COLLABORATION AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT FOR SUSTAINABLE SILK ROAD TOURISM IN THE CENTRAL ASIAN STATES AND WESTERN CHINA

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Collaboration and Stakeholder Involvement for Sustainable Silk Road Tourism in the Central Asian States and Western China

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CERTIFICATE OF ORIGINALITY

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it reproduces no material previously published or written, nor material that has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma, except where due acknowledgement has been made in the text.

CHAN, Kwok Yee Gloria

ABSTRACT

The thesis examined the relations of the five Central Asian States (CASs, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and Xinjiang of Western China, and their tourism collaboration through the Silk Road identity. The analysis of stakeholder involvement in the collaborative process is deemed vital and thus has constituted another pillar of the study. A conceptual framework, based on mutual ideas drawn from the widely adopted destination competitiveness and sustainability model, concepts of collaboration and stakeholder theory, was formulated to guide the research.

Adopting a qualitative case study approach, primary data were aggregated by means of in-depth interviews, personal communications with important stakeholders and the candidate's prolonged engagement in Silk Road tourism-related activities. A wide range of secondary data, such as official documents, meeting records, newspaper articles and online resources, was used to triangulate with the primary findings and to build a coherent interpretation of the phenomenon studied. The four key informants and eleven elites participated in the study include high-level officials from the tourism ministries, key persons in major international organisations and donor agencies, representatives of private companies and research institutes in the CASs and China. Data analysis was guided carefully by the conceptual framework and therefore relied heavily on the research questions that had led to the study. Analytical techniques such as coding and content analysis were adopted. To enhance the rigour of the methods, the whole research process was documented in detail.

The study objectives of 1) evaluating existing tourism resources and the management of such resources in the CASs and Western China; 2) analysing current collaboration and exploring the benefits and hindrances to the collaborative process; 3) identifying the different stakeholders and their respective roles and salience to collaboration; and 4) providing recommendations for effective collaboration between the CASs and China, were all fulfilled. To highlight some of the findings, major obstacles for tourism collaboration were revealed as follows: unmatched stakeholders' interests,

organisational bureaucracy, inadequate trust and leadership and the absence of evaluations and/or results of current collaboration. In addition, the original analytical tool for stakeholder analysis developed based on the existing literature was proven inapplicable for the situation studied. An alternative approach, derived from the empirical findings and supported by previous literature, was proposed. That has resulted in a comprehensive stakeholder-relational map. The findings showed that powerful, legitimate yet uncommitted stakeholders represent the major inhibitors for effective collaboration. Whereas, highly urgent stakeholders are active in working together among which alliances can be formed to increase their lobbying power to persuade the other indifferent stakeholders to join forces and to harmonise different stakeholders' interests and objectives in the stakeholder network.

The study attempted to synthesise and contribute to the knowledge of tourism development on the Silk Road and in the Central Asian region. Study limitations include potential bias of data resulted from the informants' political sensitivity and the inadequate duration of the project to study five countries and one locality in Western China at one go, especially when information and data were not easily accessible.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CAREC	Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation
CASs	Central Asian States
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CNPC	China National Petroleum Corporation
CNTA	China National Tourism Administration
EATL	Euro-Asian Transport Links
ECO	Economic Cooperation Organization
EU	European Union
EurAsEC	Eurasian Economic Community
GBAO	Gorno-Badakshan Autonomous Oblast
GDP	Gross Domestic Products
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
IFC	International Finance Corporation
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IRU	International Road Transport Union
ITB	Internationale Tourismus-Börse (International Tourism Exchange)
NELTI	New Eurasian Land Transport Initiative
OSAC	Overseas Security Advisory Council, United States
PRC	People's Republic of China
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organisation
SRADP	Silk Road Area Development Programme
SRGA	Silk Road Global Alliance
SRI	Silk Road Initiative
SRMF	Silk Road Mayors' Forum
SRRP	Silk Road Regional Programme
TAR	Trans-Asia Railway
TRACECA	Transport Corridor Europe-Caucasus-Asia
TRI	The Regional Initiative
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNECE	United Nations Economic Commission for Europe
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WE-WC	Western-Europe-Western China
WTTC	World Travel and Tourism Council
ZTB	Zerafshan Tourism Board

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter first introduces the research background of the study. The problem statement is then elaborated, followed by the identification of the research problems and objectives. Subsequently, the scope of the study is defined. Towards the end of the chapter, the significance of the study is presented. Definitions of key terms and the organisation of the thesis can be found at the end of the chapter.

1.1 Research Background

The Silk Road, misled by its name, is in fact an extensive network of the world's most ancient trade routes linking the East and the West for centuries which runs between and across a wide range of Eurasian countries covering a distance of no less than 12,000 kilometres (UNESCO, 1998; UNWTO, 2006). Travel on the Silk Road, such as for the purpose of trade and religion, was very prosperous in the ancient times, as symbolised by the travels of Marco Polo (Bonavia, 2008; D. Ma, 1998; Polo, 1993). However, due to regional conflicts, political changes and the popularity of the Maritime Silk Road, the prosperity of the Land Silk Road diminished and travel along it stopped for a long period of time. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, there was a restoration of interest in the Silk Road because of the opening of the previously-closed borders and the transitional economic situations experienced in the former Soviet republics located in Central Asia, which constitutes the centrality of the Silk Road (Airey & Shackley, 1997; UNWTO, 2001). International agencies, in particular the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, formerly WTO), expected tourism to play a leading role in the social and economic re-development of the newly independent Central Asian countries (UNWTO, 1999a; Yalcin, 2007).

1.1.1 The Silk Road

As briefly mentioned above, the Silk Road, instead of being a single identifiable route, is a web of transcontinental commercial routes, leading mainly from the old capital of

China, through Central Asia, and Persia (present Iran), to the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean (Boulnois, 2005). They were once routes through which the exchange of merchandises, in particular silk, was conducted in ancient times. It is rather difficult to exactly map out the whole ancient Silk Road considering the number of countries it covered and the number of authors who have tried to define it. Yet, one main route, together with its branches of sub-routes, appears to be consistent in the discipline of humanities (Bonavia, 2008; Boulnois, 2005; K. K. S. Chen, 1964; Dawson, 1964).

In general, the main route ran overland to the west from northern China through ancient Turkistan (part of present Xinjiang) across the Pamirs to northern Persia and on to Syria and the eastern coast of the Mediterranean, with a division southward to India. Referring to the map of the Silk Road in Appendix 1[1], the routes more specifically started from Chang'an (present Xi'an), up through the Hexi Corridor (Gansu Province) and reached Dunhuang at the edge of the Taklamakan desert. This was where the routes divided. The northern path passed through Yumen Guan (gateway of China) and crossed the Gobi Desert (about 1600 km^2 at north-western China and southern Mongolia) to Hami, and then through Turfan and Kuche to reach Kashgar, at the foot of Pamirs. The southern route separated from the main route at Dunhuang, passing Yan Guan (gateway of China), along the edges of the Taklamakan Desert, through Hetian and Shache, shifting north to join the other routes at Kashgar before they split again. One sub-route headed towards Samarkand on to Persia and reached Antioche (present Antakva, Turkey), and along the north-eastern coast of the Mediterranean onto Greece and Italy; the other went south to southern Persia or India. They were the routes on which the merchants travelled and bartered across borders and commodities such as tea and silk from China could arrive at the Roman Empire – often as overpriced noble goods (Boulnois, 2005; DeFalco, 2007). However, despite its long history, the name Silk Road (die Seidenstraße) was only coined by Baron Ferdinand von Richtofen, a German geographer and scientist, in 1877.

Due to the renewal of interest in the Silk Road after the fall of the Soviet Union, the modern Silk Road is defined in a more focused manner. In the tourism context, when compared with the above-mentioned paths, the term has evolved to refer to an area

[1] Appendix 1: Map of the Silk Road. Source: Boulnois (2005).

much more clearly delineated: Central Asia, from China to Iran (Persia), the Chinese province of Gansu, the Chinese Uighur region of Xinjiang, the former Soviet Republics of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, the southern part of Kazakhstan, and also the north of Afghanistan and a small section of Pakistan (Boulnois, 2005). Furthermore, the idea of an Iron Silk Road has emerged parallel to the development of the Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) initiated by United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) as early as in the 1960s (UNCTAD, 2009). At the industry level, there are quite a number of tour operators organising tours to the Silk Road countries as identified by Brackenbury (1997), President of the International Federation of Tour Operators, at the WTO Silk Road Forum held in Xi'an in 1996. A more detailed background of the travel on the Silk Road and its development is given in Chapter 2, Section 2.2. Yet, no literature to date has documented the actual tour provisions of the Silk Road. In this study, only the five Central Asian States (CASs), namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (or Xinjiang, in short) in Western China have been examined. The first part of the thesis findings (Section 4.1.1, Chapter 4) serves to introduce the various types of tour provisions available in this key section of the Silk Road.

1.1.2 Central Asian States (CASs)

Clarke (2009) proposed that the expansion and contraction of the geographical, political and cultural limits to Central Asia are merely results of its interactions with the surrounding regions and Central Asia should be defined as a cultural rather than a pure geographical concept. Despite so, the candidate believes that establishing a workable and significant context for the term Central Asia is important for the analysis of its tourism to be conducted. In contemporary usage, the term primarily describes the five former Soviet Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (see, for example, Airey & Shackley, 1997; Kantarci, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c; MacKerras & Clarke, 2009; Werner, 2003). Strategically bordered by Russia and China, these five CASs only gained their independence after the fall of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in August 1991. Prior to independence, they were under the rule of the Soviet Union for a period of almost seventy years.

These five newly independent CASs occupy a territory of some 3,994,400 square kilometres and have a total population of nearly 60 million (Kantarci, 2007c). The region stretches from the Caspian Sea in the west, to China in the east and from central Siberia in the north to Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan in the south[2]. Due to its vast area and the associated rich natural resources, Central Asia is being regarded as "terribly significant" to the entire world (Buyers, 2003, p. vii). As outlined by Batalden and Batalden (1997), the CASs share a number of important characteristics. Firstly, the native population of each of these states has an Islamic religious tradition which is also associated with a Turkic ethnic root. Secondly, despite this homogeneity in the native population, these states also have a common characteristic of diversity, which rests on the regional and tribal differences. Thirdly, in terms of topography and physical characteristics, the CASs exhibit a wide range of climates and vegetation. There is an apparent wealth of natural resources in the region, from the rich oil reserves in Kazakhstan to the gold mines in Kyrgyzstan; however, most of these resources have remained untapped due to the difficulties of access.

More critically, among all the post-Soviet Union republics, these five CASs experienced the most severe economic deterioration and rural poverty after the independence due to their dependency on a single-sector economy, a consequence of the Soviet's central planning and specialisation strategy (Batalden & Batalden, 1997; Izvorski & Gürgen, 1999). The problem was deepened by the landlocked nature of this region and the inaccessibility of the natural resources. Adding to the poverty are the environmental problems left behind by the Soviet's governance such as the depletion of the Aral Sea due to extensive use of water for cotton farming. Furthermore, the rural-urban inequality in development stimulated ethnic conflicts and further intensified the social unrest caused by the economic turmoil. Therefore, there was an urgent need for a sustainable economic alternative which could ideally also facilitate social development and environmental conservation. Tourism, in view of its location-induced nature and its relatively less dependence on specific resources, was deemed to be a viable option for facilitating the economic transition of these states to a market economy. Almost like idealism, tourism is traditionally regarded as a panacea for

[2] Appendix 2: Map of Central Asia and Western China. Source: CIA (2010).

economic viability, social regeneration and improvement of the living of the community (Briedenhann & Wickens, 2004). In addition, well-planned tourism increases incentives to restore or conserve the environment. In order to achieve these, the concept of sustainable development balancing the economic, socio-cultural and environmental elements is essential (UNWTO, 2004).

1.1.3 The "STANs"

The suffix "-stan" derives from an old Persian word meaning "land of" or "place of" (Ramat & Ramat, 1998); and therefore, Kazakhstan would mean the land of the Kazakhs while Uzbekistan is the homeland of the Uzbeks and so on.

Bordering Russia and China, Kazakhstan is the largest of the five "stans" in size occupying almost three million square kilometres with the second largest population (15 million)[3]. Kazakhstan's economy mainly relies on the exports of natural resources and metals of which 59% are oil and oil related products to countries including China, Russia and Germany. The Silk Road passed through the southern part of Kazakhstan particularly skirting the Tian Shan. Uzbekistan is situated in the heart of Central Asia. With a population of almost 28 million, it is the most densely populated CAS and the capital of Tashkent is the largest industrial and cultural centre in Central Asia (Airey & Shackley, 1997; Rasanayagam, 2003). The cities of Samarkand and Bukhara are historically related to the Silk Road. Export of energy products, gold and cotton has sustained the Uzbek economy since independence. Being the second smallest of the CASs in size, Kyrgyzstan is located at the eastern part of Central Asia and has a population of five million. Due to its extensive river systems and mountainous landscape, Kyrgyzstan is a major exporter of hydroelectric power. Almost every Silk route from China passed through the Pamir-Alay area in Kyrgyzstan. The second largest "stan" is Turkmenistan which borders Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iran and Afghanistan. Turkmenistan has one of the most hostile landscapes in the region. Eighty to ninety per cent of its land is covered by the Kara Kum (Black Sands) desert, one of the largest in the world; while there are also two mountain ranges in the southern part

[3] The countries' demographic and economic profiles were compiled in Appendix 3 based on statistics and information provided by CIA, UNDP and the government websites of the individual countries.

of the country, namely the Kopet and the Paropamiz. The unemployment rate of the country was 60% in 2004, much higher than those of the other CASs[4] (CIA, 2012), and there is a huge imparity in income distribution. Like the other CASs, the Turkmen economy depends on the export of natural gas and oil. Tajikistan is situated in the south-eastern most part of Central Asia sharing a frontier with Afghanistan and a disputed eastern border with China (Batalden & Batalden, 1997). It is the smallest in size (143,100 square kilometres) but with a population of more than seven million. It has the lowest GDP per capita in the region and it does not enjoy the same privilege of having a substantial oil deposit. Tajikistan is featured by its beautiful mountain located in the eastern half of the country, with the dominance of the "roof of the world", the high peaks of the Pamir Mountains (Batalden & Batalden, 1997). Detailed demographic and economic profiles of the CASs can be found in Appendix 3.

In general, the five CASs are heavily dependent on exports of natural resources and agricultural produces as the major sources of national income. Therefore, tourism could be crucial in enhancing first, their economical sustainability by diversifying the income source; second, the socio-cultural sustainability by balancing income distribution between rural and urban areas and the conservation of local cultures; third, the environmental sustainability by reducing dependence on the valuable and extinctive natural resources for generating income. In addition, tourism can be used as a political tool to crystallise their national identities, to defend their position in the global market and also to deal with the scepticism associated with the increased foreign influence in the region (MacKerras & Clarke, 2009). However, scholars across different fields stressed that their ability in this development was constrained by their internal political and economic instability, including the spread of Islamist organisations (Clarke, 2009). Therefore, if their development potentials are to be captured, they must first abandon their prejudices towards each other and start working collaboratively to a common future (A. McMillan, 2009).

[4] Unemployment rate: Kazakhstan- 6.3% (2009 estimate); Kyrgyzstan- 18% (2004 estimate); Tajikistan- 2.2% (2009 estimate); Uzbekistan – 1.1% (2009 estimate). Due to the different years of data availability, direct comparison between the CASs is difficult, if not impossible.

1.1.4 Western China

In terms of world economy and politics, China is one of the most influential countries in the twenty-first century. This is due to its vast size, population and fast growing economy [5] only some sixty years after the establishment of the Communist Government in 1949. Different from the CASs, China has taken a much more moderate approach in its economic transition by implementing different Five-year Development Plans which directed the country to first develop the eastern coast and major economic zones (CNTA, 1999). Since the "Open-door Policy" issued in 1978, economic development has taken a much faster pace and in 1985 tourism was officially included in the Seventh Five-year Plan to be an important social and economic development tool. It has been observed that the development of tourism in China has been closely linked to the government policy throughout these years and this historical development is thoroughly explained in Section 2.4, Chapter 2.

Tourism has demonstrated itself as a significant economic driver in China over the years. However, a disparity in development between the eastern coast of China and its inland and western provinces is prominent, as a result of the national policies issued since the economic reform (Démurger, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Wen & Tisdell, 1997). Despite this initial imparity, the situation has been changing after the introduction of the Go-West Policy, "xibu da kaifa", in January, 2000. Under this western development policy, six provinces namely Gansu, Guizhou, Qinghai, Shannxi, Sichuan and Yunnan; five autonomous regions, Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Tibet and Xinjiang; and one municipality, Chongqing have "embarked on a tourist-oriented development course" (G. Xu, 1999, p. 17). This development approach is particularly strategic in view of the vast amount of natural resources and attractions available for tourism development in Western China. Therefore, in consideration of the remoteness of Western China to the major economic zones and comparing to trade and other business opportunities, tourism provides a variable social and economic alternative for this particular region. In addition, tourism is used as a political tool to enhance stability in the western autonomous regions, especially Tibet and Xinjiang.

[5] Appendix 3: Country profiles of China and the CASs.

This thesis, situated in the Western China context, studies the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. This is not only because Xinjiang (ancient Turkistan) was important to the Silk Road, but more so because of the other less apparent reasons. First, Xinjiang shares similar nomadic roots, especially its religious component, with the CASs which makes management by the Chinese government more difficult but collaboration with the CASs more feasible. Second, the strategic location of Xinjiang provides China with the access to the vast quantity of oil and gas in the CASs to support China's rapid economic development and the potential trade extension into Central Asia and onwards to the Middle East and Europe (A. McMillan, 2009). Xinjiang borders four CASs and a small sliver of Russia, as well as Mongolia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India. On the China side, it is next to the provinces of Gansu and Qinghai as well as the Tibet Autonomous Region. Its geopolitical salience has a major influence on the government's policies on the region (D. McMillan, 2009). The government is placing considerable emphasis on the western economic growth to promote ethnical equality and regional security in which tourism could be a critical component.

Furthermore, exceptional success in developing Silk Road tourism has been experienced in some Chinese cities, such as Dunhuang and Xi'an. It is revealed by the industry practitioners including tour operators and hotel developers (P. Wong, personal communication, April 22, 2009)[6] that the better development of Silk Road tourism in these cities was induced by several critical factors. They are the advancement of the infrastructure and tourism provisions, the improved access and most importantly, the changed mentality and tighter collaboration of the different stakeholders, including provincial and municipal policy makers, individual tour operators, service providers and the local community towards the development of tourism. These cities are practical case studies for learning how to foster tourism collaboration within and across different countries on the Silk Road.

[6] Mr Peter Wong is the chairman of the Culture Resources Development Co., Ltd. and owns a series of Silk Road cultural hotels in Western China.

1.1.5 Silk Road collaboration

There is evidence, although scattered, of collaborative efforts by different stakeholders related to the development of the Silk Road. One of the most intriguing examples is the Silk Road Initiative (SRI) which has been implemented by a consortium of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and UNWTO ever since the early 1990s. The SRI aims to encourage collaboration and collective development of the CASs and China. It has subsequently evolved into various domain-specific programmes focusing on trade, investment and tourism. In the tourism context, UNWTO has been a partner of the SRI since 2004. By integrating its pre-2004 works done on Silk Road tourism, the UNWTO Silk Road Programme had been created, and was then revitalised in 2009 (UNWTO, 1999a; 2012d). As of March 2012, there are altogether 28 countries participating in the programme including all of the five CASs and China (UNWTO, 2012d). Meanwhile, international donor agencies have also been putting effort in developing the Central Asian region, such as the Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) programme initiated by the Asian Development Bank (ADB). The programme was funded by the Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) for the period 2007-2010, with a budget of USD 8 million (ADB, 2010). In addition to these high-level efforts of the international organisations involving the national governments of these countries, there are various non-governmental groups collaborating for the benefits of the Silk Road development. One of these groups is the Silk Road Global Alliance (SRGA), established with the notion of promoting the Silk Road Spirit, which symbolises the peaceful exchanges and mutual understanding among countries despite barriers (SRGA, personal communication, March 6, 2010)[7]. Collaboration intention is also experienced at the local level demonstrated by the Silk Road Mayors' Forum (SRMF), which is one of the achievements under the SRI regional programme and the first forum was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in October 2006 (Huebner, 2005; UNDP, 2007). With the fifth forum having been organised in 2010, the SRMF has developed into a tradition of networking and building relationships for a common future of the Silk Road (Bauer, 2010; cited in ETN, 2010)[8].

[7] A Silk Road Global Alliance workshop was held in Hong Kong on 6 March 2010 in which the candidate participated.

[8] Outcomes of these SRMFs are examined in Chapter 4 and details are documented in Appendix 13.

This also brings the international initiative to a more proactive level leading by the mayors' involvement. Nonetheless, the development of cross-national Silk Road tourism at local level is challenging as policy is usually made top-down. Collaboration efforts in the business sector have been demonstrated by Silk Road Destinations, which is a "regional project aimed at consolidation of the efforts of tourist companies of Silk Road countries on promotion of tourist product in the markets of developed countries" (Silk Road Destinations, n.d., para. 1). It involves tour operators from the five CASs, China and other neighbouring countries including Armenia and Georgia. They participated in international travel fairs collaboratively and appeared under the same identity.

Despite these initial pieces of evidence, very few studies, if not none, have ever been conducted to analyse the general cooperative relations of the CASs and China, and to evaluate the abovementioned collaborative efforts.

1.2 Problem Statement

As discussed in the preceding section on the research background, tourism could be critically beneficial to the economic, socio-cultural and environmental sustainability for the development of the five CASs. It has also political potential to strengthen the respective national identity of the CASs and reduce their reliance on the exports of natural resources for national income. From another perspective, China has an immense interest in the vast reserve of natural resources and the untapped trade markets in the CASs. The strategic location of Xinjiang attracts the Chinese government to be more proactive in developing tourism in the region, more preferably together with its CASs counterparts. However, it is observed that tourism in the CASs is underdeveloped with international tourist arrivals reaching merely around 7.2 million in 2010[9], compared to the world's 935 million international arrivals in the same year (UNWTO, 2012a). This underdevelopment is commonly reasoned by constraints such as the lack of infrastructure and hospitality facilities; inadequate facilitation of travel, visa complication and an unfavourable image perceived by potential tourists.

[9] The last available visitor arrival statistics of Turkmenistan were in 2007. The number of overnight visitors was 8,200 in 2007, according to UNWTO (2012).

Furthermore, in view of their remoteness, a CAS or Xinjiang alone may not be distinctive enough to attract mainstream visitors from overseas markets and the similarity between them may potentially lead to competition for tourism demand in the region. It is proposed that an unprejudiced collaboration between the CASs and China would help not only capture their full development potential, but also minimise obstacles in the development process. Nevertheless, looking at the existing literature and the development studies conducted by international organisations such as UNDP and UNWTO, tourism potential of the CASs and Xinjiang in Western China as part of the Silk Road has never been systematically verified and documented. Before further argument can be made on the need for the CASs and China to collaborate, it is important to first examine the tourism resources available for the countries to perform as competitive tourist destinations. Besides, tourism management approaches of the countries, as well as the abovementioned challenges for tourism development in the region, are yet to be fully understood. These analyses may help justify the necessity for the countries to pool together their comparative advantages in terms of resources and management competence so as to enhance the overall tourism competitiveness of the region.

Like the Mediterranean cluster of destinations, it was identified that regional collaboration of the CASs and Western China is crucial to prevent them from entering into competition and to add value to their attractiveness. As agreed by previous researchers (see, for example, Apostolopoulos & Sönmez, 2000; Jackson, 2006; Wong, Bauer, & Wong, 2008), regional collaboration balances the tourism development of different countries, enhances image of the region, diversifies tourism products, prolongs tourists’ stay, increases tourists’ expenditure and enhances mutual learning. These would ultimately increase the competitiveness of the region in the global market place. In addition, almost all of the commonly known obstacles for tourism development in the Central Asian region could be minimised, if not eliminated, by a tighter and better managed regional collaboration. For instance, the International Road Transport Union (IRU) documented the joint project of the two United Nations regional committees – Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) – on the development of the Euro-Asian Transport Linkages (EATL), which involves 19 nations including the five CASs and China, and addressed that non-physical barriers are more significant challenges than the physical ones (IRU, 2009).

In view of the above, it is evident that there are certain incentives for collaboration between the CASs and China in terms of tourism development. Silk Road, with its renowned brand name in the tourism history, appears to be an invaluable resource to be built on. Silk Road visualises the destination images of the CASs, has the potential to attract different types of travellers, and most importantly represents a physical (e.g. geographical) and a non-physical (e.g. cultural) link between the collaborating parties. Briefly illustrated in the previous section were the efforts made to collaborate between the CASs and Western China at different levels; however, the contents of these collaborative projects are yet to be evaluated. In addition, the relations between and among the countries in a broader economic context have first to be better examined. Before collaboration could be effective, stakeholder involvement (identification, analysis and management) is crucial but may be difficult to achieve. Collaboration between the CASs and China is facing numerous challenges of which little has been known. Therefore, a research study on the aspects of collaboration and stakeholder involvement among the five CASs and Western China in attaining a sustainable Silk Road tourism future is warranted.

1.3 Research Questions and Objectives

As noted in the problem statement, this study intends to answer questions in various major areas, particularly collaboration and stakeholder involvement in relation to the sustainable Silk Road tourism development in the CASs and Western China. The main research question is "What are the barriers preventing effective collaboration for the tourism development along the Silk Road, particularly in the CASs and Western China?" Before answering this question, it is necessary to get a better understanding of the tourism potential of the countries by examining the endowment and deployment (management) of their tourism resources. It is because the proposition that the CASs and China should collaborate to enhance the regional competitiveness of Central Asia by pooling together their comparative advantages could not be upheld if there was not any tourism potential to begin with. Therefore, the following sub-questions were used to guide the current study.

1. What are the existing tourism resources of the Silk Road, in the CASs and in Xinjiang and how are they being deployed in the individual countries?

2. How is tourism managed in the countries and what are the challenges for tourism development in the region?

3. What is the extent of existing collaboration and what are the resulting outcomes? How are the collaborative efforts being interpreted?

4. What are the incentives (expected outcomes) and barriers of Silk Road tourism collaboration, between and among the CASs and Western China?

5. Who are the stakeholders and what are their respective stakes and relationships involved in the process of tourism collaboration among the CASs and Western China?

6. What are the roles of these stakeholders in facilitating and inhibiting the process of collaboration?

7. How would the collaboration affect the overall sustainability and competitiveness of the region (CASs and Western China) as part of the Silk Road, by influencing the tourism resources these destinations possess as well as their management?

To answer the research questions, both secondary and primary data were utilised. The objectives of the study are listed as follows:

1. Using the conceptual framework developed, to evaluate the endowment (the existing tourism resources) and deployment (management) of tourism resources in the CASs and Xinjiang in Western China;

2. To analyse current collaboration among the CASs and China:

    a. To evaluate existing collaboration among the countries in general and that in the sphere of tourism development in particular;

    b. To explore the potential benefits and hindrances of the tourism collaboration process

3. Based on stakeholder theory and the developed analytical tool, to identify the different stakeholders and their respective roles and salience in the process of tourism collaboration along the Silk Road, in particular that of the CASs and China; and;
4. To provide recommendations for effective collaboration between the CASs and China.

1.4 Scope of Study

Although the Silk Road extends across a wide range of countries, this study only focuses on the tourism development of the five CASs and Western China (Xinjiang in particular). The rationale of not studying the whole Silk Road from Nara to Venice constructs on the critical evaluation of the need in doing so and the consideration of resource limitations. In order to have a meaningful research, the study targets need to be carefully selected. According to UNWTO (1999a), countries on the Silk Road are classified into three concentric circles based on their level of commitment among which the CASs need intense collaboration for the development of Silk Road tourism. In addition, in line with the notion of the SRI set up almost 20 years ago, which aimed to tighten collaboration and development among the CASs and the western provinces in China after the disintegration of the Soviet Union, it is purposive to study the obstacles that hinder the progress of this collaboration.

1.5 Project Significance and Value

1.5.1 Importance of the topic

Taking note of the recent development in the Central Asian region, such as the agreement between China and the various CASs on the construction of gas or oil-related infrastructure, the proposal of the Asia-Europe rail networks and the increased activities of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)[10]; one would start to reconsider the collaboration potential between the CASs and China. As discussed before, increased tourism activities could be beneficial to the CASs in different aspects but efforts are yet to be observed on the bettering of their respective and collective tourism performance. Tourism was put under the umbrella of the SRI to be a major collaborative area between the CASs and China; however, after almost 20 years; international tourist arrivals, physical tourism infrastructure as well as administrative access (visas) in the Central Asian region are still lagging behind other regions in Asia (I. Rahim, Personal Communication, April 6, 2009)[11]. If the CASs and China could supposedly collaborate in areas like trade and transport links, they should also be able to work together in tourism development. Therefore, it is important to understand the underlying barriers to the successful tourism collaboration in the CASs and China along the Silk Road so that the effort spent will not be wasted and tourism can reach its full potential in facilitating the social and economic (re)development process of the region.

1.5.2 Contributions to knowledge

Despite the growing interest in the culture and history of the Silk Road in the international travel market (Toops, 1999) and the evolving tourism potential in the Silk Road countries, studies on the Silk Road in the aspect of tourism are scarce and scattered. Majority of the studies focused on the conservation and preservation of heritage sites on the Silk Road in relation to tourism development and the resulting sustainability issues (see, for example, B. S. Li, 1998; M. W. Li, 2003; L. W. Wang, Ju, Lin, Gu, & Chen, 2007; S. F. Wang, Xue, & Geng, 2007; Y. Zhang & Ding, 2006). Almost all of these studies covered only the Chinese section of the Silk Road. Very occasional were there materials written on tourism development of the whole Silk Road with the exceptions of Hammond (2005) and Bonavia (2008). However, their works are more of a pure descriptive report than an analysis of any facet of Silk Road tourism. Therefore, this study, from an academic perspective, synthesised existing knowledge on tourism development along the Silk Road, especially in the CASs and

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[10] These collaborative projects are to be verified and examined in the study (Chapter 4, Section 4.3).
[11] Mr. Iman Rahim is the founder of Silk Road Adventure, an operator organising tours to western China and the CASs.

Xinjiang in Western China. It is expected that this study could also catalyse future research on similar topics by providing relevant future research directions related to Silk Road tourism and/or collaboration. In a broader sense, this study contributed to the knowledge pool of tourism collaboration and stakeholder involvement. It attempted to link resources and management of individual countries, through collaboration, to the general competiveness of the whole geographical region. Furthermore, it tried to operationalise the stakeholder theory in the context of cross-national tourism collaboration.

1.5.3 Practical contributions

The major practical contribution of this study is the examination of the obstacles preventing effective collaboration among the CASs and China for Silk Road tourism. The findings on the component of resources and that of management provided a better understanding of tourism potential in the Central Asian region and in the individual countries. The stakeholders involved in the tourism collaborative process, together with their roles and interrelationships can be better comprehended. Overall, the study presented useful information for major tourism stakeholders of the countries at national, regional and local level and offers feasible recommendations to facilitate cross-national collaboration for tourism in this important section of the Silk Road.

1.6 Definition of Key Terms

It is useful to define some of the key terms used in the study; as for example, regional collaboration could refer to what is happening in a single nation or the one that involves multiple countries in the same broader geographical region. Therefore, this section does not intend to generalise definitions for the different terms found in the previous literature but to clarify any potential ambiguity on the terms used in the study.

The Silk Road is a web of transcontinental commercial routes, leading mainly from Xi'an in China to the coasts of the eastern Mediterranean, through Central Asia, and Iran. They are routes through which the exchange of merchandise was conducted in the ancient times. In contemporary tourism definition, Silk Road mainly refers to the area of Central Asia, from China to Iran, the Chinese province of Gansu, the Chinese Uighur region of Xinjiang, the former Soviet Republics of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, a part of southern Kazakhstan, as well as the north of Afghanistan and a small section of Pakistan (Boulnois, 2005).

Central Asian States (CASs) are the five former Soviet states located in Central Asia that include Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan.

Western China in this study mainly refers to several cities and regions located in the western part of China, considering their strategic locations and their historical significance on the Silk Road. In particular, the research studied the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (or Xinjiang) located in China's far west bordering the CASs.

Resources are the combination of core resources, supporting factors and resources, as well as location and dependencies, which implicitly mean the factor conditions as in Porter's model (1996). These are the attractors which motivate the tourists to visit a destination or a group of destinations (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999).

Tourist destination management refers to the deployment and management of the different resources, elements or actors, as well as their interactions involved in a chaotic tourism system. This could happen at multi-dimensional level such as enterprise level, local level, regional level or multi-national level. The aim is to achieve both sustainability and competitiveness for the destination to be successful (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006; McKercher, 1999; Tinsley & Lynch, 2001).

Collaboration is a process of joint decision making among key stakeholders of a problem domain (i.e. the way a problem is conceptualised by the stakeholders) about the future of that domain. There are five key aspects: (1) the stakeholders are interdependent, (2) solutions emerge by dealing constructively with differences, (3) joint ownership of decisions is involved, (4) stakeholders assume collective responsibility for the future direction of the domain, and (5) collaboration is an emergent process (Gray, 1989, p. 242).

Sustainability signifies "the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, p. 43). It principles to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability in development (UNWTO, 2004). However, the focus of the study was put on competitiveness; hence, sustainability was also viewed as the ability of a destination or a group of destination to sustain its competitiveness in the global market in the long term.

Regional Competitiveness implies the competitiveness of a geographic region crossing national borders; in this case, Central Asia comprising the five CASs and Xinjiang. This kind of regional competitiveness can be built on the functional definition of destination competitiveness. While destination competitiveness is the efficient application of resources of a destination in its competing environment (micro-environment), regional destination competitiveness would be that against the competing regions in the global context (macro-environment) (Enright & Newton, 2005).

Stakeholders are defined by Freeman (1984) as "... any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives" (p.46). The focal organisation in this study originally referred to the abstract concept of Silk Road tourism collaboration; particularly that of CASs and China, with the aim to coordinate and optimise stakeholder interest (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). However, the definition of the focal organisation was later altered based on the empirical findings of the study, which will be discussed in Chapter 4.

Stakeholder Involvement applies to the identification, assessment and management of the stakeholders related to the tourism development along the Silk Road. That involves several steps which include identifying stakeholders and their respective stakes, mapping the relations between the stakeholders, assessing their corresponding roles in the collaborative process and evaluating the potential impacts of collaboration on their interests.

1.7 Organisation of the Thesis

The thesis contains five chapters. The first chapter introduces the background, objectives and value of the research. Chapter 2 presents a comprehensive review of previous literature related to the topic, followed by the formulation of a conceptual framework that guided the study. The research approach, design and methods are clearly described in Chapter 3. In view of the nature of a qualitative inquiry, both the findings and their discussion are included in Chapter 4 for a more cohesive interpretation. Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter in which the study objectives are revisited. Recommendations, study limitations and suggestions for future research are then discussed.

1.8 Chapter Summary

Having identified the background and scope of the study, the chapter elaborates on the problems leading to the research. The research questions and the corresponding objectives are then discussed. There are five major areas that the research is looking into, with *collaboration* and *stakeholder involvement* being the major pillars. The ultimate purpose of the study is to investigate the barriers preventing effective collaboration for tourism development in this key section of the Silk Road, that is, among the CASs and Xinjiang in Western China. It is hoped that the research will be of value to both tourism scholarship and practitioners. The study is expected to fill the research gap in the field of tourism research of the Silk Road and to indicate relevant directions for future research. Furthermore, the research findings may provide a better understanding of the hindrances to Silk Road tourism collaboration and eventually offer feasible recommendations to overcome such obstacles and to facilitate cross-national collaboration between and among the CASs and China.

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CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Maxwell (2005), a review of previous literature in relation to the study topic is critical and serves several purposes. These include setting up the research scope and background, informing the readers what has already been known, developing justification for the current research and providing points of comparison. Most importantly, revisiting and establishing links between existing concepts and theories consequently would result in a conceptual framework which could be used to guide the present study.

For this reason, the chapter first provides a comprehensive tourism background of the Silk Road, the CASs and China respectively. This is especially important as little has been researched on the tourism development in the regions of the Silk Road and the CASs. That is followed by a theoretical background which covers topics including public policy and tourism administration; and a cohesive examination of the concepts of sustainability and competiveness. A substantial component of this chapter is built upon the review of studies on collaboration and stakeholder theory. Towards the ending section, a conceptual framework associating the different concepts is proposed.

2.1 Development of Tourism- Review and Project

The earliest form of travel appeared in the time when primitive man set out travelling, in search of food and other necessities for his survival (Theobald, 2005). The "modern" travel era began in the course of the first civilisations in about 4000 B.C.E., as suggested by Goeldner and Ritchie (2006). They credited the Sumerian invention of money, cuneiform writing and wheels, together with the development of trade, as the founders of the travel business. Throughout the recorded history, travel has always been closely related to the progress of civilisation. In the cradle of the Western civilisation, there are numerous written references which indicate that people continued to travel for trade, commerce, religious purposes, festive celebrations, medical treatment and education except during the Dark Age which followed the time of the Roman Empire. While in the East, China had been having a minister of travel for more than four thousand years (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006). In spite of that and only until two thousand years ago, these two of the world's oldest civilisations were first linked by the renowned trade route, being named as the Silk Road afterwards. The Silk Road is a vivid evidence of the ancient cross-national travel, for the purpose of trade or politics; however, travels were still merely limited to military, government official and caravans at that time.

Scholars studying the history of tourism suggested that the concept similar to the present mass tourism began during the Industrial Revolution in England when the middle class expanded and rail transportation became available and was relatively inexpensive. Yet the growth of tourism was only turning dramatic following the end of World War II in 1945, as a result of higher discretionary incomes, changing demographics, infrastructure development and specifically, the increase in geo-political stability and the introduction of commercial aircrafts, in particular jets. Tourism gradually emerged as an integrated industry contributing to the economic and social development of the world (Eadington & Smith, 1992; Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006; Theobald, 2005).

With 982 million international tourist arrivals and an estimated total of US$ 1,030 billion international tourist receipts in 2011 (UNWTO, 2012b), tourism has developed into a worldwide activity with great significance in the 21st century. Based on the economic impact estimates of 2011 provided by WTTC (2012), travel and tourism contributes to 9.1% of the global GDP and employs over 255 million people across the world both directly and indirectly. Tourism is also a social and political influencer in many jurisdictions which provides "the moral and intellectual basis for international understanding and interdependence" (Edgell, 1999, p. 88).

Tourism is no longer a pure economic phenomenon which generates extra income and employments, but as well a factor that impacts the nature of social and political interaction taking place between countries (Eadington & Smith, 1992). An increasing number of destinations, which possess the necessary resources, are now developing either consciously or unintentionally large-scale tourism in a rapid manner. This leads to the concerns of both tourism theorists and practitioners on the concept of sustainable tourism development which requires a suitable balance between the environmental, economic and social-cultural aspects of tourism development so as to guarantee long-term sustainability (Sharpley, 2000; UNWTO, 2004). Meanwhile, competition in the future tourism market is going to be more intense in which collaboration between countries would be more valued.

Another inclination is that tourists are becoming more knowledgeable and sophisticated and hence would request higher diversification of tourism products. There has been a rising trend of alternative tourism in the past two decades, which is defined as, "forms of tourism that are consistent with natural, social, community values and which allow both hosts and guests to enjoy positive and worthwhile interaction and shared experience" (Eadington & Smith, 1992, p. 3). Alternative destinations, like the CASs and Western China as parts of the Silk Road are now given more opportunities to flourish.

Tourism will be continually growing in the future, with a forecast of 1.6 billion international tourist arrivals and a tourist expenditure of more than US$ 2 trillion annually by 2020 (UNWTO, 1999b), and will increase by a year-on-year average of 3.3% to 1.8 billion international tourist arrivals in 2030 (UNWTO, 2012c). In view of this pace and scale of development, more consideration should be placed on the issues of sustainability and competiveness, facilitated potentially by the utilisation of regional and cross-national collaboration.

2.2 Tourism on the Silk Road- From Historical Evidence to Global Initiative

The history of travel on the Silk Road is long and complex. Among the countless literature on the Silk Road, most of them were written from an archaeological or an anthropological perspective. Accounts on the ancient travellers on the Silk Road were mainly found in the Chinese literature recording about travel of the Chinese explorers with the exception of Marco Polo. Zhang Qian (Chinese diplomat, various trips, 138-115 B.C.E.) and Ban Chao (Chinese diplomat, 73 AD); Fa Xian (first Chinese monk travelled to India and back, AD 399-AD413) and Xuan Zang (Chinese monk, AD 627-643, his travel became fantastic legends); and the Polos (Italian merchants Marco Polo, 1271-1295, and his father and uncle, Niccolò, and Maffeo Polo, 1260-1269 ;1271-1295) were the most recorded Silk Road travellers in the history.

Luce Boulnois, who has been studying the Silk Road all her life, pointed out that Silk Road is now being revitalised in travel and art publications. Her books (1963; 2005) are comprehensive with accounts on the travel along the Silk Road since early ages. Recorded in *Shiji*, *the Records of the Grand Historian*, trades and communications between Chinese and people in the western and central Asia started in the Warring Period of China, 475-221 B.C.E. (DeFalco, 2007). That was reconfirmed by the discovery of Shu's (now Sichuan) products in the marketplace of Daxia (now part of Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan). However, it is undeniable that the Chinese only got to know the existence of several large kingdoms including Anxi (Persia), Shengdu (India), and Lijian (part of the Roman Empire) after Zhang Qian's mission to the west[12] (Boulnois, 2005). Mutual exchanges of ambassadors and gifts between these kingdoms were then instigated, and were followed by caravans of traders leaving and arriving China.

In fact, merchants and traders seldom journeyed the whole way from China to the Roman Empire and return on the Silk Road as it would have had taken them three to eight years (Boulnois, 2005). Merchants travelled and sold goods in their own regions and traded with the sellers across the border in exchange of their local or foreign goods. The prices of these products increased as they were passed along the Silk Road and reached the Roman Empire as exotic noble chattels. Silk was exchanged among many others things such as metals, dyes, spices, substances with aromatic and medical usages, food, horses and etcetera. Therefore, nothing could have been inaugurated the Silk Road but the spirit of collaboration, started at the business level between traders.

The Silk Road bourgeoned the most during the Tang Dynasty (618-907) of China in

[12] Zhang Qian was a Chinese diplomat in the Han Dynasty and the first recorded traveller who opened up the "Xiyu", western territory of China, in the third year of the Qianyuan era of the reign of Emperor Wudi (138 B.C.E.). The aim of his mission was to establish military alliances with the minor tribes in the West to fight against the powerful and aggressive Xiongnu tribes. Zhang completed three trips in 23 years during which he was captured as slaves, got married and lived in Xiongnu for 11 years. Although his missions were not entirely successful as the minor tribes regarded China too distant and Xiongnu too powerful, he unlocked to China a new part of the world, with its many kingdoms, products, cultures and all. The accounts on his travels form basis for the merchant activities and travels in later years.

which a favourable political environment persisted and the emperor was extending a receptive policy to the border region. Commercial and cultural exchanges were maintained between China and the central Asian kingdoms throughout the Dynasty. India, western and central Asian countries brought to China their cultures and religions while China advanced the western civilisation in terms of inventions and technology (DeFalco, 2007). Merchants, monks, missionaries, artists, scholars and adventurers were among those who travelled on the Silk Road.

However, the Land Silk Road declined during the time of the Song Dynasty (960-1126, 1126-1278) as the empire's centre of power shifted southwards and the Chinese had started to develop their navy. In the thirteen century, China owned the world's most powerful military and merchant marine (Boulnois, 2005). The original Silk Road was then gradually substituted by the maritime Silk Road. The Silk Road was totally abandoned by the fifteenth century, due to the fear of the power of Uighurs during the Ming Dynasty and the imperial instability in the Qing Dynasty.

About five hundred years after the Silk Road and its oasis cities were deserted, new types of travellers were found on the Silk Road. They were archaeologists and geographers from the West, and adventurous explorers coming from France, England, Germany and Japan. These contemporary travellers rediscovered the Silk Road and its development in the early nineteenth century and reintroduced it to the modern world. However, the internal wars in China, together with the global instability during the World War period, did not facilitate the rejuvenating of the Silk Road. In addition, the establishment of the socialist states of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) in 1922 and the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949 separated this vast part of the Silk Road from foreigners, especially non-Communist Europeans (Boulnois, 1963, 2005). The isolation lasted for thirty years during which tourism was only used for political purposes. Travel for foreign visitors resumed in the USSR and the PRC with their policy reforms in 1970s and 1978 respectively. The "Open-door Policy" advocated by the PRC government had a dramatic impact on inbound tourism to the country as well as cross-border tourism with the USSR. It is apparent that the ups and downs of the tourism along the Silk Road are, to a great extent, consequences of the policy and attitude the USSR (now CASs) and China applied on the tourism development in their respective countries.

The dissolution of the USSR marked the cornerstone for the tourism development of the Silk Road. Not only did the breaking down of the Soviet Union open the previously-closed border of the CASs to China (A. McMillan, 2009), it also led to the need for alternative development tools. Right after the independence, grating poverty and economic deterioration were widely experienced in the five CASs due to the heavy economic reliance on cotton-based agriculture, production and export of raw materials in the Soviet period (Batalden & Batalden, 1997). During 1992-96, a cumulative decline of 37% in real GDP was observed in this region, ranging from an individual decline of 16% in Uzbekistan to almost 60% in Tajikistan (Izvorski & Gürgen, 1999). In addition, because of the previous dependency on imports for consumer goods, there was a severe shortage of basic food and household items. Because of the poverty, the chances of ethnic conflicts loomed throughout the region. To summarise and as quoted by Cornia (2002), this Russian-type reform model of rapid liberalisation and stabilisation adopted in the CASs had resulted in economic and social losses.

In view of this, UNWTO considered tourism as a viable social and economic building alternative for these countries by diversifying the economy and routing the potential incomes to the community. Therefore, in its General Assembly held in 1993, the organisation decided to innovate the Silk Road Project which is a long-term tourism project devoted to promote Silk Road as a special tourism concept (UNWTO, 1999a). Under this initiative, various meetings and workshops were organised with the aim to encourage exchanges and joint projects among the Silk Road countries, especially the CASs[13]. The project focuses on areas such as creating the Silk Road brand, joint marketing, visa facilitation, training of human capital, and intraregional collaboration. More important is that it stimulated the global community to have renewed interest in this area of the world. According to the investment guide prepared by UNCTAD (2009), countries along the Silk Road, especially the CASs, should have every potential to be developed into preferential destinations focusing on cultural and historical attraction as well as eco-tourism.

Probably due to the marketing effort initiated in the project, Silk Road, in recent

[13] UNWTO activities related to Silk Road tourism are examined in Section 4.3.1.3.

tourism term, has been referred to "an area rather more limited in an extent: Central Asia, from China to Iran, the Chinese province of Gansu, the Chinese Uighur region of Xinjiang, the former Soviet Republics of Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, a part of the Republic of Kazakhstan, and also the north of Afghanistan, and a small section of Pakistan" (Boulnois, 2005, p. 14); very different from the scope initially provided by anthropologists and geographers. However, due to different reasons, even among the CASs and China, allegiance to the image of the Silk Road and the pace of tourism development are different (W. Hubner, personal communication, April 2, 2009)[14]. As explained by Clarke (2009), on one hand, CASs' capability and progress of post-Soviet development was constrained by the internal political and economic instability illustrated by the confluence of inter-state geopolitical competition, pipeline politics, transnational ethno-religious movements and the spread of Islamist organisations. On the other hand, China has been very enthusiastic in developing tourism in light of its ability to bring in foreign receipts by issuing more favourable tourism policies and developing infrastructure and tourism facilities. In particular, China is strategically using the Silk Road brand to develop tourism in the western region of China, both as an economic and a political means (on autonomous regions). Under the umbrella of the Go-West Policy, five localities in the western part are collaboratively promoting Silk Road as a tourism product in China (CNTA, 2009). With the development of thematic hotels (P. Wong, personal communication, April 22, 2009) and attractions, China is benefiting the most from the Silk Road ancient image and the number of visitors to that part of China is on the rise. Travel publications introducing the Silk Road always bear an extensive coverage on China (Werner, 2003)[15]. In spite of this initial observation, studies are yet to be conducted to evaluate the existing tourism provisions on the Silk Road, particularly in the CASs and Western China. Therefore, this study made the attempt to carry out a content analysis on travel brochures of Silk Road tours and the results of which will be discussed in the first section of Chapter 4.

Apparent evidence, such as the deliberations at the Silk Road meetings and the Silk Road Mayors' Fora, demonstrates that effort has been made by stakeholders across

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[14] Dr. Wojciech Huebner is the former chief technical advisor of the Silk Road Initiative Phase Two, a regional project of UNDP.
[15] Tourism development in CASs and China is elaborated in Section 2.3 and 2.4.

different sectors and at different level in order to better the development along the Silk Road. Collaboration takes place at national level, regional level and business level in areas ranging from energy, infrastructure investment, to trade and tourism (Bailes, Dunay, Guang, & Troitskiy, 2007; Darby, 2008; A. McMillan, 2009; UNESCO, 1998). Yet, the scale and outcomes of these collaborations, together with the roles of the stakeholders involved and their influential ability on the collaboration remain poorly understood. With the development of the Asia-Europe railway, increased infrastructure construction, alternatives demanded by tourists and all, tourism on this massive piece of land is given with numerous opportunities. Nonetheless it is at the same time faced with many challenges. As observed, with its growing importance, the number of private and public organisations or other lobby groups claiming a stake on Silk Road tourism will only increase. Therefore, a sustainable tourism future of the Silk Road could only be built upon a tight and effective collaboration among different stakeholders.

2.3 Tourism Development in the CASs- From USSR to Independence

2.3.1 In the cradle of the Soviet Union, 1922-1991

Unlike tourism in Western Europe or East Asia which has been carefully studied throughout history, research conducted in the context of tourism in the Soviet Union is minimal, not to mention those of the Russia Empire (1721-1917). Among these scarce resources, Hall (1991, 2000, 2004); as well as Mieczkowski (1974, 1991), have done the most comprehensive work. According to their studies, international tourism under the reign of Stalin (1929-53) in the USSR was nearly non-existent, just like in any other Communist political and economic settings. In addition, domestic tourism was only confined to vacationers going to health spas or children's camps. Basic tourism facilities catering to them were developed in popular destinations like Almaty or Tashkent (Werner, 2003). The situation only changed after the Khrushchev reforms in the late 1950s and early 1960s when the USSR intended to gain economic and political advantages by opening up some of its selected attractions for tourism. However, most of the country was still closed and foreign receipts from international tourism remained negligible; yet, this marked the first phase of tourism development in Central Asia (Arefyev & Mieczkowski, 1991).

The Helsinki agreement[16] marked the second stage of tourism under the condition that USSR's desperation for hard currency outweighed the fear for ideological contamination, foreign spies and the demonstration effect of the rich on the local population (Mieczkowski, 1974). Despite this open-door policy, foreign tourism was still strictly controlled and separated from the local community and domestic tourists. As can be found in the tourism manual of the USSR, only 110 cities were open to foreign guests in the 1960s and the number increased to 150 by 1985 (Werner, 2003). Travel visas (both entry and exit visas were required) were issued only to visitors buying packages from the state agencies with specific entry and exit dates and a list of cities to be visited. Shaw (1991) examined that 70% of the foreign visitors were taken to the approved locations as cultural tourists to learn about the cultural, historical and economic achievements of the USSR while the remaining travelled for health spas, participation in sport events or conferences. Although the Soviet investment and commitment to tourism were demonstrated by the preparations for the Summer Olympics in 1980, scholars argued that the intention behind was to showcase the strengths and achievements of the USSR (Richter, 1983); and to use tourism to convey a sense of law and order and the impression of economic progress. This was, almost the same regarding the Chinese policies before 1978, or during the 1990s to be precise, tourism was a political activity for international relations rather than an economic one. The only result from this stage of development was the increase of foreign tourists from 500,000 in 1956 to over 5 million in 1981; and to more than 6 million in 1988 in the USSR (Arefyev & Mieczkowski, 1991).

According to Arefyev and Mieczkowski (1991), the third stage started with the political and economic changes initiated by Michael Gorbachev in 1985 under which international relations were bettered and tourists were more welcomed. By 1990,

[16] The Helsinki agreement (made on 1 August 1975) is the final act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe held in July and August 1975 with the aim to improve relations between the Communist union and the West. The agreement involves 35 states, including the USA, Canada, almost all of the European states and the USSR. The outcomes advocated confidence-building measures for the regional security and cooperation initiatives in the areas economics, science and technology, and environment (OSCE, 1975).

almost one-sixth of the vast territory of the USSR became open to foreign tourists. The Soviet Union continued to increase its export of services and private or cooperative service sector was much expanded to contribute to the tourism growth. Despite the slow development of tourism infrastructure, the prospect for tourism development was deemed positive. However and ironically, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 as well dissolved the prosperous tourism future as these independent countries were then going through severe recession and political and social instability.

2.3.2 After Independence, 1991-present

After the USSR disbanded in 1991, studies started to evolve around the transition in these newly independent states in which tourism was also investigated as a component parallel to the economic, social and political changes experienced in these countries. Reviewing the literature in the last two decades, scholars mainly studied the tourism development in the CASs as part of a larger general study of the developing world or particularly the post-Soviet societies (see for example Dabour, 2001; Hall, 2000, 2004; Harrison, 2001; Kantarci, 2007; Lea, 1993; Telfer & Sharpley, 2008). While studies on tourism development in the individual CAS are rare, Airey and Shackley (1997) have done a comprehensive one in Uzbekistan; in addition, Palmer (2006), Thompson (2004), and Yeşiltaş (2009) examined tourism in Kyrgyzstan in the areas of eco-tourism, heritage tourism products and tourism development obstacles, respectively. Besides, Werner (2003) comparatively investigated the role of mediators in tourism development in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. She concluded that mediators, namely travel guides, agents and alike, are hugely influential in forming the images of attractions, directing tourist flows to specific locations in this part of the world whose details have little been known to tourists. Kantarci (2007), experts himself in tourism studies on Central Asia, analysed the destination image (2007a), perceived travel conditions (2007b) and investors' perception (2007c) of the CASs in the Turkish market. Among the five CASs, Tajikistan is almost excluded in these tourism studies as explained by Kantarci (2007b), there is a lack of tourism information and infrastructure in Tajikistan, coupled with the absence of reliable data and statistics on its tourism. Nevertheless, despite the presence of these studies, researchers seldom investigated the aspect of tourism collaboration between the CASs.

After 1991, the former Soviet CASs experienced new found independence and abrupt changes of operation from a centrally-planned to a market economy. As a result, as mention in Section 2.2, these newly independent states were faced with both economic and social difficulties. Tourism was regarded as valuable as stated by Harrison (2001), tourism can be used in the post-communist societies for improving balances of payment, gaining convertible currency, getting connected to the global world, encouraging investment, improving tourism facilities and services, initiating new employment condition, inducing improvements in local infrastructure, and demonstrating the "post-communist" freedom with a national identity of these previous less-known lands. On the one hand, the CASs possess advantages in developing tourism because of their long history of tourism existence such as spa tourism and nature-based tourism (even in the period of the USSR), abundance in natural sceneries and rich cultural and historic attractions, coupled with the freedom from the Soviet period; on the other hand, the process seems challenging due to the newly established borders and separatism between these states (Clarke, 2009).

In the following paragraphs, tourism in each of the CASs is discussed in more detail. However, due to the absence of internationally-recognised statistics and the different definitions of visitors in each country, no reliable and consistent visitor figures could be referenced and compared in this review.

Kazakhstan was recognised as the most successful CAS in undergoing political and economic reform (Kantarci, 2007c) and made the most impressive progress in tourism development (Werner, 2003). Tourism resources are present in vast amounts, including chains of tourist centres, mountain-ski complexes, climatic and balneology health resorts and monuments of antiquity survived from the ancient Silk Road (Kantarci, 2007a). The Ministry for Tourism and Sports was established and private tourism firms have replaced the state tourism agency in handling tourism activities (Werner, 2003). By actively encouraging trade and investment in the country and developing "standard-and-legal basis" (Kantarci, 2007c, p.822) for tourism development, Kazakhstan has over 370 hotels in various categories and 430 tourism agencies as of 2005. Besides, tourism infrastructure and tourism supply areas as well include sectors such as business tourism, adventure tourism, sport tourism, museums and parks, event tourism and Silk Road tourism. In 1997, Kazakhstan developed a decree for tourism development up to 2030 and tourism on the Silk Road was considered as an important part of the decree. As informed by the opening speech given at the Third Silk Road Mayors' Forum by the Minister of Tourism and Sport (Dosmukhambetov, 2008), the President of the country has realised a cultural heritage programme to firstly initiate development of tourism infrastructure on the Kazakh section of the Silk Road as the transport corridor between western Europe and western China; and secondly, to facilitate restoration of historical and architectural monuments in the section, in June, 2008. In March 2010 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010), a more favourable visa rule was issued for private and business travel and tourism to Kazakhstan. In 2010, Kazakhstan recorded a total of 4.7 million visitor arrivals accounting for tourism receipt of USD 1.2 billion, compared to 1.4 million and USD 403 million respectively in 2000[17] (UNWTO, 2012a).

Tourism in Uzbekistan is comparatively well researched. Because of the economic structure of the country, the availability of natural resources, coupled with the government's moderate approach in economic reform, disruption experienced in Uzbekistan after the collapse of the USSR was the least severe (Airey & Shackley, 1997). In addition, Uzbekistan has a long tradition of tourism during the Soviet period, especially in the oasis cities of Tashkent and Samarkand. Uzbekistan has more than four thousand tourism attractions and was an important transit point on the Silk Road. Therefore, different from the other CASs, Uzbekistan's tourism started on a better basis (Werner, 2003). Right after the independence, Uzbek tourism suffered from a drop in demand as the border was closed between Uzbekistan and the Russian Federation, which was the gateway to its source markets. Also, separated from Intourist, the Moscow-based state agency, Uzbekistan faced the challenges of developing its own transportation link and contacts to the global market. The major step taken must be the establishment of Uzbektourism, a governmental department of tourism with the aim to establish Uzbekistan as a separate destination in 1992 (Airey & Shackley, 1997). According to the Head of the International Relations Department of Uzbektourism (Oripov 1998[18]), since 1995 tourism has been placed with high

[17] Appendix 4: UNWTO Statistics on CASs' tourism, 1995-2010.
[18] Mr. Uvaid Oripov was the Head of International Relations Department of Uzbektourism.

priority in the government's investment plan in which previously state-owned companies were commercialised and privatised and a private sector of tourism supply was established. There were over 500 registered tourism firms and agencies in Uzbekistan in 2006 (Kantarci, 2007c). Airey and Shackley (1997) believed another important development that enabled Uzbekistan to fully compete in the global tourism market was the creation of the Uzbekistan Airways in 1991 which operated flights to twenty destinations in Europe. Tourist arrivals to Uzbekistan has reached near or over 1 million since 2007, generating tourism receipts of USD 121 million in 2010, while the figures of 1996 were only 173,000 and USD 15 million respectively[19] (UNWTO, 2009; 2012a). With this gradual increase, Uzbekistan has established its successful beginning for its modern tourism sector. Despite all these, Airey and Shackley (1997) have identified the need for more accurate and internationally consistent tourism statistics, the development of a quality accommodation supply, the advancement in education and training, the provision of better visitor information and the continuation of international marketing as key factors for tourism to prosper in Uzbekistan.

Travel reviews written on Kyrgyzstan's tourism covered a fairly extensive range of topics (see for example Palmer, 2006; Thompson, 2004; Yeşiltaş, 2009). According to Palmer (2006) and Yeşiltaş (2009), Kyrgyzstan was one of the first former Soviet Union states that started to join the World Trade Organization in 1998. It is commented that under the economic transition of this country, tourism was for the first time recognised as an industry for the Kyrgyz government, entrepreneurs and people, in which concepts like tourism marketing, service quality and human resource development were completely novel. Government has put the tourism industry on its development agenda which as well outlined its tourism planning until 2010 (Yeşiltaş, 2009). Ninety-five per cent of the areas in the country are mountains, rivers, lakes and waterfalls; and hence, it is regarded as the "Switzerland of Central Asia" (Kantarci, 2007c; Yeşiltaş, 2009). Prior to 1991, Kyrgyzstan was one of the most important recreational resorts in the USSR, especially the Issyk Kul region, coupled with the cultural heritages; domestic and regional tourists such as those from Kazakhstan (68% in 2007), Russia (7% in 2007) and Uzbekistan (17% in 2007), remain as the major source markets for Kyrgyzstan's tourism (Zozulinsky, 2008). Despite the

[19] Appendix 4: UNWTO Statistics on CASs' tourism, 1995-2010.

advantageous location of Kyrgyzstan to the Silk Road linking China and Uzbekistan (Werner, 2003), Thompson (2004) argued that the preference of Kyrgyzstan was to concentrate tourism planning and marketing on its adventure, nature and ecotourism, as well as the strategic development of a heritage tourism product. He suggested that heritage-based tourism has the potential to be used as a tool for nation building and fostering cohesion between ethnic groups, in addition to increasing visitation and revenue from international visitors. The tourism industry is showing signs of growth and the country received 1.3 million international tourists in 2010 generated USD 336 million in tourism receipts compared to 36,000 visitors and USD5 million in 1995[20] (UNWTO, 2009; 2012a). According to Kantarci (2007c), there are 172 hotels, 293 travel agencies (2005), 1925 hotel rooms (2003) and 6635 tourism employees (2004) in Kyrgyzstan. However, informants participating in Werner's (2003) study pointed out that the development was not even, with a concentration on the northern part of the country. In addition, there are numerous challenges associated with this continuous development namely seasonality of tourism, limited market, lack of tourism facilities and skilled human resources, uneven development, leakage of tourism benefits to overseas countries and political unrest (Palmer, 2006; Yeşiltaş, 2009).

Turkmenistan and Tajikistan are two of the least researched countries in terms of tourism in Central Asia due to the insignificance of their tourism sector and the lack of information and data on their tourism development (Kantarci 2007a, 2007b, 2007c). According to statistics provided by UNWTO (2012a), tourist arrivals at Turkmenistan were 8000 in 2007 while data on tourism receipts was not available. This is difficult to be compared with previous data as it is observed that there is a difference in tourist definition and calculation. In spite of that, scattered literature can still be found. Werner (2003) commented that the environment for development in Turkmenistan was the least favourable as the movements of visitors were still under strict control while Kantarci (2007c) shed a positive light on tourism in Turkmenistan by recording that the government of Turkmenistan has completed a full-year implementation in 2007 of its strategy on economic, political and cultural development for the period up to 2020. The government also started to focus on infrastructure, construction of hotels and the development of business facilities. Its air and rail networks have been better developed

[20] Appendix 4: UNWTO Statistics on CASs' tourism, 1995-2010

since 1996 and in 2001, hotel rooms totalled 2616 (Kantarci, 2007c).

For Tajikistan, Werner (2003) reasoned that its under-development of tourism was linked with its civil wars right after independence in 1991 and the weak economy which discouraged tourism investment for development. Aknazarov, Dadabaev, and Melnichkov (2002); and Kloiber (2007) studied the opportunity of mountain tourism in Tajikistan while Weber (1998) examined the possibility of turning the Shirkent National Park in Tajikistan into a tourism attraction. The mountainous territory of the Pamir mainly belongs to an autonomous province named Gorno Badakhshan in Tajikistan and there were approximately 1500 people visiting that area in 2003 for trekking or mountaineering (Kloiber, 2007). Among these visitors, the majority of them were from western countries and only 10% visited the National Park which Weber (1998) concluded as not worthwhile to be developed into an attraction in view of the limited tourism infrastructure and the permanent conflict between Tajikistan and Afghanistan. Aknazarov et al. (2002) for the first time, obtained data on the attitude of the local Pamir residents towards tourism development in the region and revealed that despite the fact that tourism was welcomed, many cultural and historical monuments in the area were almost completely destructed which largely reduces the country's tourism development potential. They concluded that mountain eco-tourism in this country would face numerous problems which include the lack of national strategy, planning and implementation for tourism development, lack of international promotion, a monopoly of the existing industry, the insufficiency of infrastructure and services, and most importantly, the persisting unfavourable political and economic situations. A significant discrepancy was observed in the tourist statistics between 2001 and 2008, recording tourist arrivals of 4,000 and 325,000 correspondingly. In 2010, the total tourist arrivals totalled 160,000, generating tourism receipts of USD 25 million (UNWTO, 2009; 2012a).

In general, tourism in the CASs is handicapped due to several reasons outlined above in the respective countries and the main reason can be seen as the unstable political and economic situations prevailing since the dissolution of the USSR. However, the actual reasons behind their development challenges are yet to be identified. While states whose tourism is less developed could always learn and make reference to those which have advanced in their tourism development as these CASs share similar development background and tourism resources and interests, it is only possible if a general collaborative environment is present in the region, instead of constant conflicts on geo-politics. The UNDP's Central Asian Human Development Report reasoned that the role of the presidency in the CASs significantly contributes to this uncooperative environment experienced in the region (Linn et al., 2005). Strong presidency emerged shortly after the end of the Soviet era in each of the republics of which the subsequent presidential election and constitutional changes were intended to increase and centralise the power of the presidents and their executive branches. According to Holmes (1993), all the Central Asian administrations had become "super-presidential" systems by 1996 in which the president and his government control all political decision-making including the management of domestic political and economic systems and relations with the countries' neighbours. However, these presidents are characterised by their high level of distrust of their neighbours in the region and their worries are that activities of the regional counterparts, in the areas such as political liberalisation, economic reform and security measures, would impede the sovereignty, legitimacy and security of their counties and especially their own governments (A. McMillan, 2009). UNDP also stressed the importance of understanding the multiplicity of interests within the CASs. The happening of collaboration in the region would depend on whether the benefiters from the collaboration are in power.

2.4 Tourism Development in China

2.4.1 Tourism in China at present time

Despite the countless emperors, monks and scholars who travelled in ancient time, modern tourism development in China has a relatively recent history. Not until the 1990s did the attitude of the policy makers change and tourism started to prosper. In spite of this late start in international tourism, in 2011 China was ranked third in tourism arrivals, receiving a total of 57.6 million tourists (includes compatriots from Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR and Taiwan Province) generating US$ 48.5 billion tourism receipts (UNWTO, 2012c); although true international tourist numbers would be much lower. Remarkable tourism growth was observed when compared to 2000, in terms of tourist arrivals and tourism receipts, under the influence of the 10th and 11th China's Five-Year Development Plans in which tourism was placed with preferential priority among the other industrial sectors (Xiao, 2006).

Embarking on the 12th Five-Year Development Plan and after 10 plus years of the implementation of the Go-West Policy[21], China's tourist arrivals rose from 31 million in 2000 to 57.6 million in 2011[22], an increase of over 85% while tourism receipts also significantly increase from US$ 16.2 billion to US$ 48.5 billion in these 12 years, reflecting a growth of almost 200%. The number of visitors would double this figure if same-day travellers and travellers in transit are also considered. Among these international tourist arrivals, majority of them came from Southeast Asia and the USA. Noticeable increases are observed with the arrivals from India, Korea and Russia. This could be explained by the various policies issued by the Chinese government since 1992 (H. Q. Zhang, Chong, & Ap, 1999) on areas such as the expansion of foreign investment, planning and construction of tourism resorts (including nature-based tourism), decentralisation of tourism pricing, regulation of tourism based on market mechanism, and intensification of tourism promotion. In particular, the growth of Russian travellers could be explained by the Go-West Policy in which cross-national collaboration is encouraged.

Tourism facilities are also well developed with 14,099 star-rated hotels and 20,110 travel agencies in 2008. There have been significant changes in these figures from those of 1993, a year after Deng Xiao-Ping had announced the inclusion of tourism in the Socialist Market Economy Model (H. Q. Zhang et al., 1999). The tourism industry contributed 3.9% to China's GDP in 2008, or 9.6% to the tertiary industry, accounting for an income of US$ 170 billion. It has evolved to be a major contributor to China's economy with 2.1 million jobs created and a 3.5% share of employment (CNTA, 1999; National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2009). However, it is evident that these contributions are more apparent in the developed tourism destinations, such as Shanghai, Beijing and Guangzhou as a result of the previous policies and development

[21] Go-West Policy, "xibu da kaifa" in Chinese, is a western China development policy issued in January 2000, involving six provinces, five autonomous regions and one municipality, of which tourism plays a prominent role.
[22] There was a drop in tourism figures in 2009 due to the worldwide unfavourable economic situation.

plans. Therefore, it is believed that tourism is an important tool to the western regional development of China, in terms of encouraging economic growth, generating sustainable employment, balancing social-economic inequality and enhancing social and political stability in this region, especially in the non-Han areas (Goodman, 2004).

2.4.2 Before 1949, the establishment of the People's Republic of China

Travel in China started thousands of years ago, evidenced by the endless poets praising their travel experience and the natural sceneries; and the famous story of Zhang Qian, who travelled across the nation and opened up the Silk Road during the Western Han Dynasty (from 206 BC to 24 AD). During the imperial eras (before 1949) and in the 1870s, foreign travellers were mainly merchants, missionaries, scholars and adventurers while young Chinese also went to study aboard. The tourism industry in the early 1990s is dominated by wealthy foreigners, either as tourists or business operators, i.e. Thomas Cook and Sons was one of the largest operators opening an office in China in the 1920s and handling ground services for international and domestic tours in China (G. Zhang, 1994). Due to the political instability and the outbreak of wars including the Civil War between the Kuomintang and the Communist Party of China (1927-1937; 1946-1949) and the Second World War (1939-45), this period of around 20 years before the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949 experienced little tourism development.

2.4.3 1949-1977, tourism in the "new" China

After years of instability, the People's Republic of China was established in October, 1949. Serving the purpose of Mao Zedong to showcase the "new" China's achievement, to expand China's political influence and to enhance international understanding, tourism was used as a political tool to receive foreign diplomats and invited guests (Zhang, 1994; Zhang et al., 1999; Zhang & Han, 2004). With the introduction of the first Five-Year Plan, there was an increased demand for tourism services as technical personnel were invited from overseas. These developments led to an increase in tourist arrivals from only 47 in 1954 to 5,439 in 1960 of which 95% were from the former USSR and from Eastern European countries. However, a diplomatic disagreement between China and the former USSR ended the growth and tourist arrivals was reduced by 70% from 1960 to 1963 (Uysal, Wei, & Reid, 1986). The readjustment of Chinese tourism policies to diversify the source markets resulted in an increase of arrivals back to 12,877 in 1965 while most of the tourists came from Western countries (CNTA, 1999). Domestic tourism hardly existed and outbound travel was limited almost exclusively to diplomats and government officials (Zhang, 1994).

The positive development did not prevail during the Cultural Revolution from 1966 to 1976. The tourist sector was hugely affected and only 303 tourists were received in 1968 (CNTA, 1999). Travel businesses were suspended. Tourism started to resume in the late 1970s with the hope of the Chinese government to rebuild the image of China to the world. Although tourism activities are recorded in this period, tourism could not be considered as a significant economic activity, in view of its scale, purpose and operating methods as a result of internal political decisions and external turbulences.

