friendship and cooperation between the peoples and governments of both countries and reflects the aspiration for further development and strengthening of Kazakh-Indian relation. India’s foreign policy is closely integrated with the country’s fundamental security and developmental priorities. Central to Indian policy objectives is ensuring a peaceful and secure
neighbourhood, cordial and balanced relations with the major powers and mutually beneficial partnerships with developing countries. India is strengthening its relations with Central Asian countries on the basis of historical and cultural linkages.

From an Indian perspective, Kazakhstan is significant for its policy for three main reasons – its strategic location, its vast energy and mineral resources, and its secular and composite social structure (Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury 2009: 35).

Our countries adhere to similar positions on the most actual international questions, such as sharing ideas of the multipolar world, creation of reliable structures of the international and regional security for struggle against new challenges and threats. There are bilateral cooperation mechanisms pushing forward India-Kazakhstan ties in various fields like inter-Government Commission, Foreign Office consultations, Joint Groups on IT, oil and gas, textile, transport, military and technical cooperation, combating terrorism.

India and Kazakhstan actively cooperate under the aegis of multilateral forums including CICA, SCO and the UN organizations. India continued to press for reform of the UN to make it more representative and democratic to enhance its credibility and effectiveness. Kazakhstan backs India’s candidacy for the UN Security Council Permanent membership.

India has been a consistent supporter of Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and is actively participating in the process. CICA is the only Central Asian forum of which India is a member. Kazakhstan facilitated India’s entry into the Shanghai Cooperation as observer. India supports Kazakh foreign policy’s initiative – Congress of Leaders of World and Traditional Religions. Kazakhstan also cooperates with India in field of counter terrorism and had condemned the Mumbai attacks in 2008 (Business Central Asia 2010: 21). Kazakhstan’s analysts note, that one of the purpose of participation of India in SCO is not only maintenance of its own security of new threats connected with terrorism and separatism, but also an opportunity to play more active role in internal affairs of Central Asia.

In 2010 Kazakhstan was chairman of the OSCE and the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 2011. Kazakhstan’s chairmanship in the OIC promotes the East-West dialogue and attracts the Muslim world’s attention to the problems of Central Asia, thereby, speeding up their settlement. This would naturally provide India a friend to carry its message, particularly to the OIC about terrorism.
Kazakhstan - India bilateral cooperation.

In recent years, India has sought to increase its commerce and strategic ties with Kazakhstan, which is the largest nation of the former Soviet republics and occupies a major expanse of territory in Central Asia with extensive oil, natural gas and mineral reserves. Both nations have also sought to establish extensive cooperation and commerce in information technology, space research, banking and increasing volume of bilateral trade. Kazakhstan also sought to negotiate a multilateral agreement with Iran and Turkmenistan to create a transport corridor to India to ensure a reliable trade route and provide Kazakhstan commercial and shipping access to the warm water ports of India.

Economic relations. India has from the beginning emphasized on the development of economic relations with Kazakhstan. In the economic sphere Kazakhstan has a two-fold significance for India. Firstly, the region represents a sizeable consumer market. Secondly, it also has vast deposits of natural resources such as abundant water for electricity generation, gold, silver, chromium and uranium besides hydrocarbons that need to be tapped, exploited and converted into value added products (Mavlonov, Ibrokhim 2004: 5).

All preconditions for strengthening economic cooperation have been created. Agreements on avoidance of double taxation and protection of mutual investment in each other’s country have been signed in Kazakhstan and India. Kazakhstan has a council of foreign investors headed by country’s president. The India-Kazakhstan Inter-Governmental Commission, established in 1992, has been instrumental in developing bilateral trade, economic, scientific, technological, industrial and cultural cooperation.

Major commodities of export from India to Kazakhstan are tea, pharmaceuticals, medical equipments, machinery, tobacco, valves and consumer items etc. Kazakhstan exports raw leather, azbest, mineral resource etc. to India. Major items of import by India are asbestos, soft wheat, steel, aluminum, wool and raw hides. Prospects for cooperation in spheres of oil and gas, civil nuclear energy, uranium, agriculture, public health, information technology, education, culture and defence are promising.

The current bilateral economic relations between India and Kazakhstan do not reflect their potential. Bilateral trade in 2010 was around USD 313.8 million, an increase of around 23.8 % over USD 253.4 million in 2009 as a result of Kazakhstan successful overcoming the economic recession (India–Kazakhstan relations 2011). So far, Indian investment to
Kazakhstan has been about $38 million, indicating the growing confidence of Indian businessmen in the favorable environment in the Kazakh economy. There are many Indian companies present in Kazakh market: Punj Lloyd, OVL, Punjab National Bank, Mittal Steel etc. On their part, Kazakh companies are also establishing there presence in India. We have Kazakh firms such as KazStroyService (infrastructure), Caspian Shelf (oil exploration), TVL (retail equipment), STL (transportation and logistics).

