

5 CHAPTER

India and Turkmenistan Relations

After reading the chapter, the reader will be able to develop an analytical understanding on the following:

- Basic background
- Commercial diplomacy
- Analysis of PM's visit, 2015
- Case Studies
- TAPI pipeline and energy security

BASIC BACKGROUND

India's relations with the Turks go back to the ancient times, with the Silk Route initially connecting the two lands. The Turkman Gate in Delhi remains as a symbol of honour to the Turk soldiers. Turkmenistan is located near the Caspian Sea and its location itself enhances its geostrategic significance due to large tracts of natural gas reserves. Turkmenistan has declared permanent neutrality at the level of foreign policy and even the UN recognises it as a neutral state. It grows cotton and wheat and is a major cotton exporter. India initiated diplomatic relations with Turkmenistan in 1992. In 1995, India initiated a programme to train Turkmenistan's diplomat and since 1996, there has been a track-II dialogue for peace and security.

COMMERCIAL DIPLOMACY

The institutional architecture is as follows:



India exports pharmacy products, machines, and plastics while importing inorganic chemicals, raw cotton and synthetics. The fifth IGC happened in 2015 in Ashgabat and the dominant theme was TAPI-pipeline (see case study for details). A lot of Indian companies are into joint ventures in multiple sectors in Turkmenistan.



India has provided education-based support to Turkmenistan. India has provided Akash tablets and has also established an IT centre for IT skill training. ITEC scholarships are also provided to students in Turkmenistan. In 2014, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations organised a ‘Namaste Turkmenistan’ programme as a part of cultural diplomacy.

TAPI Pipeline and Indian Energy Security

In 1995, a private firm named Bidas Corporation floated an idea of a pipeline from Turkmenistan to India. In 2008, the Asian Development Bank conducted a feasibility study and this led to a TAPI framework being signed for export of natural gas from Turkmenistan. The modalities were fine tuned in 2010 in Ashgabat where an intergovernmental agreement was concluded for the supply of natural gas from Daulatabad gas fields to Fazilka.



ANALYSIS OF INDIAN PRIME MINISTER’S VISIT—2015

The Indian PM visited Turkmenistan and met Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow. He gifted Gurbanguly a special handcrafted horse saddle. In Ashgabat, the PM inaugurated a traditional medicine and yoga centre. He also concluded a bilateral defence cooperation agreement. Under this, there shall be regular high level bilateral defence visits between the two nations.