2.4.4 Influence of the Open-door Policy, 1978-1999

1978 was an important year in which the Third Plenary Session of the Communist Party’s 11th Congress was held. Deng Xiao-Ping and Chen Yun, supreme leaders of the Communist Party of China, suggested the Open-door Policy which shifted emphasis from political struggle to economic re-construction. Tourism’s role was emphasised in the policy and gradually evolved to be a mix of political and economic activity (Zhang, 1994). Deng Xiao-Ping spoke on various occasions pointing out the important role and huge potential of tourism and urging faster and more stable development. With the eased travel restriction, the number of tourists visiting China reached 1.8 million in 1998 which was ranked 48th in the world with a tourism income of USD 260 million which was at the 41st position in the world (CNTA, 1999). Uysal et al. (1986) in their study pointed out a year-on-year growth of 40% in terms of tourist arrivals from 1978 to 1983. However, infrastructure and tourism facilities were not developed enough to cope with this increase in tourism demand. 1985 marked another significant year as the government included tourism in the 7th Five-Year Plan as a major component to push for economic and social development; and with the sole purpose of earning foreign exchange (Zhang et al., 1999). By 1992, more than 800 cities were open to overseas visitors involving over 500 points of entry and exit. Control over Chinese outbound tours was gradually and cautiously relaxed (Zhang, 1989, 1994; Zhang et al., 1999). China also focused on developing overseas markets by visa simplification, setting up of a star-rating hotel classification system, participation in world travel fairs and establishing overseas tourism offices. The Tourism Year of the Dragon and Visit China Year were initiated in 1988 and 1992 respectively to promote China tourism overseas. In terms of domestic travel, regulations were progressively loosened. There were a couple of travel agencies with the authorisation to make travel arrangement to a confined number of destinations (Zhang, 1994).

In 1992, Deng Xiao-Ping announced a further opening of China to the outside world so as to intensify the economic reforms (Zhang et al., 1999). In terms of international tourism, China emerged to be one of the top ten countries worldwide. Domestic tourism grew significantly and evolved to be a substantial component of national tourism development. Tourism products were diverse including the 12 national and 54 provincial level resorts (CNTA, 1999).

By the late 1990s, tourism development in China became more vigorous with the emergence of balanced development of inbound tourism, domestic tourism and outbound tourism. In 1998, international arrivals reached 63.5 million, a multiple of 35. to that of 1978, generating foreign exchange earnings of USD 12.6 billion. China's global ranking rose from 41st to seventh. Domestic tourist arrivals accounted for 694 million with an expenditure of RMB 239.1 billion. Outbound tourists reached 8.4 million, a number much larger than that of 20 years ago (National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2009). The China National Tourism Administration (1999) credited these remarkable results to the effective overseas marketing campaigns.

2.4.5 2000-present: implementation of the Go-West Policy

In spite of the rapid development of tourism as described above, an inequality was observed in this development across different regions of the country. This was caused by the fact that the initial development strategy only focused on the various focal cities located near the coast (CNTA, 1999). Because of the lack of infrastructure and its inaccessibility, the western region was not considered for development in the first phase. Deng Xiao-Ping mentioned in his public speech that the western region would be developed in the future with the help of the funds generated from the rapid development at the east (Goodman, 2004). In 2000, coinciding with the 10th Five-Year Development Plan, the Go-West Policy was issued under the leadership of Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji in consideration of the inequality and related socio-economic advantages and disadvantages between the coastal and interior regions. The policy aimed not only to direct resources to the interior and the western region; but more importantly, to implement a higher degree of state intervention in the economic and social development. Under this western development policy, six provinces including Gansu, Guizhou, Qinghai, Shannxi, Sichuan and Yunnan; five autonomous regions, Guangxi, Inner Mongolia, Ningxia, Tibet and Xinjiang; and one municipality, Chongqing have "embarked on a tourist-oriented development course" (G. Xu, 1999, p. 17). According to Goodman (2004), jurisdictions in the west are not all economically and socially disadvantaged. This could be due to the characteristics of their population and the availability of natural resources.

Similar to other locations, tourism was used as a tool to promote regional development of Western China as it brings in revenue, catalysts infrastructure improvement, encourages the establishment of tourism facilities and enhances peace and understanding among races and minority groups. In order to fully develop tourism, the reasons of the present underdevelopment need to be addressed. Li (2005) argued the possible reasons for this under-development include dispersed location of tourism attractions, insufficient transport facilities and supporting infrastructure, and inefficient management.

On the one hand, tourism acts as a facilitator of the Go-West development; on the other hand, as Ng's (2004) study indicated, the Go-West Policy also provides a better setting for tourism development in terms of infrastructure improvement, protection of the ecology, rationalisation of industry structure, emphasis on education and technology; and further opening up the region. Tourism conditions were changed tremendously after the introduction of the Go-West Policy. For example, RMB 5 billion was invested to reconstruct or extend the 20 airports in Western China. Supporting facilities including water conservation, communication, compulsory education and health care were introduced with the injection of RMB 850 billion into these projects in a five-year period starting from 2001 (State Information Center, 2010). By protecting the ecology and historical and cultural heritages; and the introduction of foreign investment and capital, the tourism potential for the western region was hugely enlarged (Li, 2005).

Thanks to the Go-West Policy, total tourist arrivals (including both international and domestic tourists) at the twelve localities in the western region in 2008 totalled nearly ten million compared to only 4,906,500 in 2000. Tourism receipts in this region also increased from USD 1.9 billion in 2000 to approximately USD 3.8 billion in 2008 (calculated based on statistics provided by the National Bureau of Statistics of China, 2009). There are a total of 3,885 star-rated hotels, 4,129 travel agencies and 5684 other tourism operators in the western part of China, a total of more than 13,000 tourism units. These are some of the evidences to show the rapid tourism development in this region of China.

Taking into consideration the short history of Chinese tourism development and its present outstanding performance, this development is rapid. Despite the fluctuations experienced in the different political periods due to internal discrepancies or external turbulence, tourism is observed to be on a growth path[23].

2.5 Tourist Destination Management

Historically tourism studies tend to see tourist destinations as a system embracing different components such as attractions, transportation, accommodation, and other services and infrastructure (i.e. Gunn & Var, 2002; Laws, 1995; Pearce & Butler, 1993). These theoretical models have the merit of perceiving tourist destinations as a system rather than a specific physical location; however, their rigidity underemphasised the other elements at the destination which would also be a result of, or have an impact

[23] Appendix 5: International and domestic tourism in China, 1978-2008.

on, its tourism development as well as the dynamics between their interactions (Tinsley & Lynch, 2001). In view of these, McKercher (1999) proposed a chaos model of tourism based on the chaos and complexity theory. The model acknowledges that considerable interactions exist between the identified elements and portrays the operation of chaotic tourism system at a multi-dimensional level. In addition, as emphasised by McKercher (1999), this model can be used equally well to represent elements that influence tourism at enterprise level, local level, regional level or even multi-national level as the relationships between these elements remain similar across different levels despite the increase in number of actors involved. Table 2.1 outlines the components of the chaos model of tourism and their functions in it.

Table 2.1 Outline of the chaos model of tourism

Actors/ components	Roles/functions
Travellers	Essential players in tourism without whom travelling would not occur
Communication vectors	Channels, means through which the traveller connect to the destination
Considerations	Factors which influence the effectiveness of the Communication vectors
Destination/ Internal tourism community	All businesses involved in tourism at the destination
External tourism agencies	Agencies (public or private sector) which try to influence tourism
Other tourism-related externalities	Alternative tourism destinations that affects a destination's ability to attract travellers
Non-tourism-related externalities	Macro-environmental forces, i.e. changing political, economic or social conditions, war, natural disaster, that affect people's ability to travel
Outputs from the system:	Both desirable and undesirable impacts from tourism
Rogues	Anyone who can push a system to the edge of criticality

Source: Compiled by author, based on McKercher (1999)

Tourism development is always regarded as geographic or physical expansion such as the increase level of infrastructure, indicated by what Tinsley and Lynch (2001) noted, “development (in the previous literature) is not portrayed in terms of people’s attitudes and values which are intangible, for example, networks and their contribution to destination development.” (p.732). In consideration of this, they examined the role of networking in tourism destination development and management process and concluded that networks at the destinations could be the frameworks connecting the place and people and these networks are not geographically dependent; hence they can go beyond destination level, to regional and international level. Nevertheless, they stressed that greater understanding could be gained on destination development and its links with tourism networks by applying a qualitative technique in examining the phenomena and the decisions and assumptions based upon this.

In line with McKercher and Tinsley and Lynch’s view on tourism, Goeldner and Ritchie (2006) agreed by furthering that tourism destination management (TDM) would be a complex, multidisciplinary challenge as that required the consideration and balance of the different elements or actors involved, and their interactions over a destination. They noted the essential and mutually supportive parameters of tourism, sustainability and competitiveness, which must be satisfied for the destination to be successful[24]. Therefore, by making reference to McKercher's (1999) model of tourism and Tinsley and Lynch's (2001) theory of tourism networking, development and management of a sustainable Silk Road tourism future can be studied with a better defined theoretical setting.

2.6 Tourism Policy

As an interrelated component to destination management, policy should also focus on achieving competitiveness and sustainability of the destinations. Dye (2002) generally defined public policy as the moves that a government chooses to take or not to take which also regulates behaviours, organises bureaucracy, manages benefits or extracts tax. Although Crouch and Ritchie (1999) once commented that tourism, comparing to the agricultural sector and petroleum sectors, is less persuasive in influencing public policy. However, their comments were made more than ten years ago. Viewing the growing importance of tourism, it is time to rethink the influential power of tourism over public policy.

Edgell (1990) particularly explained public policy in the tourism context and indicated that the purpose for establishing tourism policy is to integrate the different resources

[24] Concepts of sustainability and competitiveness are discussed in subsequent sections, *Section 2.8-2.10.*

for tourism development effectively and to balance the different tourism-associated benefits including economic, social, political, cultural and environmental with different destinations and countries. While Goeldner and Ritchie (2006) adopted Edgell's definition, they have included an additional important concept in their explanation, the role of stakeholders as they stated, "tourism policy seeks to ensure that visitors are hosted in a way that maximises the benefits to stakeholders while minimising the negative effects, costs, and impacts associated with ensuring the success of the destination" (p.405). They also commented that tourism policy is important because it ensures a direction for the tourism development of a given destination in the long term and creates a climate in which collaboration between stakeholders is supported and facilitated. This is especially useful to the current study as collaboration and stakeholder involvement are the major areas to be examined and for which specific tourism policies in the CASs and China on tourism development and collaboration on the Silk Road are influential.

In addition, Edgell (1999) expanded the tourism concept as an integrated part of the world's political economy, meaning that tourism is not only a tool used for economic but also political means. In other words, tourism policy also plays the role of foreign policy. As covered in the previous sections of *2.3* and *2.4*, tourism development, both in the USSR (before 1991)/ CASs (after 1991) and China, was not only utilised as a vehicle to generate foreign currency. It also acts as a political instrument to showcase the country's strengths and achievements in the case of China and to establish national identity in the global market in the case of those newly independent states in Central Asia.

As noted by Edgell (1999), "a discussion of the political and foreign policy implications of international tourism would not be complete in today's world without mention of international terrorism and its impact on tourism" (1999, p. 33). This is especially applicable to some parts of the Central Asian region which is perceived as an area associated with organised terrorism after the incident of September 11th. Since then, terrorism has taken a new form of being used to attain political ends and to attract global attention as media coverage of terrorist incidents focuses on political causes. In short, terrorism forces travellers to reconsider their vacation plans; but a more severe result would be the impact on the destination image of this Central Asian region which is very costly to be reconstructed. The five CASs under investigation in this study, due to their proximity and their similar religious and cultural background to countries like Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, coupled with their less-known identity, are disadvantaged for tourism development in this regard.

Demonstrated by real-life evidence, travel in these CASs is not solely limited by their tourism policies but more typically their policies on foreign affairs and national security. The travel sector has well experienced of the complication in the visa system of these countries (I. Rahim, Personal Communication, April 6, 2009)[25]. Moreover, conflicts constantly occur on borders of the CASs such as that of Uzbekistan and southern Kyrgyzstan (BBC, 2010) and prevent mainstream travel to happen in this region.

2.7 Tourism Administration in CASs and China

Doswell (1997) provided a good account and understanding on the subject of government tourism administration. A government tourism administration exists so as to plan and manage the tourism sector and to work in collaboration with other interested parties in a destination. Its format and scale may vary from country to country. The planning of tourism is seldom a matter of single domain; instead, it involves cross-sectoral responsibility, typically involves joint decision from departments such as economic and finance as well as that of foreign affairs. Doswell (1997) also noted that some countries would set up an inter-ministerial committee to deal with tourism but it is considered as not effective because facilitating tourism development does not only rely on inter-ministerial contacts and coordination but a common understanding of agreed strategy, priority and needs. Therefore, viewing the importance of tourism, he came up with a conclusion in which tourism deserves its own senior-level ministry and autonomy. In addition, Doswell (1997) argued that the more traditional idea of a tourism management organisation is now substituted by the government tourism administration. Therefore it covers all branches and levels of government and may not only consist of a single organisation. While tourism

[25] Mr. Iman Rahim is the founder of Silk Road Adventure, an operator organising tours to western China and CASs

management organisations mainly focus on domestic and international marketing, tourism statistics and some regulatory functions; a government tourism administration can range from a ministry in central government and tourism development corporations or boards with independent powers, to provincial government and municipal tourism offices. Despite the different formats, what needs to be established is an organisational framework, being able to operate in an integrated fashion while satisfying the needs of the various stakeholders.

China has a well-established tourism administrative system in which the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA) is equivalent to the Ministry of Tourism directly affiliated to the State Council. There are a total of six departments under the CNTA which includes the Department of Policy and Legal Affairs, Department of Tourism Promotion and International Liaison, Department of Planning, Development and Finance, Department of Quality Standardization and Administration, Department of Affairs on Tourism of Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, and Department of Personnel. Judging by their respective departmental titles, one can be informed that the CNTA oversees areas such as policy formulation, implementation of market development strategies, supervision and management of tourism service quality.

CASs, with their short history of tourism development, are having different forms of tourism administration in the respective countries. During the period of the Soviet Union, management of tourism, particularly the state-established itineraries, was the responsibility of *Intourist*, the foreign tourism agency and *Sputnik*, the international youth tourist agency. Both of them were state-owned agencies which were used to impose strict monitoring and control on tourist movement within the Union (Werner, 2003).

Kazakhstan was having the best tourism administrative framework among the five CASs. Almost identical to Doswell's (1997) proposed organisation, the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan had been the national tourism administration of the country until 2012. It took an active participation in outlining and implementing the state policy in the area of tourism. Its responsibilities included reviewing, forecasting, and regulating the domestic tourist services market, advocating for tourism, and publishing about tourism. Under the Ministry, the Committee of the

Tourism Industry as well conducted scientific and other research in tourism, organised and held national exhibitions of tourist goods and services. Other than the government, there is The Kazakhstan Tourism Association, a non-commercial, non-governmental organisation which consists of members from the industry such as hotels, reservation systems, and airlines. It was set up in 1991 in parallel to the establishment of the Ministry which aims to promote the tourism industry in Kazakhstan by initiating changes in legislation, facilitating tourism projects and promotion. During the time of the current research in January 2012, a reorganisation of the Kazakh government was carried out in which the Ministry of Tourism and Sports was disbanded. Details of the restructuring of the ministerial functions will be discussed in the findings part of the thesis, in Section 4.2.2.1.

As stated in the research of Airey and Shackley (1997), a national tourism organisation, Uzbektourism, was created in 1992 in Uzbekistan as a government department of tourism headed by a chairman, equivalent to a tourism minister. Uzbektourism was also acting as a promotion agency for tourism in addition to operating 35 hotels, camp grounds, and health spas and providing guiding and transportation services. The operational framework of Uzbektourism is quite different from the type of national tourism administration proposed by Doswell (1997) as it is directly involved in operation and execution of tourism projects instead of having an advisory role. However, Uzbektourism did have five critical functions in this initial stages of tourism in Uzbekistan which include picking up the components of the previously state-controlled tourism, being the basis for commercialisation and privatisation of tourism, acting as the promotion agency for the country, controlling quality of tourism supplies and lastly, developing policies for tourism.

Little is known about the tourism administrations of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Unlike Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, these CASs do not possess a formal ministry or equivalence for tourism. Instead, there is a State Committee for Tourism, Sport and Youth Policy in Kyrgyzstan; a Committee of Youth, Sport and Tourism in Tajikistan; and a State Committee for Tourism and Sport in Turkmenistan.

2.8 Tourism Sustainability

The idea of sustainability emerged in step with the environmentalism which grew to importance in 1970s whereas the term of sustainable development only became explicit in a report published by the World Commission on Environment and Development in 1987, in which it was defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 43). The report emphasised several concepts including inter-generational equity, intra-generational equity, public participation, integration of environmental protection as a component of economic development, and cautious dealing with risk and uncertainty (WCED, 1987). In principle, people are in favour of sustainability; however, in reality it is difficult to achieve as this concept is so broad and complex, and has not yet been fully operationalised.

In view of the pace of growth and nature of tourism, attention has been placed on tourism sustainability in the global agenda. There are numerous definitions for sustainability and sustainable development of tourism (Butler, 1999; Page & Dowling, 2002). The World Tourism Organization (2004) defines it in a way that "sustainable tourism development guidelines and management practices are applicable to all forms of tourism in all types of destinations, including mass tourism and the various niche tourism segments. Sustainability principles refer to the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of tourism development, and a suitable balance must be established between these three dimensions to guarantee its long-term sustainability” (Webpage on Sustainable Development of Tourism, UNWTO). Bramwell and Lane (1993) pioneered in suggesting that sustainable tourism development is a positive approach aimed to reduce the tensions created by the complex interactions between the tourists, tourism industry, the host communities and the environment so as to maintain long-term capacity and quality of both natural and human resources.

Despite the various definitions and perceived benefits associated with sustainable development, one principle is observed to be consistent which is that sustainable tourism development serves a triple bottom line sustainability which embraces the aspects of economy, society and environment; hence, facilitates the destinations to sustain in the global competitive market (Farrell, 1999; McKercher, 2003).

2.8.1 Key issues of tourism sustainability

Despite the trend and the vast amount of literature available on sustainable tourism development since the 1980s, it is commented that “little appears to have been written, in depth, on the meaning and implications of sustainable tourism development” (Hunter & Green, 1995, p. 69). Moreover, as critiqued by Liu (2003), several key issues did not gain the attention which they deserve. He addressed six areas of weaknesses in the existing sustainable tourism literature of which four are valuable to the current research and are elaborated as follows. Firstly, the importance of tourist demand to sustainability has always been downplayed; however, in reality a sustained flow of tourists should not be taken for granted. This is especially true for some underprivileged destinations in terms of tourist preference and perception. Secondly, the complexity and dynamicity of resources were not fully appreciated while the needs, preferences and technological capabilities of the society were also neglected. Thirdly, little attention has been placed on intra-generational equity, which is the fairness of benefits and costs distribution among the stakeholder groups of tourism development, despite its initial inclusion in the definition of sustainability. The fact that most of the host populations studied are not often empowered to take control of the development is underemphasised. Finally, the social and cultural impacts of tourism are often regarded as negative and the avoidance of any tourism-related socio-cultural changes is too heavily underlined. In fact, tourism could be used to facilitate positive socio-cultural changes and promote peace and understanding between the different parties in some societies (D’Amore, 1988).

2.9 Competitiveness

As mentioned, sustainability is closely linked to destination competitiveness. Competitiveness appears simple but it is in fact a complicated concept. Because of its nature of relativeness and multidimensionality, coupled with the different units and perspective used on its analysis, one would find it rather difficult to define (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Competitiveness as a concept first emerged in the field of economics in which a competitive economy refers to “one which exports goods and services at profitably market prices” (The Economist, 1994, p. 17). At national level, Scott and

Lodge (1984) defined competitiveness as a country's strategic ability to produce products and services in international trade to earn rising returns on its resources. While the OECD defined it in a similar manner to Scott and Lodge's; the inclusion of "over the long term" (WEF, 1994, p. 18) in their definition was deemed important viewing the prevailing fashion of sustainable development in present days. In addition, the World Economic Forum in their World Competitiveness Report had an alternative definition which was "the ability of a country or company to proportionally, generate more wealth than its competitors in the world market" (1994, p. 17) in which the idea of relativeness to other competitors was added. Overall, according to Hong's (2008) review on competiveness literature, among the four thousand papers across different fields studying the concept of competitiveness; four components are observed to be uniform within the idea of competitiveness which are the competitors, competing objects, competing capability and competing results. Moreover, competitiveness should be regarded as combining both assets which are inherited or created resources; and processes which are the strategy used to turn assets into economic results. To conclude, competitiveness is a concept to describe the ability of an entity, may it be a country, a business unit or a government body, to perform better than its competitors in turning its resources into profitable economic results within an identified context at various levels, including business, local, regional or international.

2.9.1 Tourist destination competitiveness and regional competitiveness

Conceptualising tourist destination competitiveness is problematic. As mentioned previously, competitiveness is multi-dimensional which embraces economic, social, environmental, and political contexts. Nevertheless, the multidisciplinary nature of tourism and the different goals that it serves makes destination competitiveness an even more complicated concept. The majority of scholars who studied the concept of destination competitiveness would make reference to Porter's (1996) national diamond of competitive advantages (Figure 2.1), which is a predecessor to his famous five forces of competition model. This national diamond model can be used to describe the fundamental structure of competition among national tourism industries; hence, determinants of competitiveness of a nation as a tourist destination.

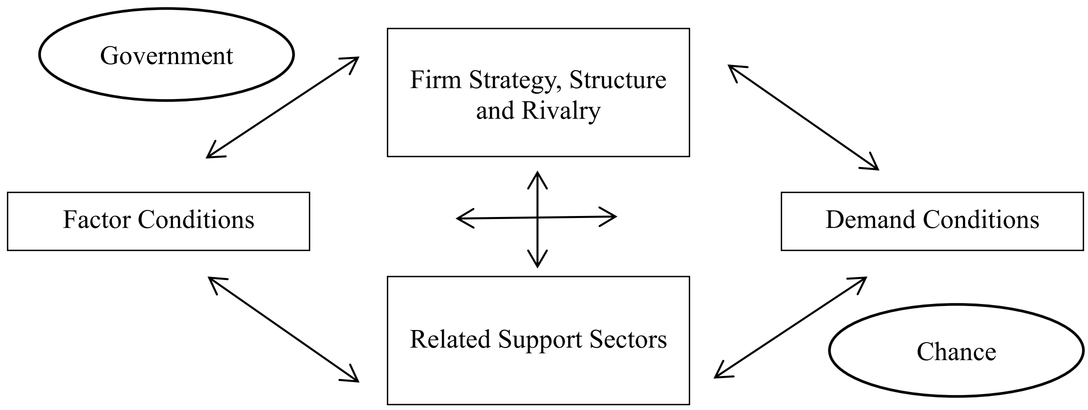

Figure 2.1 National Diamond of Competitive Advantage
Source: Porter (1996)

Borrowing Porter's (1996) ideas, factor conditions do not only include the destination's basic resources which classic economic theory believes as determinants of competitive advantages; but also the specialised factors which are created by each destination such as education, technology, infrastructure superiority and other capabilities facilitating a destination to actually outperform its competitors. Demand conditions, both domestic and international demand, are another proving ground for the tourism industry. Additionally, a high domestic demand confers efficiencies and drives a destination to improvement and innovation. Related support sectors which possess their own advantages can stimulate the tourism industry by pushing for lower costs, better quality and rapid product turn-over. Firm strategy, structure and rivalry refer to a climate of competition which stimulates improvement and discourage stagnation. Two additional factors were added to this national diamond model. Government and chance event would pose direct or indirect impacts on the tourism industry. Government policy on various aspects, as discussed before, would have an encouraging or a discouraging effect on tourism development. Chance events, such as terrorist events or political boycotts, alter the playing field of tourism, introducing opportunities for some and threats for others.

Porter's model was originally designed to compare competiveness of one nation against that of another but Crouch and Ritchie (1999) suggested that these six factors are also applicable to the levels of state/provincial, region and cities within a nation. A review conducted by C.M. Hall (2007) uncovered that previous literature on regional competitiveness mostly refers that to a region in a country (i.e.Bristow, 2005; Kitson, Martin, & Tyler, 2004). And yet, no study has applied any competitiveness model on a larger geographic region compiled by a group of different national destinations.

Most of the regional competitiveness studies such as those of Hawkins (2004) and Jackson and Murphy (2006) are based on Porter's (1998) competitive clustering. Although Jackson and Murphy (2006) applied the competitive cluster approach to four regional towns located in Australia which is a country with well-developed tourism sector; Hawkins (2004) observed that this concept is now more often employed in developing and transitional countries. Porter's clusters are "geographic concentrations of interconnected companies and institutions in a particular field… encompass an array of linked industries and other entities important to competition" (1998, p. 78). According to him, the power of cluster takes advantages of collaboration, a growing international reputation and community involvement, assisted by government policy to achieve competitiveness. Most importantly, clustering turns the comparative advantage of individual localities to competitive advantage of the larger region (Jackson & Murphy, 2006; Kitson et al., 2004). This cluster approach is believed to be as well applicable to clustering between countries through partnership marketing to put their location on the map of tourism.

Different from the previous studies, regional competitiveness in this study refers to that of a geographic region crossing national borders; in this case, Central Asia which comprises the five CASs and Xinjiang in Western China. Albeit the lack of direct references, this kind of regional competitiveness can be built on the functional definition of destination competitiveness, which was regarded by Enright and Newton (2005) as the efficient application of resources of a destination in its competing environment (micro-environment). Using the same rationale, regional destination competitiveness can be seen as the efficient application of the region's resources to compete against the other regions in a global context (macro-environment). Nevertheless, studies on cross-border regional collaboration with the aim to increase destination competitiveness do exist such as that of Wong, Mistilis, and Dwyer (2010) which is discussed in a subsequent section on regional collaboration.

2.9.2 Measuring destination competitiveness and its determinants

In general, Crouch and Ritchie (1999) concluded that tourism destination competitiveness can be indicated by the number of tourists, the amount of tourist expenditure, destination image showcased to the public, and incentive to protect the environment. To measure competitiveness of a destination or a group of destinations, most of the previous studies used a quantitative approach to measure the indicators or the determinants of destination competitiveness (see, for example, Dwyer & Kim, 2003; Enright & Newton, 2004; Gooroochurn & Sugiyarto, 2005). For instance, Jackson (2006), using total arrivals, foreign arrivals and foreign exchange earnings from tourism, empirically measured tourism competiveness and concluded that western China is less competitive than eastern China in terms of regional tourism development. However, according to Mazanec, Wober, and Zins (2007), most of these models established to date are definitional, with limited implication as they could not provide description of relationships between the variables. They alternatively examined the causal relationship between constructs within destination competitiveness using structural equation modelling, based on a tool called Competitiveness Monitor and data developed by the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC). However, using the structural equation model could only testify the degree of causal relationship between the identified determinants without real meaning on the content, such as how and why a specific variable (collaboration in this study) affects the competitiveness of the collaborating destinations individually or as a whole. Moreover, Kitson et al. (2004) revealed that there are problems to measure regional competitiveness accurately due to some conceptual issues and the need of aggregation of regional figures. Considering also the dynamic nature of collaboration, it would be more useful to adopt a qualitative approach so as to explore and uncover the relationship between collaboration and regional competitiveness.

2.9.3 Competitive advantages versus comparative advantages

As mentioned before, factor conditions are important determinants of a destination's attractiveness. However, these factors are not the sole contributors to the destination's competitiveness which guarantees it to attract tourists and be successful[26] in the global market. Therefore, it is more crucial for a destination to deploy its resources effectively to turn the factor-based comparative advantages into its competitive advantages.

On the one hand, comparative advantage concerns the factor endowments of a destination. According to Porter (1990), there are five categories of inherited or created factors, which are human resources, physical resources, knowledge resources, capital resources and infrastructure resources, in a business organisational domain. Supplemented by Crouch and Ritchie's (1999) results to fit the tourism context, historical and cultural resources were added to these factors and infrastructure category was developed into tourism superstructure. On the other hand, competitive advantage relates to factor stewardship which is an organisation's ability to deploy the resources effectively, over the long term and better than its competitors (Porter, 1990). A destination, which has a tourism vision, shares this vision with the stakeholders, understands its strengths and weaknesses, develops and implements appropriate strategies, would be more competitive regardless of its initial amount of resources (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Therefore, comparative advantage is the resources while competitive advantage is the management of a destination.

As noted above, clustering could turn the comparative advantages of the individual localities into the competitive advantages of the whole region. This is supported by several studies conducted on the effect of regional clustering on competitiveness (Jackson & Murphy, 2006; Jackson, 2006; Kitson et al., 2004). Figure 2.2 graphically illustrates how the six categories of resources affect the competitiveness of a region and how each of the resources compensates the others. Lack of a particular type of resources in one locality could be compensated by that of the partnering locality, reaching competitive advantages of the whole region as the region now is endowed with all the necessary factors and has the ability to deploy the factors effectively.

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[26] Successful destinations are defined by Crouch and Ritchie (1999) as those which can "ensure that their overall attractiveness, and the integrity of the experiences they deliver to visitors, must equal or surpass that of the many alternative destination experiences open to potential visitors" (p.139). Moreover, they included not only the economic dimension of success but as well as that of social-cultural and environmental.

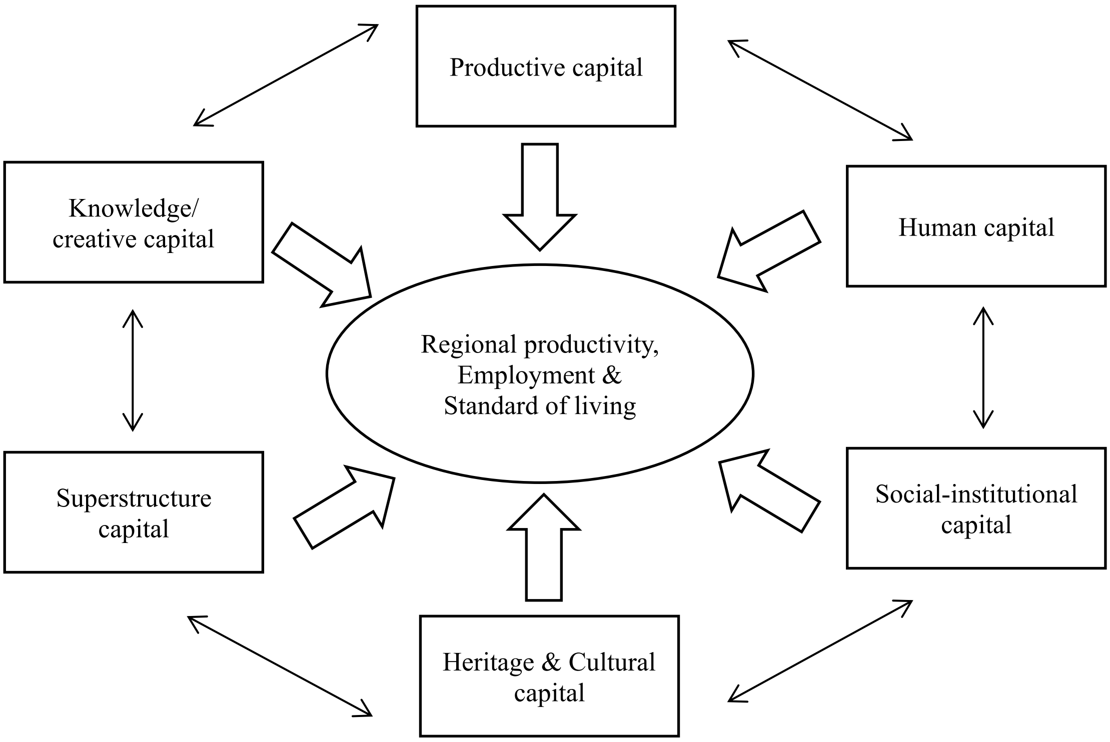

Figure 2.2 Base of regional competitive advantage
Source: Kitson et al. (2004)

2.10 Combining Destination Sustainability and Competitiveness

Competitiveness and sustainability are expressed as two interrelated and mutually supportive competences that a destination needs to achieve in order to be successful (Goeldner & Ritchie, 2006). Considering the two concepts can be blended into one, Crouch and Ritchie (1999) constructed a model of destination competitiveness and sustainability, after their four years of research, which received most attention and recognition in the field. Being based on the Porter's (1996) diamond of national competitive advantage, the Crouch and Richie's model consists of four determinants under the influence of two environmental forces, the global (macro) and competitive (micro) environments. Later on, they modified the model by including an extra determinant: destination policy, planning and development which better covers the management issues of a destination (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000). The constituents of the model are outlined in Table 2.2.

Core resources/ attractors are the major elements of destination attractiveness and are also the main driving force for tourists' visitation (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). There are seven elements within attractors which are physiography (landscape and climate, etc.), culture and history, market ties, mix of activities, special events, entertainment and tourism superstructure. While some of these factors could be managed to increase destination attractiveness, some are out of the control of the destination and hugely influence the overall competitiveness of a destination.

Table 2.2 Outline of Crouch and Ritchie's model

Determinants	Elements
Core resources/ attractors	- Physiography and climate - Culture and history - Market ties - Mix of activities - Special events - Entertainment - Superstructure
Supporting factors and resources	- Infrastructure - Accessibility - Facilitating resources - Hospitality - Enterprise
Destination management	- Resources stewardship - Marketing - Finance and venture capital - Organisation - Human resource development - Information/ research - Quality of service - Visitor management
Destination policy, planning and development	- System definition - Philosophy - Vision - Audit - Positioning - Development - Competitive/collaborative analysis - Monitoring and evaluation
Qualifying and amplifying determinants	- Location - Interdependencies - Safety and security - Awareness/image/brand - Cost/value

Source: Compiled by author, based on Crouch and Ritchie (1999) and Ritchie and Crouch (2000)

Albeit the supporting factors and resources, such as, infrastructure, transportation, hospitality and alike, do not increase the motivation of the tourists to visit a destination, they provide a functional foundation that facilitates tourism and enhances the destination's overall performance.

Destination management, with the eight sub-constructs of resources stewardship, marketing, finance and venture capital, organisation, human resource development, information and research, quality of service and visitor management, focuses on the activities which can intensify the attractiveness of the attractors and make better use of the existing resources (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). This is considered as important because it affects the inherited attractiveness of the destination, hence influences destination competitiveness.

The determinant of destination policy, planning and development embraces eight subcomponents which are definition of tourism system, value and vision, positioning and branding strategy, development plan, collaborative and competitive analysis, monitoring and evaluation; and auditing. These are important to guide the destination to develop in a competitive and sustainable way (Ritchie & Crouch, 2000).

Qualifying and amplifying determinants are situational conditions which moderate or magnify destination competitiveness by filtering the influence of the other core groups of factors. Although they are important in defining the overall destination competitiveness, they are always out of the control of the destination management body, such as location and interdependences. Despite so, a certain level of influence could still be issued over the other qualifying determinants of safety, brand awareness and the cost-value balance of the tourism products of the destinations.

The two environmental dimensions of Ritchie and Crouch's model are the global and the competitive environments. Macro (global) forces are those that affect all human activities and not only the tourism and travel industry. Micro (competitive) forces are those within the tourism system, such as action or activities of entities in the system, which directly affect the other members in the same system. They shape the immediate environment within which a destination must adapt in order to compete.

The Crouch and Ritchie's model, with modifications and together with the concepts of collaboration and stakeholder involvement, is adopted in the conceptual framework guiding this study which is discussed in a separate section towards the end of this chapter.

2.11 Stakeholder Theory

In the last two decades, there is a growing body of research considering the importance of collaboration in the tourism planning process as argued by Jamal and Getz (1995). The underlying principles presented in these studies are in fact the premise of the stakeholder theory, which is to involve all persons or organisations which affect or are affected by the proposed tourism development. As tourism per se is a sector that involves a considerable number of small fragmented parties, the desire for collective action so as to achieve a common success is evident (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005).

Although the term stakeholder has long existed[27], the now-classic stakeholder theory was only pioneered in 1984 by Freeman who suggested that an organisation is featured by the relationship among various groups and individuals, known as stakeholders. He defined stakeholder as "... any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives" (Freeman, 1984, p.46). In particular, he provided an overview of stakeholders involved in an organisation's planning process, the concept was not only limited to those most obvious stakeholders but as well as the perhaps somewhat less obvious ones like activist groups, employees and competitors. Freeman (1984) as well suggested that, "each category of stakeholder group ... can be broken down into several useful smaller categories (p. 25)...", and a, "generic stakeholder map ... can serve as a starting point... for stakeholder analysis to be meaningful… specific stakeholder groups must be identified" (p. 54). Furthermore, the fundamental basis of the stakeholder theory in fact extended an organisation to a stakeholder interest coordinating and optimising entity (Donaldson & Preston, 1995; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). Therefore, albeit this map of stakeholders could not be all-encompassing and was originated from a relatively micro setting, explicitly an organisational domain, it is still valid in providing a useful starting point in identifying and mapping out stakeholders for a tourism initiative, even in a larger context, that is to say, cross-national collaborative tourism planning.

Despite the normative core of the stakeholder theory, scholars studying this concept believed that this normative nature, together with the descriptive and instrumental

[27] Appendix 6: A chronology of stakeholder definition by different scholars in the management field.

aspects, are mutually supportive (Donaldson & Preston, 1995); hence its ability to provide philosophical guidelines for the management of an organisation should not be questioned. Freeman (1984) suggested that to operationalise this concept is to effectively identify, analyse and manage stakeholders. This involves the identification of stakeholders and their respective stakes, the process necessary to manage relationships with the stakeholders and the management of a set of transactions or bargains among the organisation and the stakeholders. Following the path of Freeman, Sheehen and Ritchie (2005) studied destination management organisations in North America and also found it important to first identify the major players of the destination management process being studied and determine the stakeholders' relevant salience to the process. They at the end, based on the Savage, Nix, Whitehead, and Blair's (1991) stakeholder typology, analysed the ability of the stakeholders of threatening or facilitating the destination management and proposed some management strategies for these stakeholders. There were several studies afterwards utilising similar procedural approaches to analyse stakeholders in a specific tourism setting, especially in the areas of sustainable tourism development (see for example de Araujo & Bramwell, 1999; Byrd, 2007). As noted by de Araujo and Bramwell (1999), although it is time-consuming and difficult to involve a whole range of stakeholders in the planning process, the associated benefits with such an identification and involvement would ensure the long-term support from the stakeholders, hence the true success in achieving sustainability. As reasoned by Bramwell and Lane (1993), the participation by multiple stakeholders holding differing stakes and perspectives pushes for the consideration of the various economic, environmental, political, social and cultural factors contributing to sustainable development.

Therefore, in order to study the potential, incentives and hindrances of collaboration for a sustainable tourism development on the Silk Road, it is crucial to first analyse the existing, potential and perceived stakeholders involved in the process. As in any strategic destination plans, the issues of collaboration performance is viewed as "the stakeholder' joint-commitment to reach its strategic goal" (d' Angella & Go, 2009, p. 431).

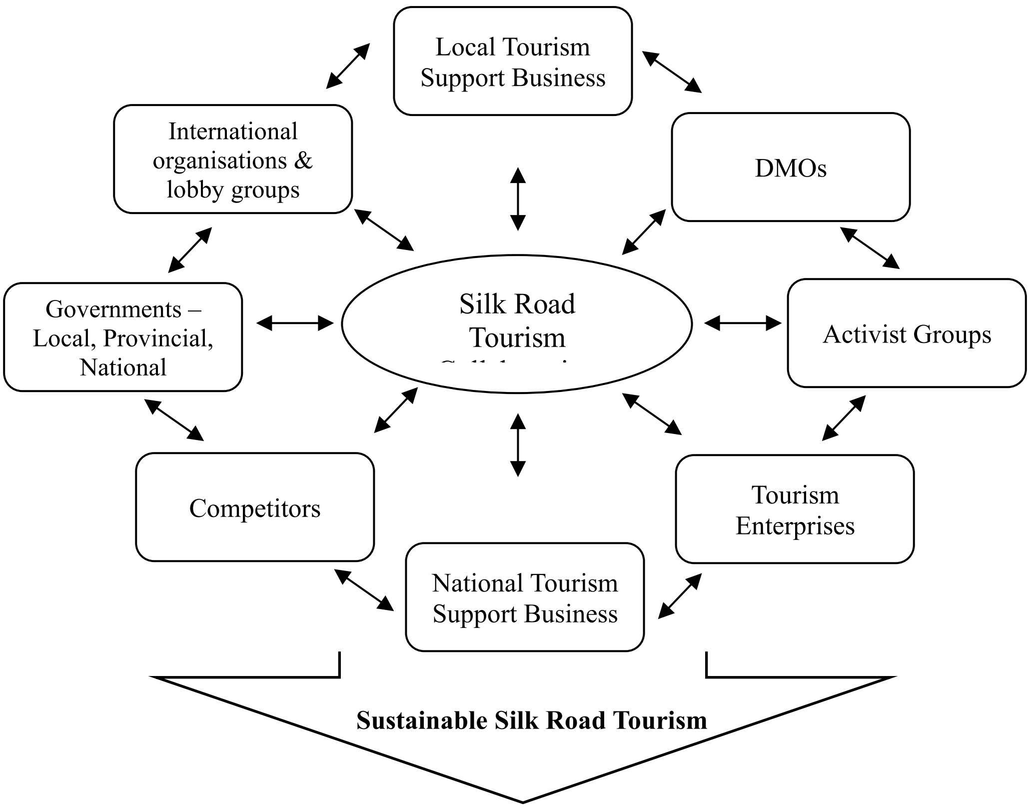

Figure 2.3 Proposed stakeholder map for identifying stakeholders of Silk Road tourism collaboration
Source: Developed for present study, based on Freeman (1984, p. 55)

Figure 2.3 presents an initial stakeholder map proposed for the stakeholder analysis to be applied on studying the Silk Road tourism collaboration, which particularly involves the five CASs and Western China. This map, as an analytical tool, is developed based on Freeman's stakeholder map for a business organisation, with reference to the works of other scholars who applied Freeman's map on a tourist destination organisation (see, for example, Sautter & Leisen, 1999; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). The national tourist offices of the individual countries, who are tourism planners in Freeman's model, are modified to become one of the stakeholder groups affecting or being affected by the tourism development along the Silk Road. The inclusion of the international organisations and other lobby groups in this initial map can be justified by the catalyst roles they are at the moment playing in advancing the collaboration for the Silk Road tourism development. Due to the relative underdevelopment of superstructure in the CASs, tourism enterprises, national and local tourism support services are believed to be influential in the development process. Lastly, tourism development along the Silk Road could be affected by three levels of government bodies of the participating Silk Road countries including the local (municipal) and national levels which deserve separate analysis. Residents, tourists and activist groups are often included in the stakeholder analysis for tourism planning. However as the main issue being studied in the proposed framework is Silk Road tourism collaboration, these stakeholder groups are considered having relatively less influence over the happening of collaboration between the CASs and Western China and are therefore not included in the proposed analysis.

2.11.1 Stakeholder identification, assessment and management

In the process of identifying stakeholders for tourism development, one often underestimates the complexity of this step and tends to default to a brief report of only the most obvious stakeholders according to their roles played. In fact, any individual or group can be qualified as a stakeholder once it claims a "stake" in the activity being analysed (Donaldson & Preston, 1995). In addition, pure description of different categories of stakeholders is not sufficient in a stakeholder analysis as this approach only deals with boundary rationality and does not represent the heterogeneity within the groups (Wolfe & Putler, 2002) ; and neglects the effect of multiple "stakes" or interest (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005).

Nevertheless, the first step in the assessment would still be identification as no analysis or differentiation of stakeholders could take place if they are not first being identified (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). According to de Araujo and Bramwell (1999), there are several approaches to identify the different stakeholders. One of these approaches is to ask the stakeholders affected by the issues to identify other stakeholders and who others should be involved in the planning. This is important as stakeholders who are identified by other stakeholders are highly relevant and reflect the value judgment of the existing stakeholders (Mark & Shotland, 1985).

Based on identification, one can map out the relationship between each group of stakeholders based on their roles, relevance and interest. Many researchers (see for example Clarkson, 1998; Freeman, 1984) differentiated stakeholders into primary and secondary stakeholders. Clarkson (1998) defined primary stakeholders as those who have formal, official or contractual relationship with the organisation and without whose continuing participation the organisation cannot persist as a going concern;

while secondary stakeholders are those who influence or are being influenced by the organisation but are not essential for the organisation to exist. Similarly, Friedman and Miles (2002), based on the nature of the connection and compatibility of interests between the different stakeholders, developed a model to understand the relationship between an organisation and the stakeholders involved in its network (Figure 2.4). Quadrant "A" represents necessary compatible relations in which every formally-involved stakeholder's interest will be adversely affected by disruption to the relationship. Therefore, this type of stakeholder will act in defence for the continuation of this relationship. Quadrant "C" indicates the other extreme relationship, contingent incompatible which could mean wars or invasion in the worst cases. Because of the incompatible ideas, conflicts occur when some of the stakeholders insist on balancing the ideas and enforcing debates, hence competition is created. Defence of interests would result in maximum damage which is to eliminate the opposing parties. Quadrant "D" is necessary incompatible relations in which the structure between the stakeholders is necessary but the ideas are not emergent. In such case, compromises must be made. Whilst one set of ideas is advances, the ideas or interests of the other party are thereby diminished. Finally, quadrant "B" represents contingent compatible institutional arrangements, a loose relationship in which stakeholders can choose to form informal agreements for the advantage to their mutual interests. Although there is no direct reference to the strategy of collaboration between stakeholders, the concept of collaboration is embedded in the model masked by the situational logic of protectionist, opportunism and concessionary.

		Connections	
		Necessary	Contingent
Sets of ideas and/or structures of material interests	Compatible	**Protectionist (A)** Strategy: Defensive	**Opportunism (B)** Strategy: Opportunistic
	Incompatible	**Concessionary (D)** Strategy: Compromise	**Competition (C)** Strategy: Elimination

Figure 2.4 Friedman and Miles's model for mapping out stakeholders
Source: Friedman and Miles (2002)

Progressing further in mapping out stakeholders' "stake" and relationship, Mitchell, Agle, and Wood (1997) went beyond superficial evidence and created a fine-gained typology to assist in the analysis of stakeholder salience by combining the ideas of power-dependency, legitimacy and urgency, based on their comprehensive review of the stakeholder management literature. Stakeholders are mapped by their possessions or attributed possession of one, two, or all three of the following: (1) the stakeholder's

power to influence the organisation /dependency of the organisation on the stakeholders (or their resources) and vice versa (2) the legitimacy of the stakeholder's relationship with the organisation; and (3) the urgency of the stakeholder's claim of interest on the organisation (Mitchell et al., 1997). They proposed salience of the stakeholders vary positively according to the number of these attributes they possess, as perceived by the organisation, hence developed a seven-category typology of stakeholders' salience (
Figure 2.5).

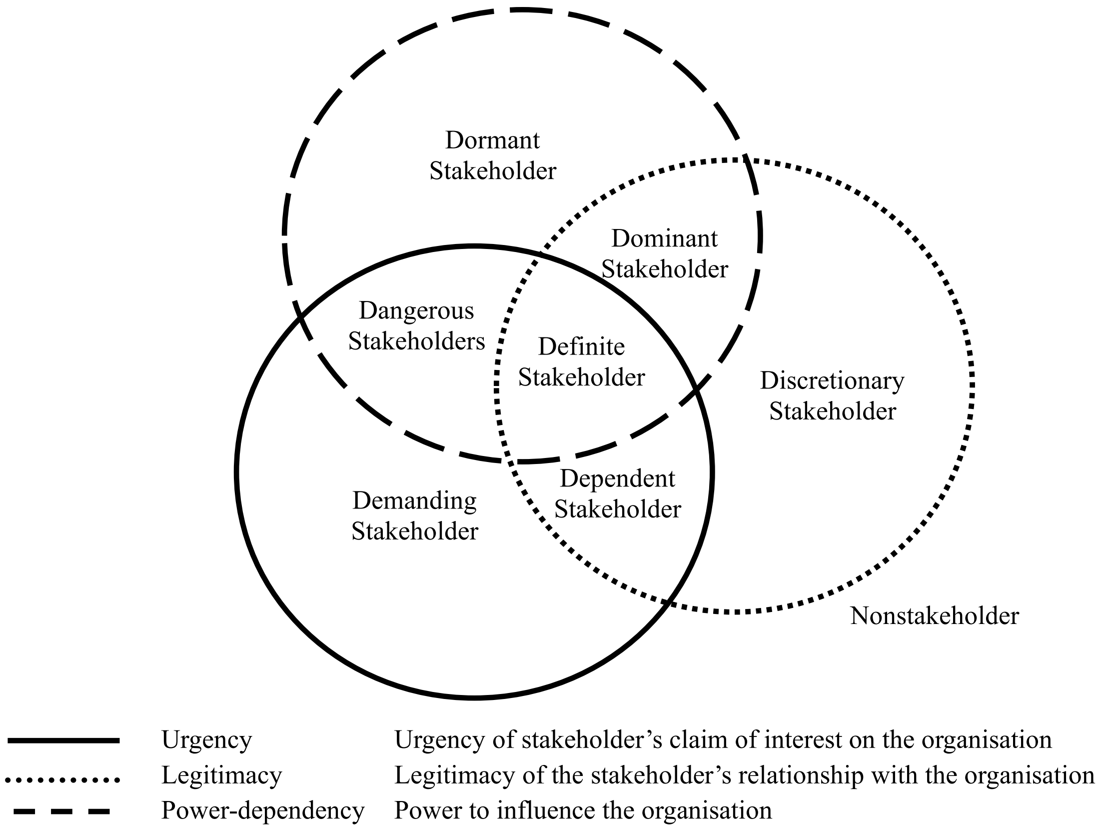

Figure 2.5 Mitchell et al.'s typology of stakeholder salience
Source: Adapted for present study, based on Mitchell et al. (1997)

Another typology was advocated by Savage et al. (1991) based on the potential of each group of stakeholders to threaten or cooperate with the organisation. The potential is determined by the stakeholders' capacity, opportunity and willingness to do so, and again, are postulated to be a function of power / dependency and relevance. A set of management strategies, which includes the use of collaboration, was derived from this typology. The management strategies are discussed later on in this sub-section.

In general, because of the fact that "stake" is only shaped but not confined by the role that the stakeholders are playing, their interests bear intrinsic values (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). Therefore, it is important to recognise that their interests are not exclusively touristic when identifying stakeholder groups and mapping their relationship for a tourism setting. Moreover, all identified stakeholder must be included into the planning and development process and the dynamism in the stakeholder relations should be acknowledged. Scholars also argued that when objectives of the different stakeholders could be aligned, they might rationally choose to cooperate or engage in exchanges such as “voluntary activity between two organisations which has consequences, actual or anticipated, for the realisation of their respective goals or objectives (Levine & White, 1961, p. 588)

As mentioned, the operationalisation of the stakeholder theory would not be complete without properly managing the identified stakeholders and this makes the operationalisation complicated. As described by Freeman (1984), the stakeholder theory could be “deceptively simple” (p. 246). It is “simple” because the identification of the stakeholders could be time-consuming but not unattainable. It is "deceptive” because the task of managing them is massive once the stakeholders are identified.

A range of studies focused on developing appropriate management strategies or responses to stakeholders. Most of these authors, especially those in the 1980s, elaborated a scale ranging from “reactive”, “defensive”, “accommodative”, to “proactive”, to describe an organisation’s posture or strategies in response to its stakeholders (Clarkson, 1995). However, this “RDAP” typology is relatively descriptive, without indicating which strategy should be adopted in a certain situation (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). Another approach is to identity the attitude of the parties, may it be supportive, opposed or neutral, to the collective interest of the stakeholders. Coalitions among supportive stakeholders could be formed so as to increase their power in that organisational domain while neutral stakeholders could be lobbied into the coalition (Bryson, 2004). However, such political objectives appear to be very controversial (de Araujo & Bramwell, 1999).

The management approach established by Savage et al. (1991) was highly recommended by Sheehan and Ritchie (2005) for its “robustness in capturing and building on the many relevant elements in the collaboration and inter-organisational relations literature, as well as previous effort to apply these to tourism" (p. 716). As mentioned, they built up a diagnostic typology for managing stakeholders based on the constructs of cooperation and threat. Figure 2.6 indicates the mentioned typology. As illustrated, there are four strategies to deal with four different types of stakeholders with different perceived potential to threaten or to cooperate with the organisation. Sheehan and Ritchie's (2005) study, which successfully verified this typology in reality, provided empirical results on the elements of the four strategies: collaboration strategies ranged from cooperation to joint ventures and to mergers; involvement strategies include soliciting opinion for planning and decision-making purposes; defensive strategy protects the organisation from negative impacts induced by stakeholders; and monitoring strategies monitor stakeholders' threats and cooperate opportunities over time. This typology is thereby proved to be useful in guiding the stakeholder management strategies given that the potentials of the stakeholders to threaten and to cooperate are identified.

		Stakeholder's Potential for Threats to Organisation	
		High	Low
Stakeholder's Potential for Cooperation with Organisation	High	**MIXED BLESSING** Strategy: Collaboration	**SUPPORTIVE** Strategy: Involvement
	Low	**NONSUPPORTIVE** Strategy: Defend	**MARGINAL** Strategy: Monitor

Figure 2.6 Diagnostic typology for stakeholder management
Source: Savage et al. (1991)

2.11.2 Summary of the stakeholder theory and related concepts

To summarise, before going into the field of collaboration and studying the elements within, one needs to understand that the underlying principle of collaboration is in fact the premise of stakeholder involvement. This is well demonstrated by the wide adoption of the stakeholder approach in the collaboration literature (Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). Nonetheless, before effective stakeholder involvement can take place in any circumstance, the relevant stakeholders, together with their "stake", in terms of power, legitimacy and urgency, must first be identified. Afterwards, the relationships among the stakeholders; based on their nature of connection and capability of interests, or their potentials in threatening and cooperating with the organisation; must be mapped out. One approach suggested by de Araujo & Bramwell (1999) is to place the stakeholders on a diagram according to their key relationships to the issue, followed by constructing a network on the diagram using arrows to show existing or likely relationships between the stakeholders, which could be accomplished with the input from the existing stakeholders. These relationships should also be prioritised based on their importance to the survival of the organisation. Due to its dynamic nature, this mapping out of stakeholder relationships would be a continuing process which requires it to be constantly revised and reconsidered. In spite of that, more proactive scans to consider existing and potential stakeholders are crucial to the sustainable success of a tourism initiative as congruency across the stakeholders' interests improves the likelihood of collaboration in the tourism planning process (Sautter & Leisen, 1999).

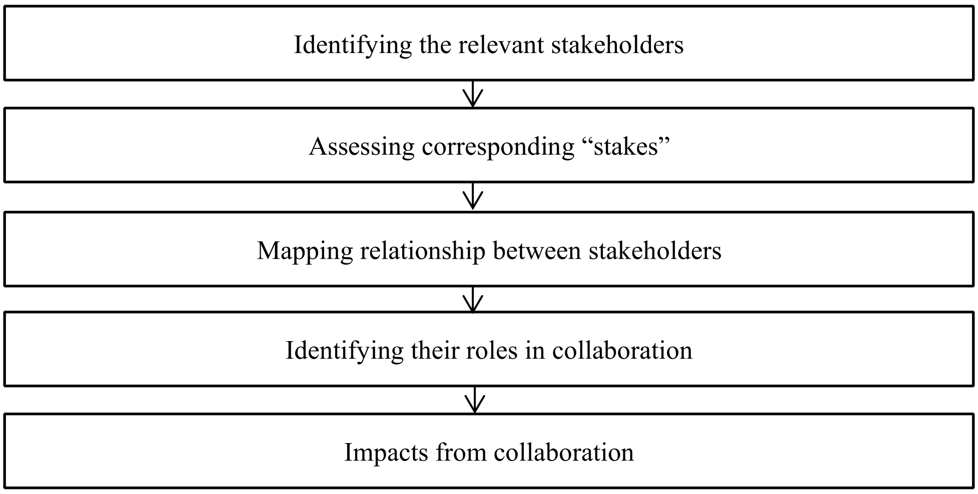

Figure 2.7 Steps of stakeholder analysis for collaboration
Source: Adapted for present study, based on de Araujo & Bramwell (1999); Freeman (1984); Sheehan & Ritchie (2005)

For the collaborative tourism initiative on the Silk Road and with the CASs and China, a sequence of steps for stakeholder assessment and involvement is proposed (Figure 2.7). It involves all the steps as proposed by Freeman (1984) and the subsequent scholars. Additionally, the stakeholders' roles in collaboration and the resulting impacts of collaboration on the different stakeholders would be analysed.

2.12 Collaboration

Although collaboration is proven to be an effective management tool for solving organisational or social problems, collaboration as a theoretical concept, is under-researched (Gray & Wood, 1991; Jamal & Getz, 1995). There is not a single comprehensive theory concluding all variables associated with the collaboration concept. Different researchers, based on their research objectives and practical case studies, established their own collaboration theoretical constructs. Gray (1989) first defined collaboration as “a process of joint decision making among key stakeholders of a problem domain about the future of that domain” (p.227). Later this definition was slightly modified to become, “a group of autonomous stakeholders of a problem domain engaged in an interactive process, using shared rules, norms, and structures, to act or decide on issues related to that domain” (Wood & Gray, 1991, p. 146). The notion of these definitions is that the stakeholders who are collaborating are independent to one another and just being engaged in action on an issue-specific basis. This could be valid for some cases but definitely not for all. As discussed in the previous section, the tenet of collaboration is the managing of relations between highly relevant stakeholders whose potential threats and cooperation intentions are high. Also supported by the earlier view of Waddock (1989) in which he stated that collaboration between stakeholders is conditional on the recognition of their interdependence, the agreement that the issues are important and on the belief that significant benefits will be resulted from working together on it. Gray (1989), despite his later definition, expanded this interdependence concept of Waddock to the network level where multiple stakeholders are involved. Later on, the perceived interdependence between stakeholders involved and their stakes in solving the problem were highlighted by Logsdon (1991) as two critical factors determining the willingness of the stakeholders to collaborate. Furthermore Gray (1989) summarised in his work the five characteristics of a collaboration process which were stakeholders’ interdependence; emergence of solutions by dealing constructively with difference; joint ownership of decision; collective responsibility for the on-going direction of that domain; and the emergent nature of collaboration.

In the tourism context, there are various studies applying the collaboration theoretical concept to examine the different facets of tourism, including tourism policy and planning (i.e. de Araujo & Bramwell, 1999; Bramwell & Sharman, 1999; C. Hall, 1999; Parker, 1999); development of sustainable and community-based tourism (i.e. Jamal & Getz, 1995; Timothy, 1998); and tourism marketing (i.e. Gajda, 2004; A. Palmer & Bejou, 1995). Bramwell and Sharman (1999) drew mutual ideas from the collaboration theory, communicative planning approach and citizen participation, assessed and evaluated the collaboration in local policy-making from three different perspectives including scope of collaboration, intensity of collaboration and degree to which consensus emerges; applied to a case study of Britain's Peak District National Park. Jamal and Getz (1995) applied the collaboration theoretical constructs to community tourism planning and evaluated the benefits and problems, as well as the facilitators and inhibitors associated with each phase of the collaboration process and confirmed that collaboration could be a useful tool to manage the turbulent planning domains of community-based tourism at local or even regional level. Summarising the propositions of the above studies, existing collaboration could be systematically evaluated (Figure 2.8).

SCOPE OF COLLABORATION		INTENSITY OF COLLABORATION		DEGREE TO WHICH CONSENSUS EMERGES	
Benefits	Problems	Benefits	Problems	Benefits	Problems
Facilitators	Inhibitors	Facilitators	Inhibitors	Facilitators	Inhibitors

Figure 2.8 Systematic evaluation of collaboration
Source: Compiled by author, based on Bramwell and Sharman (1999) and Jamal and Getz (1995)

2.12.1 Learning from the examples of regional collaboration

Management of regional destination clusters is not novel with the successful examples of cooperative destination marketing between different countries, states or cities in the same region such as that of the Caribbean and the Mediterranean. The Caribbean, although consists of more than twenty destinations, is often considered as a single destination internationally projecting an image for romance holidays and honeymoons (Jayawardena, 2002). Apostolopoulos and Sönmez, (2000) suggested that destination system restructuring coupled with cooperative marketing would be the most effective strategy for the Mediterranean to keep its consolidated market share in the increasingly globalised tourism market. This involved marketing the Mediterranean as a single destination or a travel route as it would be more beneficial for this Mediterranean cluster to compete with other destinations in the world than to compete against each other within the same region considering the similarities between these destinations. However, it should be noted that this marketing strategy needs as well to conserve the uniqueness and a separate brand image of each place. Regional collaboration, if coordinated and managed properly, can balance the tourism development of the different cities, enhance image of the region, diversify tourism products, prolong tourists' stay and increase tourists' expenditure (Apostolopoulos & Sönmez, 2000).

Also agreed by Jackson (2006), based on the two case studies of Australia and western China, forming a regional tourism cluster facilitates the conversion of comparative advantages of the individual destination to competitive advantage of the whole region; and hence, makes better use of available tourism resources. This argument was then verified by the success of the joint destination management effort of Chengdu and Xi'an in western China. They marketed themselves as "sparkling cities" and cooperatively developed a tourism route which enhanced both their individual and collective destination competitiveness.

In Asia, another prominent example of cross-border regional collaboration is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, established in 1967. With the withdrawal of the colonial powers and the resulting power vacuum experienced in the 1960s, five of the Southeast Asian countries decided to cooperate on an alliance mechanism to strengthen their newly established positions and to protect themselves from big power rivalry. Later on, five more countries joined the association to form the current ten member states of ASEAN[28]. The collaboration areas focus around economic growth, social process, cultural development, peace and stability, and training and research facilities in the region. The long-term goal of ASEAN is to develop free trade in Southeast Asia in which tourism plays a significant role (Wong et al., 2010). Wong, Mistilis, and Dwyer (2011) did a comprehensive study on the progress made on tourism collaboration by ASEAN since the inception of the ASEAN Tourism Agreement in 2002 and the consequent action plan in 2004. They discovered that except with regards to the relative progress that has been made in travel facilitation and human resource development in the region, other proposals on the Agreement have not materialised or only with outcomes which were very insignificant. They related this inefficient collaboration with the inhibitors experienced in the aspects of stakeholders, resources and processes and mechanisms, such as stakeholders' lack of collaborative mind-set, inadequate financial resources and expertise, and the general development gaps between countries. Additionally, they argued that an Asian collaboration case study expanded the boundaries of existing theories of collaboration which, of course deserves the current study to make reference to. Albeit the aspect of

[28] ASEAN member states: Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore & Thailand (founders 1967); Brunei Darussalam (joined 1984), Viet Nam (joined 1995), Myanmar, Lao PDR (joined 1997), Cambodia (joined 1999)

competiveness was not discussed in the studies on the ASEAN, earlier work of the same lead author (Wong et al., 2008) did examine the impact of collaboration and mutual learning on destination competitiveness of Hong Kong and Singapore. However, they only investigated the respective competitiveness of the two destinations, instead of the general competitiveness of the region.

In terms of cross-border collaboration on visa arrangement, there is no better example than that of the Schengen states[29]. The Schengen agreement is a treaty between the Schengen states which allows an international tourist or traveller to access to more than one Schengen state during the validity of their Schengen visa (UNWTO, 2001). The Schengen system is underpinned by a comprehensive information database on the applicants and the free exchange of information between these countries. This could serve as a functional example for the development of a multi-national visa for the countries along the Silk Road, particularly for the CASs and western China in this case.

2.12.2 Precondition for collaboration

Relationships such as collaboration, association and alliances could be generalised as inter-organisational relations. Different scholars based on their different case studies have developed some integrated theories to explain the preconditions for this kind of strategic relations to take place. Some of the most influential in this field are Gray and Wood (1991). By reviewing the research studies included in the two special issues on collaborative alliances of the Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, they identified six major theoretical perspectives which could possibly explain the emergence of inter-organisational relations. And according to Wong et al. (2010), these propositions of preconditions are particularly relevant to regional collaboration, in their case, the ASEAN collaboration.

[29] The fifteen Schengen states are Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Italy, Greece, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. All these countries except Norway and Iceland are European Union members.

Table 2.3Theoretical preconditions for inter-organisational collaboration

Theoretical perspectives	Collaboration motives	Literature
Resource dependency theory	- To gain control over scarce resources	Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Logsdon, 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003
Political approach	- To achieve a common transmutation end - To protect common resources that may be depleted by others	Golich, 1991; Roberts & Bradley, 1991
Microeconomic perspective	- To maximise efficiency - To reduce transaction costs	Fleisher, 1991; Husted, 1994
Negotiated order theory	- To achieve shared understanding of a problem - To have collective response to that problem via negotiation	Nathan & Mitroff, 1991; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005
Strategic management theory	- To gain strategic advantages	Levine & White, 1961; Westley & Vredenburg, 1991.
Institutional economics approach	- To respond towards the competitive, institutional or macro-societal forces	Freeman, 1984; Pasquero, 1991

Source: Compiled by author, based on Grey and Wood (1991)

The six identified theoretical perspectives are: (1) Resource dependence theory which delimits the conditions for stakeholders to form or to participate in collaboration to only having “high stake” and “high interdependence”. More specifically, stakeholders collaborate so as to gain or improve control over scarce resources or resources that their interests depend on in the environment (Bramwell & Lane, 2000; Logsdon, 1991; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). (2) Institutional economics approach or corporate social performance theory (Wong et al., 2010) explains collaboration as a response of the stakeholders towards the competitive, institutional or macro-societal forces (Freeman, 1984; Pasquero, 1991). (3) Strategic management theory reasons the collaboration by the conditions of scarcity and the desires of the stakeholders to exchange so as to gain strategic advantages and to solve problems (Levine & White, 1961; Westley & Vredenburg, 1991). (4) Microeconomic perspective highlights that the need of individual stakeholders to maximise efficiency and to reduce costs are the causes of collaboration (Fleisher, 1991; Husted, 1994). (5) Negotiated order theory emphasises the awareness of the stakeholders of the need of shared understanding and collective actions towards a problem and that involves negotiation (Nathan & Mitroff, 1991; Sheehan & Ritchie, 2005). (6) Political approach characterises the motives of the stakeholders as protecting their interest in common resources which may be confiscated by others. They share a common interest; therefore, they have some rules to achieve a common end (Golich, 1991). The six preconditions for inter-organisational collaboration are summarised in

.

Wong et al. (2010) suggested that the six theoretical perspectives are in fact similar to Oliver's (1990) six determinants of relation formation which include necessity, asymmetry, reciprocity, efficiency, stability and legitimacy. In addition, these determinants are not mutually exclusive and tend to coexist. Therefore, the preconditions for collaboration to exist are partly inherited in the characteristics of the stakeholders and partly created or stimulated by institutional forces such as legal actions, social norms and so on. Oliver's six determinants and their explanation are exhibited in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 Oliver's six determinants of relation formation

Determinant	Explanation
Necessity	To meet necessary laws and regulations
Asymmetry	To exercise power or control over another organisation or its resources
Reciprocity	To follow and achieve mutually beneficial goals or interests
Efficiency	To improve the organisation's internal output/ input ratio
Stability	To establish relationship to achieve stability, predictability and dependability in the organisation's relations with others in face of external environmental uncertainty
Legitimacy	To demonstrate or improve the organisation's reputation or congruence with prevailing norms in its institutional environment

Source: Compiled by author, based on Oliver (1990), cited in Wong et al. (2010)

Furthermore Jamal and Getz (1995) argued that there are several conditions which are necessary for the collaborative to be effective after formulation. These include the positive perception of the stakeholders on resulted benefits, their beliefs in the decisions made, the involvement of key groups and the presence of a convener which is equipped with expertise, resources and authority. The above-mentioned conditions could be useful references for the current study to investigate the pre-conditions for tourism collaboration between the five CASs and China, through the mean of a Silk Road network.

2.12.3 Incentives for collaboration

Judging from what has previously discussed, the pre-conditions for collaboration to certain extent resemble the stakeholders' motives in collaborating; and needless to say, these motives are in fact benefits that the stakeholders expect from the collaboration. The benefits of collaboration are well documented in previous literature. From a management perspective, Abreu and Camarinha-Matos (2008) listed all potential benefits associated with inter-organisational collaboration such as reduced costs and risks, decreased dependence on a non-collaborative party, increase innovation capacity and specialisation, establishment and defence of a position in the market, enhanced proper regulations and shared social responsibility. More specifically in the tourism context, numerous researchers stressed the value of collaboration with a list of different benefits. Bramwell and Sharman (1999) claimed that a consensus-based collaboration could assist in avoiding costs of solving conflicts among stakeholders, leading to legitimate collective actions and enhancing the coordination of policies and related activities. In terms of sustainable development, scholars reckoned collaboration among key stakeholders as a fundamental ingredient (Byrd, 2007; Sautter & Leisen, 1999). Furthermore, Jackson and Murphy (2006) emphasised the importance of regional collaboration in turning comparative advantage of individual localities to the collective competitive advantage of the region in terms of tourism development.

Table 2.5 Potential benefits of collaboration

- Increased social acceptance of policies so that implementation and enforcement may be easier to effect
- Bring in additional knowledge, attitudes and other capacities to the decision-making process
- Creative synergy leads to greater innovation and effectiveness
- Greater commitment of stakeholders to put the resulting policies into practice
- Improved coordination of the policies and related actions of the multiple stakeholders
- Encourage non-tourism activities, leading to a broadening of the economic, employment and societal base of a given community or region
- More flexible resulting policies and also more sensitive to local circumstances and to changing conditions
- Pooling of the resources of stakeholders, leading to more effective use
- Promote learning about the work, skills and potential of the other stakeholders, and also develop the group interaction and negotiating skills
- Greater consideration of the diverse economic, environmental and social issues that affect the sustainable development of resources

Source: Adapted from Bramwell and Lane (2000)

Table 2.5 is a comprehensive list of benefits associated with collaboration prepared by Bramwell and Lane (2000). Therefore, it is evident that collaboration, in different forms, is beneficial to the stakeholders. However, collaboration cannot be taken for granted. For instance, collaboration between the CASs and western China in terms of Silk Road tourism development is not happening effectively. There must be reasons for this underdevelopment which could be related to the problems with collaboration. Those problems are discussed in the next section.

2.12.4 Barriers to collaboration

The discrepancy between the many benefits listed above and the narrow adoption of collaboration in tourism could be explained by the potential problems associated with collaborative tourism planning. Table 2.6 lists some of the most significant problems as proposed by Bramwell and Lane (2000), both in principle and practice, which confine the full potential of collaboration.

The number one difficulty is the perception and misconception which stakeholders have of each other (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). Overcoming mistrust can be difficult, especially for a domain involving such a large number of multiple stakeholders. In addition, the interests of these stakeholders are not necessarily touristic but closely related to their different roles and value orientation (Gray 1989). It is important to understand that "the extent to which barriers to participative systems are embedded in social, economic, and political principles deeply valued in their own" (McCaffrey, Faerman, & Hart, 1995, p. 604). Secondly, it is not easy to convince stakeholders that it is in their best interest to participate in collaboration as most of the stakeholders would prefer central control in which they have the full power to predict and make decisions on various situations rather than entering into a complex and fragmented collaborative system. This is especially relevant for countries with a communist background, for instance, the CASs and China. Last but not least, the power relations influence who would be involved in the discussion and who would have the most influence in decisions. Tourism businesses, which are important to tourism development, may not be as influential as the government officials in these Silk Road countries. Therefore, the existing and potential hindrances to collaboration between CASs and western China in developing tourism along the Silk Road must first be identified before recommendations could be suggested and collaboration could be encouraged.