A lack of direct access is a hindrance that has been pointed out time and again. The situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan makes it nearly impossible to implement any route passing through these two countries. As of now the International North-South Corridor if implemented would help to ameliorate the situation. Kazakhstan has taken initiative to speed up the work on its part of the Corridor.

A fresh impetus to bilateral trade and commercial relations has been given as a result of the visit of President Nazarbayev to India in January 2009. During his visit an agreement between the ONGC Videsh Limited and KazMunaiGaz on the Satpayev oil block and an MoU between NPCIL and Kazatomprom envisaging cooperation, including supply of uranium to India among others, were signed. Further, an extradition treaty between both countries, and the protocol on the accession of Kazakhstan to the WTO were also signed. In the Joint Declaration issued during the visit both sides agreed that the trade volume between the two countries is far below the potential and urged that the governments and business enterprises of the two countries should address these issues.

Another significant agreement between India and Kazakhstan that was signed related to space research. The Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and the National Space Agency of Kazakhstan have signed an agreement to help and co-operate with each other in space activities (Zakir Hussain 2009). Kazakhstan hosts the famous Baikonur Cosmodrome. Despite being a major centre for space research, Kazakhstan has more or less remained a passive partner of Russia. The current agreement signed between India and Kazakhstan is expected to assist the Kazakh space programme in a big way. Kazakhstan expects technology transfers from India in the space arena.

India and Kazakhstan have agreed to draw up a “Road Map” for further intensification of bilateral cooperation in wide ranging areas, encompassing socio-political and economic spheres. This was disclosed by India’s External Affairs Minister S.M. Krishna at a press conference after his discussions with Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev and Prime Minister Karim Masimov and others ministers and senior officials, on 12 May,
2010, the second day of his three-day visit to the Central Asian country (Kazakh-Indian business 2010: 24).

Minister Krishna participated in a meeting of the Indo-Kazakh Business Forum along with First Vice Minister of Industry and new technologies Albert Rau in Kazakhstan. A delegation of Indian business leaders representing leading organizations and business houses like Tata International Limited, Sun Group, Apollo Hospitals, Punj Lloyd, Tata Motors, BHEL, ONGC etc who accompanied the minister and prominent businessmen from Kazakhstan participated in the Business Forum. The Forum provided an opportunity for both sides to discuss opportunities for trade and investment as also implementation of joint projects in Kazakhstan under the aegis of Innovative-Industrial Development Program.

Experience of Indian companies is used in the IT parks which are functioning as special economic zones at Kazakhstan. Regional IT parks are functioning at Ural, Karaganda and Almaty. IT park is a pre-economic zone with various customs and tax preferences such as tax exemption on land and property from VAT on services and goods (Bek-Ali 2009: 145).

President Nazarbayev apprised Prime Minister Singh about Kazakhstan’s Industrial-Innovation Policy wherein Kazakhstan intends to implement 170 major projects in a variety of sectors, to speed up the industrialization of Kazakhstan (Kazakh-Indian business 2010: 26). He invited Indian companies to participate in these projects. He also stated that Indian companies in Kazakhstan could benefit from the Customs Union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan and supply their goods and services within the entire Customs Union.

**Energy sector.** Today energy resources are amongst the main aspects of geopolitical importance of any country or region. In Central Asia, Kazakhstan occupies a leading position in the energy sector. Its emergence has added a new strategic dimension to the geopolitics of the whole of world and more so for Asian countries, particularly India and China (Movlonov, Ibrokhim 2006: 431). Major world powers as well as some regional powers are currently engaged in a new Great Game for enhancing their influence in this particular region. They also seek to influence the location of oil and gas pipelines routes to their own advantage. Like other countries India too has sought to expand economic cooperation and improve access to energy resources (Vijay Kumar Bhatia 2009).

India is the sixth largest importer of energy resources in the world and its needs are growing. Its stable economic growth and consequently its national security depend on its hydrocarbon supplies. Currently, India imports 70 per cent of its crude oil and gas from the Persian Gulf states (Dadwal, Shebonti Ray 2006: 130). The increased price of crude oil also
forced the Indian Government to search for alternative sustainable sources of raw materials and Kazakhstan is seen as a likely place. India is looking towards Kazakhstan as a reliable source of hydrocarbons.