Table 2.6 Potential problems of collaboration

- Limited tradition of stakeholders participating in policy-making
- Collaboration would be set up simply as 'window dressing' to avoid tackling real problems
- Under-resourced for additional staff time, leadership and administrative resources for collaboration
- Unwillingness of reducing power or to work together with unfamiliar partners or previous adversaries.
- Stakeholders with less power excluded from the process of collaborative or have less influence
- Uninterested or inactive key parties in working with others, sometimes because they decide to rely on others to produce the benefits
- Increased uncertainty about the future as the policies developed by multiple stakeholders are more difficult to predict than those developed by a central authority
- Costly and time-consuming

Source: Adapted from Bramwell and Lane (2000)

2.12.5 Process of collaboration

Gray (1989), building on the work of McCann (1983), proposed a three-stage generic model through which inter-organisational collaboration evolves (Figure 2.9). The model contains three stages which are identifying problem setting, direction setting and implementation, with steps in each stage explained in detail. Jamal and Getz (1995), based on this collaboration process model, further developed the steps and conditions in order to fit into a tourism planning domain (Table 2.7). In the stage of identifying problem setting, key stakeholders and issues are defined. It is important to designate a convener in this stage so as to assemble the relevant stakeholders into this collaborative arrangement. This is also called the pre-negotiation stage (Gray, 1989) where the previously mentioned pre-conditions for collaboration (see Section 2.12.2), such as the awareness of independence to increase commitment, the availability of resources for collaboration to proceed and the balance of power between the stakeholders, are present. The major intentions for the second stage of direction setting are to identify a future collaborative interpretation and a sense of a common purpose. This requires the coincidence of values and dispersion of power between the stakeholders. Rules and agenda should be established for setting an expected collaboration outcomes of mutual interests and alternatives should be listed and discussed. The final stage would be implementation in which the shared vision is institutionalised. This is to arrive at a plan or strategy through consensus building. Structure for the institutionalising process is established and goals and tasks are explicitly assigned. Lastly, compliance to the collaboration decision is ensued by monitoring the whole process.

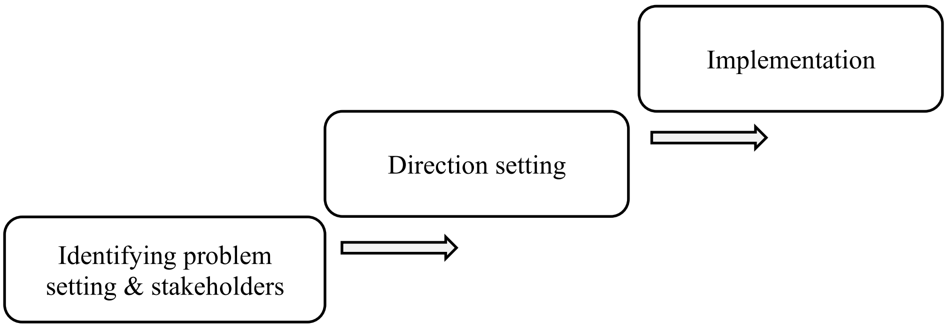

Figure 2.9 Process of collaboration
Source: Adopted from McCann (1983)

Subsequently, two extra stages were added by Selin and Chavez (1995) which are antecedent stage that relates to the initial circumstance and opportunities for collaboration; and final partnership outcome stage in which impacts of collaboration on the problem domain and its consequences for the relations between the stakeholders (i.e. improved mutual understanding and respect) are evaluated. This stage is not only used to analyse the success of the collaboration but also to provide suggestions on modifications for future collaborative plans.

Table 2.7 Facilitating conditions and steps in a tourism collaboration process

Stages	Facilitating Conditions	Actions/ Steps
Stage 1 Problem-setting	- Recognition of interdependence - Identification of a required number of stakeholders - Perceptions of legitimacy among stakeholders - Legitimate/ skilled convener - Positive beliefs about outcomes - Shared access power - Mandate (external or internal) - Adequate resources to convene and enable collaboration process	- Define purpose and domain - Identify convener - Convene stakeholders - Define problems/ issues to resolve - Identify and legitimise stakeholders - Build commitment to collaborate by raising awareness of interdependence - Balance power differences - Address stakeholder concerns - Ensure adequate resources available to allow collaboration to proceed with key stakeholders present

Stage 2 Direction-setting	- Coincidence of values - Dispersion of power among stakeholders	- Collect and share information - Appreciate shared values, enhance perceived interdependence - Ensure power distributed among several stakeholders - Establish rules and agenda for direction setting - Organise subgroups if required - List alternatives - Discuss various options - Select appropriate solutions - Arrive a shares vision or plan/strategy through consensus
Stage 3 Implementation	- High degree of ongoing interdependence - External mandates - Redistribution of power - Influencing the contextual environment	- Discuss means of implementing and monitoring solutions, shared vision, plan or strategy - Select suitable structure for institutionalising process - Assign goals and tasks - Monitor ongoing progress and ensure compliance to collaboration decisions

Source: Gray (1985, 1989) cited in Jamal and Getz (1995)

Generally, every stage of this collaboration process is affected by the issues of legitimacy and power (Gray, 1989). Furthermore, not every stage, in particular the implementation stage, is required depending on the nature of the collaboration (Jamal & Getz, 1995); and the phases are not necessarily separate and distinct with the possibilities of overlapping and recycling back to earlier issues which were not addressed (Bramwell & Lane, 2000). Despite this variation in the significance of phases for different kinds of collaboration, this model remains a fundamental set of issues which must be addressed in the course of any collaborative activities (Gray, 1989).

2.13 Conceptual Framework

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), a conceptual framework “explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied – the key factors, constructs or variables – and the presumed relationships among them” and it can be “rudimentary or elaborate, theory-driven or commonsensical, descriptive or causal” (p.18). Therefore, in order to address the research questions set in Chapter 1, several concepts are summoned to build a relevant conceptual framework (Figure 2.10).

Mutual ideas are therefore drawn from Crouch and Ritchie’s (1999) sustainability and competitiveness model, coupled with the literature review on the collaboration concept and stakeholder theory, to construct the following conceptual framework which is used to guide the research in studying tourism development, especially in the area of collaboration among the CASs and western China, along the Silk Road.

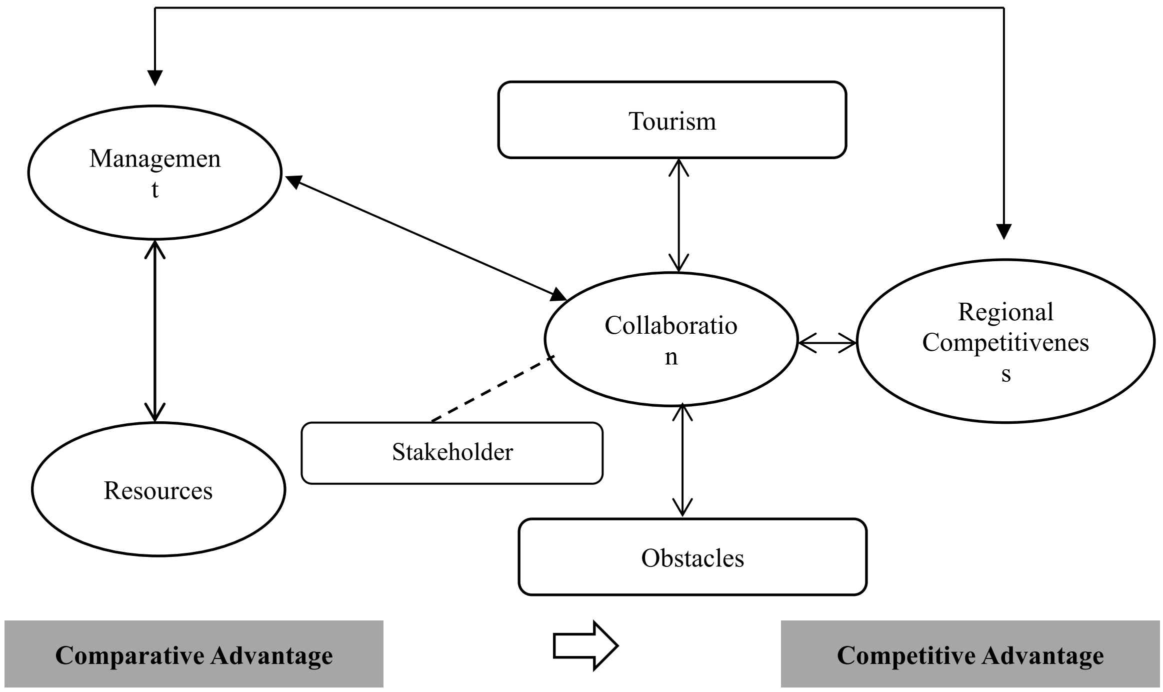

Figure 2.10 Outline of the conceptual framework
Source: Own illustration

As illustrated by the above outline (Figure 2.10), Crouch and Ritchie’s (1999) model, with minor modifications, is adopted in the conceptual framework. In agreement with Enright and Newton's (2004) approach, the candidate believes that there could be overlapping between the five categories of determinants in the model and they could be broadly re-categorised into two main factors. In the framework, core resources are combined with supporting factors and resources, together with location and dependencies in the category of qualifying determinant, to become *resources*, which are factor conditions as in Porter’s model (1996). Destination management, paired up with destination policy, planning and development, as well as safety, cost and brand awareness in the category of qualifying determinant, are grouped into *management*. Details on the two factors could be found in Figure 2.11. As in Crouch and Ritchie’s model, resources, together with its proper management would probably lead to destination competitiveness. Furthermore, based on the detailed discussion on the collaboration concept and stakeholder involvement in the preceding sections, it is proposed that through collaboration, the resources and management advantages between the individual countries would be on a better equilibrium; hence it would lead to improved competitiveness of the whole region. In addition, tourism can be used as a tool to facilitate regional collaboration while the collaboration effort should minimise the obstacles for tourism development along the Silk Road. In the process of collaboration, stakeholder involvement is proved to be crucial. Overall, the individual countries' comparative advantages, through collaboration, would turn into competitive advantages of the whole region. Figure 2.11 exhibits the details to be examined under each key idea to form the overall and comprehensive conceptual framework for this study's analysis.

As advised by Miles and Huberman (1994), building a conceptual framework forces the researcher to be selective in deciding "which variables are most important" and "which relationships are likely to be more meaningful" (p.18). As a result, the conceptual framework helps the researcher to judge what kind of information should be collected and analysed at the outset. The constructs, namely resources, management, collaboration, stakeholder involvement and regional competitiveness, act like labels for the various "intellectual bins" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.18) for the research into which pieces of primary and secondary data could be put. Therefore, instead of a relationship or theoretical model to be empirically tested, this framework serves as an analytical guide for data collection and analysis in order to obtain an in-depth understanding on the issues of Silk Road collaboration among the CASs and Western China. Therefore, a qualitative approach, which is discussed in the next chapter, is deemed useful to operationalise this framework. The purpose of the study is thus to have a thorough knowledge of each of the components in the framework. Although with this approach the candidate would neither be able to display the level of relationship between the constructs nor indicate the magnitude of change in the regional competitiveness because of collaboration, she is still convinced with the usefulness of this framework in facilitating the examination of regional collaboration. It is because, the notion of collaboration and the reasons promoting and preventing it are in fact all about human behaviours which can never be easily explained using a statistical means. Rather, the candidate aims to tell a trustworthy story in great detail on the topic.

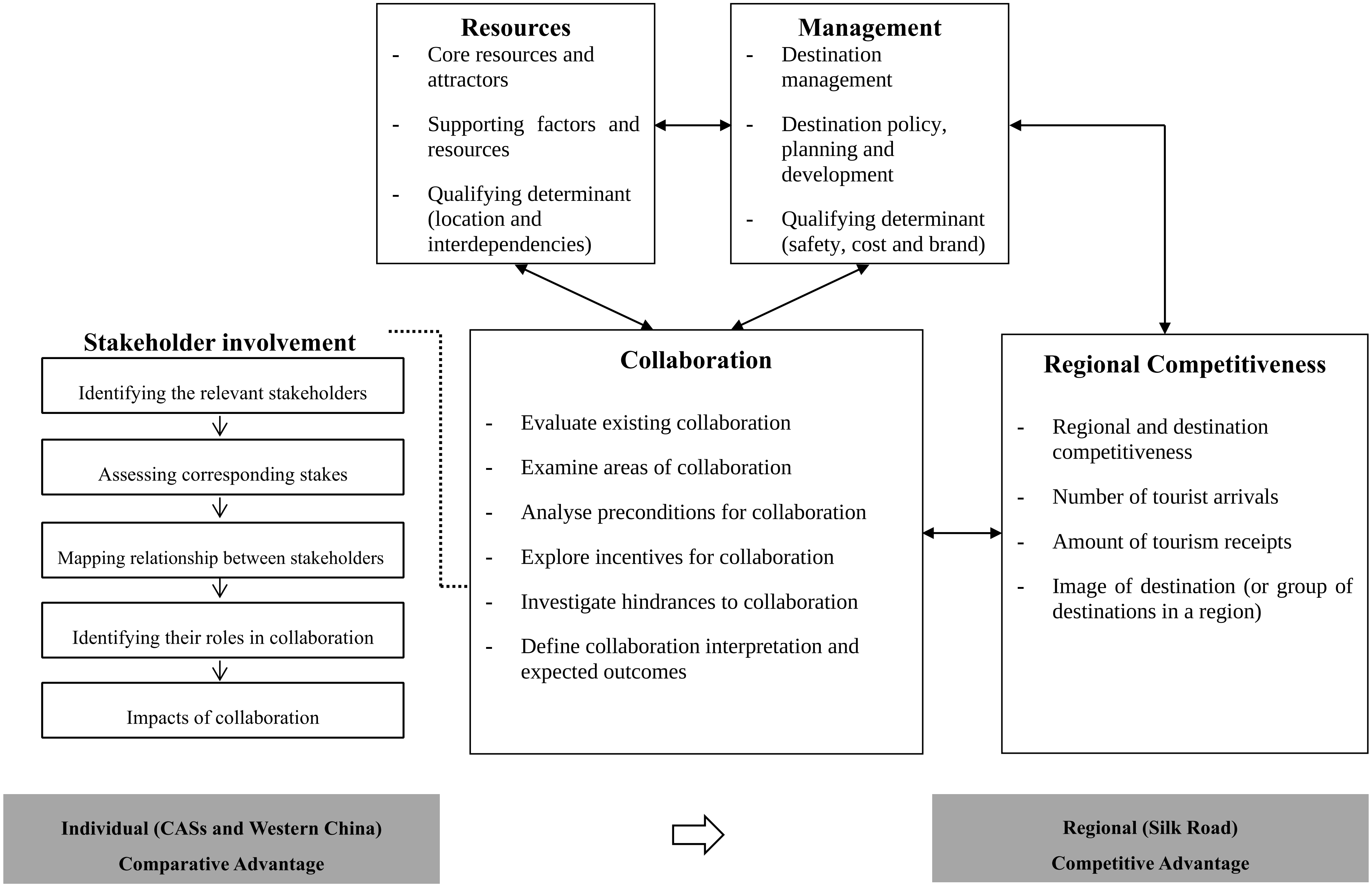

Figure 2.11 Conceptual Framework

2.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter reviewed the literature of areas which are deemed essential to the formulation of the study's research background and conceptual framework. These areas were tourism development, tourist destination management, tourism policy and administration, sustainability and competitiveness, stakeholder theory and collaboration.

The chapter began with a historical review of tourism development, particularly that of the Silk Road, in the CASs and China (Sections 2.1-2.4). The review was crucial as it provided knowledge of the past and understanding of the present of tourism development in these areas, on which further analysis could be made. This information could also lead to a more informed interpretation of the qualitative data collected subsequently which were often time and context bound. Sections 2.5-2.7 on tourist destination management, tourism policy and administration facilitated readers to understand the role of tourism policy and how the CASs and China administered tourism in their respective countries. More importantly, the literature informed both the researcher and the readers of the conceptual setting in which this research was conducted. Sustainability and competitiveness were first studied separately in Sections 2.8 and 2.9. Crouch and Ritchie's (1999) model was referenced to bring the two mutually supportive ideas together and they were elaborated in Section 2.10. Section 2.11 discussed explicitly the stakeholder theory, which was one of the key ideas in the research; and subsequently Section 2.12 acquainted the readers with the most important concept of the study which was collaboration. Definition, examples, preconditions, benefits, hindrances and process of collaboration were then elaborated.

Last but not least, a conceptual framework, both its outline and details, used in guiding this research was proposed and explained in Section 2.13. The framework was useful in systematically interpreting and analysing the data emerged in a later stage of the research.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the methodology of the research which is the analysis of the principles, approaches, methods and procedures used in forming knowledge so as to answer the research questions listed in Chapter 1. It contains four main components: theoretical paradigm, research design, data collection and data analysis. Before ending the chapter, the issues of trustworthiness, limitations of the study methods and research ethics are discussed.

3.1 Theoretical Paradigm: Naturalism

The paradigm within which a research study is situated refers to “a set of very general philosophical assumptions about the nature of the world (ontology) and how we understand it (epistemology)” (Maxwell, 2005, p. 36). Very often, paradigms also inform the researchers about the specific methodological strategies associated with these assumptions. In short, research paradigms are some basic guiding principles of what and how (in terms of conceptualisation and actual methods) to conduct a research study. There are generally two main, perhaps appear opposing, streams of research paradigms namely positivism and naturalism. While positivists study the world as a single but fragmentable reality which can be examined by a value-free objective way in a conditioned environment; naturalists believe that realities are multiple but holistic in which the knower and the known of realities are interactive and inseparable. Naturalistic inquires are bounded by the inherent value of both the inquirers and the objects (respondents rather than objects in social science studies) and the realities can only be best studied in their own natural setting (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Table 3.1 delineates the axioms of the naturalistic paradigm. Both positivist and naturalistic paradigms bear certain but different strengths and weaknesses. To decide on which paradigm to adopt, the candidate did not focus on how true the assumptions of the paradigms are; instead, she looked at the capability of the paradigm in offering the best fit to the phenomenon under examination.

Table 3.1 Axioms of naturalist paradigm

Axioms About	Naturalist Paradigm
Ontology (the nature of reality)	Realities are multiple, constructed and holistic
Epistemology (the relationship between inquirer and respondent/object)	Relationships are interactive and inseparable
The possibility of generalisation	Only time- and context- bound working hypotheses (idiographic statements) are possible, focusing on both differences and similarities of objects
The possibility of causal linkages	All entities are in a state of mutual simultaneous shaping, so that it is impossible to distinguish causes from effects
The role of values	Inquiry is value-bound

Source: Adapted for present study, based on Guba (1981); and Lincoln and Guba (1985)

As the study aimed at investigating the collaboration and the associated stakeholder involvement between the CASs and Western China for the sustainable development of Silk Road tourism which is a behavioural phenomenon that chiefly exists in the minds of the stakeholders, the study objects were basically humans. Therefore, the study objects were characterised by their nature of multiple realities. Besides, collaboration, as a human behaviour, is rarely context free. Therefore, results derived from the study of collaboration in this specific setting would be necessarily idiographic. The candidate did not aim to achieve generalisability of the findings but to appreciate both the similarities and differences between objects, which were important to the understanding of collaboration in general and Silk Road collaboration in particular. For these reasons, the naturalistic paradigm was chosen as the guiding principle for the research.

3.1.1 Research perspective: qualitative approach

As mentioned, naturalistic paradigm does not only provide the philosophical positioning to a research study but as well as some indications to its methodological strategies. Table 3.2 exhibits the characteristics of a naturalistic inquiry. As a naturalistic research study aims to unfold multiple realities, qualitative methods are often preferred (Guba, 1981). In contrast to quantitative research which mainly relates to numbers and implies precision; qualitative approaches deal with meanings, concepts, definitions, characteristics, symbols and descriptions in order to get a complete understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Berg, 2004; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). The decision on which perspective to be used greatly depends on the nature of the research discipline and the research questions.

Table 3.2 Characteristic of a naturalistic inquiry

Features	Characteristics of naturalistic inquiry
Design	Unfolding multiple realities, via interactions with the respondents
Methods	Qualitative
Quality criterion	Relevance
Source of theory	Theories emerged from the data
Knowledge types used	Both propositional knowledge and tacit knowledge
Instruments	Inquirers as the instruments
Setting	Nature, inviting whatever interference the real world provides

Source: Adapted for present study, based on Guba (1981)

Outlined by Leedy and Ormrod (2005), qualitative research serves four purposes which are (1) description to reveal nature of certain situations, process, people and etcetera, whose relatively little has been known; (2) interpretation to gain new insight, develop concepts and discover problems of the phenomenon; (3) verification to test the validity of certain assumptions in real-world contexts; and finally (4) evaluation to judge the effectiveness of particular policies, practices or innovation.

As discussed in both Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, the idea of studying the obstacles for an effective collaboration between the CASs and China to develop a sustainable Silk Road tourism in the region that can be described as “The Heart of the Silk Road” (T. Bauer, Personal Communication, July 19, 2010) is fairly novel. No similar research has been done on this topic; hence, the actual research scope is undefined. In addition, the studying of stakeholders’ perception in general, on a multi-dimensional behaviour of collaboration in particular, could not be effectively analysed by quantitative means since there would not be sufficient qualified samples to generate meaningful results. Besides, the study wanted to examine how the stakeholders collaborate and what are the barriers for effective collaboration, both of which are less likely to be defined and quantified via statistical measurement. Unlike the model-constructing research, this study did not intend to generalise collaboration as a theory, but to dig deep in the phenomenon of collaboration happening on the Silk Road. Therefore, the qualitative perspective was justifiably adopted to learn and gain insight on the topic, to verify the collaboration concept in a real setting and to evaluate the effectiveness of the existing collaboration policies and initiatives.

3.2 Research Design

There are several types of qualitative research traditions such as ethnography, case study, phenomenological study and grounded theory study. All these studies can be broadly categorised into three major types of research design: exploratory, descriptive and explanatory, depending on the research questions that are to be answered. For this research, a descriptive and explanatory case study approach was employed. In this sub-section, the case study approach and the justifications of using such methods are first discussed, followed by the display of the overall research process. Two major strategies executed in this case study, namely elite interviews and key informant strategy, are introduced towards the end of this sub-section.

3.2.1 Case study approach: justification

A case study approach, as defined by Stake (1995) as “the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances” (p.11), was employed for the investigation. Applying the justification developed by Leedy and Ormrod, (2005), a case study is suitable for learning more about a little known situation and is useful for investigating how a phenomenon (i.e. collaboration) changes over time, perhaps as a consequence of certain circumstances and interventions (i.e. different level of stakeholder involvement). Therefore here, the case being studied is the region of CASs and Western China of the Silk Road and the major activity to be examined is the collaboration between the stakeholders within the region so as to foster a sustainable tourism development on the Silk Road.

Most of the researchers who make use of a case study approach would devote a section of their method discussion on the selection of the case, for instance, how salient is the case to demonstrate or explain a phenomenon or a problem under investigation (Scholz

& Tietje, 2002). However, according to Stake (1998), a case can be pre-selected depending on the nature of the interest, either intrinsic or instrumental, of the researchers in the case. In an intrinsic case study, the researchers undertake the inquiry because they want to obtain better understanding of that case, despite of its particularity and ordinariness, rather than to illustrate a particular trait or problem. The candidate, together with her supervisors, has been fascinated by the Central Asian section of the Silk Road and its tourism offers but at the same time felt frustrated about the underdevelopment of its tourism and the uncollaborative atmosphere experienced in this region. That was the reason why the candidate has had an intrinsic interest in the case and initiated a research study on this topic.

In terms of research design, this study was descriptive and explanatory. Although very limited research has been conducted on Silk Road tourism, this study could still not be regarded as exploratory because the candidate did not intend to advocate new model of knowledge on the concepts of collaboration and stakeholder theory; but to have a detailed discussion on tourism collaboration in this section of the Silk Road. Its explanatory nature can be explained by the main research question which was to investigate why effective collaboration does not persist for the tourism development in this region and its descriptive nature corresponds to the sub-questions being asked under this broad theme (i.e. who are the stakeholders and what are their roles?). It is because according to Yin (2003), descriptive case study aims to illustrate the "what", "who" and "where" components of a phenomenon while explanatory case study answers the "why" and "how" questions embedded in the phenomenon under examination.

This research design has the advantages include the collection of in-depth data and the evidence being grounded in the setting studied. The argument of some scholars that the findings from this design fail to generalise to other cases is noted and considered (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Maxwell, 2005; Stake, 1995). Nevertheless, the focus of this study is not on the transferability of the collaboration-competitiveness concept, which has already been extensively researched in other contexts.

3.2.2 The research process

Case study is not merely a data collection tactic or a design feature alone, but a strategic research approach that encompasses “the logic of design, data collection techniques, and specific approaches to data analysis” (Yin, 2003, p.14). Although the quality of a naturalistic inquiry is mainly based on its relevance (refer to Table 3.2), the rigor of the research is still important. To achieve rigor of the methods for a qualitative study, it is important to have a well-documented research process. Moreover, unlike quantitative research whose instruments are impersonal, instrument for a naturalistic inquiry is essentially the inquirer. As a result, the research process started once the candidate began to work on this research topic until the project finished. The whole research process, which lasted from October 2009 to December 2011, is summarised in Table 3.3.

Both secondary and primary data were used in this case study. First, by reviewing the literature on different concepts, a conceptual framework had been established (Figure 2.11 in Section 2.12). Secondary data, such as related documentation and publications, were collected under each of the identified concepts (i.e. resources, management, and regional competitiveness). The framework was also used to guide the in-depth interviews conducted using an elite interview strategy (which will be discussed in the following section). Finally, both the secondary and primary data were analysed and interpreted simultaneously to generate holistic findings.

Table 3.3 Overview of the research process

Research period	Phase of the research process
Oct 09 – Jun 10	- Identified research problem - Formulated research objectives - Got familiar with the background of Silk Road tourism collaboration - Conducted the first phase of the secondary data collection (literature review) - Developed the conceptual framework - Got introduced into the Silk Road community (connection with UNWTO and the Silk Road Global Alliance, SRGA)
- 6 Mar 10	- SRGA workshop
- 18-20 May 10	- The 5th Silk Road Mayors' Forum • Supervisor's presentation (the research project got introduced to meeting participants) • Distribution of preliminary questionnaire (despite poor response rate, it was used as an introduction to the Silk Road community)
Jul 10 – Sep 10	- Finalised the interview schedule - Sent out invitation for interview to identified informants - Started the second phase of secondary data collection
Oct 10 – Oct 11	- Started primary data collection (elite interviews, either face-to-face or via telephone/Skype) and analysis - Email communication between various Silk Road stakeholders and the candidate - Continued with secondary data collection and analysis
- 8-9 Oct 10	- The 5th UNWTO International Meeting on the Silk Road, Samarkand, Uzbekistan • Getting involved in the larger Silk Road community • Establishing working contacts • Participation and observation • Collecting data from meeting presentations and deliberations • Unofficial collection of data: conversing with meeting participants
- 24 Jan 11	- SRGA meeting in Hong Kong
- 8 - 11 Mar 11	- ITB Berlin • Visit to the Central Asian pavilions Established contacts; collected promotional materials on Silk Road tours and on the Central Asian destinations; Unofficial collection of data: conversing with representatives of the tourism ministries and tour operators • UNWTO B2B Silk Road Tour Operator Event Unofficial collection of data: conversing with participants; established contacts and arrangement for telephone interviews On-site off-record interview with representative from tourism ministry of the Republic of Tajikistan • UNWTO Silk Road Ministers' Summit Second hand data gathered from summit participants
Oct 11– Oct 12	Data analysis and triangulation, report writing and refinement

3.2.3 Elite interviews

One of the principles of data collection for a case study is the use of multiple sources of evidence, both secondary and primary ones (Yin, 2003). The primary data for this study were obtained through elite interview, a method frequently used in political research. Interview, which is simply defined by Berg (2004) as “a conversation with a purpose” (p.75) to gather information, has long been considered as one of the most important sources of information for a case study (Yin, 2003). Interviews for this kind of research design are usually in-depth with an open-ended feature in which respondents are asked to provide some facts or personal opinion about the event and their insights into certain specific circumstances being examined. Nevertheless, recent literature argued that in addition to being an information gathering device, interviews should also be reflexive. There are three types of interview arrangement from structured, semi-structured to unstructured. This research utilised the second type of semi-structured interviews that consist of a number of predetermined questions and specific topics being asked in a systematic and consistent order. However, the interviews as well allowed freedom for the respondents to express ideas beyond the answers to the preset questions.

Elites are people who exercise high influence on the outcomes of the events in the research area, Silk Road collaboration in our case (Pierce, 2008). They may be, for the current study, tourism ministers, members of international institutions or lobby organisations, business representatives and etcetera. One should bear in mind that some less apparent elites exist, potentially influencing outcomes without being directly involved in the event (Pierce, 2008). The reasons for conducting elite interviews for a case study are summarised in Table 3.4.

Pierce (2008) stressed that elite interviews can be somewhat difficult. First of all, access to the most appropriate elites and the gathering of useful information from the encounter is not guaranteed. The researchers may be overawed and inhibited by the power and prestige associated with the status of the elites. Besides, the whole process of the interview, from previous arrangement to actually realisation, is confined by institutions including specific traditions, customs and rules. That was especially valid for the current research in which government officials from "post-Communist" countries and representatives of international lobby organisations were interviewed.

Table 3.4 Reasons for conducting elite interviews

- To confirm (understanding of) documentary material
- To fill gaps or clarify grey areas
- To check "Have I got the story right?"
- To try to understand the informants' perceptions, beliefs, mindsets
- To obtain "quotable quotes"
- To help identify other actors (stakeholders) involved
- To identify networks
- To facilitate/ open the way to interviews with others
- To triangulate with accounts from other interviews/ results of analysis of secondary data

Source: Adapted for present study, based on Pierce (2008, pp. 119-120)

3.2.4 Key informant strategy

There are persons, although who may not be elites, possess extensive knowledge about the specific matter being studied probably because of their professionalism, organisational positions and responsibility, experience and or even personal interest in it (Warheit, Buhl, & Bell, 1978). More importantly, these respondents can also serve as a starting point for snowball sampling and a guide to other critical sources of evidence related to the case. The more a respondent plays such roles, the more that such respondent is considered as a "key informant" (Yin, 2003, p.90). The informants are chosen not because that they can represent the members of the organisations or events being studied in any statistical sense but more because of their expertise about the issues and their willingness to communicate about it to the researchers (Kumar, Stern, & Anderson, 1993). Involvement of key informants in a study often lasts for a much longer period. They advise on the existence of corroboratory or contrary evidence and possibly provide the access to the sources of this information. Although key informants were critical to the success of the current case study, the candidate was mindful not to be too dependent on the informants and acknowledge the possibility of interpersonal influence which would affect the creditability of the findings. One of the solutions to this pitfall was the use of triangulation with other sources of evidence (refer to Section 3.3).

3.3 Data Collection

As repeatedly emphasised before, case study design requires researchers to collect extensive data on the situation in which the investigation is focused. One of the main rationales for using such a way of collecting data is to create the “converging lines of inquiry” (Yin, 2003, p.98), which is a process of triangulation. This basically means that the researchers collect various sources of data to corroborate the same fact or phenomenon. Triangulation helps to reduce the possibility of systemic biases, a possible result created from a single method or source (Maxwell, 2005), and enhance the creditability and dependability of the research. For instance, while interviewing is a capable and legitimate way to understand an informant’s perspective, observation or even analysis on secondary data allow the researchers to draw inferences about this perspective which would not be obtainable by depending on only interview data. This is particularly important for acquiring tacit knowledge about the phenomenon or aspects of the perception that the informant is reluctant to share. The most commonly used sources of evidence for case studies include but not limited to documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation and physical artifacts (Yin, 2003). Although photographs and videotapes are some of the less popular sources, they are no less important than the others. In fact, all the sources are highly complementary, building a holistic picture for the case. Maxwell (2005) suggested that the decision of which type of data to use merely depends on the research questions one needs to answer. Therefore, the data in this study were collected with the aim to investigate the five identified areas in the conceptual framework presented earlier: resources, management, stakeholder involvement, collaboration and regional competitiveness, as discussed in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5 Data planning matrix

What do I need to know?	Why do I need to know this?	What kind of data will answer the questions?	Where/ from whom can I find/access the data?
Resources of the countries	Evaluate resource endowment	Mainly documentation, coupled by interviews & observation	Tour operators via the occasion of international tourism fairs and personal communications
Management of the countries	Evaluate resource deployment	Mainly documentation, coupled by interviews & observation	The tourism authorities, consultants, academics of each country and from the Internet
Collaboration	Evaluate existing & potential collaboration	Mainly interviews, coupled with documentation and observation	Key tourism stakeholders of the Silk Road and information gathered via connection & from the Internet
Stakeholder involvement	Evaluate current stakeholder involvement	Mainly interviews, coupled with documentation and observation	Key tourism stakeholders of the Silk Road and information gathered via connection & from the Internet
Regional competitiveness	Evaluate how stakeholder perceive regional competitiveness and how collaboration impacts on regional competitiveness	Mainly interviews, coupled with documentation	Key tourism stakeholders of the Silk Road and information gathered via connection & from the Internet

Source: Developed for present study, based on a template suggested by Maxwell (2005, pp.100-101)

3.3.1 Secondary data

Secondary data refers to data which are collected by a person, agency or organisation other than the researchers and not for the purposes of the current research (Scandura & Williams, 2000). The collection of secondary data in this research consisted of two phases. Phase one was the background literature review to introduce the research topic and scope as well as to construct the conceptual framework to guide the study. The second phase commenced after the conceptual framework was finalised and took place concurrently with the primary data collection.

Secondary data, especially documentation, are valuable to a case study because they corroborate and augment evident from the other sources, verify details given by the respondents in interviews and provide traces for the researchers to make inferences which deserve further investigation (Yin, 2003). Despite so, the candidate also acknowledged the fact that information contained in some of the documents could be inaccurate or biased, probably because they were written originally to satisfy some other specific purposes. This particular fact usually constitutes the critics of the case study approach for its heavy reliance on documentation. Therefore, the candidate was cautious when using and interpreting these data.

Table 3.6 gives an overview of what kind of secondary data were used and through which means were they collected. More specifically, the analysis of the endowment and deployment of tourism resources of the five CASs and Western China was mainly based on secondary data such as travel brochures, collected at ITB Berlin and via the candidate's connection with the tour operators in Central Asia and China, scholarly studies, newspaper or magazine clippings and other resources found in the Internet. The findings from this analysis were cross-verified with the primary data collected via in-depth interviews with elites and key informants. The data collected were not reported in a pure descriptive manner; instead, synthesis, comparison and analysis had been made before the findings were presented in the next chapter.

Table 3.6 Overview of secondary data collected

Type	Data	Source
Commniques	Email communication among Silk Road stakeholders, between Silk Road stakeholders and the candidate or her supervisor	Key informants
Minutes and reports	Minutes of the SRGA meetings, reports on Silk Road related programmes and events	International organisation and lobby groups; key informants
Administrative documents	Progress report and internal records of Silk Road related programmes and activities	Key informants
Formal studies	Studies conducted on the international relation and collaboration between the CASs and China (not confined to tourism)	Library, the Internet
Media	Newspaper clippings, articles or videos appearing in the mass media related to the Silk Road, Central Asia and collaboration in that area, promotional materials presented by the service providers (i.e. travel brochures), online travel blogs and communities (i.e. Tripadvisor)	The Internet, international tourism fairs (ITB Berlin), tour operators

3.3.2 Primary data: involvement and observation

"Observational evidence is often useful in providing additional information about the topic being studied" (Yin, 2003, p.93). For this study, direct involvement in the Silk Road community as well as observation during the process played an even more important role as that did not only provide secondary information to the researcher but also connection with the key stakeholders related to Silk Road tourism collaboration. The candidate, with the help from her supervisor, was introduced to the Silk Road community at a very early stage of the study. Referring to Table 3.3, the candidate participated in various Silk Road related events including a workshop and a meeting organised by the Silk Road Global Alliance in Hong Kong, the 5th UNWTO International Meeting on the Silk Road held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, the UNWTO B2B Silk Road Tour Operator Event took place in ITB Berlin. By participating in these events, the candidate observed how the stakeholders work together and their attitude towards collaboration in the region. Besides, insiders' information which could not have been available otherwise was gathered through conversing with the event participants including representatives from the tourism ministries, land tour operators in the CASs and event organisers from the international organisations. It was unfortunate that the candidate could not manage to conduct face-to-face interviews with the elites or key informants onsite due to their busy schedules and the limited time at the meetings. However, connection was established for follow-up telephone or Skype interviews. In addition, the candidate recorded some of the meetings with permission and made field notes on the important deliberations. Documentation emerged from the events, such as presentation materials and speeches by important stakeholders, list of participants of the events, video clips and etcetera, were collected. Other than direct participation in the event, a questionnaire (Appendix 7) was developed and was distributed in the last Silk Road Mayors' Forum held in Shiraz, Iran in May, 2010 via the candidate's supervisor. Although the response rate was extremely disappointing, the collected information still provided hints on the collaboration attitudes of one of the CASs.

3.3.3 Primary data: in-depth interviews

The core primary data were collected via focused in-depth interviews during the period between the end of December 2010 and the beginning of November 2011 with identified elites and key informants. Each of the interview session lasted for half to slightly more than an hour and of which one of the key informants was interviewed twice. Considering the difficulties for the candidate to reach some of the overseas informants in person, telephone interviews were also accepted as a means of data collection. Otherwise, for informants who are located in Hong Kong, face-to-face interviews were conducted. Although telephone interviews are not a majorly-used technique in collecting qualitative data as it lacks face-to-face interaction, yet researchers found it in some circumstances not only an effective way for data collection but also the only viable option owing to some geographic constraints (Berg, 2004). This is especially applicable if the sample population is located in geographically diverse locations. In addition, researchers found telephone interviews productive in cases like this in which the researcher is known to the respondents and the respondents are familiar with the interview topic (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Steps involved in both face-to-face and telephone interviews are (1) establishing legitimacy, (2) convincing the potential subjects the importance for them to participate in the research and finally (3) ensuring that information is sufficiently detailed to contribute to a meaningful interpretation to the study. Based on the research objectives, the specific research questions and the theoretical framework, an interview schedule (detailed in Section 3.3.3.1) was developed and it was sent to the informants before the interviews took place to ensure that the informants would be familiar with the research questions. Consensus was sought from the informants to audio record the interviews which would facilitate the researcher to revisit the interview content multiple times. More discussion on the interview process can be found in the subsequent sections.

3.3.3.1 *Interview schedule*

As mentioned, focused interview was used in which an informant was being interviewed for a rather short period of time like around an hour. Although the interviews were still conducted in an open-ended and conversational manner, the candidate followed a set of predetermined questions derived from the conceptual framework. Therefore, an interview schedule was developed and was conveyed to the informant before the interview. This procedure enabled the candidate to identify the discussion topics and issues in advance and to sequence the questions during the course of the interviews. Thus, data could be collected in a systematic manner and could be compared consistently across interviews.

The interview schedule consisted of four sections namely involvement background, stakeholder involvement, collaboration and, destination and regional competitiveness. The outline of the interview schedule as well as the context of the probing questions is provided in Table 3.7. The interview schedule was first developed in English (see Appendix 8). However, considering the fact that English is not a language commonly used and understood in the CASs and China, the interview schedule was then translated into a Russian version and a Chinese version accordingly (see Appendices 9 and 10). The candidate first translated the interview schedule into Chinese and had it checked by two native Chinese speakers both of which are researchers focusing on China tourism. The Russian version was translated from English by a native Russian speaker who has English as her second language and who used to work for the UNWTO. The translated questions were then cross-checked by an additional native Russian speaker. To ensure that both versions reflected accurately the meaning of the questions as those in the English one, the translators were briefed about the background and the objectives of the research study. It is important to note that although the interviews were based on this set of predetermined questions, the informants were encouraged to express their ideas beyond the answers to the questions asked.

Table 3.7 Interview schedule

	Interview section	Main questions/ Conversational topic	Probing questions
1.	Introduction	- Background information of the study - Clarification of anonymity & confidentiality - Getting consensus for audio-recording the interview - Involvement background related to Silk Road activities	- Probing based on involvement background
2.	Tourism involvement	- How would you evaluate the progress of tourism development along the Silk Road and in the individual Silk Road countries? - Do you perceive yourself as a stakeholder of Silk Road tourism?	- Put the focus on the country in which the respondent resides or represent - Reasons behind whether the respondent perceives him/herself as a stakeholder
3.	Stakeholder involvement	- Who do you think are the relevant stakeholders for (tourism) collaboration along the Silk Road? - Are there any interrelationships between the stakeholders whom you identified? - What are the roles of the identified stakeholders in (tourism) collaboration along the Silk Road and between the Silk Road countries? - How would the outcomes from (tourism) collaboration along the Silk Road and/or between the Silk Road countries impact the identified stakeholders?	- What are their corresponding stakes and current involvement? - And what is the nature of these relationships? - Is the overall impact good or bad?
4.	Collaboration	- Could you comment on the existing collaboration along the Silk Road and between the Central Asian States and China? - Specifically in the tourism context, in which area(s) does the collaboration take place? - As a stakeholder, do you perceive benefits to collaborate? - What are the obstacles for the (tourism) collaboration along the Silk Road and between the Central Asian States and China? - How would you define successful (tourism) collaboration?	- Who are collaborating at the moment? - Is it at an initial stage or mature stage? - What are the benefits to collaborate? - What are the hidden reasons behind these visible obstacles? - What are your expected outcomes from (tourism) collaboration along the Silk Road and between the Central Asian States and China?
5.	Destination & regional competitiveness	- Could regional collaboration between the Central Asia States and western China enhance the competitiveness of the region and that of the Silk Road? - Could regional collaboration turn the comparative advantage of the individual countries (Central Asian States and China) into the competitive advantage of the region?	- If yes, which aspect and how? - If no, why not?

3.3.3.2 *Research participants: key informants and elites*

Originally, the candidate proposed to interview a total of 26 informants covering sectors that include government, tourism administration, international organisations and lobby groups, business sector as well as academia. However, she later reduced the number of respondents in consideration of the difficulties associated with recruiting elites for interview, especially in this region of the world. According to Patton (2002), “there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry” (p.224); therefore, the sample size for this research was not determined by a targeted number of informants before data collection but by the depth and richness of the data they provided in the process.

As discussed in Section 2.11.1, the examination of stakeholders of a problem domain usually involves asking the stakeholders being affected by that domain to identify the other relevant stakeholders. Therefore, purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used to locate the most appropriate elites and informants who were willing to participate in the research. Again as discussed before, the respondents were classified into key informants or elites based on their roles in the research. The key informants had had a prolonged engagement in the study, advising the candidate on topics including the general ideas and scope of the issues, their experience involved in the domain and their insights, and more importantly the access to the other sources of evidence and informants.

There were four key informants in the research which are shown in Table 3.8. Mr. George Kuang (K2) and Dr. Wojciech Huebner (K1) were the Chief Technical Advisors of the UNDP Beijing for the first and second phase of the Silk Road Initiative (SRI, formerly known as the Silk Road Area Development Programme) respectively. Both informants provided the candidate with very valuable insiders’ knowledge of the existing collaboration between the CASs and China, with regard to the international agency perspective. Mr. Peter Wong, according to his personal biography, is an “activist at intersection of political life and cultural development in China” who has established a very successful chain of cultural Silk Road hotels in Western China where he has had almost 20 years of investment experience. Mr. Magnus Bartlett is a publisher based in Hong Kong, who has published over 7000 pages of travel literature on Central Asia and the Silk Road. He also actively participates in the Silk Road related activities within the international community. Whilst the viewpoints of Mr. Kuang and Dr. Huebner were more general, relating to the overall regional collaboration in the areas of trade, investment and tourism between the CASs and China, Mr. Wong and Mr. Bartlett's opinions were more focused on tourism development.

Table 3.8 List of key informants

Ref.	Name of informant	Designation	Organisation	Remarks/ background	Means
K1	Dr. Wojciech Huebner	Secretary General	World Citizen Organization	Chief Technical Advisor, Silk Road Initiative (former Silk Road Area Development Programme) - Phase II, UNDP Beijing	Skype interview in English
K2	Mr. George S. C. Kuang	CEO	China Development Fund Management Company	Chief Technical Advisor, Silk Road Area Development Programme - Phase I, UNDP Beijing	Skype interview in English; SRGA Workshop
K3	Mr. Peter Wong	Chairman	Culture Resources Development Co. Ltd (Silk Road Hotels Chain)	Governor, Silk Road Global Alliance; almost 20 years of experience in Western China investment	Face-to-face interviews in English supplemented by Cantonese
K4	Mr. Magnus Bartlett	Publisher	Odyssey Books & Guides	Governor of the Silk Road Global Alliance; Published more than 7000 pages of travel literature on Central Asia and the Silk Road; actively involved in Silk Road related activities in the international community	Face-to-face interviews in English; SRGA Workshop

In-depth interviews were conducted with the key informants either face-to-face or via Skype (refer to Table 3.8). The candidate met Mr. Kuang personally on the occasion of the Silk Road Global Alliance workshop held in March 2010 in Hong Kong and the workshop content was audio-recorded. In addition to formal interviews, the candidate maintained regular communication with these informants of which a well-documented record has been kept.

Furthermore, both Dr. Huebner and Mr. Wong had long been supportive to the candidate's research on the Silk Road, having participated in the candidate's study for her undergraduate thesis conducted in 2009. Communications between the two informants and the candidate since 2009, including interview transcripts, emails and other written statements were retained as references for the current study.

Other than these key informants, another 11 elites were involved in the research. Six of them were interviewed either via telephone or Skype, but not face-to-face interview due to geographical constraints. They included senior representatives of the tourism ministries (T), international organisations and lobby groups (O), private businesses (P) and experts (E). The remaining five elites only agreed to contribute to the research by means of written responses. As the details of the table (Table 3.9) show, all of these elites are from organisations having high relevance to Silk Road collaboration between the CASs and China. The elites are coded based on the nature of their organisations so that easy references can be made in the next chapter where the findings are discussed.

As expected, approaching and getting the elites to participate in the research was challenging. First, gaining the access to the elites was not uncomplicated. They were either unresponsive or being minded by numerous “gatekeepers” (Pierce, 2008, p.119). Especially for the contact in the CASs, email address or telephone numbers listed on the list of participants of the various meetings or on the Internet webpage were not functioning. Although the candidate was fortunate enough to have opened up a dialogue with the elites, a couple of them declined the invitation and decided not to be involved in the research. These potential elites who rejected to be involved are listed in Table 3.10. Perhaps more frustrating was that some elites had withdrawn from the research in the middle of the process for various reasons. Some of them openly communicated their reasons of withdrawal, mostly because they did not see themselves as appropriate respondents for the research topic. The others just discontinued the communication with the researcher or just did not respond in time (i.e. before the candidate decided to end the data collection process). Table 3.11 displays the five elites who had withdrawn from the study. The candidate respected the importance of the respondents’ voluntary participation and did not persist to get an answer from these elites.

Table 3.9 List of elites

Group	Ref.	Organisation	Position	Remarks	Means
International organisation	O1	World Citizen Organization & Silk Road Global Alliance	Chairman	Actively involved in the Silk Road related activities in the international community	Telephone interview in English
	O2	Anonymous (international organisation)	Anonymous	Remains anonymous due to political sensitivity of his position	Telephone interview in English
National tourism administration	T1	The Committee of Youth Affairs, Sports and Tourism, **Tajikistan**	Vice-Chairman	Equivalent to Deputy Minister for Tourism of Tajikistan. Young and new, actively involved in Silk Road initiatives	Written response in English
	T2	Uzbektourism National Company, **Uzbekistan**	Head of International Relations and Investment Division	Equivalent to Deputy Minister for Tourism of Uzbekistan	Telephone interview in English
	T3	The Committee of Youth Affairs, Sports and Tourism, **Tajikistan**	Consultant on Tourism Development	From Deutsche Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, Germany. Having advisory role to the deputy tourism minister of Tajikistan	Telephone interview in English
	T4	Provincial Tourism Bureau of Shandong, **PRC**	Deputy Director	Used to work in the Department of Resource Planning and Development of CNTA	Written response in Chinese
Expert	E1	Dr. Harsh Varma	Expert	Used to be responsible for Silk Road programme in an international organisation. Participated in the research in his own personal capacity	Telephone interview in English
	E2	China Tourism Academy, **PRC**	International Tourism Development Institute	Involved in research projects for CNTA, including Silk Road tourism research	Written response in Chinese
	E3	SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organisation) Studies Centre	Director	Involved in research projects for the SCO, on topics like collaboration in the region	Written response in Chinese
	E4	al-Farabi Kazakh National University, **Kazakhstan**	Department of Recreational Geography and Tourism	Involved in research projects for the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Kazakhstan	Written response in Russian
Private sector	P1	The Celestial Mountains Tour Company, owner of two Silk Road hotels, **Kyrgyzstan**	Director	14 years of experience in operating tourism business and dealing with the government in Kyrgyzstan	Skype interview in English

Table 3.10 Potential elites who declined the interview invitation

Group	Organisation	Remarks/ Reasons
International organisation	World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)	Manager of the Silk Road Programme declined the invitation and suggested the candidate to rely on secondary information published by UNWTO.
Tourism administration	Committee for Tourism Industry, Ministry of Tourism and Sports Kazakhstan	Chairperson of the Committee (equivalent to the Minister) declined the invitation and advised the candidate via the UNWTO correspondent that the Ministry would not participate in the research.
Expert	Anonymous	Expert in regional disarmament in Central Asia and a long-time champion of the Silk Road movement. The expert declined the invitation due to unavailability.

Table 3.11 Elites who had withdrawn from the study

Group	Position and Organisation	Remarks	Reasons given
Tourism administration	Executive Director, Hotel and Restaurant Businesses Association/ Deputy Chairman of State Tourism Agency, **Kyrgyzstan**	Equivalent to Deputy Minister for Tourism in Kyrgyzstan	Not given
International Organisation	CIS Specialist, UNESCO **Uzbekistan**	Attended the 5th UNWTO International Meeting on the Silk Road	Position not focused on tourism
Expert	Prof. Peide Shen	Conducted numerous research on the tourism development in western China including that concerning the Eurasian Bridge and the Silk Road	Research focus only on China, not appropriate to comment on the other countries
	Head, Centre of Analysis and Prognosis of Democratic Party	Kazak partner for the Kazakhstan Development Project, participated in the last Silk Road Mayors' Forum held in Shiraz	Not given
Private sector	President, Chamber of Tourism, All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce	An non-governmental chamber consists of industrialists which assists the government to manage China's tourism economy and acts as a bridge between the public and private sectors	Not given

3.3.3.3 *The interview process*

A general interview process can be divided into three main stages: pre-interview, during interview and post-interview. Effective elite interviewing is a result of careful planning, preparation and confidence.

At the pre-interview stage, although it was important to have the research ideas crystallised and interview questions formulated, the trickiest part should be the targeting and approaching the appropriate elites for the interview. The background and objectives of the research must be clearly communicated to the potential informants and the importance of their participation in the study should be emphasised. Pierce (2008) has given some useful tips on conducting elite interviews. First, it is essential to “aim high rather than low by approaching the A-list elites rather than lesser elites” (p.121). Second, research should be done on the potential informants for their basic information and involvement background in the event being researched. Last but not least, there is a need to prepare a formal invitation and follow up with the elite’s office after it was sent. An invitation, together with an interview information note, was prepared for the elite interviewing of this research and is included in Appendix 11 and 12 respectively. Issues like voluntary participation, confidentiality of personal data and the benefits of taking part in the interview were covered in the information note.

To get the most out of an interview, the stage of “during interview” should also be well thought-out. Before the interview started, the informants were thanked and were introduced to the brief background of the research project as well as the objectives for the interview. The issues of anonymity and confidentiality were clarified with the informants. The informants were asked if they preferred to remain anonymous or have their identity (or traces of identity) disclosed and used as a member of the elites for the research. Except O2, all the other elites did not mind to be quoted and having their comments attributed to them. To maintain confidentiality is to respect the informant’s request for “whatever is said remains secret between the interviewer and subject” (Pierce, 2008, p.120). No recording or note was kept if the informant requested the interview to be off-the-record in which information provided by the informant was just for the researcher’s reference and better understanding of the context of the issue being investigated. In some cases, the informant (i.e. E1) preferred to take part in the interview in his own personal capacity which meant that comments were only attributable to him as an expert, instead to the organisation that he works for. Consensuses were obtained from the informants before the face-to-face, telephone or Skype interviews were audio-recorded using a digital voice recorder.

During the course of the interview, the candidate followed Mayo's (Mayo, 1949, p. 64, cited in Pierce 2008) and Pierce's (2008) advice on having an effective interview process whose details are listed in the following table (Table 3.12).

Table 3.12 Mayo and Pierce's advice for an effective interview process

Advice	How was it adapted in the present research?
Make evident that whole attention is given to the informant	The interviews were conducted in a quiet and distraction-free environment (except for the case of K4). The interviewer was constantly giving signals that she was listening to the informants, especially for telephone interviews whose connection quality might not be as stable.
Engage in active listening rather talking	The interviewer's questions were short while the informants' answers were long. Information and comments were constantly synthesised and summarised throughout the process of the interview. Responses were given when appropriate.
Never argue; never give advice	Despite the interviewer should be critical and avoid over-ingratiate herself with the informants' comments, she did not argue but clarify when divergence between the informant's comments and other source of evidence occurred. Notes were taken so that further investigation could be made after the interview.
Listen to what the informant wants to say, does not want to say or cannot say without help	The interviewer was very careful listening to the tempo of the informants. When there was abrupt silence, the interviewer tried to understand what the barriers were, especially for the interviews conducted with informants whose first language is not English.
Plot out tentatively the pattern of the comments. Summarise what has been said from time to time and present it to the informant for comment.	In order to ensure that the interviewer had captured the true meaning of the informants' ideas, summarised ideas were reported back to the informants between sections. Although it was done with caution that only clarification was made instead of addition or distortion of information
Develop and maintain rapport	The interview was flexible instead of being confined to the preset questions. Probing questions were asked when a definite binary (yes/no) answer was received.
Respect silence but help the subject cross barriers	When the informants appeared reluctant to answering certain questions, encourage prompts such as "go on…", "can you tell me more?", "I am curious." were used.
Do not retort or be over-eager to ingratiate oneself with the informant	The interviewer tried her best to maintain neutral criticality in the interview process.
Maintain eye contact for a face-to-face interview	Seating was arranged in a way that the informant and the interviewer could maintain eye contact in a comfortable way.
Retain control of the interview	The conversation was pulled back on track if it was distracted from the main aim of the discussion. The informants were also asked if there was anything being missed out before the interviews ended.

Source: Adapted for present study, based on Pierce (2008, pp. 124-125)

With reference to the interview schedule laid out in Table 3.7. The first section of the interview serves as an ice-breaking exercise allowing the informants to share their experience regarding Silk Road collaboration during which some subtle nuances about the informants' attitudes and feelings about the issue can also be uncovered. More often than not, it was observed in the interview process that informants usually also covered the areas of collaboration when they shared their experience, which was very important to answering the main research question. If the informants were having a tourism background, the second question related to the perception of the overall tourism development in the region was also asked. Most importantly, the informants were asked if they perceived themselves as a stakeholder of the Silk Road. The next three sections of the interview followed the questions generated from the conceptual framework covering areas like the identification of the relevant stakeholder, their roles and their relationship in the collaboration process, the evaluation of existing collaboration and future potentials, and finally their perception of the destination and region competitiveness and how can it be influenced by regional collaboration. Probing questions were used to gain more details and achieve completer explanations for the primary questions.

The major tasks involved in the post-interview stage were writing up the field notes, transcribing the recording verbatim for data analysis, summarising the answers to the research questions and triangulating them with the other evidence sources. Last but not least, "quotable quotes" (Pierce, 2008, p.127) were separated from the transcript. The candidate understood that the field notes and transcripts should be produced as soon as possible after the interview because accurate recall of the interview fades fairly fast. More details on the analysis of the data are provided in Section 3.4.

3.3.3.4 *Written responses*

Some of the elites only agreed to provide a written response when the candidate asked for an interview. One of the major reasons for this was the language barrier. The candidate was handicapped for this research in the sense that she could not speak or understand Russian, which is a lingua franca in the CASs. Therefore, a written response was obtained from that particular correspondent in Kazakhstan. The answers were then translated into English by the same translators who did the translation for the interview schedule. For the informants from China, although the candidate expressed that the interview could be conducted in Putonghua, they still preferred to respond in a written format. It was probably because the Chinese informants were cautious about what they gave as an opinion and by avoiding interview, which is simultaneous and rather unplanned, they could also prevent the chance of having some confidential, controversial or somewhat inappropriate comments slipped out unintentionally. The Chinese responses were first translated into English by the candidate and the accuracy of the translation was checked by two other native Chinese researchers.

It could be predicted that the answers given in a written responses were not as comprehensive as those obtained in an interview as there was no one who probed the informants for more in-depth information. Another observation was that the responses given by the Chinese informants were rather discreet, echoing the standpoint of the CNTA, in addition to the vague choice of words and expressions prevailing in the diplomatic language they used. The candidate fully acknowledged the weaknesses of such method but she still believed in the usefulness of the data whose 'depth' could be compensated by secondary information. The written responses at least represented the voices of these stakeholders and could somehow reflect the attitudes and general belief about collaboration in this region.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis of this research followed a general analytical strategy which was to rely on theoretical propositions that had led to the case study. Yin (2003) advised that choosing an overall analytical principle is important as it will facilitate treating the evidence more fairly, producing persuasive analytical conclusions, ruling out alternative interpretations, and using tools more effectively and efficiently.

The whole case study analysis was guided by a conceptual framework, a theoretical orientation, developed at a rather early stage of the research. Theoretical propositions like "how are the stakeholders involved in the collaboration process?" and "why does tourism collaboration not persist between the CASs and Western China?" were extremely useful in guiding the case study analysis by helping focus attention on certain data and ignore other data. They also enhance the organisation and coherence of the entire case study and define alternative explanations to be examined.

Data analysis for a qualitative research should start once the project commences because the results generated from the first piece of data would probably be the best guide leading the way to find the second piece. Therefore, data collection and analysis were simultaneously conducted in this research so as to build a coherent interpretation of the data (Maxwell, 2005; Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). In the following sub-sections, analysis on both primary and secondary data is discussed.

3.4.1 Primary data

One would be too innocent to have thought that analysis should only be done after all the data were collected. To start with, there is nothing like “all data” for qualitative research. Very often, the research study has to be wrapped up probably because of the constraints associated with resources such as time and money rather than having achieved a true theoretical saturation that was suggested in the grounded theory approach. Therefore, the candidate was very reluctant to suggest the concept of theoretical saturation when the decision to cease the collection of data was made. Indeed, consistent patterns emerged between the data given by different informants and across different sources of evidence and it seemed that no additional entirely novel ideas would surface from more data collected. However, the candidate believed that if the study duration would be long enough and participation of the informants would be more open and active, perhaps somewhat less apparent but new concepts will be resulted. In view of the nature of the present study which did not aim to generalise findings but to gain a better informed understanding of Silk Road collaboration, the candidate admits that the data collected were not exhaustive but yet the quality of the research was not sacrificed.

Analysing primary data was a continuous process of which initial steps did not only include the reading and rereading of interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents to be analysed but also the process to prepare these materials. Listening to interview recordings before transcription, the actual process of transcribing the interviews, as well as the organisation and finalisation of field notes all contribute to the candidate's understanding of the case. Other more abstract analytical procedures include thinking about the interviews and observation notes, writing memos and developing tentative coding categories when reading the data.

3.4.1.1 *Open and axial coding*

Different from coding for a quantitative study, coding for a qualitative study does not focus on counting but fracturing and rearranging the data into categories that enable comparison between elements in the same category (Maxwell, 2005). There are in general two types of categories which are organisational categories and substantive/ theoretical categories.

Organisational categories are those expected broad areas that were established before interview and observation (Maxwell, 2005). Those were, for this study, the components of the conceptual framework. The categories of "resources", "management", "stakeholder involvement", "collaboration" and "competitiveness" were like five pigeon holes to which the data were put into for initial organisation. They also formed the different sections based on which the discussion of the findings and implications will be sequenced in the following chapter. While the themes were first established, the researcher was open to additional themes emerged during the data collection process.

Substantive and/or theoretical categories give some insights of what the data actually mean (Maxwell, 2005). Substantive categories describe the perception of the participants, either using their own words and concepts (emic categories) or researchers' description of their perception. These categories are inductive in nature which do not base on existing theory. In contrast, theoretical categories are deductive by putting coded data into an abstract framework, representing the researcher's concepts (etic categories). To establish these categories from the data collected, open coding technique was used. The coding process began with the first piece of data being collected which granted the candidate the advantages to test the appropriateness of the codes for subsequent coding exercise. The candidate read and reread the transcripts to absorb herself in the data and cleared the transcripts from all "extraneous clutter and noises" (Maxwell, 2005, p.243) before coding. That was followed by tagging key ideas.

Key ideas, in the form of words, phases, or sentences, were underlined. Codes were assigned to them and recorded down in the right-hand margin. In addition to the predetermined codes, there were also additional in vivo codes surfaced from the data. From the coded transcripts, it was observed that the interviews were on average rich in information. Summaries of the key messages were also written at the end of each significant extract of the informants' comments.

Second level pattern coding further grouped the codes into broader themes or "constructs". For instance, for the identification of the stakeholders, they were first coded based on their roles played during the collaboration process which were then further categorised into high- and low- influential stakeholder groups, based on the three determinants of power, urgency and legitimacy. After obtaining a set of fully coded transcripts, axial coding was performed. Axial coding explores the relationship of categories and establishes the connections between them. Again using the identification of stakeholders as an example, the connection between the stakeholders' roles played and their collaboration was explored and conceptualised.

During the process, memoing was a crucial technique in facilitating the coding and the realisation of the relationships between different concepts, which transferred the raw data into a coherent depiction of the phenomenon being studied. Memoing is "the theorising write-up of ideas about codes and their relationships as they strike the analyst while coding… it can be a sentence, a paragraph or a few pages… it exhausts the analyst's momentary ideation based on data with perhaps a little conceptual elaboration" (Glaser, 1978, p.83, cited in Pierce, 2008). Besides, the outcomes from coding and narrative summaries were constantly compared with the other sources of evidence to identify similarities and differences. That directed further investigation and resulted in an informed interpretation and explanation of the phenomenon. Some of the expressions given by the respondents were directly quoted to provide a trail of evidence to support the categorisation pattern.

3.4.2 Secondary data

The analysis of secondary data followed a similar coding approach to that of the primary data in which analysis took place concurrently with data collection. Again, the various types of secondary data collected were categorised into those broad themes determined in the conceptual framework and further synthesis and analysis within each of the categories was made. These data basically function as an illustration of facts, a review of past and existing collaboration as well as stakeholder involvement, and as supplements to the primary data. In addition, interpretative content analysis was used as a supplementary tool to scrutinise the secondary data collected, particularly the travel brochures, serving the part of the conceptual framework which was to evaluate the tourism resources in the CASs and Xinjiang. Content analysis is a systematic description of words, texts, conversations, pictures or themes (Pierce, 2008) and is gaining popularity in media studies analysing messages written as a medium for communication ranging from books, official documents, newspapers to advertisements and films or photographs. Berg (2004) suggested a sequence for qualitative content analysis which is shown in Figure 3.1.

Determine analytical categories based on research questions

↓

Read through data and establish grounded categories (open & axial coding)

↓

Determine systematic criteria of selection for sorting data chunks into the analytical & grounded categories

↓

Begin sorting data into the various categories (revise categories when needed)

↓

- Count the number of entries in each category for descriptive statistics and to allow for the demonstration of magnitude
- Review textual materials as sorted into various categories seeking patterns

↓

- Consider the patterns in light of relevant literature and/or theory
- Offer an explanation (analysis) of the findings
- Relate the analysis to the extant literature of the subject

Figure 3.1 Stage model of qualitative content analysis
Source: Berg (2004, p. 286)

3.5 Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the reliability and validity of qualitative research in which there are four criteria: credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability [30] (Phillimore & Goodson, 2004). These criteria were developed respectively based on four concerns which are the true value, applicability, consistency and neutrality of qualitative studies. The candidate pursued the treatment of trustworthiness recommended by Guba (1981).

For the current study as a naturalistic inquiry, dealing with true value is tricky as the study subject is human's behaviour and there are multiple realities in people's mind. Therefore, parallel to the isomorphism to reality is the isomorphism to respondent' perceptions (Guba, 1981). Therefore, the most common strategy to increase creditability of a research study is by member check to verify if the findings or to be exact the interpretation of the data truly reflects the respondents' perception. For this study, correctly interpreting informants' opinion was not enough because as mentioned there would be chances that informants answered the questions in a way that they were "expected" to do so due to their job position and organisational standpoint. Therefore, to increase the creditability of the study, the candidate used the method of prolonged engagement which involved a continuous observation and the collection of referential adequacy materials for triangulation of which the process is shown in Section 3.2.2.

The fact that a study is applicable does not mean that the study has to be relevant in any context despite chronological and situational variations. The candidate believed in the naturalist's assumption that generalisations of realities are not possible because phenomena are tied to temporal and situational context in which they are found. Even for positivistic studies, their ability to generalise decays with the pass of time and the change of situation. Despite so, transferability of findings is still valid if there are certain essential similarities between this context and the other contexts. To determine if a study is transferable, one has to know as much detail of that study as possible. Therefore, to enhance the transferability of this research, the candidate has tried her best to describe the case as well as its data as thickly as possible so that comparison of this context to the other contexts can be made to determine the degree of fittingness.

[30] Credibility: how truthful the findings are (internal validity); transferability: extent to which the research findings are applicable to another setting (validity); dependability: whether the results are consistent and reproducible (reliability); confirmability: how neutral the findings are (objectivity).

Consistency is the ability of an instrument to produce stable hence meaningful results. It is because naturalists believe in multiple realities and use humans as instruments, which change not only because of errors but also evolving insights and sensitivities, they treat consistency not as invariance, but traceable variance. Therefore, consistency in a qualitative research is termed as dependability. To attain dependability, the candidate established a chain of evidence which enables the readers of the case study to follow the derivation of the evidence, from initial research questions to the case study conclusions. In order to do so, sufficient citation was made to the relevant portion of the case study database when discussing the findings. A clear documentation of the raw data as well as the interpretation procedures was maintained.

To achieve absolute objectivity is almost like an ideal for research. Even for experiments, researchers' manipulation is still present; for instance, the decision of which experiment to use. In view of the role cultural and ethnic biases can play in the study, the candidate decided to shift the burden of her neutrality to the confirmability of the data. Although reflexivity was still practised, more focus was put on data triangulation and the maintaining of the chain of evidence, which was discussed previously.

3.6 Limitations of the methods

In addition to the general limitations born by the qualitative approach, there are other constraints specifically tie to this research setting in relation to the methods being used. When collecting and analysing secondary data, it is found that a lot of the government websites or other documents are written in the respective languages of the CASs or in Russian. This limited the extent of information the researcher could analyse and led to the potential loss of important information regarding the initiatives or policies these countries have on cross-border collaboration. And as mentioned before, the same language barrier was present in collecting the primary data, which led to the use of written responses instead of interviews. Lastly, while the researcher took every possible means to engage informants from all the CASs, she failed to conduct an interview or obtain an official written response from any of the stakeholders in Turkmenistan. Although casual conversations were made with tour operators from

Turkmenistan at ITB Berlin, they were not willing to participate in any form of formal interviewing. The candidate had no alternative but to rely on second hand information about Turkmenistan from the other informants. Other than the totalitarian attitude of the government, the candidate also revealed other subtle reasons for Turkmenistan's indifferent involvement in the Silk Road collaboration initiative, which will be discussed in the following chapter.

3.7 Research Ethics

The ethics of research refers to the rightful conduct to undertake a research study. The first fundamental principle is that of nonmalefience and beneficence. The current study was conducted with the aim to do good for the society and not to pose any harm to the research participants. To start with, the research and its data collection plan were reviewed and approved by the Ethics Review sub-Committee for Research Involving Human Subjects of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, signifying that the benefits of conducting such research outweighed the potential risks, if any, to the research subjects.

Besides, the informants were all time respected and so were their rights to privacy, confidentiality and self determination. Their consensuses were sought before they were quoted as elites for the research and had their comments attributable. If the informant requested to remain anonymous and have the conversation contents kept confidential, the candidate was very cautious to be sure that no traces of evidence can be found which revealed the informant's identity and the information that he/she provided was not disclosed but merely served as some orientation information for the candidate to better understand the topic. Informants' participation was voluntary and they were advised that they could withdraw from the research anytime and without giving any reasons. Last but not least, the interview was only recorded with the informants' agreement.

Other than ethics related to study subjects. The candidate also considered the principle of integrity and for which the findings of the research were accurately, honestly and truthfully reported. In addition, all sources of literature works used were properly cited and acknowledged. The right to use any copyrighted graphic illustrations was obtained before they were incorporated in the study.

3.8 Chapter Summary

The research paradigm, together with its qualitative case study approach, was established in the beginning sections of this chapter. The methods of data collection and analysis associated with this research approach were explicitly discussed.

Section 3.3 explained in detail the methods by which both primary and secondary data were collected. Secondary data were gathered from multiple sources to reflect on the several main areas in the conceptual framework. Primary data were mainly collected by in-depth interviews with a purposive sample of stakeholders. Additional informants were identified using the snowball sampling technique. Cross-reference and triangulation could be made using both data.

The process of data analysis was discussed in Section 3.4. Coding techniques and content analysis were the chief methods used in analysing both primary and secondary data. As these two types of data were complimentary to each another, the analysis was done simultaneously.

The issues of trustworthiness and the ways to enhance the rigor of the research were mentioned in Section 3.5. Research ethics and methodological limitations for this study were included in the end of the chapter.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS, INTERPRETATION AND DISCUSSIONS

In view of the inseparable link between the analysis and interpretation of qualitative data, this chapter collectively presents the research findings and the discussions of them. Like what has been mentioned at the end of Chapter 2, a conceptual framework does not necessarily serve as a theoretical relationship model but a guide or a set of "intellectual bins" for data collection and analysis. Therefore, there are in total four groups of deliberations including *resources*, *management*, *collaboration*, and *stakeholder involvement*, in accordance with the conceptual framework established in Chapter 2 (Figure 4.1, replica of Figure 2.11).