In the Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership between the Kazakhstan and India, the Governments expressed satisfaction on the successful completion of negotiations and signing of the Heads of Agreement between National Company KazMunaiGaz JSC and ONGC Mittal Energy Ltd. in respect of Satpayev Block. The Indian Side conveyed that Kazakhstan ranks high in securing India's energy security and hoped that the conclusion of the Agreement is the beginning of a long term mutually beneficial cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector.

Kazakhstan has the second largest deposits of uranium at 1.5 million tons, constituting approximately 17 per cent of the world total. Astana is planning to add uranium output capacity from the current 6,673 metric tons Uranium (MTU) to 30,000 tons MTU by the end of 2018. The nuclear agreement signed with Kazakhstan makes it the fourth country besides the US, France, and Russia that would supply uranium to India for civilian energy purposes. Under the proposed agreement the NPCIL (Nuclear Power Corporation of India) will begin to import at least 120 tonnes annually of Kazakhstan’s uranium.

**Civil nuclear cooperation** presents good prospects for further diversifying bilateral economic and commercial contacts. Kazakhstan actively supported India for an unconditional waiver for international commerce in civil nuclear energy during the recent negotiations at the International Atomic Energy Agency and Nuclear Suppliers Group. Minister Krishna said that Kazakhstan counts on India’s support in creating an international nuclear fuel bank in Kazakhstan’s territory. He said that both countries were currently engaged in talks on cooperation in the field of peaceful nuclear energy. The technical discussions were taking place between both the sides on civilian nuclear cooperation agreement and that both countries finalized a final umbrella agreement on the subject. As a part of deepening cooperation, India will look for supply of natural uranium, investments by Indian companies in mining and construction and supply of small nuclear reactors with Indian technology (Kazakh-Indian business 2010: 26). Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev on the sidelines of the Nuclear Summit in Washington on 11 April 2010 and took stock of the progress the various agreements in force between the two countries. In a meeting, the two leaders reviewed the bilateral relations, the agreements and the initiatives that had been agreed upon during President Nazarbayev’s visit to India in January 2009.
Kazakhstan expert believe that India’s energy diplomacy is directed not so much towards funding new channels of energy supply as towards creation of new energy structure on the basis of which lies “Pan-Asian solidarity”, essence of which lies in building Pan-Asian gas system which will pass through Asia, supplying energy from production centers to consumption centers in order to stimulate growth. The project of North-South transport Corridor from Astana on Caspian Sea through Iran up to the Arabian Sea has good prospective for both countries as well as for central Asia and South Asia. North-South Corridor stipulates presence of railway link from Europe to India and countries of South-East Asia.

Security. Interest of Kazakhstan and India in the development of bilateral cooperation in the sphere of security has been reflected in the Memorandum of Military and Technical Cooperation between the Governments of two countries, in the Protocol between Committee of Defense Ministry and Ministry of Economy and Trade of Kazakhstan and Ministry of Defense of India, agreeing on creation of joint working group on combating with international terrorism. It is necessary to note that conclusion of these documents in the field of military and technical cooperation between Kazakhstan and India has positive dynamics of development. The first session of joint working group, 2002, stipulated arrangements on scientific and technical cooperation in military area, modernization of available technical equipment and arms at Naval Forces of India, rendering of assistance in development of Naval Forces of Kazakhstan, mutual visits of experts, and interactions between law enforcement bodies of two countries in the field of connecting to terrorism, extremism and illegal trafficking in arms. India has two of the finest defence training institutions in the world - namely, the National Defence Academy in Khadakvasla (Pune) and the Indian Military Academy in Dehradun (Tibb P.S. 2009: 200). Many cadets come from Kazakhstan to get trained in these great Academies. These young officers will someday occupy the highest position in Kazakhstan’s defence services and will view future India-Kazakhstan defence cooperation initiatives in a very positive light.

In this connection, President of Kazakhstan N. Nazarbayev in annual message addressed to the nation “Strategy of Kazakhstan’s entry into the ranks of the 50 most competitive countries of the world”, focused that tasks in the strengthening and expansion of international cooperation in struggle against new threats and challenges are especially in priority and they serve as mechanism for strengthening of mutually advantageous cooperation between Kazakhstan and India.
India conveyed appreciation for the CICA initiative of President Nazarbayev, which is emerging as an important multilateral forum fostering peace and stability in Asia. India is a member of CICA and has participated in both its Summits. Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in the 2002 CICA summit said that CICA is “an important initiative of the President of Kazakhstan seeking to establish a framework for mutual understanding and goodwill among the people of Asia” (PM’s Statement on CICA Summit 2002). During the summit Kazakhstan has earned a favorable international reputation for bringing together irreconcilable neighbors Pakistan and India. The Almaty meeting produced a statement by Indian Prime Minister Atali Bihar Vajpayee that India would not strike first, and the Pakistani head of government, Pervez Musharraf, expressed a willingness to open a dialogue with India.