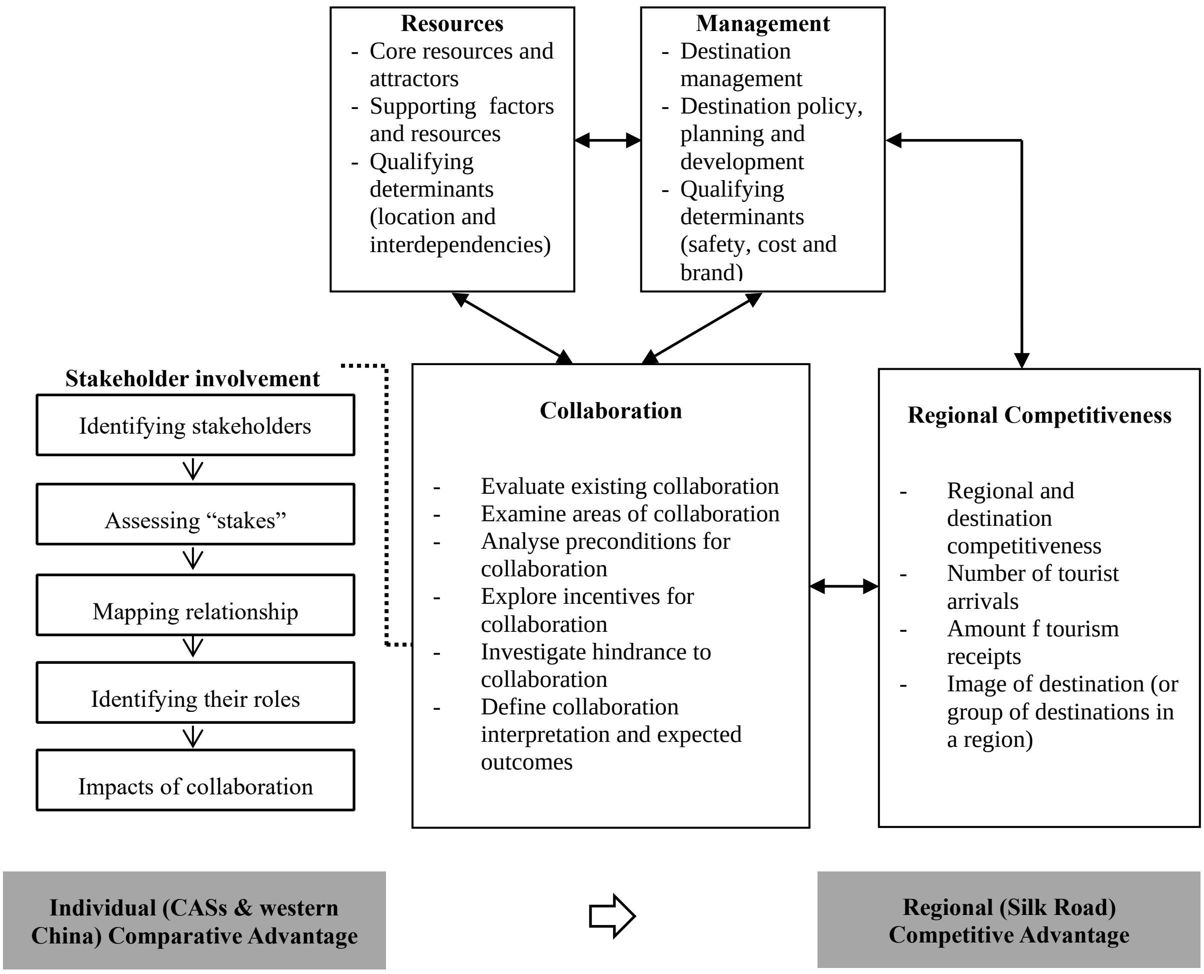

Figure 4.1 Conceptual Framework (Replica of Figure 2.11)

As previously explained in Chapter 3, the discussions of resources and management were mainly based on secondary data, supplemented with primary results from the interviews and the candidate's observation where appropriate. The analysis of tourism resources of the CASs and Xinjiang in Western China closely followed the sub-components outlined in the conceptual framework, resulted in an in-depth account of the destinations' *core resources and attractors*, *supporting factors and resources*, as well as the *qualifying determinants* of *location* and *interdependencies*. This group of findings serves the purpose of establishing and reaffirming the tourism potential of these destinations. For the analysis of management, modifications were made to the original approach of giving a descriptive account of the various sub-components of *destination management*, *destination policy, planning and development*, and the *qualifying determinants* of *safety, cost* and *brand*. Unlike tourism resources, which are the innate factors for any destination, management competence for tourism development is not always present in the countries under investigation. Alternatively, two focal areas for discussion emerged from the primary data given by the study informants and further directed the search for secondary data to substantiate the discussion. The two areas were challenges for tourism development in the Central Asian region and variance in destination management between the countries.

Data collected on collaboration first offered a comprehensive evaluation of existing collaboration among the countries, followed by the analysis the obstacles for effective collaboration. The stakeholder analysis followed the procedures set forth by the conceptual framework.

Therefore, while the findings on *resources* serve the descriptive purpose of the case study; the discussions of the remaining four components of the conceptual framework are the explanatory elements.

4.1 Resources

There are three major components that constitute the resources of a tourist destination which determine its competitiveness. They are core resources and attractors, supporting factors and resources, and the qualifying determinants of location and interdependencies. An extensive length of the thesis findings is being use to delineate the tourism resources present on the Silk Road and in the CASs and Xinjiang. There are several justifications for this arrangement. First, it is observed that not much has been written on the tourism potentials of the Silk Road and in the respective CASs and Xinjiang. The presence of tourism resources should not be assumed but verified before discussion on their management and collaboration through making use of these resources can be reasonably made. Second, without tourism resources, there would be no need for resource management. Third, while management is a determining factor for tourism success, resources are the prerequisites. It should also be noted that majority of the destinations, if not all, are somewhat endowed with resources. Yet, not every destination is equipped with management competence and experience to deploy the resources they have, especially those having a rather short history of tourism development. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the tourism potentials of this section of the Silk Road in order to sustain the proposition that these countries should collaborate with each other to make full use of their potentials.

In this section, an overview of travel itineraries and products available on the Silk Road will first be presented, followed by the discussions of the three types of resources available in the five CASs and Western China.

4.1.1 Silk Road in the market place

Confirming with what had been discussed in both Chapters 1 and 2, modern travel on the Silk Road in general, and its tour provision in particular, mainly concentrates in the several CASs and in western China. There are a few exceptions provided by foreign tour operators specialising in adventure or special interest tourism. Their provisions even consist of countries which are not normally regarded as Silk Road destinations in the contemporary travel literature but are indeed located on some of the branches of the ancient Silk Road. For instance, Wild Frontiers, a UK-based adventure travel company, offers its clients the chance to travel along the whole Silk Road in four parts[31] from Istanbul to Beijing (Wild Frontiers, 2009). In addition, it

[31] The four sections are: Istanbul to Damascus (14 days); Yerevan to Tehran (16 days); Tehran to Tashkent (18 days); and Tashkent to Beijing (23 days). The sectional tours are made up of the traditional Silk Road countries including Turkey, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and China, together

puts forward a highly adventurous itinerary which reaches southern Kazakhstan from China by going through the new highway running between Minfeng[32] to Luntai[33] across a section of the Taklamakan Desert, which is commonly known as the desert of no return. An additional tour was proposed which also includes Tajikistan in the itinerary, combining with the traditional option of going to China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. It is noted that among the five CASs under investigation, Kazakhstan and Tajikistan are not always included in the transcontinental Silk Road packages mainly because they are not located en route. However, they are still being served by separate special interest tours. Despite this, it should be noted that tour operators which provide itineraries embracing the whole Silk Road in one single trip are rare because such a journey may take up to 60 days, with tedious and complicated logistics and administrative arrangements. Some exclusive examples of international tour operators offering travellers the possibilities to traverse extensively along the Silk Road at one go also exist, which are further discussed as follows.

Information collected on the tours available in this Central Asian section of the Silk Road shows that there are in general six types of provisions available, which are *single destination*, *paired destinations*, *spill-over travel*, *triangular path*, *triangular circuit* and *transcontinental path*, categorised based on the number of destinations they serve as well as the way in which transits are being organised.

The categorisation of *single destination* is self-explanatory. It was found that itineraries which bear the name of the Silk Road but focus only on one country are plentiful. Majority of these trips visit only China or Uzbekistan. This observation is also widely supported by the primary data gathered in the interviews in which almost all of the respondents acknowledged that Silk Road travel at present is dominated by a few destinations. Elite P1, who is the Director of a Kyrgyzstan-based tour company

with the less typical ones such as Syria, Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. These atypical places were in fact historically located on the northern branch of the Silk Road bypassing the Caspian Sea.

[32] Minfeng County is under the administration of Hotan (also known as Hetian in travel literature) Prefecture in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. Hotan Prefecture is located on the southern branch of the ancient Silk Road skirting the edge of the Taklamakan Desert, outside of Yan Guan which was the westernmost frontier of ancient China (Hotan Information Centre, 2010).

[33] Luntai County is under the administration of Bayingol Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. It was known as Wulei, a strategic western centre, in the West Han Dynasty, (People's Government of Bayingol Mongolian Autonomous Prefecture, n.d.).

and has 14 years of tourism business experience in Central Asia, verified that *"…most people want to do China and the ancient cities of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan"* when they go on Silk Road tours. However, Turkmenistan seldom serves as a standalone destination probably due to the general lack of travel facilitations in the country.

As briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, the image of the Silk Road has always been closely associated with China. Xi'an in Shaanxi Province and Dunhuang in Gansu Province are the most well-known Silk Road destinations. The common voyages on this Chinese section of the Silk Road are described and graphically illustrated in Appendix 13 (Figure A13.1). Other than China, perhaps lesser known is the fact that *"… nowadays Silk Road tourism still goes to actually Uzbekistan*" (T3), which was the heart of the old-time Silk Road owing to its extensive network of oasis settlements (MacLeod & Mayhew, 2002). In the current tourism context, Uzbekistan is revitalising its long-gone glory by being another dominant tourist destination on the Silk Road. One of the key informants (K4) gave an insight on the reasons for Uzbekistan's better performance: "*…the pole of the Silk Road is definitely Uzbekistan because that has culturally three or four extremely important cities with wonderful Islamic architecture, magnificent architecture…*", coupled with the idea postulated by the media that Silk Road in Central Asia is mainly about Uzbekistan, according to Elite P1. In Appendix 13, Silk Road travel routes that are most common in Uzbekistan are outlined and are graphically displayed in Figure A13.2. Aside from China and Uzbekistan, local tour operators from the other CASs provide excursions that embrace the Silk Road brand in their own countries. However, these tours have a much shorter duration, concentrating on the most touristic areas in the individual country.

As suggested by its name, the arrangement of *paired destinations* signifies the inclusion of two bordering Silk Road countries in a single trip. Predictably, one of the two destinations is often China or Uzbekistan, but not both. This is because to travel over land between China and Uzbekistan, one has to cross through Kyrgyzstan. One of the examples of paired destinations is a 17-day tour going to Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, spending approximately eight days in each country visiting cultural and historical sites. Besides, there are provisions in which Urumqi, Xi'an and Beijing in China, together with Almaty and the Aksu-Dzhabagly Nature Reserve in Kazakhstan are visited in 15 days. Each country is specialising in its own kind of attractions, for example, China provides visitors the experience of its “dynasty wonders” (Peregrine Adventures, 2012a, para. 1) whereas Kazakhstan showcases its abundant flora and fauna to the visitors. In a paired destinations arrangement, both destinations appear to be equally important and are the major selling propositions of the tours.

Spill-over travel consists of one core destination, complemented with one or two supplementary or transit destinations. This type of tour usually lasts for 9-14 days. One of the examples is “Kyrgyzstan – Lakes of the Sky” by Peregrine Adventures (2012b). The chief destination is Kyrgyzstan where the highlights are the beautiful lakes of Son-Kul and Issyk-Kul and the little-changed Kyrgyz nomadic way of life. Kashgar and Tashkent are included on the first day and the last day of the journey respectively where only a few attractions are visited. Another illustration of spill-over travel is the tour which includes Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and China in which only half a day is spent in Tashkent at the beginning and a day is spent in Urumqi at the end of the trip accordingly. The main attractions of the itinerary are the nature reserve in Aksu-Dzhabagly, religious sites in Taraz, and the metropolitan and Soviet architectures in Almaty. It is most likely that, in these cases, China and Uzbekistan are being used as the entry and exit points of the region in view of their comparatively better-developed and more reliable international connectivity. Otherwise, locations are just added to the core destination so as to diversify the elements in the itinerary and increase its attractiveness to the potential tourists, of which majority travelled a long way to visit these countries of the Silk Road.

Triangular pattern particularly relates to the travel arrangements that involve three countries in a trip. Furthermore, under the category of triangular arrangement, there are triangular path and triangular circuit. They are different in the sense that while a triangular path does not begin and end in the same place, a triangular circuit does. Appendix 13 demonstrates some of the standard triangular paths in this part of the Silk Road (Figure A13.3). As mentioned earlier, one has to go through Kyrgyzstan before reaching Uzbekistan from China overland and vice versa. As a result, tours that adopt the combination of China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are common. Usually, the tour begins in either Urumqi or Kashgar in China or Tashkent in Uzbekistan and visits Bishkek and the famous Issyk-Kul in northern Kyrgyzstan on the journey between the two countries. In general, triangular path tours take 15 to 20 days, with some exceptions that last much longer in which visitors travel extensively in both China and Uzbekistan. Other examples of triangular path tours are introduced in Appendix 13.

Triangular circuits are believed to be the mainstream products offered by the local tour operators in Central Asia probably because it is logistically easier for them to arrange a tour that begins and finishes in their own country. Similar to triangular paths, China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan are the principle grouping, with more or less the same cities and attractions included in the itinerary. The triangular circuit tours range from those of 30 days managed by foreign tour operators to expeditions of around 10 days provided by local organisers. Other routes available are Kazakhstan – Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan – Kazakhstan, China – Kyrgyzstan – Kazakhstan – China, and Uzbekistan – Tajikistan – Kyrgyzstan – Uzbekistan (See Figure A13.4, Appendix 13). Although the combinations of countries, to a great extent, confined to those mentioned above, the sequence of travel to these countries for each tour is different. It is observed that the integral destination, which is the starting and ending point, of these triangular circuits varies, depending on the base country of the tour organisers due to a number of logistic and operational considerations.

Perhaps the arrangement of *transcontinental path* resembles the Silk Road most in the sense that the tours follow a linear travel route that goes between and across more than three countries, without returning to the initial destination. Figure A13.5 in Appendix 13 demonstrates some examples of transcontinental paths on the Silk Road. As noted earlier in this section, even though it is rather atypical to have an individual tour that passes through the whole Silk Road from the Mediterranean to China, exceptions do sometimes exist. For example, Peregrine Adventures offers a fulfilling Silk Road experience of 36 days, travelling from Istanbul to Beijing by crossing several Central Asian countries namely Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Other than Turkey and Iran, Russia is also a country that is often included in the transcontinental paths connecting to this innermost section of the Silk Road via rail connection, which appear in the more up-scale market (details are exhibited in Appendix 13). Other than the extended journeys mentioned above, there are also Silk Road transcontinental paths that are more confined to the centrality of the CASs and China. Unlike the triangular patterns, transcontinental travel seldom takes the form of a circuit arrangement obviously because of the logistical complication and the duration that such a tour would involve.

To summarise, the findings reveal six types of tour provisions on the Silk Road namely single destination, paired destinations, spill-over travel, triangular circuit, triangular path and transcontinental path. Comparing these tours with the ancient Silk Road and its branches as delineated in the beginning chapter (Section 1.1.1), slight deviations are observed. The eastern inception of the modern Silk Road extends beyond the old Chinese capital of Chang'an (present Xi'an) to Beijing whereas the western end reaches only Turkey, instead of Greece and Italy at the farthest west. Dunhuang and Kashgar continue to be the important conjunctive locations on the Silk Road linking China to the countries to the West. Perhaps more unexpected is that the lesser known county-level towns such as Hami, Turfan (now being known as Turpan) and Hetian (also known as Hotan) are still visited today within China. Ancient oasis cities including Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva in Uzbekistan and Merv in Turkmenistan continue to be the dominant destinations on the Silk Road. The sub-route of the ancient Silk Road skirting the Caspian Sea at its north and arriving at the eastern coast of the Black Sea, although less prominent, is still present. That is why countries such as Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia are sometimes as well included in modern Silk Road tours. Conversely, the other sub-route going southward through Persia to India is often omitted. This observation contradicts to Boulnois's identification (2005) which claimed that the modern Silk Road also goes to countries like Pakistan. Assessing the association of the five CASs to Silk Road travel, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan are less privileged. Tajikistan, due to its geographical location and its lack of manifestations of Silk Road heritage, is seldom visited as part of a Silk Road tour. In addition, only the southern tip of Kazakhstan is included in Silk Road itineraries, often with a very limited length of stay in the country. It is generally supported by the informants that China and Uzbekistan are the prime destinations on the Silk Road most likely because of the better tourism development approaches experienced in the two countries, which are discussed in detail in Section 4.2.

As illustrated by the above discussion and that in Appendix 13, tourism activities predominantly happen in a few attraction hotspots within the individual countries, such as the nature reserves in Kazakhstan or the Issyk-Kul region in Kyrgyzstan. These places serve as the core resources and attractors of the destinations which will be elaborated on in the following sub-sections (Section 4.1.2.1). In terms of logistic arrangement, it is found that majority of the transcontinental paths are organised by international or expatriate tour operators[34] whereas their local counterparts in Central Asia essentially specialise in the other five types of travel arrangement, especially that of triangular circuit. Very similar to the general perception about Silk Road travel, the transport arrangement in the tours analysed is complex with long overland drives and train travel. For instance, a 15-day tour going to Kazakhstan and China involves four nights being spent on an overnight train. In addition, it takes on average three to four hours to transit from one location to another in the itineraries, such as that between Tashkent and Samarkand using the Registan Express Train service (visitUzbekistan.travel, 2012). Accommodation involved in these Silk Road tours is mostly primitive, with the use of basic hotels, guesthouses, home stays, and yurt tents. Nevertheless, these highly inconvenient voyages are often regarded as a speciality of the Silk Road, projecting an image of adventure and exploration.

4.1.2 Core resources and attractors

Previously in Chapter 2, Crouch and Ritchie's (1999; 2000) model has been explicitly reviewed and discussed. According to their destination competitiveness framework, core resources and attractors are the prime appeal to tourists and the most direct motivators for prospective visitation to a destination. There are seven categories of core resources and attractors, which are, physiography and climate, culture and history, market ties, mix of activities, special events, entertainment and tourism superstructure. In the following sub-sections, the different types of core resources and attractors of the CASs and western China are examined accordingly. Western China in this study, as clarified in the beginning chapter, particularly refers to the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Some successful cases of Silk Road destinations such as Dunhuang in Gansu Province and Xi'an in Shaanxi Province are also quoted where appropriate.

[34] International tour operators are tour operators that have operation and representation in various countries, and were founded in countries other than the CASs and China. Examples are TUI and Thomas Cook; expatriate tour operators are operators that were originally founded in the CASs or China, with foreign owners and investment. Example is the Celestial Mountains Tour Company, based in Kyrgyzstan.

4.1.2.1 *Physiography and climate*

Physiography and climate, together with culture and history, are viewed as the inherited resources of a destination over which those responsible for managing tourism possess no direct control or influence. Physiography, which is the physical geography of the destination, coupled with its climate determines the "natural environmental framework" within which tourism activities take place as well as the "aesthetics and visual appeal of the destination" (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999, p. 146). It is further argued that physiography is a parameter so important that other factors must be strategically built around it for a destination to be competitive.

In general, the vast territory of the Central Asian sub-region is characterised by its landlocked nature with no direct access to any coastlines, except those on landlocked seas such as the Aral Sea. Uzbekistan is one of the two countries in the world which are doubly landlocked, that is, being surrounded by other landlocked countries. Due to the inland location, the CASs share a continental climate with insufficient and unstable precipitation which in turns shape the arid landscapes of the sub-region. The ratio of plains to mountains in this large area is four to one; however, the majority of these plains belong to the category of extra-tropical deserts (Scientific-information Centre, Interstate Sustainable Development Commission, 2007). There is a huge range of elevations of landscapes in the sub-region from 132 m below sea level in western Kazakhstan to 7465 m above sea level at the peak Ismoil Somoni of the Tian Shan in Tajikistan (CIA, 2012). Coupled with the fact that Central Asia is a territory spreading extensively from north to south, both latitudinal and altitudinal variations of climate across places are evident. As a result, the environmental and landscape zones of steppes, semi-deserts, deserts, and oases, which are altered under the influence of anthropogenic factors, are easily distinguishable. The rich variety of physiographic features constitutes the major attractiveness of the Central Asian sub-region and provides suitable fields for various activities, which will be discussed subsequently. The region has long hot summers and mild winters, with the exception of Kazakhstan where winter temperatures can fall to as low as -40 degrees Celsius. Average summer temperature of the region varies from 28 degrees Celsius in the north to 32 degrees Celsius in the south, with an annual precipitation of 100-200 mm (Scientific-information Centre, Interstate Sustainable Development Commission, 2007). Audley

Travel (2012) therefore recommends the best visiting seasons for Central Asia to be late Spring (May- June) and Autumn (September- October) whilst the months of January to March are termed as the worst time to go to Central Asia due to its unstable winter conditions.

Xinjiang, which is known as "the new territory" in Chinese, is the land of contrast, accommodating the lowest depression of China as well as some of the highest peaks of the Tian Shan. Xinjiang alone contains both the Tarim Basin and the Junggar Basin in its southern and northern geographical regions respectively, separated by the Tian Shan ranges (Bonavia, 2008). Prosperous agricultural oases are found at the edge of the vast desert. Watered by the Manas and Ulungur rivers, the semi-arid Junggar Basin is covered with grasslands and marshes. The landscape leads to the dominance of pastoral nomadic style of living in this area. As illustrated in Appendix 13, Urumqi, Turpan and Kashgar are amongst the most popular destinations in Xinjiang, and on the Silk Road. Urumqi, which means "the beautiful pastureland" (CNTA, 2011, p. 38) and Turpan, which is China's lowest basin, are core physiographic attractors of the region in their own right. Comparatively, Kashgar is less well-known for its natural attractions, instead, monuments such as tombs, Buddhist caves and mosques, together with the general atmosphere of this bazaar town are the major selling propositions. Unlike the inland China climate, Xinjiang has a dry continental to desert climate, entailing a hot and dry summer, very short spring and autumn and cold winter. The best visiting time is August and September in view of the milder weather (CNTA, 2011) but also summer when the oasis towns are full of life (Bonavia, 2008).

The physiographic and climatic features of the five CASs and Xinjiang, together with the corresponding unique selling propositions, are highlighted in Table 4.1. The table was formulated based on a more detailed discussion of these features for each of the destinations, which can be found in Appendix 14.

Table 4.1 Physiographic and climatic features of the CASs and Xinjiang

Country	Physiographic and climatic features	Unique selling propositions
Kazakhstan	- Extremely diverse landscapes (include vast steppe plains, plateaus, mountainous terrains, deserts, semi-deserts and oases) - Extensive networks of inland water resource (>48,000 lakes and 7000 rivers) - Abundant flora and fauna	- Nature-based tourism, together with tourism in the districts of mountains, lakes and rivers, promoted by Visit Kazakhstan - Water resources serve as

	- An established network of national parks and nature reserves, recently accessible to visitors - Harsh continental climate with a temperature range of -45°C in winter to 30°C in summer across the country - Winter in Almaty and Astana is usually milder (Advantour, 2012a; WMO, 2012). - Visiting season: March to November, winter as an ideal time for winter sports such as skiing	popular tourist destinations in summer - Saryarkam, the steppe and lakes of northern Kazakhstan, was listed as a UNESCO natural World Heritage site in 2008 - Aksu Zhabagly Nature Reserve is the oldest and the most popular nature reserve in Central Asia
Kyrgyzstan	- Entirely mountainous terrains, dominated by the Tian Shan chains and the associated valleys and basins (CIA, 2012; Top Asia, 2011) - 1/3 of the country is permanently snow-covered - Almost 2000 lakes - Various climatic zones from dry continental to polar in Tian Shan, subtropical in the Fergana Valley and temperate in the northern lowlands - Winter temperatures usually fall to -30°C or lower in the mountain valleys and the average lowland temperature is -5°C - Extreme temperatures and the usual winter fogs in winter time - Weather in spring changes unpredictably and some major mountain passes are still covered by snow in May (Stewart, 2004) - Visiting season: May to September, though most of the rain falls between April and June causing mud- or land-slides that block roads and passages (Traver, 2010)	- Kyrgyz Alay is popular with climbers - Panoramic scenery of snow-covered mountain caps - Issyk-Kul, at an altitude of 1,608 m and with depth and width of 702 m and 6,280 m, is the second largest mountain lake in the world (Stewart, 2004) - Son-Kul, another mountain lake located in an alpine valley near Kochkor, paradise for nomadic herdsmen and visitors - Hot summer, 247 sunny days a year. Kyrgyzstan is named as the country of sunshine among the local tour operators (Top Asia, 2011)
Tajikistan	- Extreme relief, 93% of the country's territory is mountains - Multi-coloured rock formation in GBAO - Zerafshan, "Golden River', mainstream crosses the Zerafshan Valley - Many species of fauna and flora in Tajikistan - Mountains, glaciers and rivers, lakes, fauna and flora - Two types of climates prevalent including mid-latitude continental in valleys and foothills, and semiarid to polar in the higher Pamir (CIA, 2012) - Visiting season: May to September	- Famous for the Pamir, "Roof of the World" (Visit Tajikistan, 2012), meeting point of the world's highest mountain chains, including the Karakoram, the Himalayas, the Hindu Kush and the Tian Shan - Gorno-Badakshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO) - Peak Ismoil Somoni, the highest peak in Central Asia - Fedchenko Glacier, the longest mountain glacier in the world - Nature-based tourism concentrates in the lush

		alpine region of the Zerafshan Valley - Tajik National Park and Romit Reserve
Turkmenistan	- Flat-to-rolling sandy desert, the magnificent Kara-Kum desert (also known as the Garagum desert), occupying > 80% of the country - Sand dunes rise to mountain in the country's south - West of the country borders the Caspian Sea, with a coastline of 1,768 km - Kopeth Dagh Range bordering Iran - Mainly plateau in the eastern region - Overall subtropical desert - Summer temperature in the desert reaches 50°C during the day and drops at night - Rest of the country experiences a continental climate, with cold winters and very hot summers - Visiting season: April to May and September to October	- Nature reserve with rare species of ibexes - Dinosaur plateau (438 fossil dinosaur footprints were found) - Some sandy beaches at Turkmenbashy (Advantour, 2012a) - Kov-Ata underground lake in Bakharden at the foothills of the Kopeth Dagh Mountains
Uzbekistan	- Most of the country's territory lies between the two major rivers of Central Asia, the Syr Darya (Jaxartes) and the Amu Darya (Oxus) - Steppe and desert plains dominate more than 60% of the country's territory while the rest belong to the foothills and mountains of the western Tian Shan in the east and the Gissaro-Alay ranges in the southeast - Other mountainous landscapes include the Chimgan Mountains and the Nurata mountain ranges (CATS, 2011a) - Sharp continental climate, with hot summers, cold winters, and mild springs and autumns - over 300 days of sunshine and less than 300 mm of rainfall each year (CATS, 2011; CIA, 2012) - Visiting season: brief spring to early June, September to November - Year-round destination, depending on itinerary and activities	- 10 nature reserves in the country, but their importance is often underplayed in tourism promotion - Fergana Valley, habitat to numerous flora and fauna and the most densely populated oasis in the country serves as both a nature-based and a cultural attraction
Xinjiang (China)	- With the lowest depression in China and some of the highest peaks of the Tian Shan - Mountain pastures, sand dunes, icy peaks, crystal blue lakes - Tarim Basin and the Junggar Basin - Aricultural oases at the edge of the Taklamakan Desert - Watered by the Manas and Ulungur	- Urumqi, which means "the beautiful pastureland" (CNTA, 2011, p. 38) and Turpan, which is China's lowest basin - In Urumqi: Tianchi Lake (or Heavenly Lake) and Red Hill (or Tiger Head

	rivers, the semi-arid Junggar Basin is covered with grasslands and marshes - Dry continental to desert climate: hot and dry summer, very short spring and autumn and cold winter - The oasis towns possess micro-climates resembling conditions in the hot Mediterranean areas - Visiting season: August and September but also summer	Hill) - In Turpan: the Flaming Mountain, Grape Valley and the Aydingkol Lake, which is situated 155 m below sea level

To summarise the above findings, on the one hand, there are many similarities in the physiographic and climatic characteristics among the CASs and Western China; on the other hand, they are distinctively different in terms of their destination propositions. Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan prefer building their comparative advantages on the natural landscapes, flora and fauna they have. Kazakhstan has established a network of national parks and nature reserves which are now accessible to tourists. Kyrgyzstan is endowed with beautiful high-mountain lakes while Tajikistan takes advantage of the Pamir within which the GBAO is a fascinating destination in the country. However, for Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Western China, in addition to the natural resources that the countries possess, tourism there relies as well, or perhaps more heavily, on the heritages that remain from the long history of civilisation in the Central Asian sub-region. Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan have some of the most ancient cities in the world such as Merv and Khiva. China is also conveying its long historic and cultural continuity into its unique offerings. Ancient oasis towns, together with the heritages within, are the major attractions of Western China. As a whole in the Central Asian region, spring and autumn are the best time to travel around. Nonetheless, the visiting season is being modified or prolonged in the individual country for various reasons. Uzbekistan and Xinjiang in Western China appear to be year-round destinations because most of the countries' attractions are located on the valley basins or oasis towns where winter temperatures are moderate. The hot summer is still attractive in the two destinations because of the colourful bazaars that take place in that season. Kazakhstan, especially the cities of Almaty and Astana, also has a pleasing weather most time of the year, perhaps except for winters. Yet, the very cold winter makes the operation of the country's many ski resorts feasible and attracts winter sports lovers to Kazakhstan. Seasonality is present, yet not the most prominent, in Turkmenistan. Because of the country's vast desert expanse, summer can be very hot in Turkmenistan. Nevertheless, this extreme weather reinforces the desert image of the country. In view of the heavy reliance of tourism on mountain resources, both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan experience severe seasonality in their tourist arrivals. Most of the tourism activities such as trekking and mountaineering are not favourable, if not infeasible, under adverse weather. Despite so, Kyrgyzstan is still more advantageous than Tajikistan, considering its strategic location as a crossroad and the nomadic culture dominating in the country. Physiography and climate, other than being an immediate core attractor of the destination, shapes the environment within which the other factors of destination attractiveness, such as the mix of activities and events, take place. More importantly, the landscape and climate of a place moulds the way how its people live; and hence, influences the history and culture of the destination, which constitutes an equally important component of core resources and attractors. The culture and history of the CASs and Western China are discussed in the following sub-section.

4.1.2.2 *Culture and history*

Equal in importance to physiography is the culture and history of a destination, especially in the present international tourism climate where destinations easily resemble each other. Culture and history that provides a unique setting for visitors to experience lifestyles different from their home situations create a comparative advantage for the destination (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999).

Due to the area's arid climate and the absence of a coastline, economic activities such as agriculture and trade were constrained in Central Asia. As a result, nomadic style of living dominated the history and hence the culture of the region, with exceptions in the few oasis settlements. There is a long history of civilisation in this vast piece of land between the Caspian Sea and China. However, the progress through which the people who live in the region today made their way to the modern age is complex yet poorly documented (Stewart, 2004). Referring to various sources of information available (see for example, Ayan, n.d.; MacLeod & Mayhew, 2002; Stewart, 2004; Visit Kazakhstan, n.d.), it can be concluded that the history of Central Asia is marked by conflicts, with numerous invasions and reinvasions. Some of the most significant conquerors were Alexander the Great, Jenghis Khan and Timur, to name a few. A detailed chronological history of the Central Asia region is given in Appendix 15. Some of the critical incidents shaping the region's cultural features today are highlighted as follows. First, it was the establishment of the first nomadic empire by the Scythians in the eighth century BC that marked the beginning of civilisation in Central Asia and established the tradition of nomadic lifestyle in the region. Second, the arrival of Islam in the region, brought by the Arab armies who invaded Merv in 651, and Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent and the Fergana Valley in 712-715, resulted in the Islamic dominance of the region's religious composition. The third remarkable period was when Jenghis Khan destroyed all Silk Road oasis establishments in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and Merv in the early 1200s which had affected the archaeological and cultural offerings of these destinations. Fourth, the restoration of Samarkand with refined craftsmanship and architecture during Timur's Empire from 1405 to 1526 moulded Samarkand into the most important destination in Central Asia and on the Silk Road. Fifth, the establishment of the Soviet Union led to a wholly unnatural division of Central Asia into the different modern states as of today. The borders were set up by Stalin for political reasons rather than based on the civilisations settled in the respective parts of the region (Stewart, 2004). The era of the Soviet Union was on the one hand marked by heavy industrialisation, investment in social infrastructure and vocational education. On the other hand, there were suppression of local cultures and serious environmental degradation caused by excessive development, which led to the lasting effect of ethnic tension in the region. Last but not least was the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 after which the CASs had gained their status of independent republics. It is noted that throughout history, oasis cities including Bukhara, Khiva, and Samarkand were important political and cultural centres. This also explains why cultural tourism concentrates in these areas.

Xinjiang, located in this Central Asian sub-region, was divided into 36 separate kingdoms in the ancient times. Due to its strategic location at China's westernmost frontier, Xinjiang was a tempting territory for China to assert its suzerainty throughout history, such as that of the Han and the Tang Dynasty. There had been an eventful journey before Xinjiang settled as an autonomous region of China in 1955. Those events include the Muslim rebellions of 1862-73 which was suppressed by the Qing government in 1884 and Xinjiang was under the Qing's governance until the fall of the dynasty in 1911. Xinjiang was afterwards under the rule of a succession of warlords for more than 35 years before the short-lived Eastern Turkestan Republic was established in 1945. The area was declared the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of the PRC ten years after, in which there are five autonomous prefectures, six autonomous counties, 74 counties, seven prefectures and eight municipalities (Bonavia, 2008).

In the following discussion, instead of describing the historical developments of the five CASs and Xinjiang which have so much in common, focus is put on the delineation of the cultural and historical tourism offerings in the individual countries. Attractions included in the travel literature written on Kazakhstan can be broadly categorised into nature-based, activity-based, urban, religious and archaeological attractions of which the later three bear a heavier cultural focus. Kazakhstan, compared to the other CASs, has a closer tie to Russia (see details in Table 4.2). This ethnic and hence religious composition of the country is reflected in its cultural attractions. In view of the highly urbanised population, modern culture of urban cities is also one of the attractions. Other cultural products include ethnographic parks and medieval archaeological sites.

According to different travel literature, nature is the single most important factor that shapes the dominance of the Kyrgyz nomadic culture. This has also become the most prominent cultural attraction of Kyrgyzstan to foreigners, highlighting stays in yurt tents and interaction with local tribes. Besides, in view of its advantageous crossroad location, the other theme of cultural attractions is associated with the Silk Road, featuring the legendary caravansaries en route along the Torugart Pass, the Irkestan Pass, or the Pamir Highway. As one of the respondents, P1, described:

"… but if you come to Kyrgyzstan, you can get a feel for the authentic Silk Road because although we may not have the ancient cities, we have the landscapes; … it is one of the best preserved atmosphere of the Silk Road and you can sit… and imagine the caravans, the traders coming over the crests of the hills and then the valleys." (Elite P1 [Kyrgyz tour operator], interview transcript)

Osh was also an important junction of the Silk Road and has a history of more than 3,000 years. It is also where the only UNESCO cultural World Heritage site, Sulaiman-Too Sacred Mountain, in Kyrgyzstan is located (UNESCO, 2012a). However, Osh itself cannot be an extremely popular destination because of the fact that the glory of this once prosperous oasis town was hidden beneath the influence of socialism during the Soviet time, coupled with the troubled history of ethnic conflicts between Kyrgyz and Uzbek took place in the city in the last decade.

There are two main types of cultural and historical attractions in Tajikistan which are villages of preserved mountain tribes and archaeological sites respectively. The Committee of Youth Affairs, Sports and Tourism of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, with the help from the private sector, has been promoting community-based tourism throughout the country (Visit Tajikistan, 2012). There are tours where services are all delivered by local service providers in an environmental friendly way, letting tourists explore the local culture and traditions. According to Faizulloev, vice minister of tourism of Tajikistan, visitors going to the rural areas,
"…will stay in the houses and the head of the families of the houses will accompany you, provide you with a horse, you will live in a Tajik way and a Tajik environment. You will see how we are cooking; how we are speaking, in our Persian language" (Video transcript [TravelMole, 2010])

Archaeological attractions in Tajikistan include the site of the Ancient Sogdian City of Penjikent and the UNESCO cultural World Heritage Site of Sarazm.
Table 4.2 summarises the major findings whereas a more detailed discussion can be found in Appendix 15.

Attractions included in the travel literature written on Kazakhstan can be broadly categorised into nature-based, activity-based, urban, religious and archaeological attractions of which the later three bear a heavier cultural focus. Kazakhstan, compared to the other CASs, has a closer tie to Russia (see details in Table 4.2). This ethnic and hence religious composition of the country is reflected in its cultural attractions. In view of the highly urbanised population, modern culture of urban cities is also one of the attractions. Other cultural products include ethnographic parks and medieval archaeological sites.

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Table 4.2 Historical and cultural features of the CASs and Xinjiang

Country	Cultural and historical features	Unique selling propositions
Kazakhstan	- Closer tie to Russia: Russian as the second largest group of population; Russian language as the official, everyday business tongue and for interethnic communication (CIA, 2012) - Islam as the most commonly practised religion (47%), followed by Russian Orthodox (44%) - 56% of the population is urbanised (Visit Kazakhstan, n.d.-a) - Traditional lifestyle of Kazakh people: Shabanbay Bi Village, located in Kyzylaray Mountains in Central Kazakhstan and the Zhambyl Zhabayey museum complex in Almaty - Medieval archaeological sites	- Cultural attractions reflecting the ethnic and religious composition - Almaty hosts both the Svyato-Voznesensky Cathedral (also known as Zenkov Cathedral of Holy Ascension) and the Central Mosque - The province of West Kazakhstan is strongly influenced by the Russian architectural styles - Modern cultural attractions in the urban cities - Ethno tourism promoted by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports (Visit Kazakhstan, n.d.) - Atameken in Astana, the largest ethnographic park - Mangystau territory, with >11,000 historic monuments including ancient burial grounds, mausoleums, medieval underground mosques, remains of ancient settlements (Mangistau Historial and Cultural Reserve, 2010; Massimov, 2012).
Kyrgyzstan	- Less urbanised: 35% of the population (CIA, 2012) - The Fergana Valley: major settlement area accommodating > half of the population (Stewart, 2004) - At least 23 national representations with majority of the population (almost 65%) being Kyrgyz - Some 30 tribes within the Kyrgyz community - Northern tribes: more Russified - Southern tribes: Islamic culture, similar to Uzbek, Uyghur and Tajik - Central tribes: purest Kyrgyz tribe of Sajak	- Nomadic culture shaped by natural factor (loyalty to clans and families) - Stays in yurt tents (reflecting nomadic history and national identity) and interaction with local tribes - Crossroad location: Silk Road cultural attractions, featuring the legendary caravansaries en route along the Torugart Pass, the Irkestan Pass, or the Pamir Highway - The city of Osh, important junction of the Silk Road, with a history of 3000 years, hosts the UNESCO cultural World Heritage site – Sulaiman-Too Sacred Mountain
Tajikistan	- Villages of preserved mountain tribes	- Veshab Village and Langar Village: experience local life

	- Archaeological sites	- The site of the Ancient Sogdian City of Penjikent and the UNESCO cultural World Heritage Site of Sarazm ("where the world begins" in Tajik) (UNESCO, 2012b; Visit Tajikistan, 2011). - The Committee of Youth Affairs, Sports and Tourism, with the help from the private sector, promotes community-based tourism (Visit Tajikistan, 2012)
Turkmenistan	- World's oldest civilisation of 5000 years ago - Ancient Parthia was situated on the crossroad of important Silk Road trade lines	- The core destination on the Silk Road in Central Asia - Three UNESCO cultural World Heritage Sites: State Historical and Cultural Park "Ancient Merv" in present Mary, Kunya-Urgench and the Parthian Fortresses of Nisa (UNESCO, 2012c),
Uzbekistan	- Oasis cities on the main Silk Road: Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand - Khiva: a coherent historical and architectural representation of an ancient feudal Central Asian city - Bukhara: almost 2500 years history, best example of a medieval city, centre of knowledge of the Islamic world - Samarkand: melting pot of the world's cultures, an important city of Rome, Athens and Babylon, also capital of several ancient Central Asian Empires	- Four UNESCO World Heritage Sites: Itchan Kala in Khiva, Historic Centre of Bukhara and Samarkand – Crossroads of Cultures and Historic Centre of Shakhrisyabz (UNESCO, 2012c) - Local cultures and traditions
Xinjiang (China)	- Influenced by the civilisations of China, Persia, India and Greece throughout history (Bonavia, 2008) - Archaeological treasures	- Ancient ruined cities and religious remains such as Buddhist grottoes and ancient mosques in Turpan Prefecture and the counties of Hami, Korla and Kuqa - The ruins of Gaochang City and Jiaohe City, and the Bizaklik Thousand-Buddha Grottoes in Turpan - Loulan is situated in the hub of the ancient Silk Road trade lines (CNTA, 2011)

A majority of the attractions found in Turkmenistan are related to one of the world's oldest civilisations existed on this piece of land 5000 years ago. Turkmen tour operators actively position Turkmenistan as the core destination on the Silk Road. Second to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan has three UNESCO cultural World Heritage Sites which are the major cultural and historical attractions of the country. Very different from the other CASs, local culture and lifestyle are often omitted in the tourism provisions of Turkmenistan. Instead, focus is put on the ancient historical and religious sites. The government's approach to develop tourism, separating it from the locals, may explain the above observation.

Uzbekistan is the leader in the region in terms of number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. There are four sites in total of which three were oasis cities on the main Silk Road. That is the reason why Elite T2 made the following comment, *"I would be rather correct if I say that all those stan countries are developing their (Silk Road) tourism firstly on our resources, on Uzbekistan tourism resources"* (T2). It is observed that these well-known world heritage sites dominate almost all of the tourism promotion materials reviewed. However, this observation does not imply that the role of people elements in terms of local culture and traditions is overlooked. Instead, these elements are promoted as a penetrated and embedded part of the destinations.

The civilisations of China, Persia, India and Greece posed tremendous economic and religious influence on Xinjiang throughout history (Bonavia, 2008). Due to the arid climate of the areas, the buried archaeological treasures have been well preserved. Therefore, major cultural and historical attractions in Xinjiang are its ancient ruined cities and religious remains such as Buddhist grottoes and ancient mosques. Most closely related to the Silk Road is the Ancient City of Loulan, located in Korla. Being one of the 36 ancient states of the western regions in the Han Dynasty, Loulan is situated in the hub of the ancient Silk Road trade lines, on the only way to reach the western regions from the central plains of China at that time (CNTA, 2011). Similar to Uzbekistan, local cultural elements are more like an integrated component of these tourist sites, instead of a separated one.

In general, the cultural and historical provisions in this Central Asian section of the Silk Road can be broadly categorised into, 1) local culture and traditions; 2) archaeological and historical monuments and; 3) contemporary cultural attractions in urban setting. With a significant number of heritage sites, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and cities in Western China strongly position themselves as the historical centres of the Silk Road. Because of the lack of well-preserved heritage in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, these two countries develop their cultural tourism products based on the distinctive lifestyles of their people, namely nomads and mountain tribes. Kazakhstan shifted their focus from ancient to modern, promoting the cultural diversity in its cities. It is apparent that different cultural and historical offerings are appealing to different groups of potential visitors. Yet, the decision of a traveller to visit a certain destination is modified by the presence of other non-inherited resources, such as the ease of physical and administrative access, the variety of activities and the availability of tourism superstructure. Perhaps less obvious, the ties of a destination to the originating regions of the prospective visitors are also influential.

4.1.2.3 *Market ties*

Market ties refer to the several dimensions through which a destination builds and maintains links with the residents in the potential tourist source markets (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Building upon ethnic ties and business ties suggested by Crouch and Ritchie, the candidate proposes that there are also religious ties, which are rather important in this Islamic world of Central Asia.

According to Crouch and Ritchie (1999), ethnic ties provide the strongest and the most enduring linkages that establish a rather systematic and predictable tourist flow to a destination. They further argued that although the segment of visiting friends and relatives is not the most profitable segment, it does provide a fundamental source of visitors to the destination and thus potentials for further tourism development. The complexity of history in Central Asia leads to the complicated ethnic composition in the five CASs and Western China. As illustrated in the previous sub-section, there were not the five CASs and the titular ethnic groups (such as Uzbek or Kyrgyz) 100 years ago. Diverse communities, both nomadic and sedentary, lived interdependently and shared a common Turco-Persian Islamic culture for centuries before administrative borders were set up by the Soviet ruler in 1924, in an attempt to clarify the ethnic map in the region. Despite this, the populations in the area can still be roughly divided into Turks and Tajiks based on their linguistic orientation to the Turkic language and Farsi respectively (Edgar, 2001). Therefore, there are certain ethnic ties in the five CASs and Western China to the other Turkic states such as Turkey or countries that historically came under the Persian influence (Farsi) including Iran, and Qatar and the UAE in the Middle East. It was therefore not surprising that respondent K4 made the following comment, referring to an ideal marketing approach for the tourism products in the CASs and Western China,

> *"… you need to also aim at middle-class adventure travel people in New Delhi, Mumbai, Arabians, you know, the Gulf. Of course Iran, there is a middle-class in Iran and of course Europe… there is middle-class in Turkey, you know, these people are Turkic people. I think the potential is absolutely huge."* (Key informant K4, interview transcript)

In addition, large scale internal migration in Soviet times resulted in a significant Russian population in each of the CASs, up to almost 24% in Kazakhstan and 13% in Kyrgyzstan. Other ethnicity such as German, Korean and Crimean Tatar are present in the region mostly because of the Stalinist deportations, tactics of Joseph Stalin to remove potential trouble-making ethnic groups from the Russian heartland. These ethnic groups stayed in the respective independent states even after the fall of the Soviet Union and several generations have flourished. For example, during the period of Japanese annexation of Korea, groups of Korean defectors and refugees went to Russia voluntarily for political reasons. However, being suspected by the Soviet government of spying for Japan, the Koreans were then deported to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in 1937-38 (Lee, 2010). There were 521,694 Koreans in the CIS of which 230,000 resided in Uzbekistan as of 2001 (Choi, 2003). This probably justifies the candidate's observation in Tashkent where the local markets comprise a number of Korean-owned stores selling traditional Korean food supplies and other necessities. There are also direct flights operating between Tashkent and Seoul and between Astana and Seoul on a regular basis. Ethnic ties are more so important because they may lead to business ties, which do not only provide a steady flow of business travellers to the destination but also facilitate other forms of economic development (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999).

As previously mentioned, there are large numbers of ethnic Russians residing in the CASs and they are the prime facilitators of business opportunities between the CASs and Russia. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have the highest economic development potentials, as justified by informant K3, "*they (Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan) have abundant natural resources which provide a good economic foundation and further progress would be rapid".* According to the Kazakhstan investment attractiveness survey conducted by Ernst and Young (2011), Kazakhstan was revealed to be a favourable location for foreign direct investment and that has generated more than US$ 108 billion since 1993 for the country. In addition to Russia, foreign direct investments also come from China, Ukraine, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia (Ernst & Young, 2011). Perhaps lesser known are the country's business ties to countries outside of the region. For example, bilateral agreement was signed between Kazakhstan and Malaysia, resulting in a total trade volume of US$ 144.25 million in 2010 (Urbanas, 2011). Similarly for Uzbekistan, other than the CIS countries, it has established business links with outside countries such as Indonesia, Singapore and Czech Republic (Uzbekistan Today, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c). Turkey, having Turkic ethnic ties to the CASs, has been a significant source of foreign direct investments in the region. Turkish investors are generally interested in having businesses, tourism industry included, in the CASs, especially in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (Kantarci, 2007c). Xinjiang, being the north-western gateway of China, has an advantageous location for cross-border trades and businesses. Due to the fact that China-made consumer and electronic goods are more competitively priced and have better variety when compared to those in the CASs, Xinjiang is the place for Central Asian shoppers, either for resale or for personal use (S. Li, 2010). Apparently, China, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, having better economic development bases, have more business ties with countries both within and outside of the region. Therefore, intraregional and interregional business travel mushrooms. It is furthermore revealed that business ties in Central Asia rely on the prerequisite of having either ethnic ties or religious ties between the business partners because of the much needed compromising mentality and an Islamic approach of business ethics.

When Ibn Battuta travelled from the Sahara to China in 1325 for 29 years, he had one constant observation that wherever he went between the two ends of the road, communities were being knitted together by the shared culture and faith of Islam (Aslan, 2011). With increasing mobility of people from the other Islamic countries, the segment of religious or pilgrimage travel to Central Asia grows. For example, Sayram, Arstan Bab and Turkistan (sites/ cities in Kazakhstan) formed the grand pilgrimage circuit in the Muslim world (Privratsky, 2001). The Central Asian region, especially in Uzbekistan, houses some of the world's most ancient Islamic schools, mosques and mausoleums. Because of that, Uzbekistan has recently grown in popularity as a destination for Malaysian and Egyptian tourists. As expressed by Hamed[35] (personal communication, October 8, 2010), there is a constant flow of tourists from Egypt to Uzbekistan each season, and the number of Egyptian visitors is observed to be on the rise.

4.1.2.4 *Mix of activities, special events and entertainment*

Tourist activities at a destination are shaped by the combined effect of physiographic features and local cultures (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Taking optimum advantage of both types of inherited resources yet remaining consistent with the local value enhances the competitiveness of a destination. Due to the mountainous terrain and high altitude of much of the CASs and Western China, and their complex history and nomadic cultures, coupled with their relatively less developed tourism superstructure and facilities, tourist activities promoted in this region are usually fairly adventurous. Apart from the more passive cultural visitations taking place in the valley basins and oasis cities, other activities are more adventurous that include trekking, mountaineering, biking and horseback riding, only with a slight variation of focus in the individual country. For example, although mountaineering is a common adventure activity present in all the five CASs, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are more renowned for that. There are base camps, at the foot of Lenin Peak (7134m), Khan-Tengri Peak (7010m) and Pobeda Peak (7439m), set up and owned by Kyrgyz tour operators (Ak-sai Travel, n.d.). In view of the rather narrow market for mountaineering, both Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan diversify their tourism offerings by integrating some local cultural components into them. Kyrgyz tour operators promote nomadic life experience with activities such as sleeping in yurts, making Kyrgyz traditional foods and drinks and producing local handicrafts. Probably due to the extensive implementation of community-based tourism in the Zerafshan region of Tajikistan, visitors can have interactive experiences with the local mountain tribes, taking part in

[35] Mr. Ahmed Hamed, Consul, Embassy of the Arab Republic of Egypt in Tashkent

cooking and music lessons, and learning techniques of making local crafts and farming (Zerafshan Tourism Board, 2011a).

Tourism in Kazakhstan is more activity-based. In view of its many nature reserves and abundant flora and fauna, wildlife ecotourism and bird watching are some of the most advertised tourist activities in Kazakhstan (Turan Asia, 2011). Having more capital for investment in tourism superstructure, Kazakhstan owns some world-class ski resorts, making Almaty and Astana the host of the 2011 Asian Winter Games held in January and February. Other world winter sports events being held in Kazakhstan in 2012 include The UEFA Futsal Cup and the Ski Jumping Continental Cup (Visit Kazakhstan, 2011). Water resorts, already popular in the Soviet time, remain major attractions, where concentration of tourist activities takes place. In spite of the dominance of cultural activities in Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, variety is injected by utilising the natural environment. Jeep travel and horseback riding are offered in the Karakum Desert in Turkmenistan while camel safaris are available in the Kizilkum Desert in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan further outperforms Turkmenistan by hosting a range of international, regional and local events. The Tashkent International Tourism Fair, being the largest travel fair in Central Asia, will be held for the 18th time in October and November 2012 (Uzbektourism, n.d.-a). Other events include some local or regional handicraft trade fairs organised by private businessmen. One major occasion being celebrated in the region is the Navrouz holiday on 21 March which is the first day of the Central Asian New Year, featured by the Buzkashi Game (which is a no-rule polo played with a dead goat), national dances, songs and theatrical performances of the nomadic tribes in each of the five CASs (Orient Voyages, 2011).

In Xinjiang, major activities include visiting the oasis cities and especially the big bazaars. The Xinjiang International Big Bazaar was opened in June 2003, revitalising the vibrant atmosphere of travel and trade of the ancient Silk Road. Learning from the tourism development experience from the rest of the country, there are various festivals and events created in Xinjiang such as the Urumqi Ice and Snow Customs Festival held in January and the Turpan Grape Festival held in August 26-31 every year (CNTA, 2011). In the latter event, there are Uighur traditional wedding and "Nazkum" dance performances, which are some staged entertainment for tourists.

4.1.2.5 *Tourism superstructure*

Tourism superstructure refers to elements such as accommodation, food and beverage services, transportation and major attractions that comprise the core tourism industry people perceive (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). The candidate further clarifies that the "attractions" under this category of tourism superstructure should be confined to those purposely-built attractions such as resort complexes and amusement parks. This is to differentiate them from the core attractors emerged from the destination's physiographic, historic and cultural characteristics, which have already been discussed earlier in detail. As it is suspected, superstructure in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Xinjiang is more advanced than that in the other CASs. Although not most accurate and all encompassing, a quick search on Tripadvisor, a very popular online travel guide and the world's largest travel community in which user-generated opinions and travel tips can be shared, gives an indication of the overall tourism facilities in the individual CASs. The number of accommodation establishments and restaurants shown on Tripadvisor webpage serves as a valid reference to the overall impression and scale of the tourism industry in the country because they are facilities that visitors actually used and commented on. This indication is especially useful if official statistics of tourism establishments of the countries are not easily obtainable.

Kazakhstan was revealed to have 113 hotels, 117 bed and breakfast inns and 88 restaurants suggested by visitors in its 16 regions, with concentrations in Almaty and Astana (Tripadvisor, 2012a). According to the Ministry of Tourism and Sport of Kazakhstan (n.d.), there are in total 35,153 lodging rooms with a time capacity of 76,053 beds in 2010, a 12.3% growth when compared to that in 2009. The number of tourism units has also grown by 4.6% in 2010, amounting to 2,624 units. Transportation facilities in Kazakhstan including airports, railways and roadways are relatively more developed amongst the five CASs (CIA, 2012). For man-made attractions, there are those remained from the Soviet time such as the Medeu sport complex with a skating rink built in the 1950s. Being 1,691 metres above sea level, it is the highest skating rink in the world, where many speed skating world records were set (Visit Kazakhstan, n.d.). Another major winter sports attraction is Shymbulak ski resort located near Almaty. Other than winter sports attractions, health centres and recreation camps are found along rivers, near reservoirs and lakes of the country such as that located in the basin of the Lake Balkhash. The other type of built attractions is more recent, resulted from the tourism policy and planning of the current government after the country's independence, such as the tourism master plan for 2010-2014, with private investments injected into the projects from both local and foreign companies. Some of the examples are Burabai Tourism Centre, a nature-based resort 250 km from Astana and Ak Bulak ski resort, 35 km from Almaty which also offers conference venues and services (Kaken, 2010). In addition, there is a list of tourism projects being undertaken within the framework of the master plan which will be discussed in a later section regarding tourism management in the country.

Uzbekistan, according to the literature as outlined in Chapter 2, started tourism development with a better basis. This is confirmed by Elite T2, *"... we are not doing our tourism from a blank paper or a list but we have something already which is famous all over the world."* He further emphasised that Uzbek government has long realised the potential of tourism in the country and has been proactively developing this sector. An 80% of upgrade in tourism superstructure was witnessed as suggested by him, in his capacity equivalent to the deputy tourism minister of Uzbekistan,

> *"There are about 267 hotels in all over the country. In Tashkent, we have InterContinental; we have Radisson; we have these Indonesian and Turkish hotel chains, so on and so forth. We have the aircrafts, new aircrafts, some twenty of them serving our tourists and passengers in many countries. All are in international class and brand new."* (Elite T2, interview transcript)

A review of comments on accommodation provisions across the country (70 hotels, 42 bed and breakfast inns) provided by the visitors on Tripadvisor demonstrated a variation between cities, with international chained hotels being only available in the capital city (Tripadvisor, 2012b). Visitors in general observed two types of hotels in the country including the Soviet-style ones and the "modern" ones. Those relics from the Soviet time are symbolised by their grand exterior, poor interior, and the general lack of upkeep and management, in addition to the overcharging price strategy. The modern ones, being operated by international management groups or small enterprises set up either by expatriates or locals, provide better quality of rooms and services. In terms of attractions, most of them are cultural and historic attractions as described before because they are what the country is famous for. Purposely-built attractions are limited and majority of them are in Tashkent such as the Aqualand, a water amusement park featuring 15 water attractions, some art and history museums, and many theatres (CATS, 2011b; Sairam Tourism, 2011), constructed in the Soviet era. Nonetheless, they appear more confined to serve the recreational purposes of local citizens.

According to the National Bureau of Statistics of China (2009), there were in total 1,339 tourism units in Xinjiang in 2008, including 421 star-rated hotels and 414 travel agencies. A recent search on Tripadvisor (2012c) indicated a higher number of 690 hotels and 15 bed and breakfast inns, with three quarters of them located in Urumqi. The range of accommodation establishments, in terms of level of service and price, is wide, serving travellers with different preferences and budgets. Transportation in Xinjiang is well developed with air links and rail networks connecting the region to the other parts of the country (CNTA, 2011). Other than the natural, cultural and historical attractions described in the preceding sections, man-made attractions in Xinjiang are rich and can be broadly grouped into the following categories, 1) museums and exhibitions halls such as the Folk Street and Folk Custom Museum of Xinjiang Uygur in Urumqi and the Turpan Museum; 2) resorts and tourist zones such as the Tianshan Mountain Scenic Resort of Hami and the Desert Ecological Tourist Zone of Turpan; 3) parks and gardens including the Junzi Ecological Park in Kuqa and the Urumqi Botanical Garden; 4) handicrafts and entertainments with examples like the Urumqi Water Amusement Park, People's Theatre of Xinjiang Uygur in Urumqi and the Carpet Factory (Ditan Chang) in Hotan. Perhaps more surprising, there are quite a number of Silk Road related attractions such as the Silk Route Museum of Xinjiang Uygur in Urumqi and the Silk and Mulberry Research Centre in Hotan (TripAdvisor, 2012). It shows that tourism developers in Xinjiang value the Silk Road brand and have strategically made use of it in product creation.

Reviewing the availability of tourism superstructure in Kyrgyzstan, it confirms with Werner’s (2003) argument that tourism development in the country is uneven, with a much heavier focus on the northern region, especially in the capital city of Bishkek and the Issyk-Kul areas as reflected in the varied level of tourism superstructure between the northern and southern regions. There are 24 hotels, 21 bed and breakfast inns and 33 restaurants listed on the page of Kyrgyz Republic of Tripadvisor (2012c).

Fourteen of the listed hotels are located in the capital. Accommodation is generally basic with some exceptions such as Hyatt Regency and Ak Keme Hotel in Bishkek; however, they are regarded very expensive by travellers, with rate on par with Moscow, Hong Kong and Tokyo (Logistica, 2012, para. 2). Also as mentioned previously, yurt tents are an alternative option of experiential accommodation although they are more at the adventurous end. According to Elite P1, there has not been enough variety of accommodation choices to cater to different demand of tourists in Kyrgyzstan. That was why he had set up two European-style hotels, one in Bishkek and one in Nurata. Transportation in the northern region is fairly up to standard yet road conditions in the other parts of the country may not be as traversable (Traver, 2010). Built attractions are mainly museums in the capital city. There is one small ski resort, the Karakol Ski Base, near the Karakol Canyon (Tripadvisor, 2012c) and other base camps provided by local tour operators to cater the mountaineers and trekkers.

According to DN Tours (2011), at least 30 modern hotels have been built and almost all the existing hotels have been renovated in Turkmenistan in the years since independence. There are 15 accommodation establishments in the cities of Ashgabat and Mary of Turkmenistan listed on Tripadvisor (2012d), including some luxurious options such as Sofitel Ashgabat Oguzkent. Other than the capital and the city of Mary where the World Heritage site is situated, there are resorts located on the Caspian Coast in Turkmenbashy. However, this city, being the terminus of the Trans-Caspian Railway, is more known as a transportation centre and a transit hub for raw materials. It is the focal point of the country's oil refining, mining and building industries. Perhaps this explains why regardless of President Kurbanguly Berdymukhamedov's attempt and persistence of crafting a Dubai-like mega destination resort there, the project is controversial in the international community and occupancy of the seven resort hotels is always low (Orange, 2011). Despite this, the tourist zone is to be expanded further, constituting a major cluster of built attractions in Turkmenistan. Transportation in the country is fairly well developed. Roadways are mostly paved and major cities are being linked by daily train services and domestics flights.

In Tajikistan, the scale of the tourism industry is rather limited. There are nine hotels in Dushanbe and three in Khujand as listed by Visit Tajikistan (2012) on their official website verses eight and one posted on the Tripadvisor page respectively. There is also an addition of 27 bed and breakfast inns being suggested by travellers on Tripadvisor (Tripadvisor, 2012e). Hyatt Regency is present in Dushanbe and was rated the best hotel in Tajikistan by travellers. Almost identical to the other CASs, there are two types of management of these city hotels, with those survived from the Soviet era being unfavourably perceived. Due to the effort of the Zerafshan Regional Tourism Board and some community-based tourism organisations, there are quite a number of home stays in the Zerafshan valley region and yurt tents are available for rental. Transportation is not up to international standard (CIA, 2012), with almost all of Tajikistan's transportation systems being built before 1991 under the Soviet rule and since then both the roadway and railway systems have deteriorated severely due to the lack of investment and maintenance (Library of Congress, 2007). Built attractions are confined to museums and theatres in Dushanbe which were also most likely established in the Soviet time.

Summarising the above findings on the superstructure of the CASs and Western China, the general perception that the region is lack of tourism facilities is somewhat confronted. In view of the current tourist demand in the region, it is absurd to conclude that these countries have to expand their tourism superstructure inventory. Instead, the need for quality assurance and service standard appears more immediate.

4.1.3 Supporting factors and resources

Aside from core resources and attractors, the presence of supporting factors and resources in a destination is crucial as they provide the necessary foundation for tourism success (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). There are five constituents of supporting factors and resources in Crouch and Ritchie's model. In the following discussion, these constituents are grouped into the two categories of "hardware" and "software" based on their nature. Infrastructure, facilitating resources and physical accessibility (being symbolised by the availability of transport facilities and networks) are brought under the category of "hardware", whereas hospitality, enterprise and institutional accessibility (being symbolised by ease of entry to the country) are the "software" of a destination that is highly linked to the country's culture and government policies.

4.1.3.1 *Hardware: infrastructure, facilitating resources and physical accessibility*

The extent and condition of a destination's infrastructure, including its transportation services, water supply, sanitation, and communication systems, are crucial to any kind of its economic and social activity (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). Whereas infrastructure and facilitating resources serve more like the groundwork for tourism success (or merely its happening), accessibility is one of the key determinants of tourists' choice of a destination over the others. The legacy from the Soviet development approach remains in the CASs, signified by the huge variance of the level and quality of infrastructure found in the capital cities and the second tier cities, not to mention that in the various remote villages in the mountains or other rural areas. In addition, most of the Soviet infrastructure has deteriorated, if not being abandoned. Instead of having them repurposed or recycled, disused air, sea and land vehicles or even entire train networks are seen being left to rust in the former Soviet states, due to reasons such as the lack of investments for maintenance and renovation (Urbanist, n.d.). Exceptions have recently been observed in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan of which both governments aim to invest in and upgrade the infrastructure, in the aspects of transportation and communication, of the countries. In the following discussion, focuses are being put on the transport infrastructure of the destinations, which is vital to the destinations' accessibility, hence their attractiveness to potential visitors.

According to the Embassy of the Republic of Kazakhstan to the U.S. (n.d.), the Kazakh transport sector is currently facing the problem of poor condition of fixed assets, obsolete infrastructure and technology, which leads to the fact that transportation costs in the final costs of exported goods are twice higher than those in the industrialised countries while the cargo intensity index of the Kazakh economy is over five times less efficient than that in the EU economy. Therefore, the Kazakh Government has issued a 10-year Strategy of Transport Sector Development up to 2015, involving an investment of US$ 26 billion. The strategy was implemented in two stages of 2006-2011 and 2011-2015, covering areas that include railways and automobile road networks, and in-city passenger, air and water carriage. Retrieving data from the World Bank (World dataBank, 2012), Kazakhstan possessed a road network of more than 96,000 km of which over 88% were paved roads and a total length of rail lines of over 14,000 km as of 2009. Railways remain to be the major transport system in Kazakhstan, providing 70% of cargo and 50% of passenger turnover in the overall transport operations in the country (Embassy of Kazakhstan, n.d.). Passenger transport systems in the individual cities have also been improved. The first metro in the country started operation in late 2011 in Almaty (Information Service, 2011). Meanwhile, the construction of a light rail system in Astana has started in July 2011 and the first tram line will be launched in 2014, which links the city centre with the capital airport in a faster and more comfortable way (Tengrinews, 2011). As mentioned earlier, international accessibility of Kazakhstan is high, particularly via the two major airports at Almaty and Astana. There are direct flights from Almaty to at least 25 cities worldwide, provided by airlines such as KLM, British Airways, and Lufthansa to Europe, China Southern and Uzbekistan Airways (code-sharing with Korean Air) to Asia, and Air Arabia and Etihad Airways to the Middle East (OrexCA.com, n.d.-a). Astana serves direct flights to major European cities, especially in the Netherlands and Germany as well as cities in Ukraine and Russia. Besides, Aktau is the main hub for trans-Caspian flights. Together with Shymkent and Kyzylorda, all these cities provide air links to Moscow and other CIS and CAS cities on a regular and frequent basis (Lonely Planet, n.d.-a). In 2010, Kazakhstan's air transports carried 2,425,532 passengers, with 27,306 registered carrier departures recorded (World dataBank, 2012). Other than air links, Kazakhstan is also connected to the outside world including China, Russia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Azerbaijan on land via various important crossings. However, road conditions and the customs complication at the border vary and crossings are always very congested.

Tashkent, the capital of Uzbekistan, is often regarded as the aviation hub in Central Asia, most probably because of its central location and better-developed air transport sector (Stewart, 2004). Aside from Uzbekistan Airways, international airlines include Asiana Airlines, Iran Air, Lufthansa, Turkish Airline, Aeroflot and Transaero provide direct flights from different cities to Tashkent (Lonely Planet, n.d.-b). However, British Airways, following Air France and KLM, withdrew their services from Uzbekistan in early 2007 and might only return with improved Uzbek-EU relations (Lonely Planet, n.d.-b). Frequent and rather reliable air services are available between major cities such as Andijon, Bukhara, Fergana, Termiz, Samarkand and Urgench. There were 23,551 registered carrier departures in Uzbekistan in 2010 and the total number of passengers carried was 2,166,508 (World dataBank, 2012). In addition, road and rail links are fairly developed. There were a total of more than 75,000 km paved roadways as of 2000, connecting the major cities in the country (CIA, 2012). There are regular train services running between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan or Russia. Within the county, there are two types of intercity trains namely the new high-speed trains and the Soviet-style passenger night trains. Uzbekistan Railways has recently launched several modern trains running across the country of which two hybrid trains, bought from Spanish company Talgo, were commissioned for services between Tashkent and Samarkand. Additional Talgo trains will be purchased to serve the southern parts of Uzbekistan in 2016 (Uzbekistan Newswire, 2012a; visitUzbekistan.travel, 2012). Further development was made on speed in 2011 along the route of Tashkent – Samarkand – Tashkent, with the use of a high-speed train called Afrosiyob, which reduced travel time between the two destinations from 3.5 hours to two hours (Haroon, 2011). The slower but more economic travel option on Soviet-style night trains also serves cities other than the major ones such as Kungrad and Qarshi. Uzbekistan is also connected to Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan on land transport despite the fact that crossing the border in some cases can be difficult. For example, although the Friendship Bridge linking Termiz with northern Afghanistan was opened for tourist traffic in 2005, the Uzbeks officials are sceptical and often close their side of border for security reasons (Lonely Planet, n.d.-b). In addition, the only crossing between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan open to foreigners has been issued with stricter customs and checks since the Andijon incident in May 2005. Comparing the transport infrastructure across cities, transportation services are more comprehensively developed in the capital. Lying in Tashkent is the first metro system in Central Asia which was constructed in 1968, two years after the destructive earthquake, with its first line started serving the city in 1977 (Advantour, 2012b). Apart from being an essential means of transport for city commuters, the Tashkent metro is also viewed by tourists as an attraction of the city. It is because each of the metro station was decorated with special architectural features, using marbles and granite, and interesting lightings to resemble or create atmospheres of some grand ballrooms or mysterious catacombs. Other intra-city transport services including trams, buses, and taxies are also convenient. Yet, the bus service sector is currently facing the challenge of not having enough drivers, despite the purchase of 100 new Mercedes-Benz buses financed by the republic's investment in public transport services in 2012. Critics argued that these monopolistic bus companies fail to operate as effective self-financing enterprises (UzNews.net, 2012b). Therefore, problems of the capital's transportation systems are more on its software including management competence and governmental interference. Furthermore, improvements need to be made on the transportation systems in the other regions of the country.

China has made a concerted effort to construct highways in its western region as part of the general development direction to cast harmonious societies in China's autonomous regions, as stated in the Communist Party's 16th Congress. The project of establishing a transport network of "three horizontal main ways, two vertical main ways, two circular highways and eight passages" has been carried out before 2010 (Transport Department of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, 2009). The length of the highway networks in Xinjiang totalled over 114,000 km in 2010 compared to around 89,000 km in 2004 (Highway Administration Bureau, 2004; Transport Department of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, 2009). The expansion and enhancement of transport infrastructure in Xinjiang, including the construction of extra highways, extension of networks, modification of existing important highways, as well as strengthening of roadways and associated infrastructure in the rural and border areas, were mentioned in the 11th and the 12th Five-Year Development Plans of the PRC. Twelve highways are also being constructed to link Xinjiang with Central Asia. Those road networks will also reduce travel time from Urumqi to Lianyungang, a port city in Jiangsu Province, from more than two weeks to 50 hours (Darby, 2008), making the rest of the country more closely connected to the Central Asian region. Air accessibility of this autonomous region is high when compared to its Central Asian counterparts. There are 12 airports in Xinjiang, with the Urumqi International Airport being the most important one, serving international flights to mostly Central Asian cities such as Almaty, Bishkek, Osh, Novosibirsk, Moscow, Alma-Ata, Tashkent, Baku, as well as Islamabad via Kashgar (Lonely Planet, n.d.-c). Domestic air services, which are not limited to departures from Urumqi, are available to Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou, Chengdu, Dunhuang, Xi'an and other cities in China (CNTA, 2011). There are also regular rail services between Urumqi and all the main cities in China, although cross-national trains only go to Kazakhstan via Alashankou. Other land border crossings include the Khunjerab Pass, Irkestan and Torugart Pass, and Korgas, Alashankou, Tacheng and Jimunai Pass, linking Xinjiang with Pakistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan respectively.

There has long been only one international airport in Turkmenistan, which is

Saparmurat Turkmenbashi Airport located in Ashgabat until recently. The other international airport was completed in May 2010 in Turkmenbashi, although it is not as commonly used as the old one. From Ashgabat, Turkmenistan Airlines fly to a number of international cities including London, Frankfurt, Istanbul, Beijing, Bangkok, Abu Dhabi and Delhi (DN Tours, 2011). In addition to Turkmenistan Airlines, other international carriers serving the destination include British Airways and Lufthansa Airlines, Turkish Airlines, Iran Air and Pakistan International Airlines, as well as some regional domestic carriers such as S7 Airlines and Aerosweet Airlines (OrexCA.com, n.d.-b). Besides, there are daily connections to Moscow and one or two flights per day to other Central Asian cities such as Tashkent and Yerevan (DN Tours, 2011). The number of registered carrier departures in 2010 for Turkmenistan was merely 3,221 and the volume of passengers carried was 399,468 (World dataBank, 2012). In spite of that visitors with visas can enter Turkmenistan from all bordering countries using land transport, there are no international train or bus services running between this totalitarian country and other foreign countries. There are eight border posts to enter the country, including three from Uzbekistan, two from Iran, two from Kazakhstan and one from Afghanistan, of which the Dashogus crossing and the Farab crossing adjoining Uzbekistan, as well as the Gaudan/Baigiran point linking to Iran, are the most popularly used ones (Lonely Planet, n.d.-d). It takes at least one to two hours to cross the Turkmen borders from the neighbouring countries with several passport checks and bag inspections (BBC News, 2009). Turkmenistan possesses a passenger port and terminal at Turkmenbashi at which travellers can take a cross-Caspian ferry to Baku in Azerbaijan. Within the country, the total length of the single track, non-electrified railway network is 3,080 km. The network consists majorly the main west-east route from Turkmenbashi to the Uzbekistan border near Turkmenabat via the capital Ashgabat, a branch line from Mary to Gushgy on Afghan border and another one connecting this line to the Iranian network at Sarakhs (although with a gauge change). An additional of 540 km of north-south route from Dashoguz to Ashgabat was completed in 2006. Meanwhile, the government intends to construct another north-south rail line that runs from Kazakhstan to Turkmenbashi along the Caspian coast and eventually to Iran (The World Bank, 2012a). Ninety bridges and rehabilitation of about 1,676 km of state roads have been completed under the National Development Programme; yet, the World Bank urged that there is a strong need to optimise investment in road infrastructure by focusing on demand and addressing the underlying causes for the backlog of maintenance (The World Bank, 2012a). According to CIA (2012), there were totally 58,592 km of roads in Turkmenistan, over 80% of which were paved roads in 2002. Yet, driving condition may not be favourable not really because of the quality of the physical infrastructure but more so because of the driving behaviours of the other local drivers as well as the tedious driving rules and fees issued by the government, including the chance of being fined for a dirty car used in the capital.

Comparatively, transportation development especially that of rail networks in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is constrained by their geographical locations and terrains. That explains the top priority placed by the Kyrgyz government on developing the road sub-sector. Currently, around 92% of passenger and 59% of freight traffic is carried by road, involving a road network of 34,000 km which provides connections not only to urban areas but as well as remote communities and neighbouring countries (The World Bank, 2011a). Yet, road development is severely inhibited by the predominantly alpine topography in the country where vehicles have to drive through passes that are 3,000 metres high and are in face of challenges such as frozen exhaust pipes and frequent mudslide and avalanches (Traver, 2010). According to the evaluation of the World Bank (2011b) on partnership programmes with Kyrgyzstan stated in their technical report, the current condition of road networks in the country is “generally poor to very poor (51 percent) or fair (38 percent)” (p. 9). Strengthening or reconstruction works have to be done to prevent the road assets from further deterioration. The main airport in Kyrgyzstan serving international destinations is the Manas airport in Bishkek, although there are also flights leaving for Moscow, Urumqi and Dushanbe from Osh. Destinations outside of region are limited to Dubai, Istanbul and London, operated by AC Kyrgyzstan (the national carrier), Turkish Airlines and British Airways respectively. In view of the relatively weak connectivity and limited flight choice, travellers usually make a transit at Tashkent, Almaty or Urumqi whereas some airlines such as KLM and Lufthansa offer ground shuttle service for their customers between Bishkek and Almaty (Lonely Planet, n.d.-e). Therefore, registered carrier departures only totalled to 4,775 and 269,661 passengers were carried in 2010 (World dataBank, 2012). Other land crossings are available such as the Torugart Pass and the Irkestan Pass between Kyrgyzstan and China which have been discussed before. It is still possible yet difficult to cross the Kyrgyz-Tajik border because special permit is required for the Murgab district. In addition, to traverse between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan on land, a Kazakh transit visa may be needed because most of the land routes, both roadway and railway, pass through a section of Kazakhstan. There are still 430 km of railways in Kyrgyzstan although their role in the transport sector is often neglected (The World Bank, 2011a).

Tajikistan is internationally connected by Turkish Airlines, Air Baltic and Somon Air to European cities, of which the most popular route is the weekly flight between Istanbul and Dushanbe (Visit Tajikistan, 2011). Besides, the national carrier Tajik Air serves international destination, although quite confined to the region, such as St. Petersburg and Moscow in Russia, Tehran in Iran, Urumqi in China and Dubai and Sharjah of the UAE (Tajik Air, 2012). However, there are no flights between Dushanbe and Tashkent, the major air hub in Central Asia. Travellers therefore have to rely on land transport to travel five hours to the Uzbek capital from Khojand (Lonely Planet, n.d.-f). Surprisingly, despite this relatively low accessibility of the country, the number of registered carrier departures surpassed that of Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan in 2010, totalled to 5,141, with 950,841 passengers carried (World dataBank, 2012). Although literally travellers should be able to cross through the borders to get into Tajikistan from the neighbouring countries, that may be difficult in reality. To start with, there is almost no cross-border transport between Tajikistan and its neighbours, traverses are made with a combined use of minibus and taxies. Besides, crossings are not always open to tourists. For example, although a road has been constructed along the Qolam Pass which subsequently joins the Karakoram Highway in Xinjiang, the passage is only open to Tajik and Chinese at the moment. The same applies to the border crossing into the Garm region at Karamyk between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan (Lonely Planet, n.d.-f). The most traversable crossing are those between Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Within the country, the bus or minibus network is rather limited to towns around Dushanbe and southern Tajikistan whereas the other areas are only being served by shared taxi or hired vehicles running on the country’s 27,767 km of roadways (CIA, 2012).

In addition to transport infrastructure, water and sanitation public services have also degraded substantially after the fall of the Soviet Union and its central planning. While the governments of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are gradually picking up their roles to improve and invest in public infrastructure projects, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan rely heavily on the international donor agencies for funds and technical assistance. For Turkmenistan, investments have been tilted away from the sectors of healthcare, water supply and sanitation, with disproportionally little government fund distributed to improve the quality of people's lives (The World Bank, 2012a). Also, whereas Kyrgyzstan is slowly achieving improvement in its public services with the help form the World Bank since the early 2000s (The World Bank, 2011a), Tajikistan lags behind the average of the region, with only 59% and 14% of its urban and rural population having access to public water supply and sanitation services respectively (The World Bank, 2011b). In terms of facilitating resources, such as the presence of financial services and education institutions, both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan outperform their Central Asian counterparts, basically because of their better and steadier economic development.

Regarding communication systems, again major improvements have been seen in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, signified by the improved mobile network and information technology infrastructure (Nurmakov, 2011; Zaynuddin, 2008). Yet, Internet access is still considered unaffordable for many citizens. In the region, challenges posed onto the communication system development include inadequate legislative reform, skill deficit, authoritarian practices, and disparity in knowledge level with the rest of the world (Druker, 2008). The number of Internet users in the countries is low, ranging from the highest of 33 per 100 people in Kazakhstan to the lowest of 2 per 100 people in Turkmenistan (World dataBank, 2012). The very low number of Internet users in Turkmenistan is further explained by its Xenophobic authorities restricting Internet access in the country and blocking "unfriendly sites" (Druker, 2008, p. 69).

Although it is generally acknowledged that the presence of infrastructure represents an advantage or simply a prerequisite for destination's success, it may not be always true if the existing infrastructure imposes a potential threat, as in the case of the failing Sayano-Shushenskaya hydroelectric dam in Siberia. The breach of Russia's largest dam, killing 17 people with 58 more missing, reminded governments of all the post-Soviet states of the dangers associated with the decaying Soviet-era infrastructure (Kramer, 2009). Therefore, in addition to constructing modern infrastructure, there is a pressing need for the CASs to deal with the deteriorated one.

4.1.3.2 *Software: enterprise, hospitality and institutional accessibility*

According to Crouch and Ritchie (1999), the sense of enterprise, entrepreneurship, and new venture development are influential to a destination's competitiveness. The concepts of "the sense of enterprise" and "entrepreneurship" are deemed either too vague or too broad to be measured in a specific destination. Nonetheless, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has pioneered a set of indicators to evaluate entrepreneurship in its member countries and some non-member states. Based on their model, there are three groups of indictors which include determinants, entrepreneurial performance and impacts. The determinants of entrepreneurship are namely regulatory framework, research, development and technology, entrepreneurial capabilities, culture, access to finance, and market conditions. From this, one can conclude that the vitality of entrepreneurship of a country is contributed majorly by its broader economic policy framework as well as the general business environment prevails in the country. Therefore, the following discussion primarily aims to provide a generic impression of what it is like to conduct business in the CASs and Western China.

In general, the business environment of the region has long been perceived as unfavourable. This is because in reality none of the CASs had truly experienced post-independence modern statehood; instead, their political institutions remained to be relics of the old communist system with heavy distorted industry years after the dissolution of the Soviet Union (Pasadilla, 2010). Except Kyrgyzstan, all the CASs faced internal or regional conflicts in one way or another, which hindered the confidence level in the business market. Perhaps reforms were the most progressive in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan which had initiated privatisation of many state-owned enterprises (Pasadilla, 2010). That is why they are ranked much higher based on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index in 2012, when compared to the other CASs (The World Bank, 2012b) [36]. Unlike the fast reformers, the gradualists such as Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan were sceptical towards privatisation. Tajikistan had

[36] Out of 183 countries, Kazakhstan was ranked 47th; Kyrgyzstan was ranked 70th; Tajikistan was ranked 147th; and Uzbekistan was ranked 166th (The World Bank, 2012b).

been in a state of civil war until 1995. Therefore, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are ranked very low by the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index in 2012 (The World Bank, 2012b) whereas Turkmenistan was not included in the ranking due to the unavailability of information[37]. Overall, enterprises emerged during the post-independence period had to deal with difficulties of a macroeconomic environment marked by hyperinflation, financial system collapse, major structural adjustments and an institutional vacuum (Pasadilla, 2010). While some of the privatised state-owned enterprises became medium or large-sized enterprises, all the other small to medium-sized firms have to start their business from scratch.

Kazakhstan has progressed a lot in terms of crafting a favourable business environment in the past years. Especially in 2009, the Government announced a series of large-scale support measures such as the recapitalisation of banks, support for the real estate and agriculture sectors as well as small to medium-sized enterprises (Ernst & Young, 2011). Since then, Kazakhstan has been moving up the ladder on the World Bank's East of Doing Business ranking, from the 58th place in 2011 and 47th in 2012 (The World Bank, 2012b). Furthermore, the Government has issued a strategic direction of economic diversification towards non-extractive tradable and continuous effort is made to accelerate reforms in business enabling area to increase investment in non-oil areas (The World Bank, 2012c). Tourism businesses are one of the beneficiaries under this policy climate.

Despite a better inception, business environment in Kyrgyzstan is still uncertain because of its weak economic governance and a high level of perceived corruption, coupled with the general perception of national instability, as a result of the 2010 Kyrgyz revolution and riots in Southern Kyrgyzstan (The World Bank, 2011a). Even more drastic than the influence of the global financial crisis, the violent events strongly affected the business sector by worsening loan quality. Although the country is gradually recovering from the post-event effects, the economy is weak and inflation still stood as high as 17.5% as of August 2011.

[37] Information for Turkmenistan is usually unavailable as explained by, Pasadilla (2010), statistics are considered as state secret in the country.

Uzbekistan, despite its claims of having a favourable investment climate and outstanding industrial performances (Uzbekistan Today, 2010a), continues to be a hassle-filled place for private enterprises. According to the results of the Enterprise Survey conducted from 2005-2008 by the World Bank and the International Finance Cooperation (2009), “gift requests” from government officials to get things done is common and has increased over time (p.6). This phenomenon of informal payment is more prominently faced by small to medium-sized firms. Meanwhile, security costs, being counted as a percentage of sales, has also increased by more than four times from 2005 to 2008. More recently, there is a steep decrease of foreign investment in the country. There was a 42% drop of foreign investment volume in the first quarter of 2012 when compared to the same period in 2010, as reported by the State Statistics Committee (Uzbekistan Newswire, 2012b).

Contrasting with Kazakhstan which fully embraces the market economy, private sector in Turkmenistan remains insignificant (Pasadilla, 2012). That can be reasoned by the country’s economy being heavily concentrated around the hydrocarbon cluster. The banking/ financial sector, as well as the service sector, are highly under-developed (The World Bank, 2012a). Furthermore, private land ownership is not allowed; hence, most of the industries are state-owned. Currently, private ownership of companies is only permitted in the retail trade and service sector. The U.S. Department of Commerce (2012) outlined the challenges of doing business in Turkmenistan as the inconsistent and non-transparent business legislation, corruption at all levels of the government, lack of standard knowledge and difficult market entry.

Although Tajikistan’s economy is steadily recovering from the post-independence recessions and civil conflicts of the 1990s, improving the low rate of private investment stays as a major challenge for the Tajik Government (The World Bank, 2011b). Tajikistan has taken proactive measures in developing the private sector by improving the business environment, including the simplification of entry regulations and tax relaxation, and managing relations with the neighbouring countries. Due to these reforms, Tajikistan has been listed as the top ten countries which have improved their business environment the most worldwide consecutively in 2010 and 2011 (The World Bank, 2012b). Despite this, major development challenges remain which include unstable electricity supply, corruption of public officials, difficult access to funds and unqualified and inadequate labour skills.

Despite the ethnic violence and unrest that happened in Urumqi and Kashgar of Xinjiang in July 2009, the economic wellbeing of this autonomous region has quickly recovered. The major reason behind is Beijing's attention shed on this region in the hope that prosperous economic and social development would deter local residents away from the influences of religious fundamentalism. Xinjiang is one of the beneficiaries of the Go-West Policy which demands growing investment in the region, as outlined in Chapter 1. To do so, long-term tax incentives are offered and the status of several cities will be changed so as to attract additional investments, both from domestic and foreign enterprises. The first of such cities is Kashgar, which has been given the state-level approval to establish itself as an economic development zone in 2010 (China Briefing, 2010). Furthermore, major State-owned companies, such as PetroChina and Shenhua Group, decided to double their investments in Xinjiang to US$155 billion in a five-year period of 2011-2015 (Global Times, 2011). Other than the exploitation industries namely oil and mining industries, investments are also put in railway, road, communication, hydropower and other infrastructure (People's Daily Online, 2011). Tourism, especially those from the Chinese domestic market to the region, has been strongly encouraged. Summarised by Devonshire-Ellis (2010), conducting business in Xinjiang enjoys the benefits of a good source and manufacturing market, possibility of getting longer term tax incentives, comparatively lower wage levels and space and utility costs. Nevertheless, the ethnic and religious tension is still present, leading to an additional risk factor for enterprises to consider.

The CASs, especially the traditional families and nomadic herders, are known for their generous hospitality. The welcoming image of the CASs is being postulated by the numerous accounts of travellers and journalists on their first-hand experiences with the locals (see for example, CentralAsia_traveler, 2008; Creamcrackered, 2007; The New York Times, 2009)[38], as well as the emphases placed by the destinations (see, for example, Elite T2, personal communication, October 8, 2010; Faizulloev, in TravelMole, 2010), the service providers (see for example, OrexCA.com, n.d.-d; Rajabova, n.d.), and in the travel literature on CASs (see for example, MacLeod &

[38] Web log comments from Lonely Planet travel forum: Thorn Tree travel forum

Mayhew, 2002; Stewart, 2004). Stories of travellers being given a lift to places or being invited to meals and more to teas are told over and over again, as Creamcrackered (2007) “warned”, “In fact the risks of overdosing on hospitality are far greater - there's only so much tea you can drink and watermelon you can eat” (msg 1, para 1). In contrast, in the cities and at popular tourist sites travellers continue to report experiences of the fading hospitality in these countries. Due to the development of tourism and the increasing number of tourists in the cities, cases were reported that tourists are being overcharged at hotels, restaurants and taxies due to the two-tier pricing commonly practised in the industry. Travellers made comments along the line that, “the Tajik and Kyrgyz just see you as another walking money bill” (msg 4, para 2). In addition, the “Soviet service culture” remains amongst the workforce of the hospitality sector in the CASs, marked by services that are “exceedingly nonattentive, remote, and inefficient” (Lehtinen, 1991, p. 141). The concept of service as an experience, rather than a product, is yet to be developed. Although similar observation prevails in Xinjiang, situation has been improved under the current tourism policy of CNTA, with the aim to improve tourism service system and update service quality in various tourism regions (Wu, 2011), and the introduction of foreign hospitality management in Xinjiang (Elite K3, personal communication, December 30, 2010).

Other than the availability of physical infrastructure and transport services, accessibility of a destination is also shaped by various factors, often dependent on the broader economic, social or political framework, which are beyond the influence of its mere physical location (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). One of these factors is the issuance of entry visas and permits to the country that is considerably relevant in this Central Asian region. Traditionally, the CASs only allowed visa exemption or visa on arrival for citizens from some of the CIS countries. Tourists from all the other countries had to apply for a visa via a local travel agency because visa application had to be made with an invitation letter issued by an authorised entity. The process was considered complicated and time-consuming in view of the inadequate number of overseas consulates of the CASs. However, visa regimes have recently been relaxed for the CASs, with the exception of Turkmenistan. For example, the Kyrgyz Government has issued a visa-free regime for a list of 17 countries of which Korean Democratic People`s Republic (North Korea), Mongolia, Socialist Republic of Vietnam, Turkish Republic and Japan do not belong to the group of CIS. Besides, citizens from another 41 European countries as well as from Australia, the Republic of Korea, Singapore and the U.S. can apply a visa in their personal capacity without using a travel agent (Advantour, 2012c). In this way, not only can the accessibility of Kyrgyzstan be increased, but also its competitiveness as emphasised by Elite P1, *"(it) at least means that as a destination, we stand a chance of attracting interest of possible tourists."* Elite T2 also expressed that, learning from the example of Kyrgyzstan, "*Uzbektourism (has been) working with the Government of Uzbekistan on removing visa requirements for Japanese, Malaysian, French, German, and American tourists"*. At the moment, citizens from those selected European countries, Japan and Malaysia can apply a visa without an "Uzbekistan visa support", which is equivalent to the letter of invitation (Advantour, 2012d). Besides, Uzbekistan also pioneered the practice of having the visa issued at the arrival lounge of the Tashkent International Airport under certain conditions[39]. For Tajikistan, visitors from most of the CIS countries as well as India and Iran do not need a visa to enter the country. In addition, there is a list of 80 countries of which citizens can enjoy a simplified visa procedure. Permit to the GBAO region can be requested in conjunction with the application of a travel visa (Embassy of Tajikistan, 2010). Furthermore, Visit Tajikistan (2011) stated on their travel leaflets that tourist visas are now available to most visitors upon arriving at the Dushanbe International Airport. Similar to Tajikistan, Kazakhstan requires a visa for citizens from all non-CIS countries. The application of a Kazakh visa has to be made with a letter of invitation issued by either a local travel agency or a business organisation, with exceptions for citizens coming from 34 developed countries including most countries in Europe, the U.S. and Canada in North America, Australia and New Zealand as well as Japan and Malaysia in Asia (Visit Kazakhstan, n.d.-b). As mentioned by Elite E4, *"particularly in 2012, Kazakhstan plans to introduce visa-free entry to tourists from 13 industrialised countries"*, though the list of countries remains unannounced as of the date of the research. Aligned with the comments made by Elite P1,

> *"Turkmenistan is quite difficult for example, the regulations and such, is quite difficult to get tourists to get into Turkmenistan sometimes and I am not saying that they are not interested in tourism; I am just saying it can*

[39] Condition 1: There is no Uzbek Embassy or Consulate in the country where the traveller originates his/her flight to Uzbekistan; condition 2: Connecting flights to Uzbekistan, in the country where Uzbek Embassy or Consulate exists, does not allow enough time to obtain a visa.

be difficult." (Elite P1, interview transcript)

The visa regime remains restrctive in Turkmenistan under which all foreign nationals need a visa support from a licensed travel agency in Turkmenistan and the visa application and procedure normally take three weeks. Although it is possible to obtain a visa of maximum 10 days at the international arrival lounge of the Ashgabat Airport, same documents including the approved support letter are needed. Therefore, institutional accessibility of Turkmenistan continues to be unfavourable.

All nationals are required a visa to enter China. Yet, the procedures and requirements for a tourist visa are not as complicated when compared to those of the CASs, especially for citizens from most of the developed countries such as countries in the EU and North America (China Visa Application Service Centre, n.d.). Although there are rumours that a special permit is needed to visit Xinjiang, it is not the case in reality, except for journalists (Fearcuairt, 2009). The regional law requires travellers to register with the local Public Security Bureau within 24 hours upon their arrival in Xinjiang, but the registration is normally done by the hotels where the travellers stay (Jean-Pierre D, 2011).

4.1.4 Qualifying determinant: location and interdependencies

As mentioned in Chapter 2, qualifying determinants are situational conditions that define the scale, limit or potential of destination competitiveness (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999). The two qualifying determinants of location and interdependencies here are some embedded characteristics of a destination of which tourism managers can hardly have any influence on.

The role of location, as an influential factor of destination attractiveness, is easily understandable. Although the actual location of a destination can never be changed, its relative location to important origin markets can evolve over time. This is exactly the situation for the CASs and Western China. Being in close proximity with source markets of growing importance including China, Russia and India, the CASs have improved their competitive position. This will be even more so with the improved connectivity by rail networks of the region in the near future. Yet, variance of the influential levels of location among destinations in Central Asia is currently apparent. Xinjiang, having an immediate accessibility, both physically and institutionally, to China and the major markets in Central Asia, is not only a trade hub but also the most prosperous tourist destination in the region. Besides, Kyrgyzstan as the crossroad between China and Uzbekistan, the two most important Silk Road destinations, is being benefited from its location, as verified by Elite P1, *"... if they (the travellers) want to do the Silk Road on land, they basically have to go through Kyrgyzstan"*. Although these Silk Road tours usually imply limited tourists' lengths of stay in the country that may not be long enough to generate substantial tourism receipts, they still represent opportunities and a general vision. It is because the Silk Road brand draws tourists to Kyrgyzstan that would not pay a visit to the remote country otherwise (Elite P1). Looking into this opportunity, Kazakhstan also intends to position itself as a transit corridor between China and Europe with the development of new infrastructure (Elite E4). Tajikistan, despite its enthusiasm to be a Silk Road destination, does not get much of the Silk Road travel at the moment because, *"it is not really at the centre, for many people, that is not the main (Silk Road) product"* (Elite T3). Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, possessing some of the most ancient and important Silk Road attractions, bear a lesser influence from their locations.

Interdependences of destinations can be either competitive or complementary. The most prominent complementary effect of interdependencies in the CASs and Western China is the emergence of Silk Road travel. As established in the beginning chapter, one CAS alone may not stand strong enough as a competitive destination but the Silk Road as a whole does because of its fascinating image and history translating into resilient drawing power. This is confirmed by the elites of the study, *"we realised that the western tourists or foreign tourists would not come to visit or see one country state here. That's why we have to work together to cooperate on promoting this (Silk Road) project as a whole for foreign or western tourists"* (Elite T2). This helps further reaffirm the need for the current study, looking at cross-national tourism collaboration between the CASs and Western China as a set of Silk Road destinations. Yet, certain kinds of interdependent relationship pose unfavourable effects on a destination. Particularly for the CASs, the presence of wars, terrorism and extreme fundamentalist activities in the neighbouring countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan or the general political and social instability amongst the CASs, hugely reduce the attractiveness and competitiveness of the countries as a tourist destination.

Therefore, the brand of the Silk Road can strategically be used to dilute these negative images and convey a much more positive message to potential visitors. Therefore, in spite of the fact that the CASs and Western China own some of the world's most appealing natural and cultural tourism resources, their tourism competitiveness has been scaled down by their remote location to the present source markets and the instability prevails in the proximity.

4.1.5 Summary of resources in the CASs and Xinjiang

Table 4.3 Summary of findings on "resources" in the CASs and Xinjiang

Countries / Resources	Core resources & attractors	Supporting factors & resources	Qualifying determinants
Kazakhstan	**Physiography:** - Nature reserves - Flora & fauna **Culture & history:** - Cultural diversity & contemporary culture in urban cities **Market ties:** - Russian ethnic ties - Business ties **Activities & events:** - Winter sports - Entertainment - International sports events **Tourism superstructure:** - Variety of hotels - Tourism & entertainment centres	**Hardware (infrastructure, supporting facilities, physical accessibility):** - Well-developed infrastructure, especially transport network - Significant improvement in water & sanitation infrastructure - Better development in systems of financial & educational institutions - Communication systems obtained improvement in terms of physical facilities; yet modifications on human resources and management competence are needed - High international connectivity **Software (enterprise, hospitality, institutional accessibility):** - Significant improvement in entrepreneurship/ business environment - Variation in levels of hospitality between cities - Moderate institutional accessibility	**Location:** - In proximity to growing economies, including China and Russia **Interdependencies:** - Complementary to other Silk Road destinations - Can be in competition with Kyrgyzstan for the crossroad position
Kyrgyzstan	**Physiography:** - Tian Shan chains	**Hardware (infrastructure, supporting facilities, physical**	**Locations:** - Located at the

	- Highland lakes **Culture & history:** - Nomadic lifestyle **Market ties:** - Ethnics ties - Business ties (traders) **Activities & events:** - Trekking & mountaineering - Nomadic life experience **Tourism superstructure:** - Variety of hotels needs improvement	**accessibility):** - Less-developed infrastructure - Comparatively less competitive accessibility - Improvements are being made on water & sanitation projects **Software (enterprise, hospitality, institutional accessibility):** - Significant improvement in business environment - Generally hospitable population, except in the popular tourism cities - Improvement in institutional accessibility are visible	crossroad between China and Uzbekistan, two important Silk Road destinations **Interdependencies:** - Complementary to other Silk Road destinations - Can be in competition with Kazakhstan for the crossroad position
Tajikistan	**Physiography:** - Pamir, “Roof of the World” **Culture & history:** - Mountain tribes **Market ties:** - Ethnic ties - Increased business ties **Activities & events:** - Trekking & mountaineering **Tourism superstructure:** - Community-based networks (home stays)	**Hardware (infrastructure, supporting facilities, physical accessibility):** - Inadequate infrastructure, including transportation - Improvement in public services, including water and sanitation services, is lagging behind the regional progress - Physical accessibility is relatively poor **Software (enterprise, hospitality, institutional accessibility):** - Despite substantial improvement in entrepreneurship and business environment, further progress is needed - Imparity of hospitality levels between rural and city areas - Institutional accessibility has been greatly improved	**Locations:** - Poor location, not perceived as the main Silk Road product by potential visitors **Interdependencies:** - Borders Afghanistan whose image is associated with wars and terrorism
Turkmenistan	**Physiography:** - Desert **Culture & history:** - Ancient oasis towns - Silk Road heritages **Market ties:** - Turkic ethnic ties **Activities & events:** - Jeep travel - Horseback riding **Tourism**	**Hardware (infrastructure, supporting facilities, physical accessibility):** - Cross-national transport is non-existent - Internal transport infrastructure is reasonable - Development focus tilted away from improving people’s quality of life - Authoritarian practices hinder communication development **Software (enterprise, hospitality, institutional**	**Locations:** - Lesser influence due to the non-replicable resources the destination possess **Interdependencies:** - Complementary to other Silk Road destinations - Borders Afghanistan whose image is associated with wars and terrorism

	superstructure: - Coastal resort	**accessibility):** - Insignificant private sector - Difficult business environment - Institutional accessibility is far underdeveloped	
Uzbekistan	**Physiography:** - Desert & valley basins **Culture & history:** - Silk Road heritages - Ancient oasis towns **Market ties:** - Islamic religious ties - Deportation ethnic ties **Activities & events:** - Camel safari - International tourism events - International sport tournaments **Tourism superstructure:** - Variety of hotels	**Hardware (infrastructure, supporting facilities, physical accessibility):** - Significant improvement in infrastructure - Regional transportation hub - Better reforms in financial and educational systems - Better water and sanitation services - Yet, electricity supply is unstable **Software (enterprise, hospitality, institutional accessibility):** - Entrepreneurship needs major improvement - Hospitality varies between cities - Improved institutional accessibility	**Locations:** - Lesser influence due to the non-replicable resources the destination possess **Interdependencies:** - Complementary to other Silk Road destinations
Xinjiang	**Physiography:** - Unique natural sceneries **Culture & history:** - Oasis bazaars - Mix of cultures: Chinese and Islamic - Mix of religions: Islam and Buddhism **Market ties:** - Business ties - Ethnics ties **Activities & events:** - Local events - Experience learnt from other destinations in China **Tourism superstructure:** - Variety of hotels and accommodation options	**Hardware (infrastructure, supporting facilities, physical accessibility):** - Huge investment from state-owned companies on infrastructure development - Relatively more developed transport infrastructure - High accessibility both to the China mainland and Central Asia & international connectivity **Software (enterprise, hospitality, institutional accessibility):** - Favourable business environment & entrepreneurship - Hospitality varies and may be conditioned, yet service quality is being emphasised in CNTA's planning in the coming years - Institutional accessibility has been significantly improved over the years	**Locations:** - In close proximity to China and important markets in Central Asia, both in terms of physical and institutional accessibility - **Interdependencies:** - Complementary to other famous and mature Silk Road destinations in China, such as Dunhuang and Xi'an - Complementary to Silk Road destinations in Central Asia

The above table (Table 4.3) presents the summarised findings on the resources, including the core resources and attractors, supporting factors and resources, as well as the qualifying determinants of location and interdependencies, of the CASs and Xinjiang. In short, Xinjiang, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan have overall more solid comparative advantages although Uzbekistan has to further improve its institutional ability and general business environment to be on par with Xinjiang and Kazakhstan. Turkmenistan has huge potentials mainly because of the core resources it owns yet the potentials are constrained by the government's authoritarian and totalitarian rule. Kyrgyzstan, although being more interested in tourism development, is tied up by many limitations, with finance being the most obvious one. Tajikistan is the least advantaged in all factors, regardless of its continuous effort to improve.

4.2 Management

Albeit there are abundant resources for tourism development, performances in terms of visitor number and tourism receipts in the region, especially those of the CASs, are still substandard. This proves Crouch and Ritchie's (1999) argument right. They argued that, "a destination endowed with a wealth of resources may not be as competitive as a destination lacking in resources but which is utilising the little it has much more effectively" (Crouch & Ritchie, 1999, p. 143). Therefore, it is important to analyse the management competence of the CASs and Xinjiang to evaluate whether they can effectively turn their comparative advantages into competitive advantages over the long term.

In the conceptual framework, it is suggested that destination management, together with destination policy, planning and development, as well as safety, cost and brand should be put under the construct of *management*. However, when operationalising the conceptual framework, it was found that the discussion of management cannot be meaningfully made via a pure descriptive means. It is because unlike resources, tourism management does not always exist in these post-Communist or Communist states. On the contrary, ideas like tourism marketing and service quality management are some relatively alien concepts in these countries (Elite T3, personal communication, March 10, 2011). Therefore, instead of describing the various (or even non-existent) sub-components of tourism management, the following discussion will first focus on the challenges of tourism development in the region, followed by describing and explaining the differences in tourism management approaches of the five CASs and Xinjiang.

4.2.1 Challenges for tourism development in the Central Asian region

When asked to comment on the current tourism development on the Silk Road and in the respective CASs and Xinjiang, the respondents had a general consensus that improvements have been made in several areas. First, the creation of a single tourism space in terms of improving the cross-border tourist routes and destination brand building as well as a slow yet steady increase in tourist traffic (Elite E1, E4, O2, P1, T2; key informant K1, K2, K3); second, the development of community-based tourism especially in Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan (Elite P1, T3); and third, gradual realisation of the importance of tourism development to national economies, either by the governments and their subsidiary tourism bodies or by the industry practitioners in the countries (Elite E1, E2, P1, T2, T3, T4; key informant K4). Yet, tourism potentials are not sufficiently materialised in the region. The respondents explained the underdevelopment by various challenges which are summarised in the following dendrogram (Figure 4.2). The challenges can be broadly categorised into internal and external challenges. These primary findings are consistent to the presumptions established in the beginning chapters as well as results generated from the secondary data discussed previously on the component of Resources.

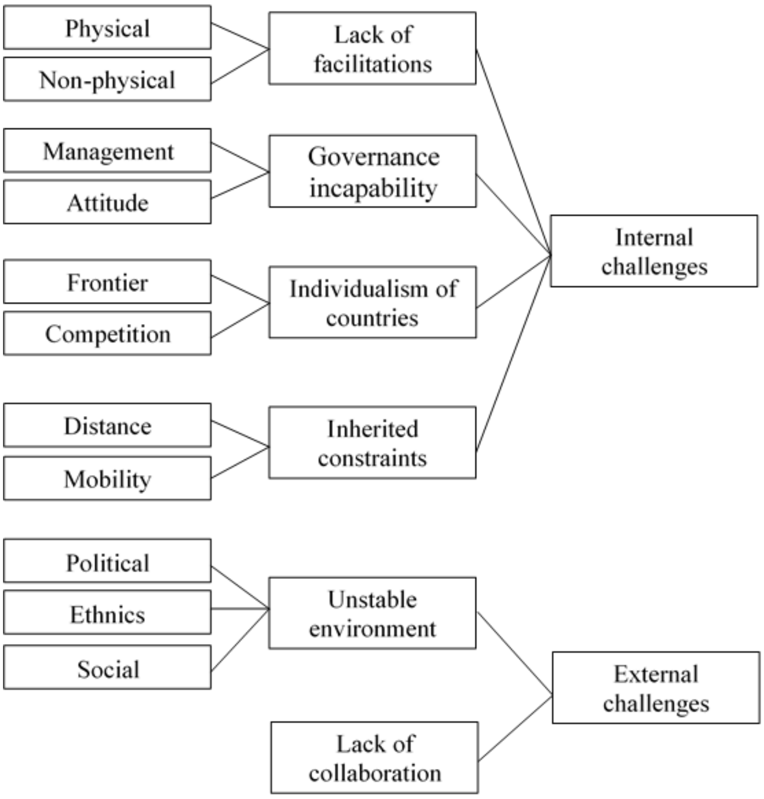

Figure 4.2 Dendrogram: challenges for tourism development in Central Asia and Xinjiang
Source: Own illustration, based on analysis of primary data

Internally, the number one challenge is the lack of both physical and non-physical facilitations for tourism development. The respondents were generally concerned with the slow progress in *"tourism capacity building"* (Elite K1), which has been on the agenda of discussion in the region for many years. Their concerns were not only related to the physical facilitations in terms of expanding infrastructure, transportation networks and the variety of tourism facilities, but more so to the non-physical facilitations such as the establishment of uniformity and standard of the quality of tourism products and services as well as sufficient investments for further development. They believed that with the improvement of non-physical facilitations, the expansion of physical capacity would follow. As mentioned in the preceding section, in view of the current tourist demand, it is not as important to build more physical facilities as to enhance the quality of tourist experience. Only with more tourist demand can investments be attracted to further improve the countries' infrastructure and tourism superstructure in higher quality and quantity.

The second most-mentioned internal challenge is the incapable governance of these

Central Asian countries which involves both the incompetent management and the indifferent altitude of the governments towards tourism. The CASs possess a different management style from that of the mainstream western perspective. One of the key informants (K4) gave an overall picture of their management as that *"... they (the CASs) don't observe the normal rule of law"*. Elite T3 also stressed that the CASs have not yet developed a habit of doing business in a way that can match the western practices prevailing in the tourism industry and attributed the reason behind to the countries' *"mentalistic"* culture (Elite T3, interview transcript). In addition to being embedded in their culture, the lack of management competence of the CASs is associated with their insufficient knowledge and experience of the tourism industry, both at the government and industry level. At the government level, a fact given by Elite T3 is that *"they somehow know that tourism could be something good to the country but they have not understood yet how strong actually tourism could be or how strong tourism is in other countries"*. As a result, they are still in the process of rationalising tourism as a significant economic sector that contributes to the national budgets and transforming their development intentions into ground strategies and actual actions. An example as such is given by Elite T3 for the case in Tajikistan:

> *"There is a national development strategy or a national poverty reduction strategy paper and in these papers, tourism is already mentioned. So on the papers, actually you already have this tourism development on the position that you would expect everybody to support it but it really at the moment is only on the paper, not in reality, in the stage that not a lot of effort is being put into it."* (Elite T3, interview transcript)

Although industry practitioners in these countries have been more active in fostering tourism development, they may not perform in the most effective manner. They, to a certain extent, do not know how to make use of the resources that they have and turn them into profitable tourism products. Other than incompetent management, the indifferent attitude of the governments or more often some of their administrative departments hold towards tourism is another challenge. There are several causes for their viewing tourism as an insignificant industry. First, the idea of developing tourism as a contributor to the national economies is paradoxical in nature for some countries. For example in Turkmenistan, the population is tiny yet they have some of the largest gas fields in the world. They do not see developing tourism as their priority simply because the revenue brought by tourism is small when compared to that generated by exporting energy-related products. For less privileged countries like Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, due to their limited budgets, they are not at the position to prioritise the development of tourism over the improvement of the countries' basic infrastructure and social benefits. The second reason is the lack of results of current effort in developing tourism. Tourism is an industry of which results take time to surface (Elite E1) and in some cases results from tourism, namely the tax revenue generated, are not as good as the governments would have expected (Elite P1). As agreed by Elite T3, sharing the situation he experienced in Tajikistan,

> *"It's difficult because it will take quite some time I guess because they have to develop results. At the moment it's an experiment. Nobody knows what it means. So tourism committee tries, with the help of the international experts at the country, and they are with very limited resources, financial resources, to generate results to show tourists are coming to the country and tourists are spending money in the country which will contribute to the income of the people who work in the tourism sector. But still it takes some time"* (Elite T3, interview transcript)

Even more problematic is the third cause. Some of the CASs may view tourism in a materialistic way. They regard tourism merely as a money-making industry that destroys their traditional value (Elite O2) or a channel through which the outside world would get to know their weaknesses (Key informant K4).

The third group of challenges mentioned by the respondents is the individualism of the countries, symbolised by their visa and immigration complications as well as the very strict frontier formalities. Key informant K4 observed that the issue of individualism of the five CASs did not only begin upon their independence from the Soviet Union but more so because of Stalin's tactics of setting up administrative borders within the Union under his governance. He explained,

> *"Stalin came and made these borders which have nothing to do with the ethnic balance of the people. He drew borders in order to divide those people and weaken them and the legacy is a catastrophe because it makes it almost inevitable that they would fight of water, they would fight of minerals… And*

> *struggling over displacement of the people, you know the Kyrgyzstan problem of the riots at the South where Uzbeks fighting with Kyrgyz and all of this stuff is largely the result of Stalin's borders"* (Key informant K4, interview transcript)

Furthermore, the individualism of the CASs has not been eliminated but intensified after the collapse of the Soviet Union for the following reasons given by Elite T3,

> *"… It's because they (CASs) are such young countries or they are still in the process of finding their own identities and concentrating on their own countries or developing their countries. They don't feel very much like opening up already for the rest of the world because they don't feel very strong at the moment."* (Elite T3, interview transcript)

That does not only pose an immediate effect on the prosperity of intraregional travel among the CASs, but more importantly is its being one of the major obstacles for tourism collaboration in the region. As a presumption established in Chapter 1, it is more difficult for the CASs to be competitive in the world travel market without them collaborating with each other due to some of their inherited constraints. These constraints were reconfirmed by the informants in the interviews, as they were named as a kind of internal challenges for tourism development in the region. One of the inherited constraints is the distance of the countries from the source markets which needs no further explanation. The other one is the limited mobility of the people to go into, out and across these countries because of the lack of actual accessibility and other institutional restrictions. Furthermore, as K4 mentioned above, individualism could be a trigger of ethnic conflicts and social instability in the region, which is one of the major external challenges raised by the informants in the study.

Referring toFigure 4.2, unstable environment in terms of political, ethnic and social instability is one of the major obstacles for tourism development in the region because *"without security, one cannot develop tourism"* (Elite O2). Key informant K3 pointed out that *"their (the CASs') development would be much slower, mainly because of the political instability"*, especially for Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Elite P1 acknowledged that *"(Kyrgyzstan) had a little trouble history last, one could say, over 10 years"*. For example, in 2011 alone, there were about 1000 protests in Kyrgyzstan for reasons such as complaints towards justice, the U.S. military base, minibus fares and interest rate on loans (Koichieva, 2011). Experts and observers explained that the resentment of the population was due to the fact that the rule of law in the country has not been fully established so people found that they cannot access power, the government and justice via the legal systems (Heathershaw, 2011, cited in Koichieva, 2011[40]). On top of the social instability illustrated by the numerous demonstrations, there were two major revolutions in Kyrgyzstan, one in 2005 and the other one in 2010, both took place just before the presidential election. It is said in some commentaries that these revolutions were solely used to serve political agendas yet the latter uprising was also followed by an ethnic conflict between Kyrgyz and Uzbek, in which 75,000 Uzbek refugees had fled across the border to Uzbekistan while many were killed or injured (Saralayeva & Merkushev, 2010). These events had adversely affected the tourism industry. According to Elite T2, the 2010 revolution had cost 85% loss of Kyrgyz tourism in that season. This is reconfirmed by Elite P1 who made the following comment, "*the revolutions last year[41] which closed the borders because… it caused a break in that particular trade and its position".* Until now, terrorist attacks like suicide bombings, either real cases or only false alarms, are constantly reported in the country (Elite P1, personal communication, January 1, 2012). That is the reason why the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, which provides one of the most comprehensive travel advice services to its citizens, has listed Kyrgyzstan as a destination to which travellers should "reconsider their need to travel". They indicated that the country is prone to volatile and unpredictable security situations (Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2012a).

The situation is only slightly better for Tajikistan. Tajikistan went straight into a civil war between the Moscow-backed government and the Islamic-led opposition and pro-democracy groups after its independence in 1992, claiming up to 50,000 lives and over one-tenth of the population left the country. The war ended in 1997 with a United Nations-brokered peace agreement (BBC Monitoring, 2011). Not only has the Tajik economy not recovered from the devastation of the civil war, the population remained is young and comparatively less productive which hampers the country's economic

[40] Dr. John Heathershaw, who is expert in Central Asian political study at the University of Exeter, was interviewed by Koichieva in the online video of BBC News on October 26, 2011.
[41] The interview was conducted in 2011; hence the informant was referring to the revolution in 2010.

revival. Commentators hinted that the country's economic hardship is going to contribute to a renewed interest in Islam yet in more radical forms among the unemployed youths (BBC Monitoring, 2011). Political violence has diminished significantly after the civil war, prompting the Overseas Security Advisory Council (OSAC) of the United States (2012a) to make the statement that "Tajikistan is a safe country to visit and live in" (para.1). Nonetheless, localised instability is still present, especially in the Rasht Valley. In accordance with the OSAC report, the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2012b) advised its citizens to "exercise a high degree of caution" when travelling to Tajikistan while the border regions with Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Afghanistan and the Rasht Valley were labelled as places that travellers should reconsider their need to travel to.

Surprisingly, in spite of the favourable comments of the informants on the stable development of Uzbekistan, OSAC had issued two travel warnings for the country in April 2011 and July 2010 respectively (OSAC, n.d.). The Council alerted its citizens of the potentials for terrorist attacks or localised civil disturbance, especially those of an anti-U.S. nature, in the country. The Economist (2009) reported violent incidents in the city of Andijan and the border post at Khanabad and suggested that Uzbekistan has been susceptible to Islamic militants ever since it once again became a transit on the supply route for the non-lethal goods of the U.S. and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization to get into Afghanistan. Those attacks also raised fears of increased tensions in the heavily populated and largely agricultural Fergana Valley, especially in the city of Andijan, the site where a rather large-scale insurgency took place and ended up with the Uzbek troop causing almost 800 civilian casualties in 2005 (OSAC, 2012b). However, with the death of Osama bin Laden, the founder and leader of the al-Qaeda group, OSAC adjusted the level of political violence and civil unrest in Uzbekistan to medium. Similar to Tajikistan, Uzbekistan is classified as a destination in which travellers should "exercise a high degree of caution" by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2012c). Exceptions are applied to Andijan and the eastern region of the Fergana Valley, as well as regions bordering Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Afghanistan to which travellers should reconsider their travel plan.

Equally caught the candidate in surprise is that despite Turkmenistan's despotic rule, Fredholm (2003) concluded that it is a country politically and socially more stable when compared to the other CASs. That is mostly because of the country's authoritarian regime itself, coupled with its rather homogenous population and a range of highly-valued welfare programmes in which most of the public utilities and health services are free to the Turkmen citizens. Yet, there are still some potential causes for instability in the country such as possible popular unrest, Islamic extremism, and coup d'etat within the ruling elites (Fredholm, 2003). In the long term, a more even distribution of wealth is deemed to be crucial to sustain the country's stability. Although the study informants were sceptical towards the political regime of Turkmenistan and its internal security, it is a destination belonging to the category of "exercise normal safety precautions" according to the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2012d), except for the Turkmenistan/Afghanistan border which is labelled as "do not travel". Turkmenistan is overall being regarded like any regular destinations in which travellers are advised to pay attention to potential threats as they would do in their home country.

Kazakhstan is comparatively the most stable among other Central Asian post-Soviet republics basically because it has a much better economy – the largest in Central Asia. Though not much has been progressed in terms of democratic freedom, the President and his government have performed very well on economic growth and maintaining the country's stability. However, this image of stability was shattered by the violent events happened in late 2011 (Jones & Smith-Spark, 2011). That two-day violence erupted in Aktau, capital of the oil-producing Mangistau region, was descended from a long-running industrial dispute by oil workers against the company's maltreatment and low pay (BBC, 2011b). Regardless of this rare hint of instability, the country is safe to travel in. The Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2012e) categorised Kazakhstan as a destinations of "exercise normal safety precautions".

Ironically, although many parts of China are considered as safe places to travel to, the two autonomous regions in the west are the exclusions. Based on the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's (2012f) classification, Xinjiang and Tibet are destinations in which travellers should exercise a higher degree of caution. Because of the Urumqi riots in July 2009, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region was widely known for its heightened ethnic tensions between Uyghur and Han Chinese. Protests and violent incidents have been more common since that date. Instead of pointing an accusing finger at Uyghur Islamic militants like Beijing did, outside observers related the causes of the Uyghur population's discontentment to the heavy-handed rule by Beijing for decades and the large-scale in-migration of Han Chinese, who had forced the locals out of jobs and livelihoods (BBC, 2011a). Until today, the situation is volatile. For example, in July 2011, a series of violent incidents occurred in Kashgar in which a number of people were killed and injured (Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2012e). In case of any violent incidents, it is the norm for the government to restrict movement and communications in the cities affected.

Reviewing the consequences of all these violent events posed on tourism, they did not only affect the tourists' perception towards the destinations but also altered some of the destinations' own institutional policies regarding tourists. For example, Xinjiang was anxious that their instability would be shown to foreign visitors after the event in July 2009; hence, the government issued a tightened visa restriction, which in fact prohibited all inbound travel to the autonomous region, and monitored movement of visitors in the specific cities. Even today, it is being widely discussed on Thorn Tree Travel Forum (2012) that there is a higher chance of a refusal if cities in Xinjiang were mentioned in the itinerary submitted when applying for a Chinese visa.

An assessment of the causes of these social unrests and violent incidents reveals that there are two major reasons for instability in the region. The first one is related to the economic situations in these countries. The causes of almost all of the above-mentioned social unrests and protests were a result of discontent of the people derived from economic hardships or unfair distribution of national wealth. This is consistent to the thoughts of the previously cited scholars, who claimed that the rapid deterioration in the economy "sharpens the social conflicts and threatens the social stability" in the CASs (Weitz, 2011a, para. 4). The other reason is the threats associated with Islamic extremism, which may evolve into Islamic terrorism. Although the influence of the various militant Islamic organisations such as al-Qaeda, Taliban as well as the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan[42] has recently been weakened, they still represent potential fuses to terrorist activities in the Central Asian region. In fact, the

[42] The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan is a small but tough group of militants of which members included citizens of several ex-Soviet republics as well as Uyghur from the western Muslim region of Xinjiang.

two underlying causes of the region's instability are interrelated. As explained by key informant K4, poverty and disparity of wealth triggers the Islamic fundamental movement. He elaborated,

> *"... but to me the card on the table that's not turned up is the card of al-Qaeda and Islamic fundamental movements which really of course are breeding in poverty and in disparity of wealth or a lack of social justice, a lack of transparency, a lack of spreading the wealth"* (Key informant K4, interview transcript)

Therefore, improving the region's economy appears to be a viable, if not the only, option to stabilise the region both socially and politically. Even for countries rich in natural resources, currently being exploited as a significant source of income, a more even distribution of wealth is needed. Very often, the revenue generated from the energy sector rests only with the oligarchs and political elites, but does not go down to the grassroots working class in these countries. An alternative economic sector, which can direct income to a broader base of the population, is important to the countries' further development. Tourism, especially in the form of community-based tourism, is an ideal tool to achieve a better and fairer economic advancement.

4.2.2 Variance in destination management between the countries

Destination management was defined by Crouch and Ritchie (1999) as "activities that enhance the appeal of the core resources and attractors, strengthen the quality and effectiveness of the supporting factors and resources, and best adapt to the constraints imposed by the qualifying determinants" (p. 149). While the structures and functions of the tourism administrations of the CASs and China have been briefly introduced in Section 2.7, any changes to the organisations and further elaborations of their functions are given in this section. In face of the similar challenges discussed above, the CASs and Xinjiang react differently because they have dissimilar tourism management approaches. In the following discussion, an overview of the countries' tourism performances is first presented. The first part of the section serves to highlight the strengths or the areas for improvement of the way tourism is managed in the CASs and Xinjiang. In general, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Xinjiang are better performers. Yet, the reasons behind their superior performances vary, which are elaborated in the second part of this section.

4.2.2.1 *Overview of countries' performances*

To establish a refined context for the current study, a brief account of the tourism industry, together with its historical development, of the CASs and China has been given in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3 and Section 2.4 respectively). Therefore, the purpose of the sub-section here is not to echo what has already been discussed earlier. Instead, attention is directed to the potential discrepancies between the findings and the literature, and any substantial progresses in the countries' tourism performances that are yet to be documented in scholarly literature.

Having a national development policy based on economic diversification and creation of regional synergy (van der Leeuw, 2011a), Kazakhstan has been relatively active in promoting tourism in the hope of diluting its heavy reliance on the oil sector. In terms of the broader business environment, Kazakhstan will follow Russia to enter the World Trade Organization as a member state at the end of 2012 (The Conway Bulletin, 2011a). The country has issued favourable policies towards foreign direct investment and establishment of small to medium-sized enterprises, which have been explicitly examined in Section 4.1.3.2. Furthermore, progressive performances have been observed in the aspects of human resource development and infrastructure building. Not only has Kazakhstan a rather established education system, which leads to a 99.5% literacy rate (CIA, 2012), there is also the unique Bolashak educational programme in which more than 6,000 students had been sponsored by the government to study abroad on fully paid scholarship (Munter, 2011). For example, in the U.K., there are over 3,000 members in The Kazakhstan Student Society at the London School of Economics (Lavrova, 2010). Young Kazaks are trained overseas to be specialists in fields ranging from engineering and medicine to politics and finance. In terms of infrastructure building, the Government Programme on Development of Transport Infrastructure of Kazakhstan for 2010-2014 has been in place, with objectives that include rehabilitating the national road networks, providing additional infrastructure along the CAREC corridors, developing the country's potential as a transit country between Europe and Asia and initiating institutional and legislative changes (The

World Bank, 2012c).

Before presenting an evaluation on the performance of the government body responsible for managing the tourism industry, one subject worth mentioning is the reorganisation of the Kazak government in January 2012. The Ministry of Tourism and Sports was disbanded upon the completion of the Parliament's fifth convocation on January 20, 2012 and the new Agency of Sport and Physical Culture was created (ILS Energy, 2012). The Committee of the Tourism Industry was then brought under the umbrella of the Ministry of Industry and New Technologies while tourism has been recognised as an important priority as part of the national strategy to become one of the top 50 most competitive nations in the world (Committee of the Tourism Industry, 2012). It was revealed that other than the change of the ministry structure and the personnel in the Committee, the strategic plans for tourism development created earlier continued to take effect. Hence, the following evaluation is based on the performance of the Committee of the Tourism Industry before the restructuring of the government. In the strategic plan prepared by the Ministry of Tourism and Sport for 2011-15, the Committee of the Tourism Industry was given a mission to integrate Kazakhstan into the international tourism community as the leader of tourism in the region of Central Asia (Committee of the Tourism Industry, 2011). The strategic plan was comprehensive covering topics in addition to mission and vision which included the analysis of current situation and development of industry trends, strategic direction, objectives and performance indicators, development features, interagency cooperation and risk management. In line with the State Programme of the Development of Tourism in the Republic of Kazakhstan for 2007-11, problematic areas such as low level of service quality, insufficient tourism and transport infrastructure and inaccessibly of Silk Road attractions in the country remained to be addressed. Based on the analysis of secondary data and respondents' comments in the study, the Committee was revealed to have made endeavours in two major areas, which are, 1) marketing and promotion in the international markets and; 2) development in tourism superstructure and related tourism investment. To start with, Kazakhstan is one of the only few CASs which has a distinctive tourism management body, represented by a well-established online portal or official tourism website, Visit Kazakhstan. According to UNWTO (2007), the role of a destination management organisation should be "to lead and coordinate activities under a coherent strategy" (p. 2). Instead of "to control the activities of their partners", they should "bring together resources and expertise and a degree of independence and objectivity to lead the way forward" (p. 2). Although marketing activities stay being a main function of a tourism management organisation, the responsibility of the organisation becomes broader, acting as a strategic leader in destination development. The Committee of the Tourism Industry, with the brand of Visit Kazakhstan, is active in the world travel market. They have been participating in international travel and tourism fairs in Europe such as ITB in Berlin, Fitur in Madrid, World Travel Market in London, and Intourmarket in Russia, as well as in Asia such as the International Travel Expo held in Hong Kong in June 2012. As justified by the respondents, *"Kazakhstan has plenty of money so they can be quite aggressive in their promotion"* (Key informant K4). Knowing the power of a significant brand, Kazakhstan emphasises its role as a Silk Road transit country in its tourism promotion as Elite E4 stated, *"... this movement (Silk Road tourism) is one of the state's priorities for tourism development in Kazakhstan"*. Besides, Kazakhstan has entered into agreements, in the sphere of tourism development, with a couple of the CIS, in addition to other countries in Europe, Asia and the Middle East (Committee of the Tourism Industry, n.d.-a). The above-mentioned areas, namely participation in international events, cooperation with the UNWTO for Silk Road tourism and agreements with partner countries, aim to serve the objective of formulating a solid destination image for Kazakhstan. Furthermore, in order to enhance its exposure in the international tourism community, the country is enthusiastic in being the host of global events such as the UNWTO General Assembly in 2009 and the 7th Asian Winter Games in 2011 (Ermegiyaev, 2011). Apart from image building, the Committee of the Tourism Industry also proactively encourages private investment in various tourism projects such as those of the tourism centres: Burabai near Astana, Kenderli near Aktau, and Zhana Ilye near Almaty, as well as many other ski resorts (Kaken, 2010). As outlined in the Committee's document of investment projects in the sphere of tourism (Committee of the Tourism Industry, 2010), Burabai is an international tourist centre located in the Akmola region that serves as a modern recreational complex catering both international and domestic tourists. Kenderli, situated in the Mangistau region, is proposed to be an international health resort, aiming to become the centre of the Caspian region. Zhann Ilye is to be developed into a tourist business centre, integrating gaming and hotel businesses, as well as sports and entertainment facilities for large-scale international sports tournaments. To facilitate and to regulate the tourism and gambling industry in Kazakhstan, the Committee is also responsible for the licensing of the country's tourism and gambling businesses. Besides, there are tourism investment projects in the southern part of Kazakhstan focusing on Silk Road heritage tourism (Committee of the Tourism Industry, 2010). One of the projects in relation to that is a tourism cluster, which involves the construction of numerous tourist centres, recreation centres and service centres, along the Western Europe-Western China (WE-WC) transport corridor (Committee of the Tourism Industry, n.d.-b). In addition to these mega projects, there are some smaller-scaled ones aiding eco- and community-based tourism. In short, Kazakhstan has put much effort in developing tourism as an alternative source of sustainable income to the country. Rather than short-sighted tactics, tourism policies and planning of Kazakhstan are quite long-term. Outside of the government, practitioners of the tourism industry in Kazakhstan have taken the initiative to protect their own interests by aligning together and hence increasing their lobbying power. Aside from the Kazakhstan Tourism Association which has been introduced in Chapter 2, there is the Kazakh National Hotel and Travel Service Association which unites more than 300 major hotels, tour operators, air transport companies, travel insurance companies and other related enterprises (van der Leeuw, 2011b). The role of these associations, as groups of tourism stakeholders, in influencing the development of tourism and cross-national collaboration will be given in Section 4.4.

For Uzbekistan, the general economic climate may be more testing. Although the country has a relatively well-off balance of trade, hence a year-on-year GDP growth, because of its wealth of gold, cotton, natural gas and oil for export, the income distribution has been severely unequal, hurting the lower ranks of the society since the country's independence. Regardless of the government praises of its efforts in creating a favourable investment environment, the continued existence of strict controls over business decisions and currency, as well as tightening of borders stifles economic activity (CIA, 2012). The International Monetary Fund (2012) furthermore advises Uzbekistan to step up measures in shrinking the inflation rate. According to a news report on Uznew.net (2012a), Uzbekistan has been challenged with a very high real inflation level, notwithstanding the government's claim of a figure lower than the predicted 7-9%. Nonetheless, the augmented budget surplus in 2011, including the Fund for Reconstruction and Development, reached 9% of the GDP (IMF, 2012). The surplus facilitates the realisation of the government's plans to invest almost US$ 7 billion in the development of infrastructure in 2011-2015. The plans include projects on automobile transport system, railway transport system, air transport, telecommunication, engineer-communication infrastructure and modernisation of public transport fleet[43] (AUCC, 2011).

The structure of the Uzbek government is fairly hierarchical. According to the Governmental Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan (n.d.), the President is both the head of state and head of government. While the Oily Majlis, a supreme state representative body that consists of the Legislative Chamber and the Senate, exercises legislative power, executive power of the country is possessed by the Cabinet of Ministers, headed by the chairman together with the prime minister and six deputy prime ministers. The Cabinet also comprises the 14 ministers and 9 chairmen of the state committees. One level down is two streams of management bodies namely the state management bodies and the economic management bodies. The individual management bodies are in different format including scientific establishments, ministries, state committees, state inspections, agencies, committees and centres under the state management bodies, and association and concerns, banks, companies, unions, funds under the economic management bodies. Unlike Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan does not have a tourism management body that is distinctively and directly associated with a ministry but a national company for tourism which is called Uzbektourism. Although Airey and Shackley's (1997) suggested that Uzbektourism is a state department equivalent to a tourism ministry, the candidate does not agree with it. It is because Uzbektourism has only been authorised as a state body for the tourism industry after significant structural reorganisations, especially the one in 2003 (Uzbektourism, n.d.-b). Yet, it lacks legislative and executive power comparable to a ministerial level, with its activities having to be reported to the Cabinet of Ministers. Other than those five main functions of Uzbektourism listed in Section 2.7, the national company is also responsible for tasks ranging from implementing the state tourism development programmes, coordinating tourist activities at inter-sectoral and inter-regional levels and attracting foreign investments to licensing of tourism businesses and training

[43] The plan includes funds of US$3.4 billion to automobile transport system, US$1.6 billion to railway transport system, US$658.8 million to air transport, US$1.3 billion to telecommunication and engineer communication infrastructure and US$24.9 million to modernisation of public transport fleet.

personnel for the tourism industry (Uzbektourism, n.d.-b). Uzbektourism oversees the regional branch offices in Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khorezm, public tourism and travel bureaus in the provincial capitals, the Republican Research, Education and Consulting Centre, together with the Central Control and Service Administration.

Uzbekistan also excels in terms of tourism marketing and promotion in the international travel community when compared to its Central Asian counterparts. For example in 2011 alone, Uzbektourism participated in 35 travel fairs abroad. Other than the major European ones, the country was also represented in travel fairs held in Australia, China, Japan and Singapore (Uzbektourism, 2012). Besides, Uzbektourism has been cooperating very closely with UNWTO. For instance, initiated by Uzbektourism and supported by UNWTO, the annual Tashkent International Tourism Fair was established and it would be the 18th time for the fair to be held in Tashkent in 2012. The UNWTO Silk Road Tourism Office, with the objective of coordinating efforts put in Silk Road tourism by the participating countries, was set up in Samarkand in 2004 and the UNWTO's 5th International Meeting on the Silk Road was held in Samarkand in 2010. From this, one can conclude that Uzbekistan is actively involved in the promotion of Silk Road tourism in the region. The next area in which Uzbektourism has performed exceedingly well is the establishment and implementation of legislation for the tourism industry. In Uzbekistan's Law of Tourism, 22 articles are clearly elaborated covering areas from basic state tourism policies and powers of tourism authorities at different level to rights and obligations of tourists and tourism business activities and measures to ensure the safety of tourists (Uzbektourism, n.d.-c). Almost like answering to Airey and Shackley's (1997) request for improvements in tourism statistics, development of quality accommodation supply and advancement in education and training (see Section 2.3.2, p. 41), the following progresses are noted. First, Uzbektourism has started updating its system of tourism statistics with the professional help from UNWTO. Methods have been innovated to measure the tourist arrivals that had not been registered anywhere in the old system. Second, airports and related facilities in Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, Urgench, Fergana and Navoi have been modernised while Uzbekistan Airways has been supplied with up-to-date airliners in recent tourism reforms (Ganiev, 2010). An 80% of upgrade in tourism superstructure including accommodation provisions has been observed (Elite T2). Third, Uzbektourism facilitates the implementation of tourism training programmes, runs the Republican Research, Education and Consulting Centre and promotes the project of setting up the Institute of Tourism (Uzbektourism, n.d.-d). Besides, there are five higher education tourism-related facilities in various major cities in Uzbekistan. Although the management of Uzbektourism seems all encompassing, it can still improve on its branding and the dissemination of travel information to visitors. Unlike Kazakhstan, Uzbektourism does not appear with an explicit brand image and an official portal on which potential visitors can obtain relevant travel information of the country.

A very detailed description of China's tourism development path has been given in Section 2.4. The Go-West Policy was introduced and illustrations were given on how the policy affected tourism development in Western China. In the twelfth 5-Year Development Plan announced in 2010, tourism continued to be recognised as an important driver of the national economic growth. In accordance with the government's regional development master plan, within which the western region has been prioritised, tourism in Western China is encouraged by more supportive policies, better resource utilisation to build comparative advantages and tighter intraregional collaboration (National Development and Reform Commission, 2010). More specifically, Beijing *"aims to push forward the idea of the Silk Road as an overall strategic plan for the western development of China"* (Key informant K3) and *"tourism is one of the major components"* (Key informant K3) alongside with the other collaborative projects in the other sectors within the western region or in partnership with its Central Asian counterparts. According to Elite T4, the reason for the Silk Road to play such a strategic role is that *"the Silk Road is one of the best selling products in Western China and an area with a relatively good basis for further tourism development"*. It also helps *"expand tourism influence"*(Elite T4) in the region. Concrete actions of the government to match this strategic approach include the preservation and revitalisation of Silk Road heritages, preparation of serial nominations for the UNESCO World Heritage List and collaboration with the Central Asian partners.

The State Administration of Cultural Heritage, together with the Chinese Commission for the International Council on Monuments and Sites, is responsible for conserving sites with significant historical value in China and the Silk Road is one of their focal projects. They conduct site inspections and develop preservation strategies, hold exhibitions, meetings and workshops to educate relevant stakeholders and the public on the value of cultural heritages and organise the World Heritage Day in China of which the theme for 2009 was "Preservation of Cultural Heritage Route" (State Administration of Cultural Heritage, 2012a). Most of all, it is presently the core duty of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage to prepare nomination proposal for the Silk Road to be inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The idea of nominating the Chinese Silk Road as a World Cultural Heritage Route was pioneered by UNESCO in 2003. Recommendations were then provided requiring inputs from the Chinese government to identify various heritage clusters along the Silk Road, prepare conservation management plans for different heritage clusters, establish a national management entity and resubmit the nomination proposal (UNESCO, 2004). In 2008, the State Administration of Cultural Heritage submitted the proposal of a Chinese section of the Silk Road which involves both the land routes and the sea routes[44] but until now the site has only been included in the UNESCO's tentative lists (UNESCO, 2012d). At the same time, efforts are being made by the State Administration to nominate a transnational section of the Silk Road together with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan for UNESCO's consideration of a cultural heritage corridor. This, together with the other collaborative projects in the Central Asian region initiated by Beijing such as the programme of the Eurasian Continental Bridge will be discussed in Section 4.3.1.

Confirming what has been established in Chapter 1, Beijing sees greater and faster economic development as a strategic move to stabilise the autonomous region of Xinjiang. According to the Xinjiang Tourism Bureau (2012, para. 3, originally in Chinese), "the affluence of the tourism industry signifies the overall development of the autonomous region. It is the indicator of a stable regional economic environment and a harmonious society within which different ethnic races live together". The study informants also agreed that prosperity brings both social and political stability to the region. Key informant K4 suggested that to "*develop Xinjiang and bring up the standard of living… ", "… one way of doing that is to encourage tourism"*. Tourism

[44] Land routes: Henan Province, Shaanxi Province, Gansu Province, Qinghai Province, Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, and Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region; sea routes: Ningbo City, Zhejiang Province and Quanzhou City, Fujian Province - from Western-Han Dynasty to Qing Dynasty.

Bureau of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region is the highest administrative department for tourism development in the autonomous region. It follows the overall development direction formulated by the CNTA and has an internal structure that oversees 15 local tourism offices at prefecture or city level. In addition, there are special committees responsible for managing the five most popular attractions in Xinjiang such as the Kanas Scenic Area in Almaty Prefecture and the Heavenly Lake of Tian Shan near Urumqi (Xinjiang Tourism Bureau, 2009). Recently in May 2011, the tourism bureau organised a full-day meeting and training session to address the strategic development approach for the tourism industry in Xinjiang announced by the Party Secretary of the Autonomous Region, Zhang Chun-Xian, in a working meeting for regional stability held earlier in April. Placing the highest priority of regional development on tourism, the strategic plan aims to establish Xinjiang as an important national destination. That involves 92 projects in 16 categories serving the purpose of clustering Xinjiang's political and historical strategic advantages into an authentic boutique destination of international standard (Xinjiang Tourism Bureau, 2012).

On paper, tourism appears to be a perfect means for enhancing social stability. In reality, its ability to do so is challenged. The study informants have reflected that benefits generated from the tourism industry have not been brought directly to the local community. Elite P1 has noted that the community-based tourism sector, such as local bed and breakfast lodges, is not that developed in China. Profits may be retained in the investors alone without going down to the grass root level. Even worse would be when the benefits were only spread among Han Chinese in the region as they have better capital and experience to set up tourism businesses, resentment from Uyghur citizens might rise. Another obstacle for tourism to perform well is the volatile situation, expressed in the form of violent events, which the region has recently been going through. That affects the central government's attitude towards tourism because *"they are nervous. They don't want tourists to see the situation"* (Key informant K4) and hence tightens the visa policy for foreign visitors to go into the region.

After several phases of post-Soviet development by the Tajik government, the country has gradually stepped out from the transitional period that was featured with aggravated socio-political situations, declines in production, macroeconomic instability and impoverishment of the population. The latest national development strategy issued by the government in 2007, with the goal to solidify social, political and economic stability, focuses on achieving sustainable economic growth, expanding the public's access to basic social services and reducing poverty. Tourism is listed together with the hydropower and agricultural sectors among others as a development priority of the country so as to enhance the national export potential (Republic of Tajikistan, 2007). It was supplementarily written that to promote tourism, especially ecotourism, efforts would be made to improve the related legislative framework, increase the overall potential of human resources and raise quality of services and competitiveness. Yet, to transfer strategy on paper into concrete action seems exceptionally difficult. As mentioned in the previous discussion on development obstacles, tourism management in Tajikistan is constrained by a very limited national budget and a somewhat unconcerned attitude of the government, despite its postulated support towards tourism on policy paper. Haroon (2012a) quoted research studies indicating that,

> "the involvement of the non-government sector to promote the tourism industry in Tajikistan is far higher than the government sector… such a trend cannot sustain itself for a longer period if the proactive support of the government is not provided, because decision making is in the hand of government and important decisions can make or break the tourism industry of any country" (para. 11).

According to Elite T3, the responsibility of tourism management in Tajikistan had been rested with the Ministry of Economy and Trade until 2007 before a special Committee of Youth Affairs, Sports and Tourism was created. The Committee consists of four main departments namely youth politics, sports, tourism and ideology. The Committee is headed by a chairman while a vice chairman leads each of the departments. As outlined by the Committee, their main functions include formulating national policy and legal framework, coordinating with other agencies and organisations and carrying out parliamentary and presidential decrees. Specifically in the sphere of tourism, the Committee is devoted to providing the best environment for all tourism stakeholders in the country, coordinating the dialogue between public and private stakeholders, drafting decrees and laws in the tourism sector and promoting these drafts in the Parliament. At the operational level, it facilitates the development of tourism products and tourism infrastructure in the country as well as to market the destination regionally and internationally (Visit Tajikistan, 2012). The industry practitioners favour such change, especially the appointment of the new vice-chairman of the Committee responsible for tourism in 2008. According to Elite T3, the vice-chairman, in the position equivalent to a vice minister for tourism, is proactive in initiating more favourable laws and rules for tourism, liaising with international donor organisations and supporting international tourism projects. New rules of entry for foreign visitors were announced by the vice-chairman at ITB Berlin 2010 (EU, 2010). The obtaining of a tourist visa was made much simpler and cheaper and the old Soviet rule requiring registration of all foreign visitors with the police on arrival was abolished. The vice-chairman was observed to value cooperation with international organisations in promoting tourism in Tajikistan as indicated in his answers on the questionnaire he returned to the candidate's first supervisor after the Fifth Silk Road Mayor's Forum. It is because currently most of the tourism projects are initiated with the support, both financially and technically, from international organisations such as the European Union and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) under the World Bank Group. For instance, the EU has provided funding under the "Central Asia Invest Programme", with the technical assistance from the European Centre for Eco and Agro Tourism, for which regional associations of tour operators in the Zerafshan Valley in the north and the Pamirs in the east are being supported (EU, 2010). The support includes training and capacity building, the development of community-based tourism, and marketing of tour packages. That is the reason why travel brochures of the Zerafshan region collected in the ITB Berlin 2012 by the candidate bore the logo of the EU. Assistance in other forms comprises the establishment of a national tour operator association and a tourism promotion board founded through cooperation between the government and the private tourism sector. IFC's provision was on capacity building from which the construction of a nine storey 85 room five-star hotel in Dushanbe was financed (The World Bank, 2011b). Apart from those international organisations, GIZ, a governmental organisation for development cooperation from Germany, has also placed experts in Tajikistan assisting the vice-chairman and his team to develop the tourism sector (Elite T3). All together, there are six international experts working on tourism development in Tajikistan but to a large extent, they are working on a voluntary basis.

With the optimistic management of the vice-chairman and his team, and the support of international donors, improvements are most noticeable in the areas of marketing and the development of community-based tourism. Similar to Kazakhstan, an official website of the tourism authority of Tajikistan was set up and via which travellers can obtain travel information of the country. A delegation of Tajikistan that involves the vice-chairman for tourism and his team, together with representatives from tour companies, has participated in major international travel fairs, bringing with them its logo and slogan of "feel the friendship" (EU, 2010; Visit Tajikistan, 2012). The most apparent example of advancement in community-based tourism is the establishment of Zerafshan Tourism Board (ZTB), with the support of the EU within the framework of Welthungerhilfe project "Strengthening Tourism Business Intermediary Organisations for Sustainable Economic Development in Tajikistan" (Zerafshan Tourism Board, n.d.). It is a non-profit union of tourism organisations including tour operators, hotels and home-stays, museums and related government bodies operating in Zerafshan valley. There are over 200 households having been benefited from the ZTB community-based tourism development programmes and projects (Zerafshan Tourism Board, n.d.). Therefore, Elite T3 acknowledged that *"there has been done quite a few things over the last few years and the number of tourists actually very slowly is rising"* and *"the quality of the service is provided, and the range of services provided in Tajikistan is getting bigger"* (Elite T3).

Nonetheless, the continuality of all these efforts is in doubt because in general tourism development in Tajikistan relies very much on the support of international organisations of which willingness and funding to sponsor may not be guaranteed in the future. Elite T3 expressed worries that *"they (international organisations) are very reserved at the moment to support tourism development in Tajikistan because they don't see very much effort made by the Tajik government in this sphere"*. According to him, Tajik government at the moment concentrates its development effort in the hydropower sector because of the obvious economic returns and the significant reduction of the country's reliance on imports of energy supplies that the sector would bring. Therefore, to convince the government and all the relevant departments of the importance of tourism would be an essential yet challenging mission.