Besides, Kazakhstan and India confirm their adherence to integration and multilateral cooperation at the regional level in the frameworks of SCO, which has two priority directions: security and economy. It is necessary to take into account that behind aspiration to receive the status of member in SCO, India has own interests. There are expansion of export of Indian military goods and services on markets of Central Asian countries, establishment of military presence at regional level with participant-countries of SCO, construction of oil pipeline involving Russia-China-India.

Both India and Kazakhstan are actively engaged in Afghan reconstruction process. Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh met Kazakhstan President N. Nazarbayev on the sidelines of the Nuclear Summit in Washington on 11 April 2010 (Review trade ties 2010: 28). During this meeting the two leaders discussed regional issues of interest including the situation in Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan. They agreed on the need for stability, security and economic development of Afghanistan, and also evinced concern at production of narcotics and trafficking in narcotics. President Nazarbayev was very appreciative of India’s role of reconstruction and economic development in Afghanistan, and he remarked that stabilization of the situation in Afghanistan would pave the way for direct surface link between India and Kazakhstan. President Nursultan Nazarbayev strongly condemned the terrorist attacks in Mumbai and reiterated the need for intensifying global cooperation in combating international terrorism. He also conveyed assurance that Kazakhstan stood firmly with India in dealing with the scourge of global terrorism. Both Sides also called for early conclusion of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism within the UN framework.
Conclusion

Contemporary geopolitical reality puts new tasks between Kazakhstan and India. Several external players are engaged in the energy rich and strategically located country of Central Asia. India have to take into account the influential players like Russia, China, US and the region’s immediate neighbours. But India has no political ambition for dominance in the region, a factor that acts strongly in favour of India. By carefully investing in different sectors India can maintain its goodwill image that it has in the region. The political relations between two sides have been cordial with no major irritants. Absence of problems like border conflicts, historical animosity in Indo-Kazakh relations makes it easer for both to trust each other.

Economic and commercial relations between India and Kazakhstan are dynamic and expanding. Among the Central Asian countries, Kazakhstan is India’s largest trading partner. However, our interaction does not fully reflect the existing potential and is not commensurate with the strong and close relations. The biggest problem in enhancing bilateral commercial exchanges is the lack of a direct access route between countries. Kazakhstan is India’s neighborhood but we are not able to take advantage of our geographical proximity because we cannot use the land route through Pakistan and Afghanistan on account of the unstable security situation in these countries. Most of the present day trade continues through third countries.

Direct access to the region will take time but that does not mean both countries should not explore possibilities to engage in constructive partnership. More Indian investments in various projects like IT, pharmaceuticals, education etc. in Kazakhstan will strengthen the bilateral engagements. It also helps Kazakhstan not to become just the source of supplier for raw materials.

Another reason is lack of adequate and authentic information available in Kazakhstan about the potential and prospects of collaborating with India, and vice-versa. There is an information gap between our two countries which keeps us from realizing the full potential of our relationship. Both countries need to know each other better and have to come closer. Speaking on future of the bilateral relationships, we believe that strategic partnership between our countries will strengthen. There are perspective tendencies of cooperation between Kazakhstan and India:
- The Information Technology sphere
- Gas and oil branch
- Development of North-South Corridor from Aktau to the Caspian Sea via Iran till the Arab Sea
- Sphere of space exploration
- Military-technical cooperation
- Biotechnologies, pharmaceutical, agriculture
- Development of bilateral cooperation in the sphere of small and middle business.
- Cooperation in the sphere of education, sport and tourism.

There is a need to take the bilateral relations to a strategic level. A wider perspective on the region will help India to improve its present links with region. Economic cooperation is only one aspect, but India and Kazakhstan can be good partners in preserving the overall Eurasian security. Considering multilateral and bilateral cooperation between Kazakhstan and India on questions of security, it is necessary to note that as priority areas of bilateral cooperation are joint opposition to international terrorism, organized crime, drug trafficking and formation of system of continental security in the frameworks of acts of CICA and SCO. Tourism and people to people contact through cultural exchange can help the two countries to understand each other.

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