In Kyrgyzstan, the many challenges outlined by Werner (2003) as discussed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.2) continue to prohibit the healthy development of the tourism industry. Kyrgyz tourism remains seasonal and the market is still limited. According to Elite P1, *"here in Kyrgyzstan, the tour season ...; concentrates on just a couple of months; 2-3 months"*. The destination draws majority of its tourists from the neighbouring countries, such as Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Russia, comprising 64%, 11% and 10% respectively, of the total foreign tourist arrivals (The National Statistical Committee, 2011; Zozulinsky, 2008). Again, the distribution of tourism development is geographically uneven with the resort area in the northern region being the most popular destination. Industry experts believed that about 60-70% of tourists to Kyrgyzstan visit the Issyk-Kul area (Zozulinsky, 2008). The nature of the attraction further intensifies the problem of seasonality, leading to a situation that occupancy can be as high as 100% during summer time but drops drastically to almost zero in winter. Tourists and foreign tour operators constantly report dissatisfaction over tourism facilities and accommodation, service level and physical and non-physical (customs procedures) accessibility of the destination (Zozulinsky, 2008). Political instability stays as a hidden threat despite informants' optimistic view about the new president and its government. However, the current findings do not stay in accordance with Werner's (2003) complaint about the leakage of tourism benefits to overseas countries. On the contrary, Kyrgyzstan is in need of foreign investments in order to improve its tourism facilities. In addition, community-based tourism has been heavily promoted in recent years in the hope of transferring the tourism benefits to the local community.

Elite P1 provided some insights on the reasons behind the continuation of these problems. It is the lack of international marketing. Echoing Zozulinsky's (2008) views, although Kyrgyzstan has been successfully advertised to the Kazak and Russian travel agencies, there is still a lack of good marketing in the Western markets. Elite P1 further emphasised that, *"... by western, I don't just mean the sort of Europe or North America; I am including South America and Japan, Australia and New Zealand and that's being a sort of a backbone type... priority pool"*. Kyrgyzstan failed to market internationally not only because of the lack of funds, but also because of the mentality of the tourism management authority. The Issyk-Kul region had always been a popular destination in the Soviet time. Even after the independence of these countries, the post-Soviet tourists continued to visit Kyrgyzstan for its mountain lake resorts and the management body seemed sufficiently content with that seasonal and limited tourist flow (Elite P1). Besides, due to the lack of government budget, Kyrgyzstan does not have resources to lobby and therefore, there are not enough embassies abroad.

Although tourism has been identified as an important sector for the national development programme of Kyrgyzstan (Zozulinsky, 2008), it is at the moment getting the lowest allocation of national budget, accounting for some seven to eight million KGS (around USD 170,000) (IBC, 2011). The industry merely contributes 3.8% to the national GDP in 2010 (The National Statistical Committee, 2011). Almost identical to Tajikistan, the tourism industry in Kyrgyzstan has been handicapped by the country's unstable environment as well as a depressive economic climate, perhaps together with the limited effort paid by the government in practice to push forward concrete tourism development strategies. According to Elite P1, *"It's been very difficult and the Kyrgyz government have tried over the years to do a number of things but then they don't have a lot of money available and they don't see tourism as a priority to the economy"*. Yet, he followed his comment by shedding a positive light on the industry outlook,

> *"since the change of government in 2010, yes I think it's better to say some of the people at the top have shown a lot of interest in what they can do to help develop tourism but their hands are somewhat tied in many aspects"* (Elite P1, interview transcript)

In December 2011, alongside with another presidential change of the country (after the one in 2010), there was a government reorganisation. The State Committee for Tourism, Sport and Youth Policy, as introduced in Section 2.7, was demolished. The Department of Tourism, with a newly appointed director, was created under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (formerly Ministry of Culture). The Department was established with clearer aims and functions as listed in an official document retrieved from the government website. The responsibility of the Department includes; first, the implementation of state's policy issued on the tourism industry; second, the creation of favourable conditions for tourism development; third, the shaping of a positive image of the country. The Department is also required to carry out concrete tasks ranging from conducting comprehensive analysis of the sector, monitoring the quality of services and preservation of travel resources to cooperation with international organisations and implementation of training programmes (Government of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, 2012). Although it seems that the duties of the new tourism management body had been more explicitly clarified, concerns were raised in the business community. Industry practitioners challenged the decision of the government to transfer such an important sector as tourism to the jurisdiction of a government agency which deals majorly with social issues because to them, tourism is more than just a social phenomenon. It is an industry critical to the future of the country's economy (IBC, 2011). Despite their initial concerns, the candidate observed higher involvement of the Kyrgyz Republic in the international travel community after the establishment of the Department. For instance, with the help of the Embassy of the Kyrgyz Republic in Germany and International Business Council (IBC), a delegation representing the country, headed by the Minister of Culture and Tourism, attended the ITB Berlin in 2012 (Embassy of Kyrgyz Republic, 2012). This is to compare with the ITB in 2011 to which no government body from Kyrgyzstan was sent. IBC is a business association in Kyrgyzstan established in 2000 with the mission to build a stronger Kyrgyz economy. To remould Kyrgyzstan into an attractive investment location, the association helps promote business legislation and environment, support the process of economic reform, ensure that private sector is represented in the government decision-making, and fight against corruption. With the funding from the EU, IBC has been implementing Central Asia Invest Programme II – Strengthening Tourism Business Intermediary Organisations for Sustainable Economic Development of Central Asia until the end of 2012 (IBC, n.d.). Some of the objectives of the project, especially those highly relevant to the current research, are highlighted as follows. First, it aims to protect and preserve the historical, culture and natural resources and enhance sustainable economic development in Kyrgyzstan and Central Asia. Second, it hopes to strengthen and sustain the capacity of tourism associations to promote their members' interests as well towards government agencies with other stakeholders. Third, it facilitates cooperation and linkages between Kyrgyz, Central Asian, and European tourism associations. Quite a bit of progress has been made under the fruitful cooperation between IBC and the government. The latter has developed a programme called "Kyrgyzstan in full view" in which the Ministry of Culture and Tourism plans to establish contact with tour operators abroad, as well as provide Kyrgyz tour operators a chance to promote their products and build business relationships. Discovery Central Asia Travel Forum 2012, the first ever travel forum held in

Kyrgyzstan, took place in Bishkek in April 28-29, attracting 300 delegates from 15 countries which represented 200 organisations (Haroon, 2012b). Besides, the Ministry is responsible for coordinating tourism promotion and developing activity standard, though Kazakhstan, Russia and Uzbekistan stay as target countries in the 2012 summer season (Savina, 2012). Improvements are planned as well for infrastructure building at the Ak Jol border post, training programme for staff and information distribution to visitors at attractions. It is suggested that an independent and flexible body, either a state-owned enterprise or public-private partnership, should be in charge of tourism marketing because most of the international donors prefer allocate money to a private organisation rather than to the government. Meerim Matkulova, manager of an EU-funded project on tourism in Central Asia, concluded that, "it was good to know that the government is working effectively with different agencies to coordinate tourism promotion" (Savina, 2012, para.3).

Despite these initiatives, industry practitioners remain sceptical. First, similar initiatives had been developed before but they did not sustain. Specialists, after working for two to three months, would leave without passing the knowledge and experience they accumulated to the new people. The initiatives might be suspended due to the lack of a consistent flow of funds or changes in the government. Besides, state budget devoted for tourism continues to be very modest; hence, the responsibility of tourism promotions is left with the donor projects. Second, advertising efforts still concentrate in the tourism market of neighbouring countries; therefore, the dependence on these markets has not been reduced. International organisations, such as UNWTO, have advocated using the Silk Road brand to diversify the sources of tourists for Kyrgyzstan. However, Elite P1 stated that even though Silk Road tourism is valued, the government and the industry practitioners are keener on developing Kyrgyzstan as a standalone destination. In addition, marketing specialists have proposed a greater use of the Internet, especially social networks, in creating a positive image of Kyrgyzstan, though results are yet to be seen. Third, "*Kyrgyzstan doesn't have licensing like the other countries"* (Elite P1). There is a pressing need to develop a clear public policy and to improve the legal framework of the tourism industry in the country.

Based on the previous discussion on tourism resources, one would expect a rather flourishing tourism industry in Turkmenistan. Yet, tourism development has been wrong-footed by the totalitarian political approach of the late president Saparmurat Niyazov, marked by his single political party, personality cultism, control over the economy, restriction of speech and limited freedom of movement of the Turkmen people. In the western community, there is a perception that Niyazov's regime somehow resembles that of former North Korean leader Kim Jong-il (Anonymous, personal communication, January 2, 2011[45]; Orange, 2011). The country's economy has solely been relying on the energy sector. Not only is this source of national income not sustainable, the revenue generated is often kept by the very few oligarchs. The country report of Turkmenistan prepared by CountryWatch (2012) concluded that the overall prospect for Turkmenistan's economy is not encouraging because of the widespread internal poverty, endemic corruption, government misuse of oil and gas revenues and Ashgabat's hesitation in implementing market-oriented reforms. However, following the death of Niyazov in 2006 and the inauguration of the current President Kurbanguly Berdymukhamedov in 2007, there appeared hints that the new post-Niyazov government would work to create a friendlier environment for foreign investment.

The tourism management body in Turkmenistan is the State Committee for Tourism and Sports. Building upon the basis of the State Tourist Corporation "Turkmensiyakhat", which was established in 2004, the State Committee for Tourism and Sports was founded under the President's decree in 2000. It was appointed, with a ministry status, to work over legislation, statistics and market analysis and foster development in the spheres of tourism and sports (State Committee of Tourism and Sports, n.d.-a). The State Committee has a structure of 12 divisions and in the tourism sphere it owns 20 tourism enterprises and 16 tour operators. Information is not available on whether there were changes in the committee structure and its functions in the new government. Nonetheless, industry practitioners, especially the tour operators to whom the candidate talked to at ITB Berlin in 2011, expressed optimism towards future tourism development under the governance of Berdymukhamedov

[45] The respondent remains anonymous due to the political sensitivity associated with his/her answer.

(Anonymous[46], personal communication, March 10, 2011). According to the country report prepared by Euromonitor (2012), tourism has been given a higher priority in recent years, as signified by the government's investment allocated towards the construction of Avaza Tourism Zone. This to a large extent corresponds to Kantarci's (2007c) observation that the Turkmen government has started to focus more on infrastructure building and the provisions of hotels and business facilities since 2007.

Despite the optimistic picture postulated, some fundamental problems continue to trouble the development of tourism in Turkmenistan. First, information and statistics about the government and its works have been regarded as state secrets in Turkmenistan and therefore it is somewhat difficult to evaluate the performances of the government and especially the State Committee for Tourism and Sports based on official sources. Second, the government's involvement in facilitating the flow of tourists into the country is very limited. On the contrary, *"they are quite strict to that who they want to receive to their countries and under what conditions"* even though tourism has now been positioned with higher importance (Elite P1). Similar to the Niyazov's era, potential visitors to the country have to undergo a long bureaucratic visa process. That hugely limits the accessibility of the country as an international destination. Once entered the country, visitors must strictly follow the intended itinerary and travel dates provided on their letter of invitation and they are obliged to stay in a hotel. Restrictions on the movement of foreign visitors are implemented and tourists are not allowed to leave the capital city without a professional guide (Euromonitor, 2012). This implies that there were not any changes to the limited freedom of tourists' movement since the new president has been in power when compared to Werner's observation in 2003. Therefore, with the lack of government input, *"the efforts to get tourists to go to Turkmenistan are from a very handful of private sector companies"* (Key informant K4). This corresponds to the candidate's observation that the official tourism management body of the country did not participate in any of the international travel fairs. As a replacement for the government, tour operators are joined together to share a pavilion at the ITB Berlin 2011. Third, the government has a wrong focus of their tourism spending. Despite the many heritages

[46] The respondent is a representative of a Turkmen tour operator who requested to be quoted in the study anonymously.

that it has, majority of the travellers to the country at present are on business trips related to the oil commerce, especially those from Russia, China and Iran. Currently, *"the Turkmen government, …, spends very little money on promotion"* (Key informant K4). Instead of spending money to market and promote something that they already have, namely the ancient cities and heritage sites, they are putting billions of dollars to construct a Dubai-like mega resort at Turkmenbashi on the Caspian Coast. Although the Turkmen government termed the project as a significant tourism reform (State Committee of Tourism and Sports, n.d.-b) and tour operators are confident in the proposed tourism zone (Anonymous, personal communication, Match 10, 2011), foreign observers considered it as "the most ill-conceived resort ever built" (Orange, 2011, para. 1).

The creation of the 5,000-hectare tourism zone Avaza was pioneered by the President Berdymukhamedov with the notion to construct a Turkmen "Las Vegas" consisting of "numerous casinos and other entertainment centres" (Solovyov, 2011, para. 14). The State has spent USD 1.5 billion, accounting for most state investment, on the first stage of the Avaza project which mainly involves the construction of seven colossal, marble-fronted hotels. A further 23 hotels, together with an aqua park and two Dubai-styled artificial islands are planned in the subsequent stages of the tourism zone (Orange, 2011; Solovyov, 2011). To finance the project, the government recognises the importance of foreign investment by creating propitious conditions for Avaza investors such as simplified visa rules, tax breaks, insurance and land lots allocated for 40-year term without charging any lease payments (Euromonitor, 2012). Even if financing it is not a problem, the idea of such a tourism zone on the country's Caspian coast appears outrageous to the outside world. Commentators expressed concerns on not only the high prices charged at the hotels, but also the Soviet-styled services or the general lack of services, inadequacy of infrastructure from basic clean water supply to Internet connection, suitability of the Caspian Sea for water resort in view of the climate and pollutions from the nearby oil refinery, not to mention the insufficient flight connectivity to the region and the bureaucratic hurdles to secure a visa (Orange, 2011; Solovyov, 2011; Truman, 2011).

Other than to purely support tourism development, the candidate observed some hidden motives for the country to develop such a tourism zone. According to the State

Committee for Tourism and Sports, the tourism zone was created for the recreational benefits of the Turkmen citizens. For example, local citizens are offered a discounted rate of USD 45-108 per room per night at the resort hotels. Yet, this portrayed positive intention is counter-argued by Solovyov (2011) effortlessly because the discounted rates are still insensibly high for locals whose average monthly wage can be as low as USD 250. Therefore, the project cannot really be a benefit to the local community, not even to the sellers in the nearby markets because the hotels there are always having zero occupancy. Alternatively, the candidate believes the single most possible reason to build such a tourism zone is the President's wish to demonstrate to the world the wealth of the country, though not necessarily of the people. This is illustrated by the extravagant ornate of the hotels with golden accessories and excessive use of marble. Besides, the largest hotel in the complex, Watanchy, was built by the Defence Ministry and contains a huge portrait of the President in parade uniform. Berdymukhamedov even ordered banks and other ministries to build their own hotels to match (Solovyov, 2011). Regardless of the rationales behind building the tourism zone, Euromonitor (2012) concludes that the success of the Avaza resort project would depend on the decisions made by the government on softening visa regulations, upgrading basic infrastructure and improving the image of the country so as to attract visitors.

4.2.2.2 *Factors leading to the variances*

From the above discussion, it is obvious that there are significant variances of the countries' tourism performances. Elite E1 concluded the factors leading to the variances as follows,

> *"It all depends on the policies and strategies of the countries, the resources of the individual countries which include both financial resources and human resources and there are so many other factors, non-tourism factors which coming to play when we talk about development."* (Elite E1, interview transcript)

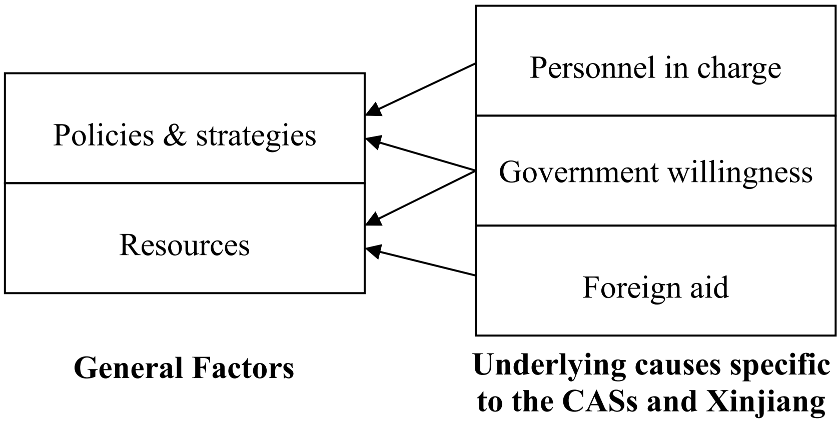

Figure 4.3 Underlying causes for variances of tourism performances

Additionally for the countries under investigation, there are some specific underlying causes of those factors, which are illustrated in the figure above (Figure 4.3). It is noted that the underlying causes may contribute to more than one factor. For instance, a government that is in favour of tourism development would issue more encouraging tourism policies and strategies and allocate comparatively more resources to develop tourism when compared to a government that perceives the opposite.

The first most-mentioned reason by the informants is the change of personnel in charge in the tourism management body of the countries. For example, there has been a new prospect for tourism in Uzbekistan because of the recently appointed chairman of Uzbektourism, Rustam Mirzaev (A. Chen[47], personal communication, October 8, 2010). According to key informant K4,

> *"he (Rustam) runs a very successful, really the leading… not only does he run the leading operation … in Uzbekistan called Saram but also ever since I first met… and I met him probably in 1996. He was already always trying to get the other tour operators to cooperate to sell Silk Road but not to (only) sell Uzbekistan."* (Key informant K4, interview transcript)

The advantage of having an industry practitioner to lead a national tourism management body is that he or she has a better market perspective, which the CASs

[47] Mr. Allen Chen is the general manager of Overseas Travel Service in Taiwan, overlooking outbound travel to Uzbekistan.

are commonly lack of. The new chairman of Uzbektourism understands the tourism market in Central Asia well because of his years of experience in operating tourism businesses in the region. In addition, he has better connections with the other industry members. He can act as a bridge between the government and the industry to formulate the most desirable tourism development approach. The expertise of the Chairman was demonstrated by him saying that, *"... the position (Chairman of Uzbektourism) incurs a great deal of work and responsibility, as well as challenges. Much like vehicle maintenance, the tourism industry needs thorough checkups and urgent measures to make it work properly"* (R. Mirzaev, personal communication, December 22, 2010).

In addition to capability and experience, tourism personnel that are envisioned and ardent are also important. Elite T3 shared the experience that they had in Tajikistan. Tourism as an industry has been more valued and improvements have been evident since the appointment of the new minister. He explained, *"... then a very engaged new tourism minister was appointed in 2008 and he has initiated a few laws or rules and other things"*. The new minister may not be as experienced, but he is fuelled to promote tourism in Tajikistan and has been active in the international travel community and cross-national collaboration if there is such an opportunity.

The second underlying cause for the variances of countries' tourism performances is the government willingness to prioritise tourism in their national development plan. As mentioned by the Secretary General of UNWTO at the press conference of the Fifth International Meeting on the Silk Road held in Samarkand in October 2010, the most important factor for tourism development in this Central Asian region is the *"existence of political will to put travel and tourism at a high priority in their national agenda. Once that exists, other things are just matter of detail"* (T. Rifai, transcript of meeting recording, October 8, 2010). Elite P1 reveals his optimism on the tourism future in Kyrgyzstan because he has observed a higher political will. He elaborated,

> *"... since the change of government in 2010, yes I think it's better to say some of the people at the top have shown a lot of interest in what they can do to help develop tourism but their hands are somehow tied in many aspects."* (Elite P1, interview transcript)

This very comment leads to a pathetic yet realistic determining factor of tourism success which is resources. For example, although Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan are in face of the same problem of limited financial resources available for tourism development, Tajikistan gets additional sources of funds from international donors such as the EU. This represents one of the underlying reasons in explaining the variances of tourism performance among the CASs.

4.3 Collaboration

The essence of collaboration is best illustarted in an old tale of the Aesop's Fables: "… each one of you alone is as weak as a single stick. But if you are together, you are strong (like a bundle of sticks). Always remember that when slender threads are wound together, they will have a rope to bind a lion" (an extract from Aesop's Fables, translated version)[48]. As proposed in the problem statement of the current research, the countries studied, especially the CASs, would be very much benefited if they are to collaborate in the tourism context; and yet, progresses in terms of tourism collaboration among these countries have not been satisfactory. The following group of findings will first verify such claims by looking at the existing collaboration among the CASs and China in various areas, followed by an evaluation of the preconditions leading to tourism collaboration in particular. While the section mainly deals with the reasons for stagnation of tourism collaboration, it also discusses the stakeholders' interpretation and expected outcomes from collaboration as such.

4.3.1 Evaluation of existing collaboration among the CASs and China

Primary data collected from the study participants were triangulated with secondary data collected from sources such as newspaper clippings, magazine extracts, press releases of government agencies, official documents of international organisations and etcetera. Elite T3 noted that, *"…of course there is collaboration, if you look further, not only to the tourism sector"* (T3). Therefore, instead of only focusing on tourism collaboration, the following evaluation also considers collaboration from a broader perspective so as to construct a holistic and more meaningful understanding of the

[48] The extract was taken from the last will of a wise father to his sons in one of the Aesop's Fables.

relations between and among the CASs and China.

The analysis showed that collaborations among the countries can be classified into various levels namely, 1) multilateral intergovernmental collaboration; 2) bilateral agreements between national governments; 3) programmes of work initiated by international organisations or donor agencies; 4) private partnerships and association at industry level; and 5) efforts of the civil society. In general, the areas of collaboration include economic integration and trade opportunities, capacity building and energy related projects, political and regional security agreements and tourism specific projects. It should be noted that collaboration also happens in areas such as humanitarian and cultural development, health and border management; yet they are not included in the current discussion.

To systematically evaluate the existing collaboration of the CASs and China, the following discussion is organised based on the different levels of collaboration within which the various collaborative areas are illustrated with concrete examples. Considering the fragmentation of the information available, it is almost impossible to list and describe all current collaborative projects and agreements taking place between and among the countries. Hence, the section does not aim to do so.

When asked about the progress of collaboration between and among the countries, there are three main streams of thoughts emerged from the informants' responses. While many of them expressed frustration towards the progress being too slow and effort being insufficient, their comments mainly referred to collaboration at intergovernmental level, especially those involving more than two national governments. The informants who held opposing opinion, that is, collaboration is vivid in the region supported their argument with evidence of the active partnerships at industry level and bilateral agreements in the energy and transport sectors. The third group of comments indicated that though the progress of collaboration *"is not terribly bad"* (Key informant K1), it is in a kind of stagnation and *"good results take time to surface"* (Elite E1). They altogether stressed that the overall collaborative climate has changed drastically over the years and the CASs and China are now readier to work with one another than they were before.

4.3.1.1 *Multilateral intergovernmental collaboration*

Multilateral intergovernmental collaboration is the most ideal type of cooperation as it involves most, if not all, of the five CASs and China at government level. Key informant K4 emphasised the importance of realising that the way policies are issued and decisions are made in the CASs and China follows a single-direction top-down approach (very often the top means the president himself in these countries) versus the preferred way of collective decision-making process between the government and its people. Therefore, collaborative efforts at government level, regardless of the areas of joint forces, is a solid representation of the willingness of the governments in opening up dialogues and exchanges with their neighbouring countries.

Collaboration of this type is often in the form of multinational organisations, with the most representative example being the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). According to Bailes, Dunay, Guang, and Troitskiy (2007), the SCO remains as one of the world's least transparent multilateral organisations despite its coverage of the largest geographic areas and populations of any regional group[49]. The prototype of the SCO was the *Shanghai Five* established in April 1996 by the heads of state of China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and realising the need for confidence-building in the border regions between China and its four neighbours (Bailes et al., 2007; Hansen, 2008). The motivation behind this loose alliance is largely driven by the self-interests of the individual countries. For China, normalising and stabilising the relations with Russia and the other bordering Shanghai Five members brought multiple benefits. First, the most immediate concern of China was the development of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. Earlier policies including economic modernisation and Han Chinese colonisation were proven failures to restrain the Uighur secessionist movements in the region, especially after 1991 when all the neighbouring CASs had won their independence from the Soviet Union. Gaining the support from the Shanghai Five members would make it harder for the Uighur secessionists to operate from these

[49] The SCO member states altogether cover a land area of more than 30 million square kilometres (approximately 60% of the Eurasian landmass) and a quarter of the world's population or over 3 billion (nearly half of the world's population) if observer states and dialogue partners are also included in the count (SCO, 2011).

countries. Second, China has been anxious about its future energy security considering its rapid development and the resulted increased energy consumption. In addition, the current Middle Eastern and African oil supplies were considered insecure as they have been largely influenced by the U.S., signifying a possible economic blockade in case of a serious conflict with the U.S. For the CASs, the most immediate benefit of joining the Shanghai Five was the settling of the border disputes with China. By cooperating with China, the CASs would also be rewarded, in a longer term, with substantial economic benefits from the rapid growth of China and the spill-over effect from the economic modernisation in Xinjiang. Furthermore, the CASs got additional access to the sea via China which reduces their dependence on Russia and opens up new export markets in Asia. In the early years after its establishment, the Shanghai Five remained as an "inward-looking grouping" (Hansen, 2008, p. 219), focusing on internal issues among the member states such as border disputes, demilitarisation and economic development. Not until 1999 did the group shift the focus to external issue namely the threat of the "the three evils" of terrorism, separatism and religious extremism prevailing in the region. In 2000, a regional anti-terrorism structure (RATS), which was later renamed to regional counter-terrorism structure (RCTS), was established within the framework of the SCO in Tashkent (SCO, 2011a). According to Hansen (2008), the agreement on combating "the three evils", which remained to be a central pillar of the founding documents of the SCO later on, is a solid indication of the evolvement of the Shanghai Five mechanism. The members were ready "to move beyond the initial phase of merely removing obstacle to peaceful co-existence and work instead to develop new areas of co-operation" (Hansen, 2008, p. 220). Subsequently, joining by Uzbekistan, the Shanghai Five mechanism was institutionalised to form the SCO in 2001. The declared objectives of the organisation, retrieved from their official website in 2011, are:

> "strengthening mutual confidence and good-neighbourly relations among the member countries; promoting effective cooperation in politics, trade and economy, science and technology, culture as well as education, energy, transportation, tourism, environmental protection and other fields; making joint efforts to maintain and ensure peace, security and stability in the region, moving towards the establishment of a new, democratic, just and rational political and economic international order" (SCO, 2011b, para. 2)

It is further noted that the objectives of the SCO keep evolving. “Transportation” was not listed in the founding documents of the SCO in 2001 as one of its cooperative areas whereas “tourism” was only added after 2010. In general, there are three major areas of collaboration, namely political, economic and military. Details of the collaboration areas as well as the substructures of the SCO are exhibited in Table 4.4. At present, other than the six permanent members, there are five observer states (i.e. Afghanistan, Iran, India, Mongolia and Pakistan) and two dialogues partners (i.e. Belarus and Sri Lanka) within the SCO structure.

Political cooperation among the SCO members is characterised by their fears of getting involved in someone else’s conflicts and the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of the other states. As a result, their collaborative effort in the sphere of foreign policy is often rich in declaration yet weak in content. Hansen (2008) commented that it is very unlikely for the SCO to move decision-making to the supranational level, learning from the experience of the earlier CIS grouping. Due to similar reasons, military cooperation is least developed and is mainly non-institutionalised. Much of the effort is directed to the fight against terrorism, with the most recent activity being the Peace Mission 2012[50] held in Khujand, Tajikistan in June. It is the ninth joint military exercise of the SCO and the second routine multilateral military exercise since 2007[51](PLA Daily, 2012). It is believed that anti-terrorism will remain the central military aim of the Organisation in the future.

In addition to the original political and military purpose of stabilising the internal relations among the member states and enhancing the regional security against the three evil forces, “regional economic cooperation has thrived to be an important growth pole of the SCO (over the years)” (H. Wang, 2010, para. 21). The SCO Interbank Consortium and the SCO Business Council were established in 2005 and 2006 respectively with the aim to facilitate regional economic cooperation[52]. It is not surprising that economic cooperative projects concentrate in the energy sector, followed by the removal of trade barriers and foreign direct investments, as well as

[50] All of the SCO member states, except Uzbekistan, took part in the Peace Mission 2012.
[51] Agreement was reached among member states in 2007 to organise routine moderate-scale joint military exercises every two to three years (PLA Daily, 2012).
[52] Functions of the SCO Business Council and the SCO Interbank Consortium are listed in Table 4.4.

the development of infrastructure and transport links. In view of the pressing need to create and maintain economic stability in the region, the SCO members have been emphasising the importance of stronger intra-SCO economic links and trade expansion ever since the economic crisis in 2009 (Xinhua, 2009). For instance, China is going to provide the SCO member states USD 10 billion in loans to shore up the regional economy, as mentioned by President Hu Jintao at the 12th meeting of the SCO Council of Heads in June 2012 (Khabar Agency, 2012).

The SCO, and particularly the annual Council of Heads meetings, seems to be an effective (or perhaps the only feasible) cross-national platform through which the most active interactions among the CASs and China have been made. Nevertheless, multilateral agreements stay peripheral and usually appear in the form of some joint declarations. Solid collaboration still depends mainly on bilateral agreements between national governments, established in accordance with the general framework and directions laid down by the signed declaration each year. Bilateral cooperation is especially prominent in the field of trade and investment whereas pipeline and transport projects may involve multiple countries. Examples are the China's Central Asian Gas Pipeline and the mega projects of the Euro-Asian Transport Links. Yet, a closer investigation of these projects revealed that they are neither truly multilateral nor initiated by the counties themselves. Instead of cross-national agreements, the Central Asian Pipeline project is in fact a series of bilateral agreements between China and the three CASs, namely Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (CNPC, 2011; Y. Ma, 2012). Meanwhile, most of the transnational transport projects have been initiated and endeavoured by international organisations with external funding. For instance, the Euro-Asian Transport Link project is a joint initiative of UNECE and UNESCAP for the period of 2002-2007 (phase one) and 2008-2012 (phase two) (UNECE, n.d.). Besides, Kazakhstan's Western Europe-Western China (WE-WC) transnational corridor project has solicited external loans from sources such as International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, Islamic Development Bank, ADB and etc. (ROK Ministry of Transport and Communications, n.d.).

Although tourism, especially that along the Silk Road, has been mentioned in the SCO regular meetings, it is merely stated alongside with other second-tier developments of culture, sports, youth and media or as a by-product of the development of transnational transport links. As confirmed by Elite O2, *"I did not see a lot of interest in tourism; economic development is more immediate"*. Furthermore, the SCO does not see its role in removing obstacles for tourism development, namely the lack of tourism infrastructure and visa complications, as many of those problems are regarded as bilateral in nature and responsibility should therefore lie with the individual countries (Elite E3). Therefore, no solid agreements have been made by the SCO on tourism development so far. Despite so, key informant K3 shed a positive light by sharing a recent tourism initiative among the SCO members. CNTA is working with the SCO nations and provinces in China to develop a chain of logistic and support bases to promote cross country automobile travel (P. Wong, personal communication, September 16, 2012).

In short, the SCO is successful in reducing tension among the member states and providing a broader framework within which its members are able to work on bilateral agreements, with focuses being put on the energy sector, trade and transnational transport links. Details of the bilateral agreements between these countries are to be elaborated in the next section (Section 4.3.1.2). Notwithstanding the evolvement of the SCO, collaboration among the member states will never be obstacle-free. Unlike the EU members who believe in mutual vulnerability, the SCO members are disposed to conflict, basically because of their fundamental lack of trust in one another and their zero-sum mentality, which will be explained further in Section 4.3.3.

Table 4.4 Example of multilateral intergovernmental collaboration

<table>
<tr><th colspan="5">Multilateral intergovernmental collaboration</th></tr>
<tr><th>Organisation</th><th>Establishment year</th><th>Member states (year)</th><th>Areas of collaboration</th><th>Sub-structure</th></tr>
<tr>
<td>Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), former Shanghai Five</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Member states:
China (1996),
Kazakhstan (1996),
Kyrgyzstan (1996),
Russia (1996),
Tajikistan (1996),
Uzbekistan (2001),

Observers:
India,
Iran,
Mongolia,
Pakistan,
Afghanistan

Dialogue partners:
Belarus,
Sri Lanka
Turkey (to be confirmed)</td>
<td>Political
- Normalise and stabilise relations among member states
- Prevent dominance of Western (mainly from the U.S.) power in the region
- Increase political and normative power of the SCO members (to deflate Western criticism on democratic development and current domestic rule)
- Non-interference in the domestic affairs of other states
- For China and Russia, improve their position vis-à-vis the U.S.
- For the CASs, improve the prospect of regime survival

Economic
- Energy supplies
- Infrastructure projects (both road and rail)
- Removal of trade barriers
- Foreign direct investment in non-energy sectors</td>
<td>Regional Counter-Terrorism Structure (RCTS, founded in 2001)
- Former regional anti-terrorism structure (RATS)
- Permanent acting agency of SCO, based in Tashkent
- Assist, coordinate and interact with the competent agencies of SCO member countries on fighting with terrorism, separatism and extremism

SCO Business Council (founded in 2006)
- Bring together the business communities of the six countries
- Promote economic cooperation within the framework of SCO
- Establish direct links among business and financial circles
- Assist practical promotion of multilateral projects
- Provide advisory and expert assessments in trade, economic and investment interaction
- Areas include: energy, transportation, telecommunications, credit and banking, education, science, new technology, healthcare and agriculture
- Harmonise national legislations in economic field
- Contain special working groups of healthcare (proposed establishment of SCO-WHO [structure similar to World Health Organization]), education, and SCO Energy Club</td>
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</table>

			Military - Non-institutionalised military cooperation - Mainly for combating against "the three evils": terrorism, separatism, religious extremism - Perform anti-terrorist exercises	**SCO Interbank Consortium (founded in 2005)** - With members: Development Bank of Kazakhstan, State Development Bank of China, Bank for Development and Foreign Economic Affairs (Vnesheconombank) of Russia, National Bank of Tajikistan and National Bank for Foreign Economic Activity of Uzbekistan, Settlement and Savings Company of Kyrgyzstan - Belarusbank as bank partner - Action Plan in support of regional economic cooperation - Agreements on credit granting and funding for joint investment projects to the tune of 742 million dollars - Work with SCO Business Council
Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC), former Customs Union, with the Central Asian Co-operation organisation merged into it in 2005	2001	**Member states:** Belarus (2001) Kazakhstan (2001) Kyrgyzstan (2001) Russia (2001) Tajikistan (2001) **Observers:** Moldavia Ukraine Armenia **Former member:** Uzbekistan (2005; withdrew in 2008)	**Common economic space/ free trade zone/ customs union** - Creation of a common market and a single economic space - Formation of the Customs Union Committee, a supranational body - Agreements on encouragement and mutual protection of investments, agreements on technical regulation harmonization, the formation of the EAEC common energy market **Transport** - Unified tariffs, increase product transportation volume, simplify customs procedures, create	**EurAsEC Interstate Council** - Supreme body of the EurAsEC, composed of heads of states and heads of government - Regulate trade terms, formulate custom policies of the Community regarding third states, simply and unify customs regulations and rules, harmonise national legislation of member states **EurAsEC Integration Committee** - Standing body of EurAsCE, composed of deputy heads of governments - Analyse the status and development trends of integration processes in the Community, examine issues and prepare proposals for the works of the Interstate Council, elaborate and implement interstate investment projects, economic, social and other programmes, maintain contacts with other international organisations, represent interests of the Community, prepare proposals

	transnational transport and consignment corporations **Energy** - Enhance common hydro-energetic complexes located in Central Asia and resolve water and electricity supply problems, common energy balance **Work force migration** - Protect migrants, create an effective regulation and control system for migration of workers, combat against migration related criminality, resolve tax payment problems of migrants and their employers **Agrarian sector** - Conciliate agrarian sector policy in member states, develop common agrarian market, reduce transportation and storage costs, create new market institutions in these domains (insurance, banks, leasing, stock market, etc.)	on state membership (or observer-ship), control over implementation of treaties and resolutions as well as the EurAsCE budget **EurAsEC Inter-parliamentary Assembly** - Composed of deputies assigned by the parliaments of the member states - Coordinate legal policies and organise inter-parliament cooperation **Community Court of Justice** - Settle economic disputes between the member states relating to the implementation of the Community's resolutions and treaties **Other subsidiary structures** - EurAsEC Commission of Permanent Representatives - EurAsEC Integration Committee Secretariat - EurAsEC Integration Committee Councils and Commissions

Source: Complied by author, based on secondary data from Bailes et al. (2007); EurAsEC (2011); Eurasian Economic Center (N.d.); Hansen (2008); PRC Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2012); SCO (2009, 2011a, 2011b)

Other than the SCO, the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC) is another multinational organisation that involves, or has involved, most of the CASs. The EurAsEC is led by Russia (excluding China) and with all of its members being post-Soviet states. Evolving from the CIS Customs Union between Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan, the EurAsEC was established in 2001 with the following aim:

> "…developing economic cooperation and trade, to effectively further the process for forming the Customs Union and Common Economic Space, and to coordinate the actions of Community states during integration into the world economy and international trading system" (EurAsEC, 2011, p. 3)

The five founding members are Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia and Tajikistan. While Uzbekistan joined the EurAsCE in 2005, it has suspended its involvement in the programme of work of the Community since 2008. The members are striving to create a free economic zone (phase one of the development), a customs union, and a common economic space among themselves. Although the initial stages of the EurAsCE Customs Union and the EurAsCE Common Economic Space have already started, they currently only involve Belarus, Kazakhstan and the Russian Federation. It is agreed that the other EurAsEC members shall join the two entities at a time when their economies and legislative systems are ready (EurAsEC, 2011). Details of the areas of collaboration of the EurAsEC as well as its substructures are included in Table 4.4.

The two multilateral organisations in the region, that is the SCO dominated by China and the EurAsEC led by Russia, were established almost at the same time. It is not difficult to notice this subtle power struggle between China and Russia in the Central Asian region by their exerting a higher influence on the socio-economic development of the CASs. Meanwhile, commentators suggested that the incentive of the CASs to join these organisations may not be to seek closer cooperation among themselves but rather to establish better relations with their larger and stronger neighbours, namely China and Russia (Akhmadov, 2008). Quoting the Uzbek mass media, it is stated that, "it is time for the Central Asian States to understand that it is not right to rely on an uncle across the ocean, but more convenient and reliable to befriend with the closest, time-tested neighbours" (cited in Marat, 2006, para. 5). Due to its "long-standing policy of abstaining from joining regional blocs", Turkmenistan continues to show disinterest in joining any of these multilateral intergovernmental organisations (Weitz, 2011b, para. 11). The country is not even an observer state or a dialogue partner of the SCO. Nonetheless, Turkmenistan occasionally joins the annual Council of Heads meeting of the SCO to discuss with the individual countries about establishing bilateral agreements of mutual interests.

4.3.1.2 *Bilateral intergovernmental agreements*

As mentioned, while multilateral attempts open up platforms for dialogues among the CASs and China, it is bilateral agreements that signify concrete collaborative efforts between national governments. Even within the same multilateral collaborative structure, the nature and quality of the relations between its members can still vary. For example, the disputes of Uzbekistan with Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have neither been resolved nor ceased after Uzbekistan's accession to the SCO in 2005. Furthermore, the decision for one country to collaborate with another country involves the consideration of numerous factors ranging from the national interests, development priority and resources available of the two countries to external reasons such as geo-political concerns. Table 4.5 (pp. 293-301) gives an overview of the areas and contents of the existing bilateral agreements and relations between the countries (China and the CASs). It is noted in this summarisation that bilateral agreements are heavily concentrated in the energy sector, very much because of China's proactive measures in establishing energy partnerships with the CASs. Besides, trade and investment as well as transport and infrastructure building are the other major areas for bilateral cooperation. These areas of collaboration are congruent with those at multilateral level. The findings reaffirm what has been revealed earlier, that is, the contents of bilateral agreements are often confined within the cooperative framework and directions outlined by the multilateral declarations.

In general, China and Kazakhstan are enthusiastic about bilateral cooperation in the region basically because of their better and rapidly growing economies. Turkmenistan and perhaps also Uzbekistan are known by their hesitation to join any of the regional economic cooperation schemes. The latter is instead a keen proponent of bilateral agreements with individual countries which share mutual interests. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are more passive in terms of cooperation due to the absence of oil and gas

fields in their territories and their relatively slow socio-economic development.
China has a consistent and pragmatic approach to cooperation, especially with its neighbouring less-developed and developing countries (H. Wang, 2010). Within the SCO setting, China has reached consensus with the leaders of the other SCO members on developing bilateral ties and deepening mutually beneficial cooperation (Xinhua News Agency, 2009c). The contents of these bilateral settlements are exhibited in Table 4.5. As the table shows, China's cooperation with Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are more vibrant and mainly deals with pragmatic issues, particularly energy related cooperation.

Due to the rapidly growing population and economy, China has a huge demand[53] and an urgent quest to secure energy resources. Compared to the U.S. whose 15% of oil imports come from neighbouring Canada and Mexico, China's oil imports rely heavily on sources from afar and are subject to multisided uncertainty[54] (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2012a, 2012b). Therefore, energy policies of the PRC government are dominated by the needs to diversify both the origins of oil imports and energy supplies, and to secure those sources often through overseas investment and long-term contracts as well as overseas acquisition of energy companies. Considering that the three CASs own most of the natural energy resources in the Central Asian region, China's move is strategic. China's first 620-mile transnational oil pipeline, originating in Kazakhstan, started operation in 2006 to bring Kazakh and Russian oil to the Chinese border at Xinjiang. It was a joint venture between China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and Kazakhstan's KazMunaiGaz and expansion is undertaken to bring more oil from the oil fields at the Kazakh Caspian coast to China, doubling the present capacity to 400,000 bbl/day by 2014. Recently, Chinese national oil companies, including CNPC, Sinopec, and China National Offshore Oil Corporation, have secured a bilateral oil-for-loan agreement amounted to USD 10 billion with Kazakhstan and a gas-for-loan deal with Turkmenistan (U.S. Energy

[53] In 2011, China is the world's second largest oil importer behind the U.S. and the largest global energy consumer. Its energy consumption growth accounted for half of the world's total oil consumption growth (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2012a).
[54] In 2011, Saudi Arabia and Angola are China's two largest sources of oil imports (over one-third of China's total oil imports). Other sources like Sudan, South Sudan and Iran are prone to supply disruptions and uncertainty due to reasons such as political sanctions and conflicts of interests (U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2012a).

Information Administration, 2012a). Another major energy project of China is the Central Asian Gas Pipeline which brings in natural gas from Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (construction in progress, 2011-2014) (CNPC, 2011). It has a span of 1,833 kilometres with two lines having been operational since December 2009. The third line, with a section crossing Uzbekistan, will be in operation starting from December 2014, delivering 25 billion cubic metres of natural gas from the three countries to China annually and will reach the planned deliverability of 55 billion cubic metres per annum by the end of 2015 (Y. Ma, 2012). China sees Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan as important energy partners. In 2012, Turkmenistan and China further signed an agreement to expand the current amount of gas supply by over 60% and China is allowed to invest in the upstream stakes of Turkmenistan's gas development projects (The Conway Bulletin, 2011b; U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2012a). Meanwhile, Sinopec has offered to invest USD 1 billion in the expansion of the Atyrau oil refinery in western Kazakhstan, signifying the increased Chinese control over Kazakhstan's oil production[55] (Sharip, 2010).

Another area where bilateral agreements are often found is cross-border trade. According to the statistics provided by the PRC's Ministry of Commerce (cited in Xinhua, 2012) the total trade volume of the SCO member states reached USD 4.65 trillion in 2011, representing a year-on-year growth of 25%. China's trade with other SCO members increased from USD 12.1 billion in 2001 to USD 113.4 billion in 2011 (Xinhua, 2012). China is Kazakhstan's second largest export partner accounting for 17.7% of Kazakhstan's total exports in 2010 (WTO, 2012). Inter-trade volume between China and Kazakhstan is expected to increase from the present USD 25 billion to USD 40 billion before 2015 (Xinhua News Agency, 2012). It is noted that with the growth in the Kazakh economy, China and Kazakhstan are readier to move beyond energy partnership to other facets of economic cooperation. For Kyrgyzstan, most commodity goods in the country are imported, with majority of them from Russia (33.6%), China (20.7%) and Kazakhstan (12%). Meanwhile, Kazakhstan is also the fourth largest export market (12.2%) for Kyrgyzstan's agricultural products and manufactures in 2010 (WTO, 2012). While World Trade Organization's data of trade profiles for Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan are not available, Xinhua (2012)

[55] China has a 22% stake in Kazakhstan's oil production, 2.5 times more than that of Russia.

claimed that China is also the second most important trade partner for Tajikistan in 2011. Despite this growth in intra-SCO trade, significant disparities are observed in the importance of the SCO markets for the individual countries. China is an important trade partner for the CASs, but apparently not vice versa.

Bilateral cooperation also happens in the transport sector. The most prominent project is again initiated by China, which is, the Asia-Europe rail network. China has been in negotiation to construct a high-speed rail network that crosses 17 countries between China and various locations in Europe. The network would consist of northern, southern and western routes and is part of China's Pan-Asian railway plan which attempts to connect 28 countries with 81,000 kilometres of railways, confirmed by the PRC's Ministry of Railways in March 2010 (cited in Muzalevsky, 2010). The western network of the project would run from Urumqi through Central Asia, including Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, possibly connecting as well Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey then to Germany (S. Chen, 2010). In order to take part in the increased trade that such network would bring, the CASs are prepared to offer China trade incentives in exchange for financial support on the enormous construction cost (Darby, 2008). Other than rail networks, bilateral agreements are also made to improve and construct road links, such as Kazakhstan's WE-WC transnational corridor and Tajikistan's Kuliab-Kalai Khum road links connecting Uzbekistan, Afghanistan, Kyrgyzstan and China. Outside observers commented that similar projects (both rail and road networks) in the region will create an iron Silk Road of transportation and commerce linking China and Europe via Central Asia. Although the project sounds ambitious and will take a long time to complete, it is believed that both China and the CASs will be banking on the multiplier effect of the construction process, not to mention its completion and success (Trilling, 2007).

As mentioned, China is Kazakhstan's second largest trading partner (17.7%, 2010), it is nonetheless surpassed by the EU with a much larger share of Kazakh export and import markets (53.8% and 30.1% respectively, 2010) (WTO, 2012). Although a couple of bilateral trade agreements were established between Kazakhstan and the individual CASs, their cross-border trade volumes are still not significant. For instance, in 2011, Kazakhstan's trade turnovers with Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan totalled only USD 750 million, USD 405.2 million and USD 183 million respectively

(Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ROK, 2012). Exception was Uzbekistan with which total trade volume amounted to USD 1.3 billion in 2009 (The Government Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2010). This is attributed to the establishment of a free trade area between Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan from 2008 onwards (Akhmadov, 2008). Other than trade, Kazakhstan is also an important investor in the other CASs' economies, particularly the less-developed Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Although Kazakhstan's enthusiasm for cooperation in the region is of similar standing with that of China, its interests are less urgent. It is probably because Kazakhstan does not have a pressing energy demand as China does and it aims rather to establish Kazakh economy in partnership with economically advanced nations.

In spite of Uzbekistan's membership in the SCO, both Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan have expressed disinterest to join any of the regional economic blocs. The former prefers bilateral agreements to multilateral regional settlement. As the President Karimov said, "In order to establish a union between the states, their level of socioeconomic development and potential should be comparable" (cited in Akhmadov, 2008, para. 2). His comment particularly refers to the countries' different approaches to economic development[56] and the uneven distribution of natural wealth, in terms of oil and gas, in the region. That is why Uzbekistan refused to join the Central Asian (EurAcEC) Customs Union and has suspended its involvement in the EurAsEC since 2008. Alternatively, Uzbekistan has established bilateral intergovernmental agreements, not only with the neighbouring countries of CASs and China, but also other countries like Indonesia, Singapore and Czech Republic (refer to Section 4.1.2.3). In addition, the country has some 45 bilateral agreements signed with foreign countries in the tourism field (Ganiev, 2010). However, it is observed that Uzbekistan's relations with the neighbouring CASs are not particularly good and stable. Border and trade disputes continue to happen between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan and between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. As shown in Table 4.5, the progress of Kyrgyz-Uzbek cooperation is staggeringly slow and disrupted by the two revolutions in Kyrgyzstan which also led to Kyrgyz-Uzbek ethnic conflicts (refer to Section 4.2.1 on challenges for tourism development). Moreover, Uzbek-Kyrgyz relations have long been

[56] The business environments of the CASs and China are briefly described in Section 4.1.3.2 on "enterprises" as part of the supporting factors and resources for tourism development.

bothered with the disputes at their 1,600- kilometre border, over the political rights of Uzbeks residing in Kyrgyzstan and over the sharing of water, gas, and land resources (Marat, 2006). The United Nations explained that trust and cooperation between Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan would not be restored unless a full investigation is made into the violence happened in 2010 and the perpetrators are punished (UN News Centre, 2011). Relations between Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are no better, featured with a "no war, no peace" deadlock since the 1990s (Tolipov, 2012, para. 10). The dispute was majorly over the construction of the Rogun Hydropower Station in the upstream Tajikistan, and was worsened by the terrorist attacks in Uzbekistan launched from Tajikistan's territory. Very recently in April 2012, Tajikistan issued a rather harsh demarche against Uzbekistan, accusing the country for issuing a blockade of railroads, cargo and gas supply to Tajikistan. Meanwhile, Uzbekistan denied such an intention. The issue remains unresolved. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan apparently have stronger wills to resume cooperative relations with Uzbekistan because they are somewhat dependent on Uzbek imports of energy and goods. On the contrary, "cooperation with Kyrgyzstan or Tajikistan – the region's weakest states – has never been a priority for official Tashkent" (Marat, 2006, para. 4).

Unlike Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan's willingness to cooperate bilaterally is uncertain, with most of its agreements being at initial stages or with rather vague contents, particularly those with the weaker states (see Table 4.5 for cooperation and relations between Turkmenistan and Kyrgyzstan, and between Turkmenistan and Tajikistan). Turkmenistan's external relations and foreign policy have been featured with its proclaimed state's neutrality and isolationism ever since its independence (Akhmadov, 2008). Although Turkmenistan has become less isolationist under the rule of Berdymukhamedov, cooperation with foreign states still focus mainly on natural gas exports (Freedom House, 2012). Therefore, majority of Turkmenistan's bilateral agreements are made in relation to oil and gas trade, with other energy partners namely China, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan (see Table 4.5 for more details). In addition, it is noted that bilateral relations between Turkmenistan and foreign countries are often associated with some declarations of common political position and wills. For instance, in the bilateral agreement between Turkmenistan and China, it is written that China respects Turkmenistan's country status of neutrality, Turkmenistan in return supports China's peaceful reunification and territorial integrity, with a hidden reference to the

Taiwan issue (Xinhua, 2011). Also, for Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan, they have proclaimed similar positions on the various issues related to the legal status of the Caspian Sea (Kazinform, 2009).

Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are less privileged for bilateral cooperation chiefly due to their lack of natural resources. Although they appear eager to cooperation, their actual accomplishments are somehow tied up in many aspects, particular by their internal social and political instability, coupled with the lack of financial resources. Nonetheless, Kyrgyzstan has a better chance to change the situation principally because of its strategic transit location as an immediate neighbour to China. Kyrgyzstan is involved in some of China's energy and transport project (see Table 4.5 for details). For instance, Kyrgyzstan relies on the proposed China- Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway links to develop its southern areas and reached initial agreement with China on the construction. In addition, there is the China-Kyrgyzstan cross-border hydropower development project. Cooperation is also made on connectivity improvement and local development programmes between the adjacent regions between the two countries. According to the study informants, although relations between Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan have been unfavourable, situations may change under the rule of the newly selected Kyrgyz President, Atambayev. This has already been experienced in the relations between Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The Kazakh President has even prompted Kyrgyzstan's accession to the EurAsCE Customs Union and continues to supply the much needed Kazakh gas to Kyrgyz households and industries despite the latter's debt for gas supplies of over USD 30 million in 2012 (Voloshin, 2012).

For Tajikistan, situation may be less fortunate. Documented bilateral agreements of Tajikistan with the other countries are rather superficial, except the ones with China and probably those with Kazakhstan. The Tajik-China road corridor is one of Tajikistan's major infrastructure development projects, which cost roughly USD 720 million. China lent the capital to the Tajik government in the form of long-term, low-interest loans (Thrilling, 2007). Ironically yet, the project had majorly employed Chinese workers and used Chinese equipment, meaning the money spent somehow went back to China. Besides, to build the Kuliab-Kalai Khum road networks, Tajikistan was seeking a USD 13 million loan from the OPEC Fund for International

Development (Muzalevsky, 2010). From these observations, one can tell the major hindrance for Tajikistan to establish fair and stable bilateral cooperation with its neighbouring countries is the lack of financial capital.

To summarise, while China, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are the “proactive doers”, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan can only be the “passive wishers” for bilateral cooperation in the Central Asian region. Consistent with Turkmenistan’s foreign policy approach, the country is moderate in terms of working bilaterally with its neighbouring countries. It is noted that the happening of bilateral cooperation is influenced by many factors. First, cooperation is materialised when interests are aligned. An example is China’s interests in CASs’ energy resources versus CASs’ interests in China’s loans and financial aids. Therefore, major areas of current bilateral agreements are still confined, with most of them being energy projects, economic and trade cooperation and joint infrastructure building; whereas, tourism is not yet visible as a field for active bilateral cooperation (at least not shown on their official documents). As confirmed by Elite T3, *“tourism ministries, but I know that with their direct neighbours, there is not very active exchange about what can be done in the future. It seems that everybody is working for himself in developing international tourism industry”*. The second factor is the countries’ (its government and especially the President) preference and discretion over what and with whom they work with. For example, Uzbekistan’s preference on bilateral agreements to multilateral settlements is most likely a result of the President’s cautiousness about the possible dilution of his power to any supranational authority. Turkmenistan is scrupulous in choosing its cooperative partners due to its national policy of neutrality and isolationism. In addition, detrimental relations between countries present a major collaboration obstacle. Last but not least, resources are again a significant factor in affecting the roles these countries would play in the context of bilateral cooperation. China and Kazakhstan are obviously readier, politically and economically, to work with other countries and most of the time they act as investors and funding agents in bilateral projects with the other CASs.

Table 4.5 Bilateral cooperation (/relations) of the CASs and China

Collaborating countries	China	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
			Bilateral agreements/ relations			
China	N/A	**Comprehensive strategic partnership in 2011 and Joint communiqué in April 2012** - Trade (volume of trade increases from USD 25 billion in 2011 to an expected USD 40 billion before 2015) - Mutual investment (mining, natural resources, high technology and advanced manufacturing) - Energy sector (China-Kazakhstan oil and gas pipeline, nuclear power, natural uranium) - Finance - Transportation (highways, railways, aviation) (Xinhua News Agency, 2012)	**Five-point proposal on pragmatic cooperation** - Cross-border infrastructure construction (China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan railway and roads - Power grid renovation and China-Kyrgyzstan cross-border hydropower project development, power cooperation - Mutual investment - Local development strategies and cooperation between adjacent regions - Cooperation on counter-terrorism, drug control, border control, security and safety during major events and emergency handling, law enforcement and security cooperation **Outside the five-point**	**Consolidation of friendship** **Expansion of pragmatic cooperation** between China and Tajikistan in terms of political, economic and security cooperation (Xinhua News Agency, 2009a) - Mining, agriculture, and other large-scale joint projects - China's help to build an agricultural technology centre to increase food output and promote personnel training - Investment environment (People's Daily Online, 2009)	**Strategic energy partnership** - With natural gas pipelines opened in 2009 - Frequent high-level visits - Expanded trade cooperation - Cultural exchanges - China respects Turkmenistan's neutral country status - Turkmenistan supports China's peaceful reunification and territorial integrity - Potential cooperation in non-energy sectors: transportation, telecommunications, chemicals, textile and agriculture, trade, culture and education - Security and law enforcement cooperation	**Intergovernmental economic and trade cooperation committee** - Partnership relation since 2005 - High-level exchanges - Political mutual trust - Cooperation in areas: trade, economy, energy, security, culture, transport, telecommunications, light industry, agriculture, finance and social development - China's continued supply of aid (People's Daily Online, 2009; Xinhua News Agency, 2009b) **Agreement of gas supply** - Line C of the Central Asia-China Gas Pipeline covers a distance of 529 km in Uzbekistan and plays an important role in

Collaborating countries	China	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
China	N/A	**China-Kazakhstan Cooperation Committee for economic and trade cooperation** - Economy, trade, transportation, ports, science, technology, finance, energy, mineral resources, humanities, security, railway. - Memorandum of Understanding on industrial safety (Xinhua News Agency, 2010)	- Economic and trade cooperation - Related railway and highway projects - Facilitate connectivity - Power and other energy cooperation - Agriculture, mining and light industry - Local exchanges - Security and law enforcement - Safeguard stability and peace (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of PRC, 2012) - Bilateral trade volume reached USD 4 billion in 2011 (L. Xu, 2012)		(Xinhua, 2011)	diversifying Uzbekistan's gas export (CNPC, 2011)
Kazakhstan	See the box for "China-Kazakhstan" above	N/A	**1997 Treaty on Eternal Friendship & 2002 Treaty on Ally Relation** - Agreement to broaden bilateral cooperation in areas including energy, agriculture, transport and communications,	**Kazakh-Tajik Direct Investments Fund** - To enhance investment cooperation - Trade turnover amounted to USD 405.2 million in 2011 - Signed a Memorandum on the establishment of	**Major joint projects on transport and energy sectors** - Uzen-Gorgan Railway and Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan-China gas pipeline	**The Interstate Coordination Council** - Second sitting in 2007, focused on trade and economic, social and cultural cooperation - Potential to cooperate in the hydropower industry, infrastructure

Collaborating countries	China	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Kazakhstan	See the box for "China-Kazakhstan" above	N/A	mining, processing industries, and tourism - Cross-border trade amounted to USD 750 million in 2011 - Improve the business climate and dismantle unnecessary administrative obstacles to the expansion of joint enterprises - Kazakhstan has invested more than USD 1 billion into the Kyrgyz economy since its independence during the period 1991-2011 - Enlarged sessions of the Supreme Interstate Council and the Kazakh-Kyrgyz Intergovernmental Council to be held in late 2012 - Establishment of a Kazakh-Kyrgyz Investment Fund with headquarters in Almaty and subsequently another one in Bishkek	the Interstate Coordination Council and the Council of Foreign Ministers of the two countries in 2008 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ROK, 2012) - Areas of bilateral cooperation include: energy, use of hydro resources, construction and metallurgy - 47 Kazakh-Tajik joint ventures were recorded in 2010 (Ergasheva, 2010)	- Bilateral relations are primarily in the fuel and energy sector and transit of energy resources - Similar position on determining the status of the Caspian Sea - Progresses in the demarcation of the Kazakh-Turkmen border - Mutual trade volume totaled USD 183 million in 2011 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of ROK, 2012) - Trade-economic cooperation via the Caspian Sea - Establishment of twin-city relations between Aktau and Turkmenbashi (Kazinform, 2009)	development (construction of automobile and roads) (Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan, 2007) **The Joint Intergovernmental Commission for bilateral cooperation** - The 11th sitting in 2010, focused on expansion of trade and economic cooperation, cooperation in the field of agriculture and water management, cooperation in transport, settlement of promissory notes between the energy supply systems of two countries, and expansions of the contract-legal base of bilateral cooperation (uzreport.uz, 2010) **Further developing the Uzbek-Kazakh relations in politics, trade-**

Collaborating countries	China	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Kazakhstan	See the box for "China-Kazakhstan" above	N/A	- Identification of priority areas of bilateral cooperation and the allocation of public funds to the benefit of specifically selected projects - Signed a new agreement on strategic partnership detailing their shared objectives for the next 10 years in August 2012 (Voloshin, 2012)			**economic and cultural-humanitarian spheres in 2010** - Cooperation in investment, agriculture, effectives use of transit-transport potential - Solid legal base was created with 140 documents - Strategic Economic Cooperation till 2016 - Agreement on mutual providing of land for building of diplomatic missions, programme of cooperation between Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the two countries (2010-2011), programme of cooperation between Ministry of Culture or equivalence of the two countries (2010-2012) - Mutual interest to develop acceptable mechanism on joint use of water-energy resources of the Central Asian region

Collaborating countries	China	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Kazakhstan	See the box for "China-Kazakhstan" above	N/A				(UzDaily, 2010) **Economic Cooperation Program for 2006-2010 and the Economic Cooperation Strategy for 2007-2016** - Bilateral trade turnover totalled USD 1.3 billion in 2009 (The Governmental Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2010)
Kyrgyzstan	See the box for "China-Kyrgyzstan" above	See the box for "Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan" above	N/A	**The 11th meeting of Kyrgyz-Tajik intergovernmental commission on comprehensive consideration of bilateral issues** - A plan of bilateral actions for 2012-2013 was proposed for trade-economic cooperation between the countries (Kabar, 2012c) **Society of Friendship "Tajikistan-Kyrgyzstan"**	**Initial stage of discussion for cooperation in 2011, despite cooperative intention first appeared in 2007** (Hasanov, 2011; Ibraliev, 2007; Kabar, 2011) - Possibilities for collaboration in the trade, economic, cultural and humanitarian spheres were reaffirmed in diplomatic mission of the Kyrgyz ambassador to	**Intergovernmental commission on trade and economic cooperation since 1996** - Seven sessions of meeting have been held with the last one being held in December 2009 - The bilateral trade turnover increased by 44% to USD 256 million in 2008. In the first half of 2009, the figure reached USD 140 million. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, n.d.; The

Collaborating countries	China	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Kyrgyzstan	See the box for "China-Kyrgyzstan" above	See the box for "Kazakhstan-Kyrgyzstan" above	N/A	- Cultural and humanitarian cooperation (Kabar, 2012a) **Interstate agreement between the Committee for Emergency Situations in Tajikistan and the Ministry of Emergency Situations in Kyrgyzstan** - Cooperation in civil defense, emergency prevention and response - A result of the joint effort of Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development, a non- governmental , not- for- profit organisation founded in Paris, and the European Commission Humanitarian Aid department (Asia-Plus, 2012a)	Turkmenistan in February 2011 (Hasanov, 2011) - Intention of early coordination and signing of a draft Treaty on friendship and cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan was raised in a bilateral meeting held in conjunction with a meeting of the Council of CIS Heads of Governments and the EurAsEC Interstate Council in October 2011; - Alongside, the first meeting of the Turkmen-Kyrgyz intergovernmental commission was proposed to be held in the near future (Kabar, 2011)	Governmental Portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2009) **Cooperation suspended following the revolutions in 2005 and 2010.** **The two countries discussed prospects of cooperation in December 2011** (Trend.az, 2011) **Kyrgyzstan proposed to resume the work of the Joint Kyrgyz-Uzbek Intergovernmental Commission on bilateral cooperation and to organise the eighth session of the meeting** (Kabar, 2012b)
					Priority areas for Tajik-Turkmen	**Intergovernmental commission on trade**

Collaborating countries	China	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Tajikistan	See the box for "China-Tajikistan" above	See the box for "Kazakhstan-Tajikistan" above	See the box for "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan" above	N/A	**cooperation:** - Production and transportation of electric power, oil products, nonferrous metallurgy, transport telecommunications, and textiles Seven agreements signed in August 2012: - Cooperation between the chambers of commerce; Agreement between Tajikistan's National Bank and Turkmenistan's Ministry of Finance on combating money laundering and financing of terrorism; Agreement on cooperation between the Academies of Sciences;	**and economic cooperation** - With only two meetings being held, one in 2002, and one in 2009 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, n.d.) **Continuous tension and diminished trust** between the two states since the 1990s caused by disputes over the construction of the Rogun Hydropower station. (Tolipov, 2012) **Signs of resumed collaborative efforts in 2011** (The Governmental portal of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2011) Yet, on November 17, 2011, Uzbekistan suspended rail traffic to Tajik southern province-Khatlon. And on April 1,

Collaborating countries	China	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Tajikistan	See the box for "China-Tajikistan" above	See the box for "Kazakhstan-Tajikistan" above	See the box for "Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan" above	N/A	Programme of cooperation in arts and culture for 2013 - 2014; Programme of cooperation between the Foreign Ministries for 2013 - 2014; Intergovernmental agreement on allocating plots for mutual embassies; and a joint communiqué (Moore, 2012)	2012, Uzbekistan stopped delivery of natural gas, and subsequently electricity, to Tajikistan. In April 2012, Tajik Embassy in Moscow accused Uzbekistan of blockading railroads and cargo and gas supply to Tajikistan**.** The allegations were revoked by Uzbek authorities**.** **The relation of the two countries is marked by such demarche-and-response situations** (Tolipov, 2012) **Tajikistan has a stronger will to improve relations with Uzbekistan in view of the much needed energy and rail networks** (Asia-Plus, 2012b)
	See the box for "China-	See the box for "Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan" above	See the box for "Kyrgyzstan-Turkmenistan" above	See the box for "Tajikistan-Turkmenistan" above	N/A	**Uzbek-Turkmen Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific,**

Collaborating countries	China	Kazakhstan	Kyrgyzstan	Tajikistan	Turkmenistan	Uzbekistan
Turkmenistan	Turkmenistan" above					**Technological and Cultural Cooperation** - Bilateral trade grew by 68.7% to USD 454.3 million in 2011 and USD 1 billion is expected in 2012-14 (CA-News, 2012) - Cooperation in hydrocarbon industry, within the transnational Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan-Kazakhstan-China pipeline project - Cooperation in Transport and communications, within Uzbekistan-Turkmenistan-Iran-Oman-Qatar transport corridor (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, n.d.)
Uzbekistan	See the box for "China-Uzbekistan" above	See the box for "Kazakhstan-Uzbekistan" above	See the box for "Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan" above	See the box for "Tajikistan-Uzbekistan" above	See the box for "Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan" above	N/A

4.3.1.3 *Collaborative projects by international organisations or donor agencies*

Regional collaboration in Central Asia has been on the agenda of the international community ever since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the independence of the CASs in 1991. Many projects have been initiated throughout the years to promote mutually beneficial trade and economic coexistence among the former Soviet states. International organisations involved in these projects are diverse with the UN agencies being the most active. The UN, as early as 1993 in the 48th session of its General Assembly, started to devote effort to assist the landlocked states in Central Asia to enter world markets, although initial focus was mainly on a multi-country transit system[57]. As a result, UNESCAP and UNDP were amongst the earliest pioneers of development projects in Central Asia, followed by UNECE in the sphere of cross-regional transport, UNCTAD with a focus on regional trade and UNWTO, looking into the possibility of tourism development in the region. Other than organisations under the UN umbrella, IRU, the EU and other individual donor agencies are also active initiators of collaborative projects in Central Asia. These projects often connect the Central Asian countries using the linkage of the Silk Road. In this section, a brief introduction of the various projects initiated by the international organisations or donor agencies is first given. Yet, the major discussion is placed on the project of the Silk Road Initiative (SRI) and the subsequent works of the UNWTO, which are more closely related to tourism.

One of the most long-lasting projects is UNESCAP's Trans-Asia Railway (TAR) first established back in the 1960s. The TAR was planned to provide a continuous 14,000 kilometre rail link between Singapore and Istanbul. The TAR concept had then been interrupted by political and economic turbulences for almost three decades and only in the 1990s was the idea revived (UNESCAP, n.d.). The initial TAR network was separated into four sections of which the north-south corridor links Northern Europe to the Persian Gulf through the Russia Federation, Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) and the Caucasus region (UNESCAP, 2001).

[57] More details can be found in the Resolution 48/170 resulted from the 48th session of the UN General Assembly in December 1993, retrievable from United Nations Dag Hammarskjöld Library (UN, n.d.-a).

Subsequently, in cooperation with UNECE, a more focused initiative of Euro-Asian Transport Links (EATL) was launched in 2002, as part of a wider capacity building project of the United Nations Development Account. EATL aimed to facilitate the 19 participating states[58] in strengthening their national capacity by developing interregional land and land-cum-sea transport linkages and to promote interregional cooperation (UNECE, n.d.). Phase one of the project has already been completed while phase two is in place for the period from 2008 to 2012. Along similar lines are the long-term project of TRACECA and the IRU's New Eurasian Land Transport Initiative (NELTI). TRACECA, abbreviation for Transport Corridor Europe-the Caucasus-Asia, is an interregional programme of technical assistance initiated as a result of the Brussels Declaration[59] and with initial funding from the EU. The programme was established in 1993 with the aim to catalyse "development of the transport corridor from Europe, crossing the Black Sea, Caucasus, the Caspian Sea and reaching the Central Asian countries" (TRACECA, 2009, para. 2); and hence to strengthen economic relation, trade and transport communication along the Corridor region. The milestone of TRACECA was the adoption of the Basic Multilateral Agreement on International Transport for Development of the Europe-the Caucasus-Asia Corridor in 1998 by the 13 participating countries among which are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan[60] (TRACECA, 2012). The latest development was the formulation of the TRACECA Intergovernmental Commission Strategy for the period up to 2015. IRU's NELTI was established in 2008 in compliment with the initiatives of the UN and the EU. Instead of working at intergovernmental level, IRU focuses more on collaboration between transport and logistics companies from Eurasian countries including Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. NELTI is already at its third stage and has evolved as a joint effort with the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO)[61](IRU, 2012).

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[58] The participating countries include: Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, China, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

[59] The Brussels Declaration was resulted from the Brussels Conference attended by Ministries of Trade and Transport from eight countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, in May 1993.

[60] Turkmenistan has not been represented in any of the meetings and agreements despite its initial involvement in the Brussels meeting. Other member states include: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Iran (assistance to Iran has been suspended due to the EU sanctions since 2010), Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Romania, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine and Uzbekistan.

[61] The ECO is an intergovernmental regional organisation established in 1985 by Iran, Pakistan and Turkey for the purpose of promoting economic, technical and cultural cooperation. Later it was joined

All the above projects are catalysts for the UN's notion of international transport being a tool for trade expansion, economic growth and cultural exchanges. Later on, it was added in the EATL framework that interregional transport linkages can be a facilitator for tourism development (UNECE, n.d.). An evaluation of these programmes revealed some of their denominators. First, the works undertaken or proposed by these initiatives appear similar in nature with major achievements in the following areas, 1) research and feasibility studies on transnational transport routes and in the individual countries; 2) identification of investment needs and sourcing of the much needed funds; 3) negotiation and establishment of compatible policy frameworks among participating countries; 4) hosting of symposia and conferences to reach agreement and to lobby programme supporters; 5) organisation of workshops and training sessions for relevant personnel; and 6) increasing the awareness of the projects in the international community, though indirectly. Second, they are faced with similar challenges with the most headachy being the insecure source of financial resources. As a result, all these programmes have usually been implemented in phases, planned out carefully based on the budgets on hands. That is why Muzalevsky (2010) pointed out that none of these regional programmes are comparable to China's scheme of a high-speed Asia-Europe rail network in terms of proportions and funds. Third, these programmes could often be used as a means of political manipulation. For instance, TRACECA's technical assistance to Iran has been suspended since 2010 due to the EU sanctions on the country over its nuclear activities which were reinforced in 2012 (BBC News, 2012; TRACECA, n.d.). Last but not least, as secretariats of these initiatives are most of the time financed by the member countries, it could be possible that countries with more financial contributions would have higher influence over the implementation of the programmes. All together, these projects are in joint forces to establish what is regarded in the international community as the "Iron Silk Road".

Other than transport, UNESCO first expressed its interest in the Silk Road, particularly as a group of common heritages of the Eurasian people in 1988 and initiated the UNESCO Silk Road Project for the period of 1988-1997 (UNESCO, n.d.). Despite so,

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by Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, yet they were only represented by their embassies in Tehran, Iran.

not until recently have concrete efforts been made on pushing for a serial and trans-boundary World Heritage nomination of the Silk Road, especially in the Central Asian and China sub-region (UNESCO Almaty, 2007). Expert working groups were formed and several meetings and workshops were held in the few years after 1996. It was in the Second Meeting of the Coordinating Committee of the Serial World Heritage Nomination of the Silk Roads held in May 2011 when Ashgabat Agreement, with more than 50 potential Silk Road heritage corridors recognised, was adopted by the twelve participating countries[62]. The three corridors linking the five CASs and China were regarded as top priority for the first phase of the nomination (UNESCO, 2011). It is agreed that the nomination dossiers will be submitted by February 2013. In a subsequent meeting held in April 2012, two priority paths were identified. The first one is China- Kazakhstan- Kyrgyzstan passage, with a possible extension to Uzbekistan transnational Tian Shan corridor; and the second one is Tajikistan-Uzbekistan- Turkmenistan Amu Darya transnational corridor (UNESCO, 2012l). It is expected that the first option will enter the inscription process first because China has been very proactive and enthusiastic in getting its section of the Silk Road on the World Heritage List before the other Silk Road sections do (State Administration of Cultural Heritage, 2012b).

International donor agencies are also cooperating for the Central Asian region. The most prominent example is the CAREC programme established in 1996 as briefly mentioned in Chapter 1. CAREC is a partnership of ten countries[63], in collaboration with six multilateral institutions[64], to promote cooperation in the four areas of transport, trade facilitation, energy and trade policy in Central Asia and its neighbours (ADB, 2012a). A strategic framework for the period up to 2020 has been laid down recently in 2012. In the period from 2001 to 2010, over 100 CAREC-related projects have been formulated, with budgets over USD 15 billion (ADB, 2012b). The initiative claimed itself to be "a premier regional cooperation programme" (ADB, 2012b, p.3) probably because when compared to the other regional programmes, CAREC has apparently

[62] The twelve countries are Afghanistan, China, India, Iran, Japan, Kazakhstan, Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Nepal, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
[63] Afghanistan (2005), Azerbaijan (2002), Kazakhstan (1997), Kyrgyzstan (1997), Mongolia (2002), Pakistan (2010), PRC (1997), Tajikistan (1998), Turkmenistan (2010), Uzbekistan (1997).
[64] Multilateral partners: ADB, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, IMF, Islamic Development Bank, UNDP, World Bank.

performed better in terms of financing. In addition, it appears to be one of the only few economic cooperative initiatives in the region that has successfully involved Turkmenistan since 2010.

Other than these donor-led programmes, there are projects undertaken by enterprises that provide international cooperation services in the Central Asian region. They are acting on behalf of international donors including national governments of advanced economies, the World Bank and the EU. An example of these enterprises is the German Agency for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, GIZ). Commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, GIZ has been implementing a programme titled "support of regional economic cooperation in Central Asia" for the period 2005-2014 with a budget of over 15 million Euros (GIZ, n.d.). The beneficiaries of the project include Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and possibly Turkmenistan. Instead of mere providing financial aids, GIZ's assistance is more practical and operational. The programme aims to diminish unnecessary administrative barriers for trade, bring up quality infrastructure to international standard, and introduce modern management techniques in the region. What have been achieved till now are the formation of inter-ministerial groups between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, removal of major trade barriers, passing of more than 100 technical regulations that meet international standard, and provision of practical training for local companies and consultants. In association with this programme, Elite T3 has been placed by GIZ in the national tourism authority of Tajikistan, which is, the Committee of Youth Affairs, Sports and Tourism since April 2010. He explained his role as *"to support the vice minister and his team in their taskforce to develop the tourism sector… and also somehow involved in the work with the neighbouring countries in promoting the Silk Road project"* (Elite T3). He sees the pressing need there is to introduce to the Tajik tourism authority about modern management of the travel industry, especially in the sphere of tourism marketing and service quality management.

Summarising the above findings, although tourism was not declared as a specific development area in the abovementioned international initiatives, it has still been an integral component. Tourism, being closely linked to transport, will be benefited directly from the Eurasian transport projects. Besides, the successful enlisting of the

Silk Road (or sections of the Silk Road) as world heritages would enhance the attractiveness of the Silk Road and the countries it crosses as tourist destinations. It should be noted that other than these economic integration and trade link projects, there are international programmes that are related to humanitarian development, health and border management, which have been excluded from the discussion.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, it is the SRI and the subsequent works of the UNWTO that had stimulated the candidate's interest in conducting such research. Therefore, both technical advisors of the Silk Road Area Development Programme (SRI, Phase 1, 2001-2002) and the Silk Road Regional Programme (SRI, Phase 2, 2005-2007) were invited to participate in the study. In addition, Elite E1 was directly involved in Silk Road-related works during his previous assignment with one of the key SRI partner organisation, although the information he shared was confined to his own personal experience rather than expressed on behalf of the organisation. Likewise, most of the other key informants and elites have been active participants and/or potential beneficiaries of the SRI and related programmes. They include an advisor to a key UN agency, tourism ministers of some of the CASs and a group of *"Silk Road activists"*, as they called themselves. Their sharing of experience and opinion cohesively built the following evaluation of the SRI and the UNWTO Silk Road Programme.

Instead of a single programme, the SRI should be understood as a series of projects, implemented by a consortium comprising UNDP, UNCTAD and UNWTO, as it was briefly mentioned in Chapter 1. Although the involvement level of each of these organisations varies across different time frame, they are the constant supporters and working partners of the Initiative.

Not counting the scattered efforts of the UNESCO's Silk Road Programme in the earlier years, which bore a heavier focus on cultural rather than socio-economic development, the predecessor of the SRI should be the Silk Road Area Development Programme (SRADP) established by UNDP in 2001. It had lasted for one and half years, with UNCTAD as a cooperating agency. It is believed to be a programme catalysed by China's aim to build up its inner and poorer regions through the national plan of Economic Development in Poor Areas and the development strategy of the New Eurasian Land Bridge between 1980s and 1990s. It was documented in the

SRADP project proposal that a series of conferences and workshops had already been held from 1994 onwards, mostly initiated by China (UNDP, 1999). China subsequently sought assistance from UNDP to establish links and facilitate its cooperation with the CASs, taking advantage of the organisation's strong institutional presence in the region. UNDP got interested in the idea and several feasibility studies were conducted before the actual SRADP was officially inaugurated in 2001. It received seed moneys of USD 1 million and USD 200,000 from the Asian bureau and the European bureau of UNDP respectively (UNDP, 1999). Yet, only after three months of the initiation of the project, the first chief technical advisor cum manager left and was substituted by Mr. George Kuang (Key informant K2). The programme ceased in the end of 2002 due to the lack of continuation funds. In this so-called the first phase of the SRI, focuses were put on three major pillars, which are, regional cooperation, transport and transit, and trade and customs. The SRADP was unique because when compared to the other Silk Road or Eurasian projects, it had a more precise regional focus, serving only the CASs and China. Besides, it was a project of the kind that sees "cooperation among countries as an end in itself" (UNDP, 1999, p. 5); whereas other projects regarded cooperation as a means to achieve other goals. In this phase, tourism was not considered as a cooperative area as explained by Key informant K2, *"... you don't do trading too much with your neighbours so it is difficult to talk about tourism"*. The overall aim of the project, as outlined by its termination evaluation report, was "idea-generating" and building up an effective mechanism for "working-level regional cooperation" (UNOPS & UNDP, 2002, p. 11).

A few years after the termination of the SRADP, the UNDP's Silk Road Regional Programme (SRRP), which was also referred as "Silk Road Initiative – Future built on tradition", was created with additional funding from the two regional bureaus in 2005 (UNDP, 2007). It was when the name SRI first appeared and the programme was regarded as a continuation of the SRADP (UNDP China, 2005). The project was managed by Dr. Wojciech Huebner (Key informant K1) and lasted from January 2005 to December 2007. Although the overall aim remained to be enhancing cooperation and development among China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, the project this time had specifically focused on facilitating public-private partnerships in the areas of trade, investment and tourism. It was the first time when tourism was formally declared as a significant development tool for the regional economic integration of Central Asia. A parallel country project was operated in China (UNDP, 2004). The SRRP carried on the legacy of the SRADP and completed tasks that were promised in the SRADP proposal, which included, the establishment of platforms such as regional mayors' and investment fora. Then again the budget came into an end and the project subsided. Nonetheless, the tradition of the SRMF continued and the fora are now being coordinated by some non-UN civil societies, namely the SRGA, and individual municipal governments.

Concurrent with the UNDP development was UNWTO's effort in promoting Silk Road tourism. The idea was first conjured up amongst the member states at the tenth session of the UNWTO General Assembly in 1993 when they appealed to the organisation to set up a project to promote Silk Road tourism (UNWTO, 1993). At this initial stage, cooperation was mainly undertaken in cooperation with UNESCO focusing on Silk Road cultural tourism. A UNESCO/ WTO cultural tourism programme in Central Asia was formulated with the First International Silk Road Meeting being held in 1994 in Samarkand, resulted in the Samarkand Declaration (UNESCO, 2008). According to Elite E1, the Samarkand Declaration is a remarkable step forward as it marked the establishment of the *"Silk Road concept"*, a collective identity of the participating countries that brought tourism efforts of the CASs and China together. Silk Road activities were at that time under the joint management of the regional representation of Asia and the Pacific and that of Europe of UNWTO. Four international Silk Road meetings, three Silk Road travel fora, and various workshops were held in the ten years between 1994 and 2004, before UNWTO became a partner organisation of the SRI. The annual UN Silk Road City Award was launched in the same year when UNWTO joined the SRI consortium. UNWTO had been having an assisting role in the SRI programme of works until 2009 when its Silk Road Programme was revitalised in the 18th session of the General Assembly by the Astana Declaration. A separate division within the reorganised UNWTO structure, with its own budget account, was set up in 2010 and Ms. Alla Peressolova was appointed as the programme manager. Since then, UNWTO's efforts spent on Silk Road projects have been more consolidated and institutionalised. UNWTO has therefore become the core organisation of the SRI. A new Silk Road action plan was crafted in 2010 and was revisited in 2012. International marketing and promotion appears to be the focus of the recent Silk Road activities, as demonstrated by the joint projects of UNWTO with

Tripadvisor and Global Trekker in 2011 and 2012 respectively. A detailed overview of the UNWTO Silk Road activities from 1993 to 2012 (as of October) is included in Appendix 13. The programme has evolved in scale with 28 participating countries as of March 2012[65] (UNWTO, n.d.).

An integrated model of collaborative process has been proposed in Chapter 2 (see Section 2.12.5) by combining McCann's (1983) and Gray's (1989) models as well as the ideas of Jamal and Getz (1995) and Selin and Chavez (1995). Using this model to evaluate the two phases of the SRI, the major achievements of the SRADP were mainly confined to stage one of the collaborative process, which is, identifying problem setting and stakeholders. On the one hand, China and the CASs as key stakeholders in the collaboration recognised their interdependence and requested for a joint regional programme. On the other hand, UNDP acted as a skilled and legitimate convener. Only high-level government officials and agencies were involved in this stage as the focus of the collaboration was on *"opening up the relationships between China and the CASs or even among the CASs because… that was the region that they don't really communicate too much with the outside world"* (Key informant K2). Concrete outcomes were the studies conducted on the customs and trade environment of the individual countries (three separate reports for China, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) and seminars and workshops organised for the government officials to work on *"very specific, concrete laws and regulations"* (K2). According to the SRADP termination evaluation report (UNOPS & UNDP, 2002), the project had two main features. First it was a "significant regional cooperation forum" with "very board and ambitious idea-generating activities (p.11). Second, government representatives of the member countries showed enthusiastic support to the project, representing the countries' commitment to collaborate by having their awareness of interdependence raised.

Collaboration did not leap up the process ladder immediately after the start of the SSRP (SRI's Phase 2), though the programme was regarded as a continuation of the SRADP. Instead, the process rebounded back to the first stage of problem setting. Three pragmatic areas were proposed for cooperation and additional stakeholders were

[65] They are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, China, Croatia, DPR Korea, Rep. Korea, Egypt, Georgia, Greece, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan (as of March 2012).

identified. The SSRP invited input from UNTCAD for the project of the Silk Road Investors' Guide, UNWTO for the preparation of the Silk Road tourism inventory, and most importantly the SCO for motivating high-level government involvement from the CASs and China. In this phase, problems in each of the areas, namely trade and transit, investment and tourism, were much more clearly delineated in the project document (UNDP, 2004). Various stakeholders, including potential donors and cooperative partners, and their possible roles in the project were recognised and explained. Directions and strategies guiding this phase of SRI were formulated and concrete deliverables were proposed. With this development, the SSRP had reached or perhaps surpassed the second stage of the collaborative process model. The project had resulted in the establishment of the Silk Road Investment Forum coupled with a regional-focused investors' guide, the SRMF, and a Silk Road cultural and economic map. Most importantly, the SCO was motivated to join in partnership with UNDP to foster economic integration in the Central Asian region (UNDP, 2006). However, the process was disrupted by a discontinuation of financial support only two years after the project started.

In the sphere of tourism, a careful review of the work records of the UNWTO Silk Road Programme revealed that collaboration in all these years has not genuinely yielded any significant results. Since almost 20 years ago when the programme first started, several impediments to Silk Road tourism development had been identified. Those impediments included the complicated frontier formalities, insufficient tourism infrastructure and substandard tourism products and services (Elite E1). Despite the programme's efforts, the evaluation of today's tourism superstructure (see Section 4.1.2.5) and tourism supporting resources (see Section 4.1.3) of the CASs and China, as well as the challenges associated with tourism development in the region (see Section 4.2.1) shows that improvements have been negligible. The same problems have been repetitively raised throughout the years at different deliberations and declarations have continued to stay on paper[66]. For instance, although a common Silk Road visa was first proposed in 1998, it has been nowhere near realisation until today[67]. It appears that Silk Road tourism collaboration is in stagnation, with the collaborative

[66] Details of the meetings and declarations can be found in Appendix 13.
[67] Discussion of the countries' institutional accessibility can be found in Section 4.1.3.2.

process remaining in the first stage where no concrete implementation took place. That is why one of the study participants has written to the candidate after reading the newly adopted Silk Road Action Plan 2011/2012 saying that, *"I have been listening to almost the same tune (though earlier delivered by different team…) since 2004 and the progress has been always close to zero"* (Anonymous[68], personal communication, October 23, 2010). The statement is not unreasonable considering that the issues of marketing and promotion, capacity building and destination management, as well as travel facilitation have always been on the agenda ever since the programme's inception. Although conferences and workshops can be manifestation of collaboration between the countries, they may not always transfer to concrete actions. One of the informants even disapproved these events, critiquing them being *"talkshops"* rather than *"workshops"* without much very solid having been done. This is reaffirmed by another informant questioning on the scale of the meetings and the relevance of the meeting participants. It is because at the moment, the Silk Road events were merely social gatherings where *"everybody is happy eating, drinking and talking, then gone with the wind, very few things left… that's invalid, it's a useless way to really promote something"* (Anonymous). Therefore, the Silk Road Programme has been criticised for not being effective and with efforts lingering around at a superficial level.

Yet, the recent establishment of a separate Silk Road office within the UNWTO structure presents an unrevealed opportunity, which symbolises a revitalisation of the old Silk Road programme and hence an increased interest among the member states. On the one hand, it appears to be a positive development, especially when Silk Road related activities have become more frequent and regular (e.g. the annual Silk Road ministers' meeting held at ITB Berlin). On the other hand, it could be an illusion if efforts continue to fail in dealing with the challenges of tourism collaboration in the region at the grass roots. Another concern is associated with the expansion of the programme. The UNWTO Silk Road Programme now comprises 28 member states and that somehow defeats the original purpose of the project to assist development in the five CASs and Western China in a focused manner.

Concluding this section, it is noted that there is a general lack of consolidated effort at

[68] Some comments/ statements have been quoted anonymously due to their political sensitivity.

this level of collaboration. As discussed, almost all of the abovementioned projects initiated by international organisations or donor agencies have had their focuses on similar issues, such as transport and transit, trade and investment. That leads to the suspicion that efforts could have been duplicated and resources might not have been effectively used. In addition, collaboration is still at a manifest level, often expressed in the form of meetings and workshops. With regard to the SRI, there are several factors impeding its usefulness and effectiveness which are discussed as follows.

First, it is the lack of project continuality as explained by Key informant K1, *"... Silk Road requires long-term activities, not only to be designated for two years as a topic"*. There are several reasons behind the limited duration of the projects with number one being the lack of resources. International organisations, especially the UN agencies, are still operating on a *"traditional model where if there is some money, then institutions are setting up projects, and when money is coming to an end, the projects are dying and they disappear, and they are completely forgotten in no long"* (Key informant K1). As mentioned, both the SRADP and the subsequent SRRP were subsided due to the lack of continuation funds. The uncertainty of a sustainable project fund also made it difficult for long-term work-planning (UNDP, 2006). The second reason is institutional bureaucracy. International organisations are often institutionalised to stick with one topic issue not more than a few years so that they could demonstrate their dynamics by developing new targets and new programmes when the previous projects end. Besides, some of the organisations may claim a monopoly on doing projects within the Silk Road, making it harder for the other non-governmental organisations to take over the responsibility. In addition to institutional culture, the continuation of a project also very much depends on the personnel responsible for it. Different persons may have different perspectives and interests. A project will no longer be supported if the persons in charge despise the idea and think that the resources can be better allocated (Key informant K2). This reason is especially prominent when there is a change of personnel, that is, when the keen supporter of the project left his/ her position. With the limited duration, other problems arise. For example, evaluation of the SRADP was constrained as "it is difficult to measure tangible results, especially with respect to a project that has scheduled activities for only one year" (UNOPS & UNDP, 2002, p. 12). Therefore, no serious attempts have ever been made to understand why tourism collaboration among the CASs and China is not happening under the SRI. The lack of proper evaluation has negatively influenced the effectiveness of the projects.

The third impeding factor is the way how these projects have been conducted, which is affected by the perspective and perception of the stakeholders in charge and the nature of the organisations that are setting objectives, pushing progress and hiring people (Key informant K1). The organisations may start off with all good intentions but very often they got lobbied along the way (Key informant K4). Due to institutional bureaucracies that are behind these projects, organisations may pretend that they were doing something solid while in reality they did not. One way to do that was through the use of declarations because *"declaration is one thing and easy continuation of the whole stuff is another thing"* (Key informant K1). The informants commented that these political statements, in the form of declarations, have been leading to nowhere and did not provide any concrete actions. Furthermore, international organisations, especially the UN agencies, are supposed to consider the benefits of all their member states. A large-scale, long-term project that focuses only on some specific countries is difficult to be justified. Therefore, there has been a struggle between recognition and relevance in these projects. For example, while the UNWTO Silk Road Programme is now a widely recognised project that involves 28 "Silk Road countries", its relevance to the individual countries remains in doubt. In addition, the nature of the organisations also influences which countries are being benefited from the initiatives. For instance, Turkmenistan has not been involved in any of the Silk Road activities simply because the country has not been paying for its membership to the UNWTO (Anonymous, personal communication, March 10, 2011). Finally, it is the lack of results. As explained by Key informant K3, *"If you organised a forum with all the efforts and money but could not achieve any results, the enthusiasm of the participating countries would be greatly reduced"*. The project underperformance is often attributed to causes such as administrative delays, procedural weaknesses and design flaws, coupled with other operational difficulties. As mentioned, the original project manager resigned three months after the SRADP's inception. That had caused much delay to the project progress especially with regard to the three commissioned studies, as evaluated by the termination report of the SRADP (UNOPS & UNDP, 2002). For the SRRP, difficulties were experienced at operational level with the UNDP's financial management system, in addition to a misuse of the project fund by other offices at the beginning of 2006, causing chaos to the project implementation (UNDP, 2006).

4.3.1.4 *Industry-level collaboration*

There is a consensus among the study participants that tourism collaboration is most vivid at industry level, demonstrated by the efforts of the tour operators in the CASs and China. Cooperation is also reflected in the area of tourism investment and among tourism enterprises (i.e. hotels and airlines). In addition to cross-national collaboration, various associations of tourism businesses have been observed in the individual countries. Most of the informants agreed that tourism collaboration, at the moment, is largely dependent on the industry members, with very limited support from the national governments, especially in the CASs.

It is noted that cross-border cooperation between the Central Asian tour operators is relatively intense, especially for the organisation of Silk Road tours. As exhibited in Section 4.1.1, most of the Silk Road tours involve more than one country in Central Asia and coordination is much needed for such tours to happen. There are some regional tour operator groups established to serve that purpose. Among them, Silk Road Destinations and the Great Silk Road Tour Operators Group are two more prominent examples due to their continuous presence in international travel fairs. The two groups are quite similar in nature with the only major difference in membership as shown in Table 4.6. Although China and Tajikistan are listed as members for Silk Road Destinations, no tour operators from their sides were observed to be active in the group and they have not been represented at international travel fairs under the umbrella of the Silk Road Destinations[69]. While for the Great Silk Road Tour Operators Group, the two countries are not its members.

[69] At ITB Berlin 2011, to which the candidate went for data collection, only Aquarius Travel (Armenia), Owadan Tourism, Sairam, Ak-Sai Travel and Turan Asia were represented at the Silk Road Destinations stand.

Table 4.6 Members of the two regional Silk Road tour operator groups

Country	Silk Road Destinations	Great Silk Road Tour Operators Group
China	Not defined	Non member
Kazakhstan	Turan Asia	Turan Asia
Kyrgyzstan	Ak-Sai Travel	ITMC Tien-Shan
Tajikistan	Not defined	Non member
Turkmenistan	Owadan Tourism	DN Tours
Uzbekistan	Sairam Tourism	Sairam Tourism
Other countries	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia	Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iran, and Pakistan

Source: Sairam Tourism (2010); UNWTO (n.d.-a)

More information of the Great Silk Road Tour Operators Group – or Silk Road Group in short – is given for the better understanding of the mechanism behind these regional tour operator associations[70]. The Silk Road Group was established in 1998 to unite tour operators in Central Asia for co-creating and selling the newly derived concept of a transnational tour product of the Silk Road. The group now comprises tour companies from nine countries (see Table 4.4) working collaboratively to strengthen their individual and collective tourism products and to reduce cost of marketing by joint promotional activities. The tour companies have been participating in major international tourism fairs together under the name of the Silk Road Group since 1998. Joint promotional materials, which are always linked with the Silk Road image, are published and large-scale tourism projects are organised. Examples were the international expeditions of “In footsteps of Marco Polo” and “Tracing the Asian campaign of Alexander the Great” in the past. The group is governed by an annual general meeting among the members and its day-to-day operation is overseen by an elected chairman, rotating on a one-year term (Sairam Tourism, 2010). Elite E1 appreciated the effort of these tour operator groups and complimented on their being *“quite successful”*.

Other than these multilateral associations, cooperation is common between and among both inbound and outbound tour operators in these countries. As Elite T3 observed,

> *“On the industry level, I know that, for instance, Tajik tour operators they are working with Uzbek tour operators and Kyrgyz operators and they have*

[70] The Great Silk Road Tour Operators Group was chosen over Silk Road Destinations for a more in-depth deliberation because the website of the latter (the only available information source) was suspended at the time of data analysis. Hence, data on the group cannot be verified.

> *just started to think about working with Chinese tour operators because they have somebody from China, focuses on China actually, who has already advised the Tajik tour operators about the Chinese market"* (Elite T3, interview transcript)

To establish business contacts across countries, the SCO's web portal of regional economic cooperation acts as a good platform. Quoting an example from the tourism industry, Sunrise Tour, an Uzbek travel company, was looking for partnership opportunities with outbound tour operators in China via the portal in 2010 in the hope to open up new Chinese markets for its Uzbek tourism products (SCO Regional Economic Cooperation, 2012).

An examination of this industry-level cooperation revealed the several factors that have catalysed the tighter relations between tourism businesses. First and foremost, it is the natural law of business survival. Key informant K3 explained this in a few plain but powerful words, "I invest my business there"; therefore, businesses enter into cooperative terms when they perceive benefits associated with such partnership. Second, there is such a need for collaboration. Being directly involved in the travel business, the tour operators understand the tourists' desires to travel not only to one country in Central Asia. In addition, the iconic name of the Silk Road links the countries together and could bring businesses from afar. Hence, Silk Road travel represents a considerable business opportunity. Besides, the commonly acknowledged problems associated with Silk Road travel, that is, visa complication and the tediousness of cross border travel arrangement, require a collective solution. Second, it is perhaps obligation rather than freewill that drives tour operators to work together. Elite P1 explained the different licensing systems across countries which make it difficult for his company alone to organise Silk Road tours. While Kyrgyzstan allows tour operators from the other CASs to run tours in the country, this regulation is not mutual. It means Kyrgyz tour operators have no other options but to work with their counterparts in each of the other destinations if they want to run tours to Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (Elite P1). Third, the Central Asian tour operators are often constrained in budget. By joining forces with other tour operators in Central Asia, they can pool together their marketing money and reduce unnecessary administrative cost across the border. Last but not least, it is hoped that their lobbying and negotiation power within the tourism system would increase as a result of their alliance.

Within the individual countries, associations of tour operators can also be found. Examples are the Kyrgyz Association of Tour Operators, Tajikistan Association of Tour Operators and Pamir Eco-cultural Tourism Association. Kyrgyz Association of Tour Operators is a non-commercial association established in 1999 that unites 38 organisations in the country including three higher education institutes in tourism studies. The association was set up with the purpose to protect the interests of both the tour companies and the customers (IBC, 2012; KATO, n.d.). Pamir Eco-cultural Tourism Association, despite its name, only connects tourism related firms in the GBAO in Tajikistan. Its members include tour companies and accommodation providers, as well as the Association of Guides and Drivers' Association in the oblast (PECTA, n.d.). Together with the example of the Zerafshan Tourism Board (see more details in Section 4.2.2.1), it is revealed that tourism cooperation and/or alliances exist at national, provincial, and sectoral level in Tajikistan.

Apart from tour operators, tourism investment is another area where cooperation is observed. For instance, Yak Tours in Karakul (Kyrgyzstan) was looking for Chinese partners to invest in tourism superstructure building and to cooperate in marketing and distribution efforts (SCO Regional Economic Cooperation, 2012). Besides, tourism enterprises such as airline companies have established partnership with their Central Asian counterparts, though more subtly. An example is the interline partnership between Air Astana and Uzbekistan Airways (Air Astana, 2012). In addition, airline partnerships with companies outside of Central Asia also increase the competitiveness of the tourism industry in the region. Air Astana and Uzbekistan Airways are currently having code-sharing agreements with airlines from Europe (i.e. LHF, Air Baltic), Asia (i.e. Air Asiana, Malaysia Airlines, and Air India), Russia and the Middle East. With these, the connectivity of the region is enhanced. The International Air Transport Association urged the airlines to develop together a Silk Road in the sky by improving the air connectivity of the Central Asian and Caucasus region (IATA, 2012).

4.3.1.5 *Efforts of the civil society*

The role of the increasingly global civil society organisations as UN system partners for UN efforts at the country level had been recognised and was strengthened in the World Economic Forum in 2009 (UN, n.d.-b). The involvement of civil society organisations in Silk Road collaboration is also apparent. Examples of these organisations include the Silk Road Global Alliance (SRGA) and The Regional Initiative (TRI). The SRGA, as briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, looks at Silk Road collaboration from a broader perspective; whereas The Regional Initiative is more tourism oriented.

The SRGA has no formal structure and budget. It is a successor of the Suzhou Group that was established by a group of Silk Road activists with the aim to "bring people together for positive exchange of ideas and live a life in a cooperative spirit", "to do something for the people on the ground" and "to establish connectivity between people who would otherwise not getting together" (SRGA, 2010, p. 9). With founders that include the two former technical advisors of the SRI, the SRGA succeeded the tradition of organising the Silk Road Mayors' Forum (SRMF) when the SRI came to an end in 2007. The seventh SRMF will be held in November 2012 in Gaziantep, Turkey. The SRGA is working closely with mayors of the Silk Road cities in many other countries in addition to the CASs and China.

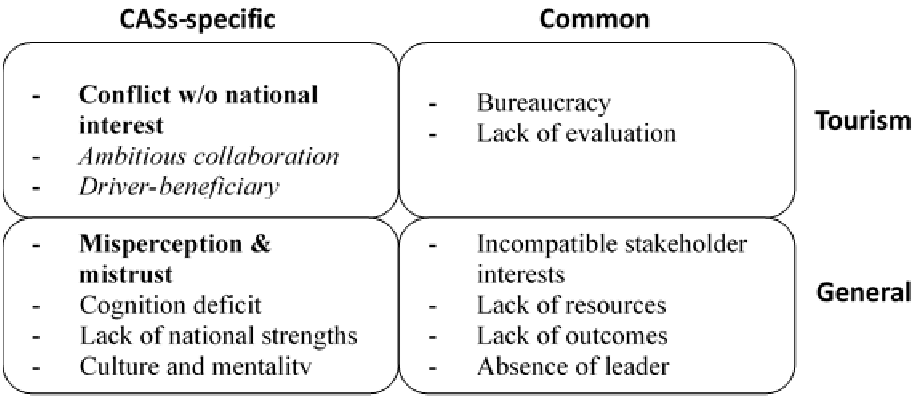
TRI is "a tri-regional umbrella of tourism related organisations" that acts as a link among South Asia, Central Asia and Eastern Europe (TRI, 2012, pt. 4). It aims to connect Silk Road or Silk Road destinations as one tourism entity and supports the Silk Road programmes of the UN agencies, particularly that of UNWTO. Members of TRI include tourism-related non-governmental organisations, tourism associations, tourism firms such as tour operators and hoteliers, education and research institutes from 12 countries in South Asia, Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Four of the five CASs, that is, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, are represented by their historic geographical society, trekking union, regional tourism office and tourist companies respectively in TRI. TRI has recently put forward the ideas of a Central Asian Tourism Board and a single entry visa for all Central Asian Republics at the Discovery Central Asia Travel Forum held in Bishkek in 2012 (Haroon, 2012b).

These organisations represent the interest of the civil society and appear to be proactive endeavours in fostering Silk Road collaboration at working level. They are comparatively more resourceful in ideas and better understand the needs of the countries. However, their efforts are scattered and the organisations themselves may lack influence in the region; hence, concrete actions are limited. Major achievements of the organisations are confined to increasing the awareness and creating noises for Silk Road collaboration in the international community, as well as assisting the efforts of the international agencies. In addition, they catalyse platforms and opportunities for stakeholders to interact and explore collaboration potential. Therefore, they are more on a supporting and lobbying role in the sphere of Silk Road collaboration.

4.3.2 Obstacles for collaboration

In Chapter 2, the potential obstacles for effective collaboration among the CASs and China have been presumed based on the literature reviewed and the candidate's initial understanding of the CASs and China as part of Central Asia. The three obstacles identified – perception and misconception, unaligned stakeholders' interests as well as power relations – are confirmed by empirical data. Furthermore, an additional list of obstacles has been generated from empirical data from the study informants, triangulated with secondary data.

The data extracted from all the interviews and written responses indicated that there are in total 118 points of references made relating to collaboration obstacles. In addition to the answers obtained from the question, "what are the obstacles for (tourism) collaboration along the Silk Road and between the Central Asian States and China?", other evidences of collaboration obstacles were, and quite frequently, noted elsewhere in the interview transcripts (although not for the case of written response in which respondents' answers are less simultaneous). Fourteen mainstream collaboration obstacles were resulted from a second level pattern coding. They range from very common obstacles like "misconception and mistrust", "incompatible stakeholder interests", and "bureaucracy" to some specific ones such as "conflict with national interest", "driver-beneficiary mismatch" and "lack of national strengths". All the identified obstacles can be found in Figure 4.4. Furthermore, these obstacles were further classified based on their nature. First, they can either be location- and industry-specific or general obstacles that are also common in any parts of the world. As shown in the collaboration matrix (Figure 4.9), four categories have been resulted.



Note: Items in *italic* are Silk Road-specific obstacles; items in **bold** are determining obstacles
Figure 4.4 Matrix of obstacle for collaboration among the CASs and China

4.4 Stakeholder involvement

4.4.1 The relevant stakeholders and their stakes

Stakeholders in the private sector that include various types of tourism enterprises (i.e. tour operators, accommodation providers, transport companies and airlines) as well as "pan-touristic firms" (K3) were regarded as the most prominent group of stakeholders in Silk Road tourism collaboration as Elite E2 explained, *"tourism entrepreneurs are the actual executors as well as the direct beneficiaries of the collaboration"*. Equal in importance as regarded by the study informants were the international organisations and donor agencies as they are acting as facilitators and catalysts in these regional initiatives, coupled with their constant presence in the region. National and provincial governments were considered influential in the collaborative process because *"... in this part of the world, government plays essential roles in such things actually. If government for example is not interested in tourism, I think tourism would hardly ever be developing in these countries"* (T2). While national government were merely respected as policy makers, provincial governments were seen being more proactive in execution. Surprisingly, while destination management organisations or equivalence are supposed to play an important role, they were only mentioned after the governments as key informant K4 noted, *"the ministry of tourism is not any big* *deal in any of these countries because it's s small percentage of their income"*. Other identified stakeholder groups include tourism experts and research institutes, civil societies and lobby groups as well as media.

Table 4.7 Identified stakeholders, their roles and stakes

Stakeholder groups	Roles	Stakes
Tourism enterprises	Executor, beneficiary, lobby	Profit-making
International organisations/ donor agencies	Facilitator, catalyst, lobby	International goodwill Global influence
National government	Policy maker	National interest, power of presidential rule
Provincial government	Rules and law makers, executor	Provincial development
Destination management organisations/ tourism ministries	Executor for tourism development, lobby	Tourism development
Tourism experts and research institutes	Industry support	Individual performance
Civil societies/ lobby groups	Lobby	International goodwill and recognition
Media	Message conveyer	Awareness

Source: Compiled by author, based on findings from in-depth interviews

Confirming the study assumption, the stakeholder groups of tourists and local communities were not considered in the analysis because, *"they have very limited influence to the happening of Silk Road tourism collaboration. Therefore, they are at a rather passive position"* (Elite E2).

4.4.2 Mapping stakeholders' relationship and their roles in collaboration

Being convinced by the capability of Freeman's (1984) stakeholder map to perform beyond an organisational domain, it was originally proposed to adopt the map directly by replacing the focal organisation with the issue being studied: Silk Road tourism collaboration as illustrated in Figure 4.5 (replica of Figure 2.3). Indeed, this stakeholder map still serves its descriptive and normative functions; however, problem arises when its instrumental aspect is being operationalised due to the absence of a focal organisation who manages its relationships with the various stakeholders.

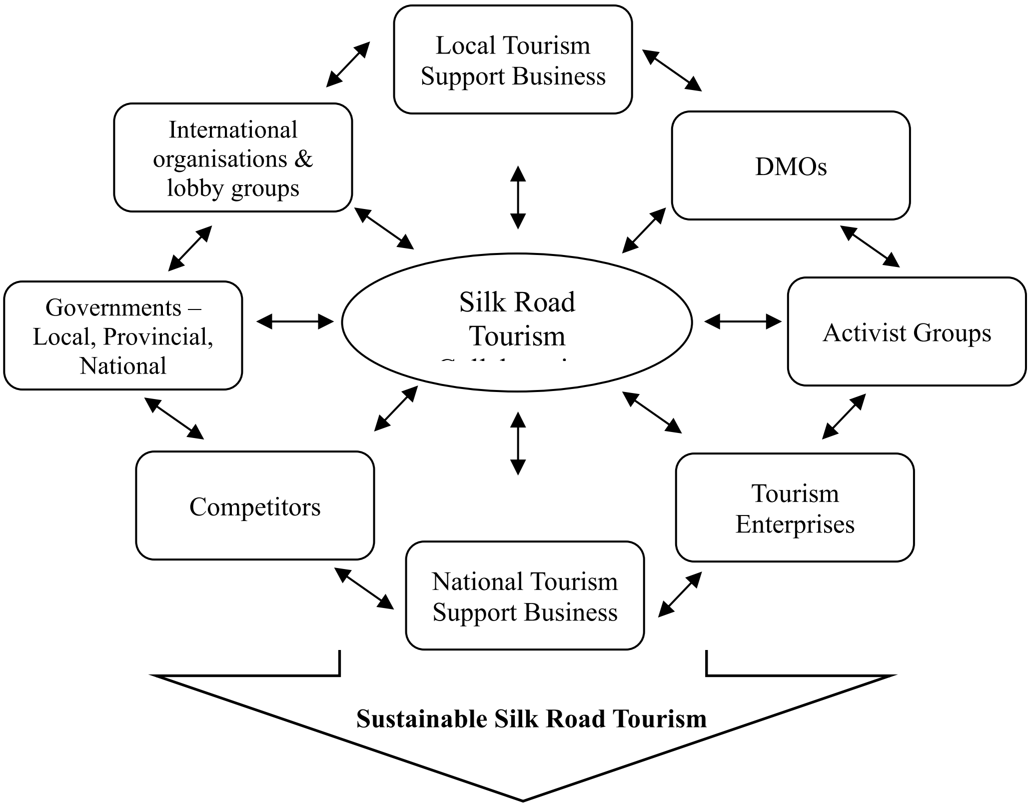


Figure 4.5 Proposed stakeholder map for identifying stakeholders of Silk Road tourism collaboration (Replica of Figure 2.3)

Therefore, an alternative approach, which was grounded from the empirical data and supported by previous literature, was used to identify the different stakeholders and to map out the stakeholders' relationships in the process of tourism collaboration on the Silk Road. Pioneered by de Araujo and Bramwell (1999) in their studies on tourism collaboration, this approach requires the researchers to place the stakeholders identified, in this case from both the elite interviews and the secondary data analysis, on a diagram according to their relationships with the issue, followed by constructing a network on the diagram using arrows to show existing relationships between the stakeholders. This approach was modified in this study by incorporating the typology of stakeholder salience suggested by Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997). According to them, stakeholder salience can be classified by the attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency as perceived by the managers of the focal organisations. In the diagram (Figure 4.6), the size of the circles symbolises the power of the respective stakeholders while the arrows signify the legitimate relationships between the stakeholders.

The stakeholder relational map can be interpreted as follows. The size of the circles symbolises the power of the stakeholders over the decision-making of the focal organisations, the DMOs. AL stands for the airlines in Central Asia. They are collaborating across the CASs on bilateral and multilateral agreements. DMO represents the destination management organisations of the respective countries which are the focal organisations on the stakeholder map. They are loosely linked with each other. They manage their stakeholder groups. Although they are the focal organisations, they do not necessarily possess the strongest power over the development of tourism and its related collaboration. GOVT is the national governments of the respective countries. In this particular region of the world, the president and his government control all political decision-making including the management of domestic political and economic systems and relations with the countries' neighbours (Holmes, 1993). That is the reason why they are having the strongest power over the decision of whether to collaborate with other countries in terms of tourism development. H is hotel chains that may form alliances across the CASs and have collaborative relationship with the DMOs. IA is the international agencies. They act as facilitators or catalysts of tighter collaboration between the CASs, both between the national governments and between the DMOs, depending on the nature of the agencies. L is Lobby groups, are non-governmental groups that are keen on facilitating the collaboration between the CASs, usually in cooperation with the international agencies. Media are represented by M. They are playing a significant role in the collaboration as they disseminate information between the CASs and between the CASs and the potential tourist-generating markets. Provincial government (PG) are collaborating at provincial or municipal level on specific projects, as demonstrated by the Silk Road Mayors' Fora. Travel agencies and tour operators (TA) are at the present the most active collaborating parties. Travel agencies of the individual CASs form alliances, such as Silk Road Destinations and Silk Road Group, to promote Silk Road tourism collectively in the international markets, i.e. London World Travel Market or ITB.

It was revealed that on one hand national governments are extremely influential on the happening of tourism collaboration between these countries as they are having a very high level of authority, the possession of both power and legitimacy, over the decision-making of the DMOs. However, these governments are having low urgency. They are indifferent to tourism collaboration and pose major hindrances to the collaborative process. On the other hand, less powerful stakeholders such as tour operators and private tourism businesses are possessing high urgency and are active in collaborating with each other. Their interests are aligned and that is the reason why alliances have been formed between these stakeholders, such as Silk Road Destinations and Silk Road Group.

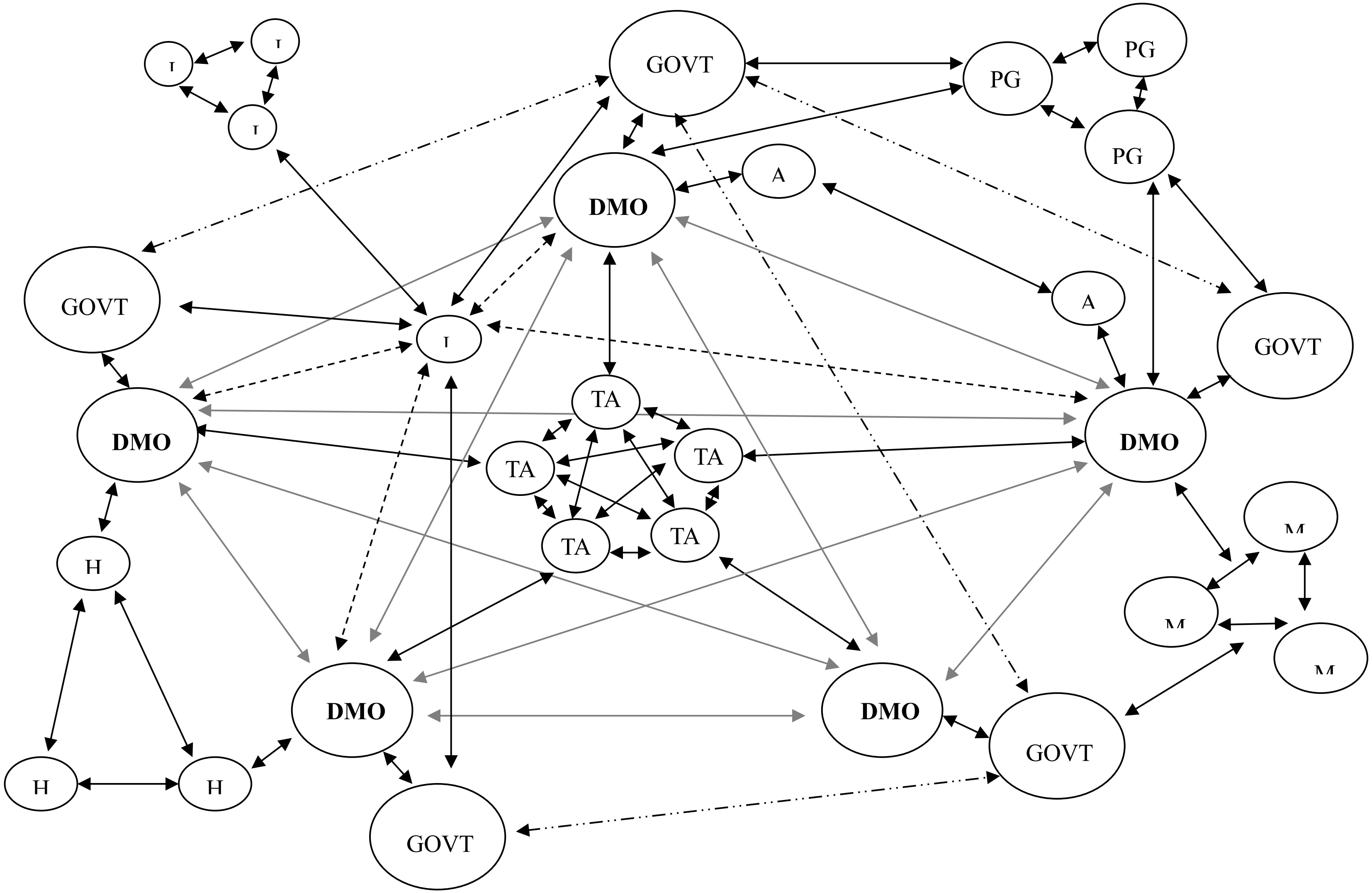


Figure 4.6 Stakeholder relational map for tourism collaboration on the Silk Road

4.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter is the core of the thesis, exhibiting the four groups of research findings on resources, management, collaboration and stakeholder involvement, derived based on the conceptual framework established

Section 4.1 discussed the tourism resources available on the Silk Road, in the five CASs and in Xinjiang of Western China. Section 4.1.1 provided an overview of the tour provision in the Central Asian section of the Silk Road. An extensive length was used to delineate core tourism resources and attractors, as well as supporting "hardware" and "software" of the CASs and Western China. The qualifying effect of location and interdependencies on tourism resources in these countries was also discussed. Section 4.2 dealt with the tourism management issues of the Central Asian region, in the CASs and in Western China. Prevailing challenges for tourism development were elaborated in Section 4.2.1. While the main aim of Section 4.2.2 was to discuss the factors contributing to countries' variances in terms of tourism management, an overview of the countries' tourism performance was provided in Section 4.2.2.1.

Collaboration was comprehensively evaluated in Section 4.3.1 at multilateral and bilateral intergovernmental level. Collaborative projects initiated by international organisation and donor agencies, cooperation at industry level as well as efforts of the civil society were also examined. Major obstacles inhibiting tourism collaboration were identified in Section 4.3.2. A stakeholder analysis was conducted and elaborated in Section 4.4.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this concluding chapter of the thesis, the research findings are first summarised by revisiting each of the four research objectives that the study intended to address. Recommendations are then given and elaborated. That is followed by the discussion of the study limitations. Possible future research directions are suggested at the end of the chapter.

5.1 Objectives Revisited

To conclude the thesis, there is no better way than to revisit the study objectives set forth at the beginning of the research and verify how far the findings have gone in addressing the objectives. Ever since the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the independence of the CASs, there has been a restoration of interest in a better regional integration to facilitate the socio-economic redevelopment in these countries. From another perspective, China is proactive in working with its Central Asian counterparts mostly due to its interest in the natural reserves and untapped trade markets in these countries, coupled with the hidden concerns related to the development of Xinjiang. In the course of regional integration and development, tourism has been identified alongside with investment and trade as a significant socio-economic redevelopment tool in the Central Asian region. However, the progress of tourism development is slow with most of the major development obstacles remain unresolved. Collaboration is argued to be the only viable way forward. However, few studies, if any, have yet analysed how collaboration will benefit tourism development in the region and what are the impediments to effective collaboration between and among the CASs and Western China. Against this background, the study intended to address these knowledge gaps by fulfilling the following objectives: 1) evaluating existing tourism resources and management of the CASs and Western China; 2) analysing current collaboration and exploring the benefits and hindrances to the collaborative process; 3) identifying the different stakeholders and their respective roles and salience to collaboration; and ultimately 4) providing recommendations for effective collaboration between the CASs and China.

To do so, a conceptual framework was developed for this research. Mutual ideas were drawn from Crouch and Richie's (1999) competitiveness and sustainability model, concepts of collaboration and stakeholder theory to formulate the framework. Although resources and management of the Silk Road countries are the major determinants of their respective destination competitiveness, the framework suggests that through collaboration, these comparative advantages of the individual countries would be turned into competitive advantages of the whole Central Asian region. That is, the region would be endowed with all the necessary resources to be deployed effectively to achieve global competitiveness. In the process of collaboration, stakeholder involvement which includes identifying and assessing the relevant stakeholders and mapping out the relationships among them is critical. Various sub-dimensions under each of the components: resources, management, stakeholder involvement, collaboration and regional competitiveness, were proposed in the framework for leading to an in-depth understanding of the complex phenomenon of cross-national tourism collaboration in this central part of the Silk Road.

5.1.1 Tourism resources

The main research question guiding the collection and analysis of data on this component of the conceptual framework was, "What are the existing tourism resources of the Silk Road, in the CASs and in Xinjiang and how are they being deployed in the individual countries?" To answer this question, tourism resources of the Silk Road, in the five CASs and Xinjiang were analysed using contents of relevant travel brochures, supplemented by primary data gathered from the interviews.

Tour provision on the Silk Road can be categorised into single destination, paired destinations, spill-over travel, triangular path, triangular circuit and transcontinental path, categorised based on the number of destinations they serve as well as the way in which transits are being organised. These tours are introduced in Section 4.1.1. Detailed discussion and graphical illustrations can be found in Appendix 13. In terms of Silk Road travel, Tajikistan and Kazakhstan are less privileged while China and

Uzbekistan are the prime destinations. Tourism activities predominantly happen in a few attraction hotspots within the individual countries. In terms of logistic arrangement, it is found that majority of the transcontinental paths are organised by international or expatriate tour operators whereas their local counterparts in Central Asia essentially specialise in the other five types of travel arrangement, especially that of triangular circuit. Silk Road travel is still characterised by tedious transport arrangement coupled with primitive accommodation. Yet it was found that these features, instead of inhibiting Silk Road travel, are regarded as a speciality of the Silk Road, projecting an image of adventure and exploration.

From Section 4.1.2 to Section 4.1.4, a comprehensive review of the inherited core resources of physiography and culture, other core resources of market ties, mix of activities and events and tourism superstructure, together with the supporting factors, both in terms of hardware and software, was provided. In addition, the qualifying effect of location and interdependencies was analysed. In terms of core resources and attractors, the five CASs and Xinjiang, building upon their natural physiography as well as longstanding history, are rather abundant in inherited resources for tourism development. When comparing the natural and cultural resources of the CASs and Xinjiang, they are almost neck and neck with each other. Each of the countries has something unique to offer, yet the nature of their uniqueness is different. On the one hand, Uzbekistan, Xinjiang, and Turkmenistan retain some comparative advantages that are not easily replicable by destinations outside of the region, namely the Silk Road cultural heritages and oasis towns. But on the other hand, the specialties of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, which are the natural landscapes such as mountains (despite among the highest in the world) and lakes, are somewhat less distinctive. It is because they would never be the only destinations for adventure travellers who wish to do mountaineering or trekking. They face competition from destinations around the globe, especially those in closer proximity to the source markets. Culturally speaking, Kyrgyzstan outperformed Tajikistan because of its unique nomadic lifestyle that visitors can experience.

For created resources, Xinjiang, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are better performers in the region, for both general infrastructure and tourism superstructure basically because they have better government support (especially for the case of Xinjiang) and economic foundations. For the same reasons, their capability to host international or regional events to attract additional visitors and establish a recognisable destination image is higher. The variety of activities offered at these destinations can also be broader. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, constrained by their limited national budgets, find it rather difficult to improve the general infrastructure in their countries, not to mention that for tourism development. Although there are progressive advancements in both countries, the standard of infrastructure and tourism superstructure still lags behind that of their counterparts in the region. Turkmenistan, despite funding may not be a problem, puts a tilted focus on constructing large-scale infrastructure and mega resorts instead of improving the infrastructure and standard of living of its people.

Evaluation on the accessibility of the countries revealed that Xinjiang, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, equipped with better-developed transport infrastructure and services, have the highest international connectivity in the region. Besides, policies regarding the ease of entering the countries, namely the visa regimes, have been made less complicated in Xinjiang and Uzbekistan for foreign tourists. As a result, both the physical and institutional accessibility of the two countries is higher when compared to the remaining four CASs. Although Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan have also simplified their visa regulations, the generally accessibility of the countries is limited by the inadequate investment in transport infrastructure. Whereas investment is not an issue for Turkmenistan, its international accessibility is hindered by the totalitarian rule of the government, which limits the access of foreign tourists into the country.

There is a dilemma of tourism development in the region. On the one hand, gradual increase in tourism demand brought to the CASs the modern and more efficient type of tourism superstructure and its management, when compared to the Soviet-style ones. On the other hand, the development does not necessarily change the Soviet service culture that is pertaining in each of the countries. The situation is especially prominent in urban areas when compared to the genuine hospitality preserved in the local tribes and nomadic herder families. Furthermore, in some popular tourist sites, visitors are just being regarded as profit generators; hence, cases of tourists being overcharged or cheated are not uncommon.

The two qualifying determinants modified the destination competitiveness of the

CASs and Xinjiang, though in different scale. Kyrgyzstan, despite the constraints associated with its core resources and support factors as outlined above, achieves a better competitive position because of its location being at the crossroad between the two important Silk Road destinations. Despite this, it may still face a strong competition from Kazakhstan which also aims at being the transit corridor between China and Europe. The findings revealed that due to the long distance from the major source markets at present, the interdependency between the CASs and Western China as part of Silk Road travel is high. Yet the modifying effect of location on Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan is rather insignificant because of the plentiful Silk Road tourism resources that they possess. Tajikistan, sharing a border with Afghanistan that is known for wars and instability, is at a somewhat unfavourable competitive position. Collaborating with the other CASs to promote Silk Road tourism presents an opportunity for Tajikistan to diversify its tourism provisions as well as to enhance its destination image.

5.1.2 Management

Data collection for this component was guided by the question "how is tourism managed in the countries and what are the challenges for tourism development in the region?" The main data used were from the study participants collected via interviews and other personal communications. Their opinion was triangulated and the discussion was substantiated with a wide range of secondary data. Due to the absence of many of the sub-components under the component of management outlined in Crouch and Ritchie's (1999) model (that is, destination management, destination policy, planning and development and the qualifying of safety, cost and brand) in these countries, the findings were rearranged to mainly include two sections: challenges for tourism development in the region and variance in destination management between the countries with an exploration on the determining factors of the differences.

Positive light was shed on several areas for tourism development in the region, namely, 1) the creation of a single tourism space; 2) a slow yet stead increase in tourism traffic; 3) the development of community-based tourism in some of the CASs; and 4) the gradual realisation of the importance of tourism to national economies. However, tourism potential is still not sufficiently materialised in the region. Primary data from the study informants suggested several reasons for this underdevelopment and they were analysed and grouped into two major challenges: internal and external challenges, which were discussed in Section 4.2.1.

The first major internal challenge is the lack of physical and non-physical facilitation of travel. The informants placed more importance on the development of non-physical facilitation including the establishment of uniformity and standard of the quality of tourism products and services as well as sufficient investments for further development. They believed with the improvement of non-physical facilitations, the expansion of physical capacity would follow. The second internal challenge is the incapable governance of the governments and the tourism authorities in terms of incompetent management and indifferent attitude towards tourism. Several reasons were drawn from the data to explain the incompetent management, which are: 1) the mentalistic culture of the CASs that does not follow the normal way of doing business; 2) insufficient knowledge and experience of the tourism industry; and the indifferent attitude towards tourism, which are: 1) the paradox of developing tourism; 2) the lack of immediate results of current effort in developing tourism; and 3) the misperception of tourism being purely materialistic which destroys the countries' traditional value, and this perhaps is regarded as the most problematic cause of the governments' indifferent attitude towards tourism. The third internal challenge is the individualism of the CASs, represented in the form of visa complication and strict frontier formalities. This does not only hinder tourism but collaboration and could be a trigger of ethnic conflicts and social instability in the region. The last internal challenge is the inherited constraints of these countries which include the distance from the source markets and the limited mobility of the people.

In the broader external environment, tourism development is hindered by the region's instability and the general lack of collaboration among the countries in the sphere of tourism. The external challenge of political, social and ethnic instability is especially prominent for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and perhaps also Uzbekistan despite the favourable yet could be biased comments of the study informants on the stable development of Uzbekistan. Comparatively, Kazakhstan and surprisingly Turkmenistan are politically and socially more stable regardless of the despotic rule of the latter. That could be reasoned by the more stable economies of the two countries as both of them are endowed with a wealth of natural resources namely oil and gas. And for China, although many parts of the country are considered as politically and socially stable, the two autonomous regions are the exceptions. Xinjiang is known for its ethnic tension between Uyghur and Han Chinese and violent incidents are common. Outside observers relate the conflict between the ethnicities to the large in-migration of Han Chinese in the region which forced the Uyghur locals out of job and livelihoods. Two major reasons for instability in the region were revealed, which are,: 1) unfavourable economic situation including economic hardships and unfair distribution of national wealth resulted in discontentment of the people; and 2) threats associated with Islamic extremism. The study informants further explained that it is poverty and the disparity of wealth that triggers the Islamic fundamental movement.

The first part of Section 4.2.2 gave a detailed account of the countries' performance of tourism management and a thorough analysis of the respective development obstacles in the individual countries. It was revealed in Section 4.2.2.2 that the management approaches of tourism in the countries largely vary because of two general factors, which are, 1) policies and strategies, and 2) resources attributed to three underlying causes of, 1) personnel in charge, 2) government willingness, and 3) foreign aid.

5.1.3 Collaboration

There are two major sections written on the component of collaboration. In the first section, an extensive review was conducted on existing collaboration and international relations of the CASs and China, guided by the research questions "what is the extent of existing collaboration and what are the resulting outcomes?" and "how are the collaborative efforts being interpreted?". The findings revealed the five major types of collaboration, including 1) multilateral intergovernmental collaboration; 2) bilateral intergovernmental agreements; 3) collaborative projects by international organisations and donor agencies; 4) industry level of collaboration; and 5) efforts of the civil society, of which almost all of them focused on economic integration and trade, energy-related sector, transport and transit.

The discussion of multilateral intergovernmental collaboration was based on the two multilateral organisations in the region, which are, the SCO dominated by China and the EurAsEC led by Russia. The power struggle between China and Russia in the Central Asian region was evident by their exerting a higher influence on the socio-economic development of the CASs. Meanwhile, the CASs aim to establish better relations with their stronger neighbours and this does not necessarily transfer into concrete cooperative actions. Among the CASs, Turkmenistan continues to show disinterest in joining any of the regional groupings despite its bilateral agreements with the other Central Asian counterparts, China and Russia.

From the analysis of the bilateral relations between the governments of the countries, it is concluded that China, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan are the proactive doers while Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are only the passive wishers for collaboration in the region. Several factors were revealed as influential to the happening of bilateral cooperation. First, cooperation is materialised when interests are aligned between the countries. The second factor is the governments' preferences and discretion over what and with whom they cooperate as demonstrated by the approaches adopted by Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. Third, detrimental relations between particular countries present a major collaboration obstacle. Last but not least is the factor of resources. For instance, China and Kazakhstan appear readier, both economically and politically, to work with the other countries and most of the time, they act as investors and funding agents in the bilateral projects. Details of the collaboration at multilateral and bilateral intergovernmental levels can be found in Table 4.4 and Table 4.5 respectively.

A comprehensive review was made on the various collaborative projects by international organisation and donor agencies, with the focal discussion being made on the evaluation of the SRI. The SRI's background and historical development, evaluation of it as a collaborative process and the reasons behind its ineffectiveness in fostering concrete results were discussed towards the end of Section 4.3.1.3. The several factor impeding the effectiveness of the SRI are: 1) the lack of project continuality; 2) the lack of proper evaluation of the project; 3) bureaucracies behind the project affected by the perspective and perception of the stakeholders in charge; and 4) the lack of results.

It is further observed that tourism collaboration has been mostly active at industry level mainly because the tourism businesses have an urgent to do so. Their efforts are demonstrated by various tour operator groups and associations, as well as frequent business contacts for tourism investment. At the end of the section, efforts of the civil society were also briefly introduced. It is concluded that their efforts are scattered and the organisations may lack influence in the region. Therefore, they are more on a supporting and lobbying role in the sphere of Silk Road collaboration

The guiding question for the second part of the analysis was, “what are the incentives (expected outcomes) and barriers of Silk Road tourism collaboration, between and among the CASs and Western China?” Results generated from the primary data gathered from the informants lead to the formation of a matrix of collaboration obstacles (discussed in Section 4.3.2). There are in total 14 identified obstacles which can be put into the categories of common general obstacles (those which are common at other locations and in other field of collaboration), common tourism obstacles (obstacles of tourism-specific collaboration that are also common in other parts of the world), CAS-specific collaboration obstacles in general and those in the tourism field in particular. The obstacles range from very common ones including “misconception and mistrust”, “incompatible stakeholder interests” and “bureaucracy” to some specific obstacles such as “conflict with national interest” and “lack of national strengths”.

5.1.4 Stakeholder involvement

Based on the interview findings, seven groups of stakeholders were identified being influential to the Silk Road tourism collaborative process. They are tourism enterprises, international organisations and donor agencies, national and provincial governments, destination management organisations or tourism ministries, civil societies and lobby groups, tourism experts and research institutes, and the media. Their roles played range from primary executors and beneficiaries and policy makers, facilitators and catalysts to industry support and message conveyer.

The stakeholder analytical tool developed based on Freeman’s (1984) stakeholder map

(Figure 2.3) was found inappropriate in analysing the relationship among the stakeholders. While the original tool still serves its normative and descriptive purposes, it failed to perform at the operational level. Therefore, an alternative approach, based on the empirical findings of the research and with reference to previous literature, was formulated. Hence, a stakeholder-relational map was resulted (Figure 4.11). It was revealed that while tourism enterprises are more active in cross-national tourism collaboration, the national governments represent the major impediment to effective collaboration.

5.2 Implications and recommendations

Based on the four groups of findings as concluded above, the following recommendations are provided.

5.2.1 A Silk Road tourism jigsaw in Central Asia

Based on the findings of tourism resources of the CASs and Western China, a tourism jigsaw in Central Asia is proposed (Figure 5.1). Instead of competing on the same type of tourism provisions, it would be more beneficial for the CASs and Xinjiang to specialise in their comparative advantages and contribute to the multiple selling prepositions of the region. As supported by Elite E1, *"... so within one visit, you should be able to go to one, two or three countries to see the unique and strong attractions of the different countries."* The tourism jigsaw can be formed under the Silk Road brand so as to create awareness and to enhance the region's image. Silk Road travel can also draw visitors from afar to sample the region's tourism provisions, which may lead to return visits to the individual countries for a longer stay. Furthermore, the Silk Road brand attracts travellers that would not visit the region and especially the specific country otherwise, as emphasised by Elite E1,

> *"I do think it's important to develop the Silk Road. It's important to tourism. The 6-7 day tour in Kyrgyzstan wouldn't be here if it wasn't for the fact they were doing the Silk Road. So I want the Silk Road to develop." (Elite P1, interview transcript)*

Figure 5.1 Jigsaw of tourism provisions in the CASs and Western China
Source: Own illustration, based on findings on tourism resources in the CASs and China

Figure 5.1 graphically illustrates the unique selling prepositions that the countries can focus on. To effectively do so, collaboration between the countries is deemed critical. Yet, due to the different tourism management approaches in the individual countries under the strong presidency prevails in the region, competition is obvious at present. In addition, it is advised that the local tour operators in Central Asia can learn the know-how from foreign tour operators doing businesses in the region so as to bring up the standard of the products and services that they provide, to enhance their marketing effectiveness, and to have better access to the tourist generating markets.

5.2.2 The two ends of a cycle: tourism and stability

From the discussion of challenges for tourism development in the region, it was revealed that the external challenge of ethnic, political and social instability is impedimental. The analysis of the factors leading to regional instability resulted in one detrimental cause, which is, economic unfavourableness that include economic hardship and uneven distribution of national wealth. Therefore, improving the region's economy as well as an evener distribution of income appears to be a viable, if not the only, option to stabilise the region both socially and politically. The role of tourism, as an alternative economic sector that can route income to a broader base of the population, is reaffirmed. Tourism, especially in the form of community-based tourism, is an ideal tool to achieve a better and fairer economic advancement. This argument further strengthens the proposition put forward in the beginning of the study which is to encourage tourism development in these CASs. Tourism and stability are like the two ends of a cycle, as illustrated in Figure 5.2. On the one hand, stability is a precondition for tourism to take place; on the other hand, the successful development of tourism can indirectly bring stability to a location. Nonetheless, proper management is essential to materialise the goods that tourism could do to these countries.

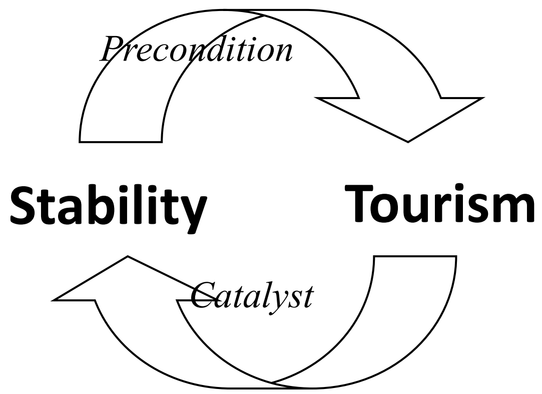


Figure 5.2 Interrelationship between tourism and stability
Source: Own illustration, based on findings on tourism management in the CASs and China

5.2.3 Each mistake teaches a lesson

Without knowing the reasons of failure, improvements cannot be made. Without knowing the past, one cannot evaluate the present or preparing for the future. Therefore, the comprehensive overview of existing collaboration and the evaluation of the specific collaborative projects revealed their weakness and the general obstacles for collaboration in the region. The several reasons for the project's unsuccessfulness were concluded in Section 5.1.3 and lesson could be drawn from them. Although it is noted that most of the obstacles deliberated in Section 4.3.2 are fundamental and it would take a very long time for them to be resolved, the discussion provided a broad direction for future work to be done. As Key informant K4 described collaboration in this part of the world as hope and that *"hope is like a path in the countryside: originally there was no path – yet, as people are walking all the time in the same spot, a way appears*" (Lu Xun, 1921; cited by key informant K4 in the interview).

5.2.4 Aligned stakes that count

Based on the findings of the stakeholder analysis, it is recommended that matching stakeholders' objectives would be the number one strategy to enhance collaboration because stakeholders' interests in these countries are not necessarily touristic. Second, coalitions among urgent stakeholders with mutual stakes should be formed so as to increase their power while they can lobby the other stakeholders into the coalitions or seek the other stakeholders' adoption of their claims to influence the powerful but indifferent stakeholders.

5.3 Limitations

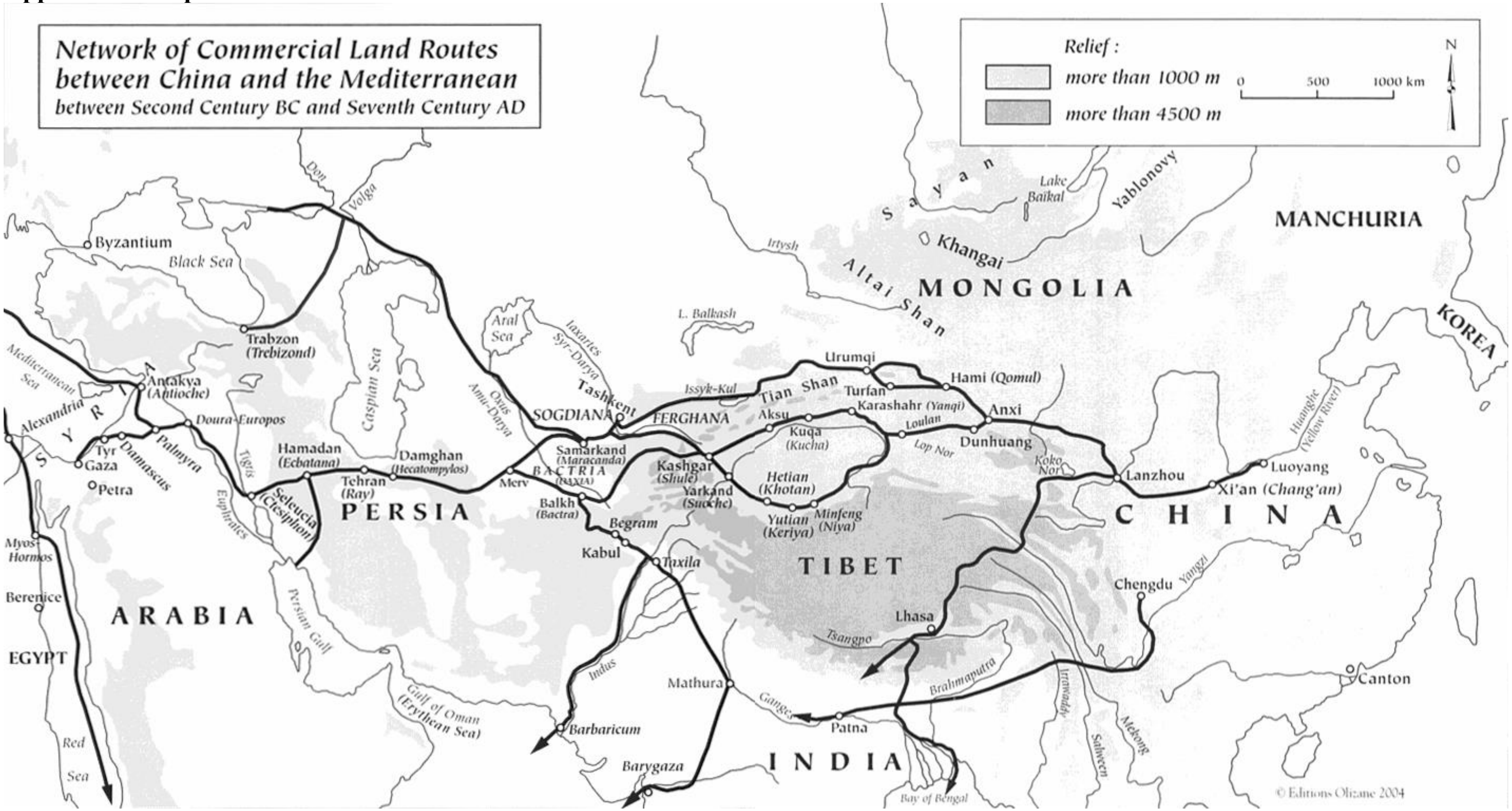
Like any other research studies, this study has several limitations. Due to the political sensitivity in the CASs and China, informants could be sceptical in answering some of the questions that are proposed to be asked during the interviews, especially when commenting on the other countries or stakeholders involved. In addition, access to reliable and accurate information related to the CASs and China is relatively difficult. Last but not least, the topic is extensive but financial and time resources are limited, and hence not all the aspects related to the topic could be comprehensively covered in this study. It is important to note that development of tourism along the Silk Road as a whole or development of Silk Road tourism in other parts on the Silk Road should not be neglected and that future studies may draw on the findings of this research

5.4 Future Research Direction

As stated in the above section on study limitations, the present study may appear overly ambitious which did not facilitate a thorough understanding of tourism development in the individual countries. Future research is directed to a more focused and in-depth tourism study of the individual country which can examine especially the role of tourism in this type of transitional economy. In addition, the current study only considered stakeholders in the political arena and in the industry, it would be useful to include also the community and the travellers in these countries for future study to provide a more holistic stakeholder analysis. Furthermore, to ensure tourism development would benefit the grass-root populations, studies can be conducted to facilitate community-based tourism in these countries.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Map of the Silk Road



Source: Boulnois (2005, pp. 30-31). Note: Copyright © 2005, 2004 Edictions Olizane, Geneva. Used with permission.

Appendix 2: Map of Central Asia and China

Source: CIA (2010).
Note: Information on the Central Intelligence Agency Web site is in the public domain and may be reproduced, published or otherwise used without the Central Intelligence Agency's permission.
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Appendix 3: Country Profile: China and the CASs

Profile of China

Area		
Total (square km)	9,596,961 (land: 9,569,901; water: 27,060)	
Government		
Government type	Communist state	
Capital	Beijing	
Administrative divisions	23 provinces, 5 autonomous regions, and 4 municipalities	
Independence	1 October 1949 (People's Republic of China established)	
Tourism authority	China National Tourism Administration	
People		
Population	1,343,239,923	Jul 2012 est.
Age structure	0-14 years	2012 est.
0-14 years	17.4%	
Male	125,528,983	
Female	107,668,285	
15-64 years	73.5%	
Male	507,661,881	
Female	480,115,760	
65 years and over	9.1%	
Male	58,677,903	
Female	63,587,111	
Median age		2012 est.
Total (yrs)	35.9	
Male (yrs)	35.2	
Female (yrs)	36.6	
Birth rate (birth per 1,000 population)	12.31	2012 est.
Death rate (death per 1,000 population)	7.17	Jul 2012 est.
Life expectancy at birth		2012 est.
Total (yrs)	74.84	
Male (yrs)	72.82	
Female (yrs)	77.11	
Adult literacy (age 15 and over can read and write)	90.9%	2000 census
Urban population	47%	2010
Human Development Index	0.687	2011 est.
Economy		
Currency	Renminbi yuan (RMB)	
Exchange rate (per US$)	6.8249	2009
GDP (billion US$)	5927	2010.
GDP (purchasing power parity) (trillion US$)	11.44	2011 est.
GDP (per capita US$) (PPP)	8,500	2011 est.
GDP (composition by sector)		2011 est.
Agriculture	10.1%	
Industry	46.8%	
Services	43.1%	
Inflation rate (consumer prices)	5.5%	2011 est.
Gini coefficient	48	2009
Unemployment rate	6.5%	2011 est.

Agriculture products	Rice, wheat, potatoes, corn, peanuts, tea, millet, barley, apples, cotton, oilseed; pork; fish	
Industries	Mining and ore processing, iron, steel, aluminium, and other metals, coal; machine building; armaments; textiles and apparel; petroleum; cement; chemicals; fertilizers; consumer products, including footwear, toys, and electronics; food processing; transportation equipment, including automobiles, rail cars and locomotives, ships, and aircraft; telecommunications equipment, commercial space launch vehicles, satellites	
Oil		
Production (bbl/day)	3795000	2008
Consumption (bbl/day)	7999000	2008
Exports (bbl/day)	388,000	2008 est.
Natural gas		
Production (billion cu m)	76.1	2008
Consumption (billion cu m)	80.7	2008
Exports (billion cu m)	3.34	2008
Export commodities	Electrical and other machinery, including data processing equipment, apparel, textiles, iron and steel, optical and medical equipment	
Export partners		2010
European Union (27)	19.7%	
United States	18.0%	
Hong Kong, China	13.8%	
Japan	7.7%	
Korea, Republic of	4.4%	
Import commodities	Electrical and other machinery, oil and mineral fuels, optical and medical equipment, metal ores, plastics, organic chemicals	
Import partners		2010
Japan	12.7%	
European Union (27)	12.1%	
Korea, Republic of	9.9%	
Taiwan	8.3%	
Hong Kong, China	7.7%	
Transportation		
Airports with paved runways		2009
Total	425	
Over 3,047 m	63	
2,438 to 3,047 m	132	
1,524 to 2,437 m	133	
914 to 1,523 m	25	
Under 914 m	72	
Airports with unpaved runways	57	2009
Pipelines		2009
Gas (km)	32,545	
Oil (km)	20,097	
Refined products (km)	10,915	
Railways (km)	77,834	2008
Roadways (km)	3,583,715	2007
Waterways (km)	110,000	2008
Ports and terminals	Dalian, Guangzhou, Ningbo, Qingdao, Qinhuangdao, Shanghai, Shenzhen, Tianjin	

Source: CIA World Factbook, UNDP, Government websites, various years

Profile of Kazakhstan

Area		
Total (sq km)	2,724,900	
Land (sq km)	2,699,700	
Water (sq km)	25,200	
Government		
Government type	Republic; authoritarian presidential rule, with little power outside the executive branch	
Capital	Astana	
Administrative divisions	14 provinces and 3 cities	
Independence	16 December 1991 (from the Soviet Union)	
Tourism authority	Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of Kazakhstan	
People		
Population	15,460,484	Jul 2010 est.
Age structure		2010 est.
0-14 years	21.6%	
Male	1,707,608	
Female	1,634,993	
15-64 years	70.7%	
Male	5,334,740	
Female	5,603,185	
65 years and over	7.6%	
Male	407,212	
Female	772,746	
Median age		2010 est.
Total (yrs)	29.9	
Male (yrs)	28.4	
Female (yrs)	31.6	
Birth rate (birth per 1,000 population)	16.66	2010 est.
Death rate (death per 1,000 population)	9.39	Jul 2010 est.
Life expectancy at birth		2010 est.
Total (yrs)	68.19	
Male (yrs)	62.91	
Female (yrs)	73.78	
Adult literacy (age 15 and over can read and write)	99.5%	1999 est.
Urban population	58%	2008
Human Development Index	0.745	2011 est.
Economy		
Currency	Tenge (KZT)	
Exchange rate (per US$)	147.84	2009
GDP (billion US$)	108.3	2009 est.
GDP (purchasing power parity) (billion US$)	182.3	2009 est.
GDP (per capita US$) (PPP)	11,800	2009 est.
GDP (composition by sector)		2009 est.
Agriculture	6.4%	
Industry	38.1%	
Services	55.5%	
Inflation rate (consumer prices)	7.3%	2009
Gini coefficient	28.8	2008
Unemployment rate	6.3%	
Agriculture products	Grain (mostly spring wheat), cotton; livestock	
Industries	Oil, coal, iron ore, manganese, chromite, lead,	

	zinc, copper, titanium, bauxite, gold, silver, phosphates, sulfur, iron and steel; tractors and other agricultural machinery, electric motors, construction materials	
Oil		
Production (bbl/day)	1528000	2009 est.
Consumption (bbl/day)	239,000	2008 est.
Exports (bbl/day)	1345000	2009 est.
Natural gas		
Production (billion cu m)	35.61	2009 est.
Consumption (billion cu m)	33.68	2008 est.
Exports (billion cu m)	17.66	2008 est.
Export commodities	Oil and oil products 59%, ferrous metals 19%, chemicals 5%, machinery 3%, grain, wool, meat, coal	
Export partners		2008
China	13.4%	
Russia	11.1%	
Germany	10.6%	
Italy	6.9%	
Romania	6.6%	
France	5.7%	
Ukraine	5.4%	
Turkey	4.1%	
Import commodities	Machinery and equipment, metal products, foodstuffs	
Import partners		2008
Russia	34%	
China	25%	
Germany	6.2%	
Ukraine	4.7%	
Transportation		
Airports with paved runways		2009
Total	67	
Over 3,047 m	10	
2,438 to 3,047 m	26	
1,524 to 2,437 m	17	
914 to 1,523 m	5	
Under 914 m	9	
Airports with unpaved runways	32	2009
Pipelines		2009
Condensate (km)	658	
Gas (km)	11,146	
Oil (km)	10,376	
Refined products (km)	1,095	
Railways (km)	15,082	2008
Roadways (km)	93,612	2007
Waterways (km)	4,000	2008
Ports and terminals	Aqtau (Shevchenko), Atyrau (Gur'yev), Oskemen (Ust-Kamenogorsk), Pavlodar, Semey (Semipalatinsk)	

Source: CIA World Factbook, UNDP, Government websites, various years

Profile of Kyrgyzstan

Area		
Total (sq km)	199,951	
Land (sq km)	191,801	
Water (sq km)	8,150	
Government		
Government type	Republic	
Capital	Bishkek	
Administrative divisions	7 provinces and 1 city	
Independence	31 August 1991 (from the Soviet Union)	
Tourism authority	State Committee for Tourism, Sport and Youth Policy	
People		
Population	5,508,626	Jul 2010 est.
Age structure		2010 est.
0-14 years	29.4%	
Male	827,346	
Female	794,746	
15-64 years	65%	
Male	1,754,681	
Female	1,827,553	
65 years and over	5.5%	
Male	118,215	
Female	186,085	
Median age		2010 est.
Total (yrs)	24.7	
Male (yrs)	23.8	
Female (yrs)	25.6	
Birth rate (birth per 1,000 population)	23.58	2010 est.
Death rate (death per 1,000 population)	6.85	Jul 2010 est.
Life expectancy at birth		2010 est.
Total (yrs)	69.74	
Male (yrs)	65.74	
Female (yrs)	73.94	
Adult literacy (age 15 and over can read and write)	98.7%	1999 census
Urban population	36%	2008
Human Development Index	0.615	2011 est.
Economy		
Currency	Som (KGS)	
Exchange rate (per US$)	43.069	2009
GDP (billion US$)	4.736	2009 est.
GDP (purchasing power parity) (billion US$)	11.66	2009 est.
GDP (per capita US$) (PPP)	2,100	2009 est.
GDP (composition by sector)		2009 est.
Agriculture	30.7%	
Industry	15.9%	
Services	53.4%	
Inflation rate (consumer prices)	7.9%	2009 est.
Gini coefficient	30.3	2003
Unemployment rate	18%	2004 est.
Agriculture products	Tobacco, cotton, potatoes, vegetables, grapes, fruits and berries; sheep, goats, cattle, wool	
Industries	Small machinery, textiles, food processing,	

	cement, shoes, sawn logs, refrigerators, furniture, electric motors, gold, rare earth metals	
Oil		
Production (bbl/day)	958	2008 est.
Consumption (bbl/day)	15,000	2008 est.
Exports (bbl/day)	1,890	2007 est.
Natural gas		
Production (million cu m)	30	2008 est.
Consumption (million cu m)	750	2008 est.
Exports (million cu m)	0	2008 est.
Export commodities	Cotton, wool, meat, tobacco; gold, mercury, uranium, natural gas, hydropower; machinery; shoes	
Export partners		2008
Switzerland	27.2%	
Russia	19.2%	
Uzbekistan	14.3%	
Kazakhstan	11.4%	
France	6.7%	
Import commodities	Oil and gas, machinery and equipment, chemicals, foodstuffs	
Import partners		2008
Russia	36.6%	
China	17.9%	
Kazakhstan	9.2%	
Germany	8.2%	
Transportation		
Airports with paved runways		2009
Total	18	
Over 3,047 m	1	
2,438 to 3,047 m	3	
1,524 to 2,437 m	11	
Under 914 m	3	
Airports with unpaved runways	11	2009
Pipelines		2009
Gas (km)	254	
Oil (km)	16	
Railways (km)	470	2008
Roadways (km)	18,500	2003
Waterways (km)	600	2008
Ports and terminals	Balykchy (Ysyk-Kol or Rybach'ye)	

Source: CIA World Factbook, UNDP, Government websites, various years

Profile of Tajikistan

Area		
Total (sq km)	143,100	
Land (sq km)	141,510	
Water (sq km)	2,590	
Government		
Government type	Republic	
Capital	Dushanbe	
Administrative divisions	2 provinces and 1 autonomous province	
Independence	9 September 1991 (from the Soviet Union)	
Tourism authority	Committee of Youth, Sport and Tourism	
People		
Population	7,487,489	Jul 2010 est.
Age structure		2010 est.
0-14 years	34.1%	
Male	1,300,221	
Female	1,255,316	
15-64 years	62.4%	
Male	2,313,460	
Female	2,357,496	
65 years and over	3.5%	
Male	110,807	
Female	150,189	
Median age		2010 est.
Total (yrs)	22.2	
Male (yrs)	21.7	
Female (yrs)	22.7	
Birth rate (birth per 1,000 population)	26.49	2010 est.
Death rate (death per 1,000 population)	6.72	Jul 2010 est.
Life expectancy at birth		2010 est.
Total (yrs)	65.68	
Male (yrs)	62.63	
Female (yrs)	68.88	
Adult literacy (age 15 and over can read and write)	99.5%	2000 census
Urban population	26%	2008
Human Development Index	0.607	2011 est.
Economy		
Currency	Tajikistani somoni (TJS)	
Exchange rate (per US$)	4.3813	2009
GDP (billion US$)	4.741	2009 est.
GDP (purchasing power parity) (billion US$)	13.8	2009 est.
GDP (per capita US$) (PPP)	1,800	2009 est.
GDP (composition by sector)		2009 est.
Agriculture	18.9%	
Industry	21.9%	
Services	59.2%	
Inflation rate (consumer prices)	6.4%	2009 est.
Gini coefficient	32.6	2006
Unemployment rate	2.2%	2009 est.
Agriculture products	Cotton, grain, fruits, grapes, vegetables; cattle, sheep, goats	
Industries	Aluminum, zinc, lead; chemicals and fertilizers, cement, vegetable oil, metal-cutting machine	

	tools, refrigerators and freezers	
Oil		
Production (bbl/day)	238	2008 est.
Consumption (bbl/day)	36,000	2008 est.
Exports (bbl/day)	349	
Natural gas		
Production (million cu m)	16.1	2009 est.
Consumption (million cu m)	266.1	2009 est.
Exports (million cu m)	0	2009 est.
Export commodities	Aluminum, electricity, cotton, fruits, vegetable oil, textiles	
Export partners		2008
Netherlands	36.7%	
Turkey	26.5%	
Russia	8.6%	
Iran	6.6%	
China	5.7%	
Uzbekistan	5.1%	
Import commodities	Electricity, petroleum products, aluminum oxide, machinery and equipment, foodstuffs	
Import partners		2008
Russia	32.3%	
China	11.9%	
Kazakhstan	8.8%	
Uzbekistan	4.7%	
Transportation		
Airports with paved runways		2009
Total	18	
Over 3,047 m	2	
2,438 to 3,047 m	4	
1,524 to 2,437 m	6	
914 to 1,523 m	3	
Under 914 m	3	
Airports with unpaved runways	8	2009
Pipelines		2009
Gas (km)	549	
Oil (km)	38	
Railways (km)	680	2008
Roadways (km)	27,767	2000
Waterways (km)	200	2008
Ports and terminals	N/A	

Source: CIA World Factbook, UNDP, Government websites, various years

Profile of Turkmenistan

Area		
Total (sq km)	488,100	
Land (sq km)	469,930	
Water (sq km)	18,170	
Government		
Government type	Defines itself as a secular democracy and a presidential republic; in actuality displays authoritarian presidential rule, with power concentrated within the executive branch	
Capital	Ashgabat	
Administrative divisions	5 provinces and 1 independent city	
Independence	27 October 1991 (from the Soviet Union)	
Tourism authority	State Committee for Tourism and Sport of Turkmenistan	
People		
Population	4,940,916	Jul 2010 est.
Age structure		2010 est.
0-14 years	28.2%	
Male	703,941	
Female	687,335	
15-64 years	67.7%	
Male	1,657,903	
Female	1,687,725	
65 years and over	4.1%	
Male	88,520	
Female	115,492	
Median age		2010 est.
Total (yrs)	24.8	
Male (yrs)	24.4	
Female (yrs)	25.3	
Birth rate (birth per 1,000 population)	19.62	2010 est.
Death rate (death per 1,000 population)	6.27	Jul 2010 est.
Life expectancy at birth		2010 est.
Total (yrs)	68.2	
Male (yrs)	65.25	
Female (yrs)	71.29	
Adult literacy (age 15 and over can read and write)	98.8%	1999 census
Urban population	49%	2008
Human Development Index	0.686	2011 est.
Economy		
Currency	Turkmen manat (TMM)	
Exchange rate (per US$)	2.85	2009
GDP (billion US$)	16.24	2009 est.
GDP (purchasing power parity) (billion US$)	33.58	2009 est.
GDP (per capita US$) (PPP)	6,900	2009 est.
GDP (composition by sector)		2009 est.
Agriculture	10%	
Industry	33.9%	
Services	56%	
Inflation rate (consumer prices)	15%	2009 est.
Gini coefficient	40.8	1998
Unemployment rate	60%	2004 est.

Agriculture products	Cotton, grain; livestock	
Industries	Natural gas, oil, petroleum products, textiles, food processing	
Oil		
Production (bbl/day)	191,800	2009 est.
Consumption (bbl/day)	153,400	2009 est.
Exports (bbl/day)	38,360	2009 est.
Natural gas		
Production (billion cu m)	34	2009 est.
Consumption (billion cu m)	20	2009 est.
Exports (billion cu m)	14	2009 est.
Export commodities	Gas, crude oil, petrochemicals, textiles, cotton fiber	
Export partners		2008
Ukraine	51.6%	
Poland	10%	
Hungary	8%	
Import commodities	Machinery and equipment, chemicals, foodstuffs	
Import partners		2008
Russia	16.8%	
China	16.7%	
Turkey	13.8%	
UAE	10.2%	
Ukraine	7.8%	
Germany	5.5%	
Iran	5%	
Transportation		
Airports with paved runways		2009
Total	22	
Over 3,047 m	1	
2,438 to 3,047 m	10	
1,524 to 2,437 m	9	
914 to 1,523 m	2	
Airports with unpaved runways	6	2009
Pipelines		2009
Gas (km)	6,417	
Oil (km)	1,457	
Railways (km)	2,980	2008
Roadways (km)	58,592	2002
Waterways (km)	1,300	2008
Ports and terminals	Turkmenbasy	

Source: CIA World Factbook, UNDP, Government websites, various years

Profile of Uzbekistan

Area		
Total (sq km)	447,400	
Land (sq km)	425,400	
Water (sq km)	22,000	
Government		
Government type	Republic; authoritarian presidential rule, with little power outside the executive branch	
Capital	Tashkent (Toshkent)	
Administrative divisions	12 provinces, 1 autonomous republic, and 1 city	
Independence	1 September 1991 (from the Soviet Union)	
Tourism authority	"Uzbektourism" National Company	
People		
Population	27,865,738	Jul 2010 est.
Age structure		2010 est.
0-14 years	27.3%	
Male	3,893,056	
Female	3,709,185	
15-64 years	68%	
Male	9,410,206	
Female	9,532,880	
65 years and over	4.7%	
Male	564,417	
Female	755,994	
Median age		2010 est.
Total (yrs)	25.2	
Male (yrs)	24.7	
Female (yrs)	25.8	
Birth rate (birth per 1,000 population)	17.51	2010 est.
Death rate (death per 1,000 population)	5.29	Jul 2010 est.
Life expectancy at birth		2010 est.
Total (yrs)	72.24	
Male (yrs)	69.22	
Female (yrs)	75.44	
Adult literacy (age 15 and over can read and write)	99.3%	2003 est.
Urban population	37%	2008
Human Development Index	0.641	2011 est.
Economy		
Currency	Uzbekistani soum (UZS)	
Exchange rate (per US$)	1,469	2009
GDP (billion US$)	30.68	2009 est.
GDP (purchasing power parity) (billion US$)	77.55	2009 est.
GDP (per capita US$) (PPP)	2,800	2009 est.
GDP (composition by sector)		2009 est.
Agriculture	26.8%	
Industry	39.5%	
Services	33.7%	
Inflation rate (consumer prices)	8.6%	2009 est.
Gini coefficient	36.8	2003
Unemployment rate	1.1%	2009 est.
Agriculture products	Cotton, vegetables, fruits, grain; livestock	
Industries	Textiles, food processing, machine building, metallurgy, gold, petroleum, natural gas,	

	chemicals	
Oil		
Production (bbl/day)	83,820	2008 est.
Consumption (bbl/day)	148,000	2008 est.
Exports (bbl/day)	6,104	2008 est.
Natural gas		
Production (billion cu m)	67.6	2008 est.
Consumption (billion cu m)	52.6	2008 est.
Exports (billion cu m)	15	2008 est.
Export commodities	Energy products, cotton, gold, mineral fertilizers, ferrous and non-ferrous metals, textiles, food products, machinery, automobiles	
Export partners		2008
Ukraine	27.4%	
Russia	16.9%	
Turkey	7.5%	
Kazakhstan	5.9%	
Bangladesh	5%	
China	4.3%	
Japan	4.1%	
Import commodities	Machinery and equipment, foodstuffs, chemicals, ferrous and non-ferrous metals	
Import partners		2008
Russia	25.1%	
China	15.3%	
South Korea	13.5%	
Ukraine	7.1%	
Germany	5.4%	
Kazakhstan	4.8%	
Turkey	4%	
Transportation		
Airports with paved runways		2009
Total	33	
Over 3,047 m	6	
2,438 to 3,047 m	13	
1,524 to 2,437 m	6	
914 to 1,523 m	4	
Under 914 m	4	
Airports with unpaved runways	21	2009
Pipelines		2009
Gas (km)	9,706	
Oil (km)	868	
Railways (km)	3,645	2008
Roadways (km)	86,496	2000
Waterways (km)	1,100	2008
Ports and terminals	Termiz (Amu Darya)	

Source: CIA World Factbook, UNDP, Government websites, various years

Appendix 4: UNWTO Statistics on CASs' Tourism, 1995-2010

Year	Kazakhstan		Kyrgyz Republic		Tajikistan		Turkmenistan		Uzbekistan[4]	
	Arrivals[1] (Thousands)	Receipts[2] (US$ Mn)	Arrivals (Thousands)	Receipts (US$ Mn)	Arrivals (Thousands)	Receipts (US$ Mn)	Arrivals (Thousands)	Receipts (US$ Mn)	Arrivals (Thousands)	Receipts (US$ Mn)
1995	.. [3]	155	36	5	..	..	218	..	92	..
1996	..	258	42	4	..	..	217	13	173	15
1997	..	350	87	7	..	..	257	46	960	198
1998	..	454	59	12	..	..	300	..	811	167
1999	..	394	48	18	2	..	..	..	487	102
2000	1471	403	59	20	4	..	3	..	302	63
2001	1845	502	99	32	4	..	5	..	345	72
2002	2832	680	140	48	..	5	11	..	332	68
2003	2410	638	342	62	..	7	8	..	231	48
2004	3073	803	398	92	..	9	15	..	262	57
2005	3143	801	319	94	..	10	12	..	242	28
2006	3468	973	766	189	..	11	6	..	560	43
2007	3876	1213	1656	392	..	16	8	..	903	51
2008	3447	1255	2435	569	325	24	..	..	1069	64
2009	3118	1185	2147	506	207	6	..	..	1215	99
2010	3393	1236	1316	336	160	25	..	..	975	121

Source: UNWTO (various years)

[1] Arrivals stand for tourist (overnight visitor) arrivals which exclude same-day visitors (excursionists) and cruise passengers in UNWTO's statistical terms. Shaded data refer to total number of visitors as no separate data for same-day visitors and/or cruise passengers are available for those specific years.
[2] Tourism receipts include receipts on travel and receipts on passenger transport. Shaded data refer to receipts on travel as no aggregated data are available for those specific years.
[3] (..) signifies no available data.
[4] Data on tourism receipts provided by the country to UNWTO which do not appear in the IMF dataset.

Appendix 5: International & Domestic Tourism in China, 1978-2008.

Year	International		Domestic	
	Tourist Arrivals (Million)	Expenditure (Billion USD)	Trips (Million)	Expenditure (Billion Yuan)
1978	1.8	0.3	..	1.8
1979	4.2	0.4	..	..
1980	5.7	0.6	..	..
1981	7.8	0.8	..	..
1982	7.9	0.8	..	..
1983	9.5	0.9	..	..
1984	12.9	1.1	200	..
1985	17.8	1.3	240	8.0
1986	22.8	1.5	270	10.6
1987	26.9	1.9	290	14.0
1988	31.7	2.2	300	18.7
1989	24.5	1.9	240	15.0
1990	27.5	2.2	280	17.0
1991	33.4	2.8	300	20.0
1992	38.1	3.9	330	25.0
1993	41.5	4.7	411	86.4
1994	43.7	7.3	524	102.4
1995	46.4	8.7	629	137.6
1996	51.1	10.2	640	163.8
1997	57.6	12.1	644	211.3
1998	63.5	12.6	695	239.1
1999	72.8	14.1	719	283.2
2000	83.4	16.2	744	317.6
2001	89.0	17.8	784	352.2
2002	97.9	20.4	878	387.8
2003	91.7	17.4	870	344.2
2004	109.0	25.7	1102	471.1
2005	120.3	29.3	1212	528.6
2006	124.9	33.9	1394	623.0
2007	131.9	41.9	1610	777.1
2008	130.0	40.8	1712	874.9
2009	126.5	42.6	--	--
2010	133.8	50.2	--	--
2011	135.4	--	--	--
2012	132.4	--	--	--

Source: CNTA (1999); National Bureau of Statistics of China, various years; World Bank (2012)

Appendix 6: A Chronology of Stakeholder Definition

Source	Definition
Stanford memo, 1963 (cited in Freeman & Reed, 1983, and Freeman, 1984)	"those groups without whose support the organization would cease to exist"
Rhenman, 1964	"are depending on the firm in order to achieve their personal goals and on whom the firm is depending for its existence" (cited in Nasi, 1995)
Ahlstedt & Jahnukainen, 1971	"driven by their own interests and goals are participants in a firm, and thus depending on it and whom for its sake the firm is depending" (cited in Nasi, 1995)
Freeman & Reed, 1983, p.91	"can affect the achievement of an organization's objectives or who is affected by the achievement of an organization's objectives"
Freeman, 1984, p.46	"can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives"
Freeman & Gilbert, 1987, p.397	"can affect or is affected by a business"
Cornell & Shapiro, 1987, p.5	"claimants" who have "contracts"
Evan & Freeman 1988, p. 75-76	"have a stake in or claim on the firm"
Evan & Freeman 1988, p.79	"benefit from or are harmed by, and whose rights are violated or respected by, corporate actions"
Bowie, 1988, p.112	"without whose support the organization would cease to exist"
Alkhafaji, 1989, p.36	"groups to whom the corporation is responsible"
Carroll, 1989, p.57	"asserts to have one or more of these kinds of stakes-"ranging from an interest to a right (legal or moral) to ownership or legal title to the company's assets or property"

Source: Mitchell, Agle and Wood (1997)

Appendix 7: Questionnaire Distributed in the Fifth Silk Road Mayors' Forum
(held in Shiraz, Iran from 18-20 May 2010)

Towards a Sustainable Silk Road Tourism Future in Central Asia and China through Collaboration and Stakeholder Involvement*

Gloria K. Y. Chan & Dr. Thomas Bauer
School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

As part of the study "Towards a Sustainable Silk Road Tourism Future in Central Asia and China through Collaboration and Stakeholder Involvement", this survey is conducted with the aim to empirically examine the perception and intention on collaboration of the various stakeholders related to the development along the Silk Road and between the Silk Road countries. The results are expected to be contributory to the understanding of the collaboration potentials along the Silk Road; hence, recommendations could be made to strengthen this collaboration.

It would be most appreciated if you could take time to complete this questionnaire regarding your personal opinions on the collaboration along the Silk Road. This questionnaire contains five parts. Please be ensured that your answers will be treated with confidentiality and anonymity; and will only be used for academic and research purposes.

I. Involvement background

1. Which country are you from? : ____________
2. Which institution are you representing in relation to the Silk Road? : ____________
3. What is your role in the above institution? : ____________
4. How many years have you participated in Silk Road related activity? : ________ years
5. Do you perceive yourself as a stakeholder of the Silk Road : ☐ Yes ☐ No
6. Why? ____
   Why not? ____

II. Extent of current collaboration

7. Are you/ your institution collaborating with any countries/ institutions in relation to the Silk Road?
   ☐ Yes ______________________________
   ☐ No Why not? ______________________________
8. What are the countries/ institutions that you/ your institution are collaborating with?
   Country(ies) : ______________________________
   Institution(s) : ______________________________
9. At which level is your collaboration? *(could choose more than one)*
   ☐ Cross-national (inter-governmental) ☐ Regional ☐ Provincial/ Municipal
   ☐ Business ☐ Others, please specify: ______________
10. Which are the area(s) of collaboration? *(could choose more than one)*
    ☐ Trade ☐ Tourism ☐ Investment
    ☐ Science ☐ Arts and culture ☐ Infrastructure development (i.e. energy projects)
    ☐ Others, please specify: ______________

III. Tourism collaboration

11. If there is collaboration in the tourism context, in which area(s) does it take place?
(could choose more than one)
☐ Transportation link ☐ Hotel development ☐ Attraction clustering
☐ Joint destination marketing ☐ Immigration procedure ☐ Events and festivals
☐ Others, please specify: ______________________

12. Who are your partner(s) of collaboration?
____

13. Which of the following tourism stakeholder(s) do you consider important for collaboration in the tourism context? *(could choose more than one)*
☐ Governments (provincial, national) ☐ NTOs ☐ Tourism enterprises
☐ Tourism support businesses ☐ Residents ☐ Competitors
☐ Others, please specify: ______________________

IV. Collaboration motivation

14. Do you perceive benefits to collaborate? ☐ Yes ☐ No

15. If yes, what are the benefits?
☐ Efficient resource use ☐ Development sustainability ☐ Regional competitiveness
☐ Resolving conflicts ☐ Social benefits ☐ Political benefits
☐ Others, please specify: ______________________

V. Collaboration intentions

16. Would you initiative/ continue tourism collaboration with the other stakeholders of the Silk Road?
☐ Yes ☐ No
Why or why not?
____

17. If yes, with whom and how would you do it?
____

18. What are the obstacles for the tourism collaboration along the Silk Road?
____

This is the end of the questionnaire. Please return the completed questionnaire to Dr. Thomas Bauer before the end of the Forum.

-Thank You-

*Note: The project name was changed as a result of the candidate's confirmation of registration.

Appendix 8: Interview Schedule – English and Original Version

Collaboration and Stakeholder Involvement for Sustainable Silk Road Tourism in Central Asian States and Western China

Gloria K. Y. Chan & Dr. Thomas Bauer
School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University

Interview Schedule

I. Involvement Background

1. Would you please share with me your background and your involvement in the Silk Road related activities (country, organisation/ institution, role in the organisation especially in relation to Silk Road collaboration, years and experience in collaboration, etc.)?

2. How would you evaluate the progress of tourism development along the Silk Road and in the individual Silk Road countries?

3. a. Do you perceive yourself as a stakeholder of the Silk Road?
   b. Why?
   c. Why not?

II. Stakeholder Involvement

4. a. Who do you think are the relevant stakeholders for (tourism) collaboration along the Silk Road?
   b. And what are their corresponding stakes and current involvement?

5. a. Are there any interrelationships between the stakeholders whom you identified?
   b. And what is the nature of these relationships?

6. What are the roles of the identified stakeholders in (tourism) collaboration along the Silk Road and between the Silk Road countries?

7. How would the outcomes from (tourism) collaboration along the Silk Road and/or between the Silk Road countries impact on the identified stakeholders?

III. Collaboration

8. Could you comment on the existing collaboration along the Silk Road and between the Central Asian States and China (stakeholder involved, level, area(s), stage, etc.)?

9. Specifically in the tourism context, in which area(s) does the collaboration take place?

10. a. As a stakeholder, do you perceive benefits to collaborate?
    b. If yes, what are the benefits?
    c. If no, why not?

11. What are the obstacles for the (tourism) collaboration along the Silk Road and between the Central Asian States and China?

12. a. How would you define successful (tourism) collaboration?
    b. What are your expected outcomes from (tourism) collaboration along the Silk Road and between the Central Asian States and China?

IV. <u>Destination and regional competitiveness</u>

13. What makes a destination/ region competitive?

14. a. Could regional collaboration between the Central Asia States and western China enhance the competitiveness of the region and that of the Silk Road?
    b. If yes, which aspect and how?
    c. If no, why not?

15 Could regional collaboration turn the comparative advantage of the individual countries (Central Asian States and China) into the competitive advantage of the region?

This is the end of the interview questions. Should you have any enquiries regarding this interview or this research, please contact us at gloriaky.chan@

-Thank You-

Appendix 9: Interview Schedule – Russian Translated Version

Сотрудничество и участие заинтересованных сторон в развитии устойчивого туризма на Шелковом пути в государствах Центральной Азии и западного Китая

Глория К. И.Чан & Др. Томас Бауэр
Школа туризма и управления гостиничной индустрией,
Политехнический университет Гонконга

План опроса

I. Информация об участии в проекте Шелкового пути

1. Пожалуйста, поделитесь информацией о степени и времени Вашего участия в деятельности, связанной с туризмом на Шелковом пути (страна, организация/ учреждение, роль в организации, в особенности, в том что, касается сотрудничества в области Шелкового пути, время и опыт сотрудничества и т.д.)?

2. Как бы Вы оценили прогресс в области развития туризма на Шелковом пути и в каждой конкретной стране Шелкового пути?

3. a. Считаете ли Вы себя участником туристского процесса на Шелковом пути?
   b. Почему?
   c. Почему нет?

II. Информация об участниках

4. a. Какие стороны, по Вашему мнению, являются наиболее подходящими для сотрудничества в области развития туризма на Шелковом пути?
   b. И какова их роль в процессе и степень участия в нем на сегодняшний день?

5. a. Есть ли какое-то взаимодействие между упомянутыми Вами сторонами?
   b. Какова природа этих взаимоотношений?

6. Какова роль выявленных Вами сторон (в туризме) в области сотрудничества на Шелковом пути и между странами Шелкового пути?

7. Какое влияние оказывают на выявленные Вами стороны результаты сотрудничества в области развития Шелкового пути?

III. Сотрудничество

8. Могли бы Вы прокомментировать степень имеющегося сотрудничества на Шелковом пути и между государствами Центральной Азии и Китаем (вовлеченность сторон, уровень, стадия и т.д.)?
9. В какой области (в контексте туризма) имеет место данное сотрудничество?

10. a. Получаете ли Вы как участвующая сторона выгоды от сотрудничества?
    b. Если да, то какие?
    c. Если нет, то почему?

11. Каковы препятствия для сотрудничества в туризме на Шелковом пути и между странами Центральной Азии и Китаем?

12. a. Как бы Вы определили успешное сотрудничество в туризме?
    b. Каковы Ваши ожидаемые выгоды от сотрудничества в туризме на Шелковом пути и между странами Центральной Азии и Китаем?

IV. Дестинации и региональная конкурентоспособность

13. Что делает дестинацию/регион конкурентоспособным?

14. a. Может ли региональное сотрудничество между центрально-азиатскими странами и западным Китаем укрепить конкурентоспособность региона и Шелкового пути в целом?
    b. Если да, то каким образом?
    c. Если нет, то почему?

15. Можно ли при помощи регионального сотрудничества сравнительные преимущества отдельно взятых стран превратить в качественные конкурентные преимущества целого региона (центрально-азиатские страны и Китай)?

Опрос завершился. Если у Вас есть какие-либо вопросы в отношении опроса или данного исследования, просьба обращаться по данной эл. почте:
gloriaky.chan@

-Спасибо за внимание-

Appendix 10: Interview Schedule – Chinese Translated Version

丝路沿线各国之间的旅游合作与利益相关者的参与对其发展的影响

陈帼怡，鲍俊堂博士
香港理工大学 酒店及旅游业管理学院

访问问题

I. 参与背景

1 请分享您参与丝路相关活动的经验
在丝路合作中扮演的角色和经验）。
2 您对于丝路沿线国家的旅游发展有什么评价？
3 您认为自己/您的商会是丝路的利益相关者吗？

II. 利益相关者（Stakeholder）的参与

4 您认为谁是丝路（旅游）合作的利益相关者？
5 这些利益相关者在丝路合作上的参与程度如何？
6 这些利益相关者之间有哪些相互关系？
7 这些利益相关者在丝路合作上担当什么角色？
8 丝路合作的成果对于这些利益相关者又有什么影响？

III. 协作

9 您对中国与中亚国家现有的丝路合作有什么评价
（利益相关者的参与程度，合作的范畴，规模， 阶段等）？
10 在旅游发展领域, 合作主要体现在哪方面？
11 作为一个利益相关者，您觉得合作会有哪些益处？如果有，益处体现在什么方面？ 如果没有， 原因是什么？
12 中国与中亚国家在丝路的(旅游)合作方面存在什么障碍？
13 您会如何定义成功的丝路合作？
14 中国与中亚国家在丝路的合作上应当取得怎样的成绩？

IV. 目的地和地区竞争力

15 中国西部与中亚国家的地区竞争力是怎样？
16 您觉得中国西部与中亚国家的合作可以加强整个中亚地区和丝路的竞争力吗？
17 区域合作可以把中亚各国和中国的各自的优势转为整个地区的国际优势吗？

访问结束

如您对此研究有任何疑问，请与我们联系：gloriaky.chan @ **谢谢您**

Appendix 11: Invitation for elite interview – English version

<u>Collaboration and Stakeholder Involvement for Sustainable Silk Road Tourism in Central Asian States and Western China</u>

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am a Master of Philosophy student in the School of Hotel and Tourism Management at The Hong Kong Polytechnic University. I am currently conducting a research project on "Collaboration and Stakeholder Involvement for Sustainable Silk Road Tourism in Central Asian States and Western China", under the supervision of Dr Thomas Bauer.

In view of your expertise related to the topic, may I cordially invite you to participate in a 45-minute interview with the aim to empirically examine the perceptions and intentions on collaboration of the various stakeholders related to the development along the Silk Road and between the Silk Road countries?

Such research is unprecedented and its results are expected to contribute to the better understanding of the collaboration potential along the Silk Road but not without your invaluable input. Recommendations to strengthen the collaboration along the Silk Road could be made based on the research findings.

Please be assured that information obtained from the interview will solely be used for academic and research purposes. To facilitate data analysis, the interview will be audio recorded with your consent.

I would be grateful if you could participate in the interview. Enclosed please find the interview schedule for your reference. You are most welcome to express opinions beyond the proposed questions. You could contact me anytime should you have any enquiries. I look forward to your affirmative reply. Thank you very much.

Yours sincerely (Signature)	Endorsed by (Signature)
Gloria Chan M. Phil. Candidate	Dr Thomas Bauer Chief Supervisor Assistant Professor

Contact:
School of Hotel and Tourism Management, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, Hung Hom, Hong Kong
Tel: +852 9556
Email: gloriaky.chan@

Appendix 12 Interview information note

Project Title:

Collaboration and Stakeholder Involvement for Sustainable Silk Road Tourism in Central Asian States and Western China

Because of your expertise related to Silk Road tourism and/or collaboration, you are being invited to take part in the captioned research study. Before your participation in the research, it is important for you to understand why the research is being conducted and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information.

What are the purposes and objectives of the study?

The study aims to empirically examine the phenomenon of tourism collaboration and stakeholder involvement along the Silk Road and between the Silk Road countries. The main research question is: "What are the barriers preventing effective collaboration for the tourism development along the Silk Road, particularly in the CASs and China?" The research has the following objectives:

- Based on stakeholder theory, to analyse the stakeholder involvement in the process of tourism collaboration along the Silk Road, between the CASs and China;
- To evaluate the existing collaboration between the CASs and China on the Silk Road tourism development;
- To investigate the potential benefits and hindrances to the tourism collaboration process;
- Using the conceptual framework developed, to explore how collaboration between the CASs and western China influences the overall sustainability and competitiveness of the region and of Silk Road tourism and;
- To provide recommendations for the effective collaboration between the CASs and China, at both regional and local levels, that will ultimately contribute to a sustainable and competitive tourism future along the Silk Road.

Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been selected by purposive sampling technique based on your experience and involvement in the Silk Road related collaboration and/ or tourism activities. Around 10-15 other informants will be involved in the research.

Do I have to take part?

Your participation to the research is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time, and without giving a reason.

What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be participating in a 30-45 minute expert interview conducted either face-to-face or via telephone. The interview will be audio-recorded with your consent. You may also be contacted after the interview through emails or telephone if further information is needed.

What are the possible benefits of taking part?

The results of this research are expected to contribute to our knowledge on the collaboration potential along the Silk Road. Recommendations to strengthen the collaboration along the Silk Road could be made based on the research findings.

Will my personal information be kept confidential?

Your personal credentials will be kept confidential while information obtained from the interview will solely be used for academic and research purposes. You could participate in the interview in your personal capacity or in the capacity of the position you hold in relation to Silk Road collaboration. Please indicate before the interview if you do not want to be identified as an expert and would like to remain anonymous in the research.

What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the research will be used for the completion of a thesis to be submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Philosophy at the School of Hotel and Tourism Management of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and for other publications that arise from the thesis.

Who has reviewed the study?

The research complies with the standard of the ethics review of research by the School of Hotel and Tourism Management of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Who can I contact for further information?

Gloria Kwok-Yee Chan	Dr Thomas Bauer, Assistant Professor
M. Phil. Candidate	Chief Supervisor
	Tel: +852 3400 2178 (office)
Tel: +852 9556 (mobile)	
+852 3400 2337 (office)	
Email: gloriaky.chan@	Email: hmthomas@

Address:
Room TH842, School of Hotel and Tourism Management,
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University,
17 Science Museum Road,
TST East, Kowloon, Hong Kong

Thank you very much for your participation in the research.

(Date)

Appendix 13: Supplementary discussion on 'Silk Road in the market place'

(with graphical illustrations and details of sample tours)

I. Single destination

As elaborated in Section 4.1.1, majority of the single destination Silk Road tours go to either China or Uzbekistan. Therefore, examples of these Silk Road tours in the two countries are discussed as follows.

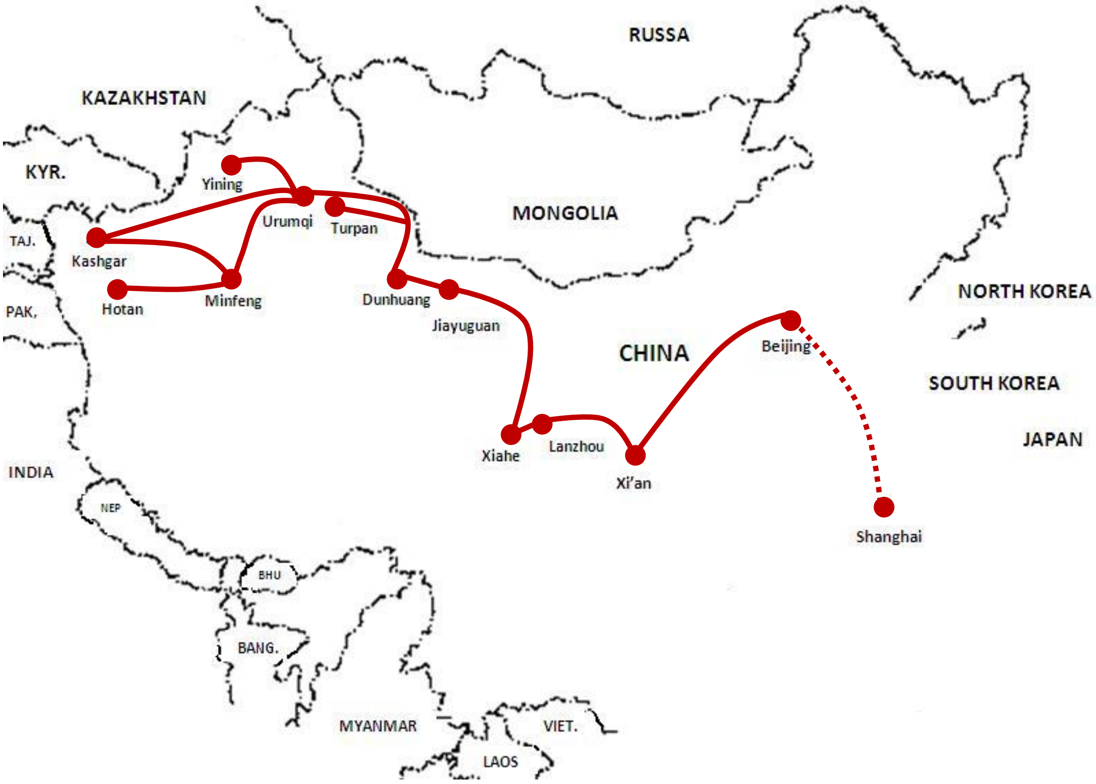

Figure A13.1 Silk Road travel routes in China
Source: Own illustration, based on the analysis of Silk Road tour provisions in China
Note: Atypical inclusion of Shanghai (dotted line in the figure)

For Silk Road tours in China, in addition to the two famous Silk Road destinations of Xi'an and Dunhuang, it was found that en route between these two popular cities Lanzhou, Xiahe and Jiayuguan are often visited. Further west on the routes are destinations like Turpan, Urumqi and Kashgar in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region, whose cultures and sceneries are distinctive from those in the rest of China. Culturally, people in Xinjiang are Muslims Uighur and many of them still enjoy a nomadic style of living. Scenically, on top of the Taklamakan desert and its legendary oasis towns such as Kashgar and Hotan, Xinjiang also shares the extraordinary landscape of the Tian Shan, which are known as the "Mountains of Heaven" (Stewart, 2004, p. 32), with Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan at their borders. Although Beijing is not physically located on the ancient Silk Road, it is always included as the outset of the modern journeys. This can be explained by Beijing's outstanding international connectivity. Air China, whose home hub is located at Beijing Capital International Airport, serves in total 141 destinations including 47 international cities (Air China, 2012). Besides, a number of tour operators integrate Shanghai, or Lhasa in Tibet in their itineraries which diffuses their Silk Road focus and makes them more similar to other classic Chinese tours. In general, Silk Road tours to China from long-haul markets such as the U.K. and Australia last for 14-18 days and the duration of those coming from short-haul markets like Hong Kong and Japan is 10 days or less. Locations within the country are being connected by domestic flights, road and overnight train journeys. Accommodation offered include hotels, especially in the major tourist cities, complemented with stays in guesthouses and yurts.

Figure A13.2 Silk Road travel routes in Uzbekistan
Source: Own illustration, based on the analysis of Silk Road tour provisions in Uzbekistan

For Uzbekistan, the few oasis cities namely Samarkand, which is known as the "jewel of the Silk Route" (Audley Travel, 2012, p. 59), Bukhara and Khiva are the focal points of these tours. The journeys usually commence and end in Tashkent, the capital of the country, due to its relatively better developed air transport links with the rest of the world. For instance, Uzbekistan Airways, the national carrier with its base in Tashkent International Airport, serves 41 destinations worldwide and 11 domestic cities including Bukhara and Samarkand (Uzbekistan Airways, 2011). Travel within the country mainly relies on train services and overland journeys. Home stay, guesthouses and yurt tents are the regular accommodation except in Tashkent in which there are a number of international hotel chains. Silk Road tours to Uzbekistan normally run from slightly more than 10 days regardless of the origins of the tour participants.

II. Triangular path

Figure A13.3 Silk Road travel routes: triangular path
Source: Own illustration, based on the analysis of Silk Road tour provisions in the CASs and China

Other than the typical China-Kyrgyzstan-Uzbekistan overland itinerary introduced in Section 4.1.1, there are other examples of triangular path Silk Road tours. The green dotted line in the figure above (Figure A13.3) represents an adventurous travel route that passes through the three bordering countries of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The major focus of this tour is the Gorno-Badakshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), which is an autonomous province in Tajikistan which occupies 45% of the country's land area and is renowned for its mountainous landscape featuring the Pamir and the Tian Shan ranges (OrexCA.com, n.d.-d). The only traversable route into and out of the region is the Pamir Highway which runs between Osh in southern Kyrgyzstan and Dushanbe, the capital city of Tajikistan. Unlike the other tours going to Kyrgyzstan, this adventurous expedition only includes the southern part of the country, including Sary Tash, a caravansary that is an important junction on the Pamir Highway. The last example shown in the figure above illustrates that triangular path may as well involve a third country out of the region, in this case, Iran. The tour starts in Tashkent, visits Samarkand, Bukhara and Urgench on the way to Ashgabat, and ends in Mashhad in Iran by overland transport. Shiraz, Isfahan and Tehran, which were the heart of ancient Persia, are included in the itinerary. In general, triangular path tours take 15 to 20 days, with some exceptions that last much longer in which visitors travel extensively in both China and Uzbekistan.

III. Triangular circuit

China, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan
Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan
China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan
Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan

Figure A13.4 Silk Road travel routes: triangular circuit
Source: Own illustration, based on the analysis of Silk Road tour provisions in the CASs and China

For a triangular circuit travel route, Turan Asia Travel Agency[71], based in Kazakhstan and Aspantour[72], an Uzbek tour operator, both present an option of visiting Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan conjunctly, as illustrated in the following figure (Figure A13.4). Turan Asia Travel Agency's tour begins in Almaty, integrating prominent attractions such as the Issyk-Kul and the Fergana Valley, and other major cities like Tashkent and Bishkek before it is concluded back in Almaty on the 13th day of the journey. For the tour of Aspantour, it commences and finishes in Tashkent, with more emphasis placed on the ancient oasis cities in Uzbekistan, coupled with jaunts to Almaty in Kazakhstan, Bishkek as well as the Issyk-Kul in Kyrgyzstan. The China – Kyrgyzstan – Kazakhstan – China route is another example of triangular circuit. Starting in Urumqi in China, the itinerary also consists of Kashgar, Almaty in Kazakhstan and Naryn in Kyrgyzstan, which is an important transit junction on the way to and from Kashgar (The Celestial Mountains Tour Company, n.d.). The destinations contained in the array of Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan for

[71] Tour information was collected at ITB Berlin 2011. More information of the travel agency can be retrieved from its official website: http://incoming.turanasia.kz/
[72] Tour information was collected at ITB Berlin 2011. More information of the tour operator can be retrieved from its official website: http://www.aspantour.uz/

triangular circuits are akin to those for triangular paths, highlighting an adventurous nature-based trip that visits the GBAO, the Fergana Valley and the restricted Pamir region accessed primarily by using the Pamir Highway.

IV. Transcontinental path

Figure A13.5 Silk Road travel routes: transcontinental path
Source: Own illustration, based on the analysis of Silk Road tour provisions in the CASs and China

Figure A13.5 exhibits the various transcontinental path tours of the Silk Road. The specific itinerary of Peregrine Adventures's extensive 36-day Silk Road tour (introduced in Section 4.1.1.) begins with a day tour in Istanbul, followed immediately by a three-day-three-night journey on the Trans-Asia Express to Tehran. Kashan, Abyaneh, Esfahan and Mashhad are the major destinations in Iran. Then by overland drive, the group reaches Ashgabat and continues to Mary and Merv in Turkmenistan. Bukhara, Nurata, Samarkand and Tashkent are visited in Uzbekistan by using land transport. Before arriving at the Aksu-Dzhabagly Nature Reserve, there is a change of both the tour guide and the vehicle at the Uzbek-Kazakh border due to the tourism regulatory policies of Kazakhstan. The core attractions in this Kazakh segment of the trip are Taraz City and Merke Gorge. To reach Urumqi in China, visitors take an overnight train. The voyage goes on to Xi'an before it finishes in Beijing. Most of the transits in China are conducted using rails. Although this is not necessarily the complete Silk Road going to countries such as Georgia and Azerbaijan, it is a good attempt to comprise the long crossing from Turkey to China and bring into most of the CASs in its programme within an acceptable duration.

For transcontinental paths connecting to this innermost section of the Silk Road that include Russia, one of the examples is the one with duration of more than 30 days, starts from St. Petersburg in Russia and visits Moscow before departing on the Trans-Kazak train to reach Taraz City and Almaty in Kazakhstan. On the way, it stops at Bukhara, Nurata and Samarkand in Uzbekistan. The last part of the itinerary focuses on places in China, including Urumqi and the traditional destinations of Xi'an and Beijing. In addition, there is an arrangement offered in the more up market tours which uses a similar route but on private trains. This 11,226 km all-inclusive journey, which lasts for 22 days, consists of two parts. The first section explores China using "The Shangri-la Express" in eight days, going to Beijing, Xi'an, Lanzhou, Dunhuang, Turpan, and Urumqi. Upon arrival at Alasankou, the border control between China and Kazakhstan, visitors continue their journey on "Golden Eagle Express". A day is spent in Almaty and three days are spent in the two important Silk Road oasis cities of Samarkand and Bukhara in Uzbekistan. A slight detour is made to Mary and Ashgabat in Turkmenistan before returning to Khiva in Uzbekistan. Crossing the Kazakh Desert on the Golden Eagle Express, visitors arrive at Volgograd and continue on to Moscow where the tour terminates. Most of the time, travel on the Silk Road is being portrayed as one with many hassles, including long overland drives and changes of accommodation along the way. The above-mentioned tour is one of the very few exceptions of a luxurious travel experience on the Silk Road, with private trains that featured excellent sleeping cars, good dining options, as well as medical services and guest lectures on board. This tour is expensive, costing, in Australian Dollars, from 22,460 for economy class travel to 30,575 for first class travel (The Captain's Choice Tour, 2012). While the price includes the air and train transits, all sightseeing excursions, meals and drinks aboard, it does not include the passport and visa charges, which can be very costly considering the number of countries being covered in the itinerary.

Below are the examples of Silk Road transcontinental paths that are more confined to the centrality of the CASs and China. One of them is offered by Ayan Tourism and Travel Company, a tour operator based in Turkmenistan. The tour takes 20 days and incorporates in its itinerary typical destinations like Khiva and Mary, as well as some lesser known destinations to operators outside of the region, including places like Tashauz in Turkmenistan and Karakul in Kyrgyzstan. While Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan appear to be the core destinations, Kyrgyzstan plays the role as a crossroad and Almaty as a departure gateway. The last example shown in Figure A13.5 is another 20-day tour that is themed as "The Taklamakan Desert Silk Route". It skirts the southern edge of the Taklamakan desert. Embarking in Tashkent, the tour visits the Fergana Valley and the southern part of Kyrgyzstan. It then continues to Kashgar by utilising the recently-opened Irkestan Pass, which is regarded as the shortest yet toughest route from the Fergana Valley to China (Advantour, 2012e), with a midway stop at the caravansary of Sary-Tash. Various ancient oasis cities are visited in China.

Appendix 14: Supplementary discussion on 'physiography and climate' of the CASs and Western China (Xinjiang)

I. Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan has extremely diverse landscapes. The vast steppe plain at the north stretches over 3000 km from the basin of the Caspian Sea in the west to the foothill of the Altai Mountains in the east. Plateaus spread over the central areas of the country while mountainous terrains dominate its eastern and south-eastern regions. Deserts, semi-deserts and oases can be found in the southwest (Advantour, 2012a; Visit Kazakhstan, n.d.-a). The physiography of Kazakhstan is also typified by its extensive networks of inland water resources. There are in total more than 48,000 lakes and 7,000 rivers in the country, serving as popular tourist destinations in summer (Visit Kazakhstan, n.d.). Amongst them, Saryarkam, the steppe and lakes of northern Kazakhstan, was listed as a UNESCO natural World Heritage site in 2008. The site consists of two protected areas, Naurzum State Nature Reserve and Korgalzhyn State Nature Reserve, occupying an area of 450,344 hectares and featuring wetlands that are an important stopover for migratory birds of which some are endangered species (UNESCO, 2012e). Building on its diverse landscapes and abundant flora and fauna, the Ministry of Tourism and Sport of Kazakhstan exclusively promotes its nature-based tourism, together with tourism in the districts of mountains, lakes and rivers. According to the 10 reasons of visiting Kazakhstan given by the Ministry, eight of them are nature-based attractions, such as Rakhmanov Springs, Karkaraly and Aksu Zhabagly Nature Reserve (Visit Kazakhstan, n.d.). There is an established network of national parks and nature reserves in Kazakhstan, which have recently become accessible to visitors. Located at the north-western part of the Tian Shan Mountains, Aksu Zhabagly Nature Reserve is the oldest and the most popular nature reserve in the Central Asian region. It is home to a number of rare animals such as snow leopards and Tian Shan brown bears. The climate of Kazakhstan is harsh continental with a temperature range of -45 degrees Celsius in winter to 30 degrees Celsius in summer across the country although winter in Almaty and Astana is usually milder (Advantour, 2012a; WMO, 2012). The most favourable season to visit Kazakhstan is from March to November, though winter is also an ideal time for various winter sports such as skiing.

II. Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyzstan is much smaller in size yet its terrains are entirely mountainous. More than 90% of the territory is above 1,000 m and 41% is above 3,000 m, dominated by the Tian Shan chains and the associated valleys and basins (CIA, 2012; Top Asia, 2011). The northern edge of the Pamir embodies the southern border of Kyrgyzstan with Tajikistan, of which the Kyrgyz Alay is popular with climbers. Almost one third of the country is permanently snow-covered, which contributes to one of the most panoramic scenery for visitors. There are almost 2000 lakes in the country among which Issyk-Kul, at an altitude of 1,608 m and with depth and width of 702 m and 6,280 m respectively, is the second largest mountain lake in the world (Stewart, 2004). Located to the east of Bishkek, the Issyk-Kul oblast is a very popular destination, both for visitors within and outside the region. This salty lake is famous for its sky-blue water, sandy beaches, astonishing surrounding of snow-clad mountains and glaciers of the Tian Shan, as well as the legends of ruined cities nestling on the lake floor. Son-Kul is another mountain lake located in an alpine valley near Kochkor. It is regarded as a paradise for nomadic herdsmen in the summer months because of its lush pastures and water. Several tour operators have yurts around Son-Kul to accommodate visitors, right next to the yurt camps set up by the locals. Not only is the physiography of Kyrgyzstan its source of attractiveness as a destination, it also casts the nomadic living styles of the Kyrgyz people whose culture is unique and appealing to visitors. Because of the diverse landscapes, Kyrgyzstan has various climatic zones from dry continental to polar in Tian Shan, subtropical in the Fergana Valley bordering Uzbekistan and temperate in the northern lowlands. Winter temperatures usually fall to -30 degrees Celsius or lower in the mountain valleys while the average lowland temperature is -5 degrees Celsius with a 24 degrees difference between day and night. The extreme temperatures, together with the usual winter fogs, do not facilitate travel in the winter time. Although the thaw normally starts in February or March, weather in spring changes unpredictably and some of the major mountain passes are still covered by snow in May (Stewart, 2004). The ideal season to visit Kyrgyzstan is from May to September, before the weather gets cold again in October. Nevertheless, most of the rain falls between April and June that sometimes causes mud- or land-slides that block roads and passages (Traver, 2010). Summer of Kyrgyzstan is hot, with a huge daily variation in temperatures especially for the highland areas (from 8-12 degrees Celsius during the day to sub-zero temperatures at night). Average lowland temperature in summer is 26-30 degrees Celsius, with the highest being recorded as over 40. Sunlight is plentiful, with 247 sunny days a year, which makes Kyrgyzstan being named as the country of sunshine among the local tour operators (Top Asia, 2011).

III. Tajikistan

Tajikistan is also a country with extreme relief. Ninety-three percent of the country's territory is mountains. As briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, Tajikistan is famous for the Pamir, which is the meeting point of the world's highest mountain chains, including the Karakoram, the Himalayas, the Hindu Kush and the Tian Shan. It is also known as, in ancient Persian language, the "Roof of the World" (Visit Tajikistan, 2012). The Pamir is principally situated in the GBAO, which has already been introduced in the previous section as the major focus of most of the Tajik tours. The Peak Ismoil Somoni, the highest peak in the Central Asian region, is located there together with the longest mountain glacier in the world – the Fedchenko Glacier (Visit Tajikistan, 2011). This area is additionally characterised by several deep valleys running west into the Panj River and the Pamir Highway that is decorated by multi-coloured rock formations. Apart from the Pamir at the east, nature-based tourism concentrates in the lush alpine region of the Zerafshan Valley in the west which is also the gateway to the Fann Mountains. Zerafshan, which means "Golden River" in Tajik (Zerafshan Tourism Board, 2011b, p. 3), is the mainstream crosses the valley and brings water along the way. The highlights of the region include Haftkul (or being known as the Seven Lakes because of their multi-coloured nature), Iskanderkul and the Fann Mountains. There are also many species of fauna and flora in Tajikistan, most of which can be found in the Tajik National Park and Romit Reserve. In short, Tajikistan promotes its tourism mainly on its physiographical features including mountains, glaciers and rivers, lakes, fauna and flora. This corresponds to Elite T3's comment that tourism in Tajikistan is mostly nature-based. There are in general two types of climates prevalent in Tajikistan which include mid-latitude continental in valleys and foothills, and semiarid to polar in the higher Pamir (CIA, 2012). Therefore, like the other CASs, the best time to visit Tajikistan is between May and September when the average temperatures are comfortable.

IV. Turkmenistan

The single most prominent feature of Turkmenistan's physiography is its flat-to-rolling sandy desert, the magnificent Kara-Kum desert (also known as the Garagum desert), occupying over 80% of the country. Sand dunes of the desert rise to mountain in its south. Perhaps contrary to this piece of arid land, the west of the country borders the Caspian Sea and has a coastline of 1,768 km that features some magnificent sandy beaches at Turkmenbashy (Advantour, 2012a). Along the border with Iran lies Turkmenistan's only mountain range, the Kopeth Dagh Range. It has been made into a nature reserve in which the rare species of ibexes are preserved. The mountains are also well-known for their dinosaur plateau where 438 fossil dinosaur footprints were found. The eastern region of the country mainly consists of plateau. In addition, Turkmenistan has various unique natural landmarks, such as the Kov-Ata underground lake in Bakharden at the foothills of the Kopeth Dagh Mountains. It is a mineral-rich lake lying in an underground cave and being filled up by water from hot springs. The climate of Turkmenistan is overall subtropical desert in view of the extensive coverage of the Kara-Kum. It implies that summer temperature in the desert can reach 50 degrees Celsius during the day and drops drastically at night. The rest of the country experiences a continental climate, with cold winters and very hot summers. Most precipitation falls between January and May but two-third of the country receives less than 150 mm of rainfall each year (Advantour, 2012a; Ayan, n.d.). Therefore, the best months for travel to Turkmenistan are April-May and September-October considering the beautiful blossoming and the harvest season respectively (DN Tours, 2011).

V. Uzbekistan

Compared to the other four CASs, travel literature, such as travel brochures and illustrative maps, provided by Uzbek tour operators contains less information on the physiographic attractions of the country. Instead, much emphasis is being placed on the historical and cultural heritages in the oasis cities of Bukhara, Khiva and Samarkand together with the country's capital of Tashkent. Most of the territory of Uzbekistan lies between the two major rivers of Central Asia, namely the Syr Darya (Jaxartes) and the Amu Darya (Oxus). The Syr Darya flows from Kyrgyzstan and through the Tian Shan to the Fergana Valley in Uzbekistan's northwest. Skirting Tashkent, it continues to cut through southern Kazakhstan and the Kyzyl Kum (Red Sands) desert to reach the Aral Sea. For the Amu Darya, it takes a north-western path parallel to the Syr Darya travelling from the High Pamir of Tajikistan, following the Afghan border and separating the Kyzyl Kum from the Kara Kum in Turkmenistan. Before flowing into the Caspian Sea across the Ustyurt plateau or into the Aral Sea, the river enters the Turan lowland and the Khorezm oasis (MacLeod & Mayhew, 2002). The Zerafshan, one of the former tributaries of Amu Darya, nurtures the famous oasis cities of Samarkand and Bukhara. Steppe and desert plains dominate more than 60% of the country's territory while the rest belong to the foothills and mountains of the western Tian Shan in the east and the Gissaro-Alay ranges in the southeast. Other mountainous landscapes include the Chimgan Mountains and the Nurata mountain ranges (CATS, 2011a). CIA (2012) summarises Uzbekistan's terrain as follows: sandy desert with dunes, flat intensively irrigated valleys along the two important rivers, Fergana Valley in the east and shrinking Aral Sea in the west. In total, there are 10 nature reserves in the country but their importance is often underplayed in tourism promotion (CATS, 2011). The Fergana Valley surrounded by Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan is one of the most popular natural attractions in Uzbekistan. The diamond-shaped valley is surrounded by various mountain ranges including the Kuramin, the Chatkal, the Fergana, the Alai and the Turkestan. It is not only a natural habitat to numerous flora and fauna, but also the most densely populated oasis in the country. Therefore, the Fergana Valley serves conjointly as a nature-based and a cultural attraction. The country has a sharp continental climate, with hot summers, cold winters, and mild springs and autumns. There are over 300 days of sunshine and less than 300 mm of rainfall each year (CATS, 2011; CIA, 2012). Travel is encouraged for spring (brief spring to early June) and autumn (September to November). Although summer is hot with temperature that may be above 35 degrees Celsius, the very hot daytime temperature is offset by the cool evenings, low humidity and the summer bazaars popular in this season (MacLeod & Mayhew, 2002). Winter is also dry and sunny for most of the valley plains while cold and snowy winter is only experienced in mountain areas. It is deemed that Uzbekistan can be visited most time of a year depending on the destinations and the activities involved in the journey.

VI. China – Xinjiang

The PRC is the fourth largest country in the world and its physiographic features vary greatly. As a whole, the country's terrains are made up of mountains and lofty plateau, with deserts in the west and plains, deltas and hills in the east (CIA, 2012). Numerous mountain ranges and highlands cover two-third of Chinese territory. The mountainous landscape is accompanied by four extensive plateaus, four large basins and three vast plains. Because of the latitudinal expanse of the country, its climate is very diverse, from tropical in the south to subarctic in the north. Compared to the eastern coast, western China is relatively rugged in which all the four plateaus are located. According to the China Yearbook 2004 (GOV.cn, 2012), the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau dominates the western region, taking up a quarter of the area of the country. The Plateau elevates to an average of 4,000 m above sea level, and along which located the Himalayan Range at its southwest. Mount Everest (or Mount Qomolangma), which is the world's tallest peak (8850 m), lies at the eastern section of the plateau. Surrounding the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau at its north and east, it is a vast area that is interspersed with extensive basins and highlands. The Turpan Basin, located at 154 metres below sea level in Xinjiang, is the lowest depression in the country. Except Sichuan Basin, the other three large basins are all situated in western China. The Altai and the Qilianshan are mountain ranges that spread in a NW-SE direction, shaping the terrains of China's northwest. In short, western China is extremely rich in topography that serves as a core attractor for the region's tourism development.

Xinjiang, which is known as "the new territory" in Chinese, is the land of contrast, accommodating the lowest depression of China as well as some of the highest peaks of the Tian Shan. Xinjiang's natural environment is signified by its mountain pastures, sand dunes, icy peaks, and crystal blue lakes. Xinjiang alone contains both the Tarim Basin and the Junggar Basin in its southern and northern geographical regions respectively, separated by the Tian Shan ranges (Bonavia, 2008). Tarim Basin, the largest basin in China, is positioned between the Tian Shan and the Kunlun ranges, incorporating the Taklamakan Desert. Prosperous agricultural oases are found at the edge of the vast desert. Watered by the Manas and Ulungur rivers, the semi-arid Junggar Basin is covered with grasslands and marshes. The landscape leads to the dominance of pastoral nomadic style of living in this area. As illustrated in Appendix 13, Urumqi, Turpan and Kashgar are amongst the most popular destinations in Xinjiang, and on the Silk Road. Urumqi, which means “the beautiful pastureland” (CNTA, 2011, p. 38) and Turpan, which is China’s lowest basin, are core physiographic attractors of the region in their own right. Urumqi, which is located at the northern foot of the Tian Shan and is surrounded three sides by mountains, is the capital city of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The city’s natural tourism attractions include Tianchi Lake (or Heavenly Lake) and Red Hill (or Tiger Head Hill). Tianchi is a high mountain lake formed by melted snow water, with picturesque scenery around. Red Hill, whose rocks are dark red, is the symbol of Urumqi, locating at the centre of the city. The Flaming Mountain, Grape Valley and the Aydingkol Lake, which is situated 155 m below sea level, are the most significant physiographic attractions of Turpan. Comparatively, Kashgar is less well-known for its natural attractions, instead, monuments such as tombs, Buddhist caves and mosques, together with the general atmosphere of this bazaar town are the major selling propositions. Unlike the inland China climate, Xinjiang is having a dry continental to desert climate, entailing a hot and dry summer, very short spring and autumn and cold winter. In summer, temperatures average at 30 degrees Celsius for Urumqi and rise to mid-40 degrees Celsius for Turpan. Winter temperatures are around -10 degrees Celsius and are lower in mountain areas and the northern Junggar Basin. Nevertheless, the oasis towns possess micro-climates that are favourable, resembling conditions in the hot Mediterranean areas. The best visiting time is August and September in view of the milder weather (CNTA, 2011) but also summer when the oasis towns are full of life and when flora blossom (Bonavia, 2008). After evaluating the successful cases of tourism development in Xi’an and Dunhuang, it is revealed that Xi’an’s attractiveness is entirely built upon its significance in the imperial history, resulting in countless heritages and monuments. In contrast, even though Dunhuang was crowned as “the national historical and cultural city” (CNTA, 2011, p.18) under the administration of Jiuquan prefecture, its tourism development is moreover being supported by the natural attractions of the city namely Mingsha Hill, Crescent Moon Spring and Dunhuang Yadan National Geopark.

Appendix 15: Supplementary discussion on 'culture and history' of the CASs and Western China (Xinjiang)

I. Chronological history of Central Asia

Chronologically, there was first the pre-historical period of 25,000-35,000 years ago, as proven by the Homo sapiens neanderthalensis remains of the Ice Age found near Samarkand. Then in the eighth century BC, the first identifiable group of Central Asian people, the Scythians, emerged and created the first nomadic empire but they were then gradually absorbed into the Kushan Empire that was founded in the first century AD. The vast part of Central Asia was afterwards dominated by various warrior tribes including the Huns and the Turks. The next important historical period was the arrival of Islam in the region brought by the Arab armies who invaded Merv in 651, and Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent and the Fergana Valley between 712-715. Although the Arabs were subsequently expelled by the Samanid dynasty from the region, the Islamic influence stayed. By the end of the tenth century, the Samanid dynasty was replaced by the Karakhanids. Nonetheless Karakhanids, being threatened by interludes from the surrounding territories, their power in the Central Asian region was taken away from them unaware by the Seljuks, another Turkic group that established its capital in Merv and ruled there until 1210. Another remarkable period was when Jenghis Khan destroyed all the Silk Road oasis establishments in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and Merv and put these towns once again into the secrecy of the desert in the early 1200s. That Mongol rule lasted for more than 140 years. Timur was the next conqueror of the region until 1405 whist his empire lived under the rule of his grandson and great-great-great grandson up to 1526. That was the time when finest craftsmanship and architects were recruited to fashion Samarkand into the way it appears today. Disputes and changes of empires continued and in 1747, a trio of khanates at Khiva, Bukhara and Kokand ruled Central Asia. Since then the region was dominated by Kokand khanate up till 1877, yet the influence of the Russians was already present. By the end of the 19^{th} century, the area was under the expanded power of the Russian Empire, symbolised by the Tsarist Rule. Only after the Russian Revolution and the Civil War between 1917 and 1920 had the Soviet Union been established. The division of Central Asia into the different modern states as of today is wholly unnatural, made up by Stalin for political reasons rather than based on the civilisations settled in the respective parts of the region (Stewart, 2004). The era of the Soviet Union is on the one hand marked by heavy industrialisation, investment in social infrastructure and vocational education. On the other hand, there were suppression of local cultures and serious environmental degradation caused by excessive development, which led to the lasting effect of ethnic tension in the region. With the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the CASs gained their status of independent republics, though the boundaries of these nations are still unnatural.

II. Historic and cultural attractions in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan, compared to the other four CASs, has a closer tie to Russia. According to the CIA (2012) quoting the 2009 Census of Kazakhstan, Russian is the second largest group of population in the country and the Russian language is regarded as the official, everyday business tongue, as well as that of interethnic communication. Although

Islam is still the most commonly-practised religion (47%) in Kazakhstan, it is closely followed by Russian Orthodox (44%). This ethnic and religious composition is reflected in the cultural attractions of the country. For example, Almaty hosts both the Svyato-Voznesensky Cathedral (also known as Zenkov Cathedral of Holy Ascension) and the Central Mosque. The cathedral was built in 1904-07 and is regarded as the largest and the second tallest wooden building in the world of which construction involved no nails. It is a beautiful resemblance of Orthodox Church architecture with colourful domes. The Central Mosque, being the largest mosque in Kazakhstan, is the central building of Islam in Almaty. Coupled with the Green Bazaar and Almaty's Arbat nearby, the area is one of the most important attractions that recall the country's ethnic tie to the Central Asian sub-region. Other than that, the province of West Kazakhstan is strongly influenced by the Russian architectural styles due to its intensive economic links with many Russian cities. Fifty-six percent of the Kazakh population is urbanised (Visit Kazakhstan, n.d.-a); therefore, modern cultural attractions in the urban cities are also popular. Bayterek Tower, which symbolises the relocation of the country's capital, President's Culture Centre, and the Palace of Peace and Harmony are the major attractions in Astana, the new capital of Kazakhstan. Ethno tourism is also promoted by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, which provides visitors a chance to experience the traditional lifestyle of Kazakh people (Visit Kazakhstan, n.d.). Examples are the Shabanbay Bi Village, located in Kyzylaray Mountains in Central Kazakhstan and the Zhambyl Zhabayey museum complex in Almaty. In addition, Atameken in Astana is the largest ethnographic park in the country, featuring a special outdoor museum. The last component of Kazakh cultural attractions is the medieval archaeological sites such as that located in the Mangystau territory. There are more than 11,000 historic monuments including ancient burial grounds, mausoleums, medieval underground mosques, remains of ancient settlements and etcetera (Mangistau Historial and Cultural Reserve, 2010; Massimov, 2012).

III. Historic and cultural attractions in Kyrgyzstan

Unlike Kazakhstan, population in Kyrgyzstan is far less urbanised, accounting only for 35% of the people (CIA, 2012). The Fergana Valley is the major settlement area accommodating more than half of the population (Stewart, 2004). There are at least 23 national representations in the country but majority of the population (almost 65%) is made up of Kyrgyz. However, even within the Kyrgyz community, there are some 30 tribes that are divided into three main blocks of the north, south and centre by their geographical locations. The northerners are believed to be more Russified while the southerners adopted largely the Islamic culture similar to those of the Uzbek, Uyghur and Tajik. In the central part of the country, covering Son-Kul, Suusamyr and southwestern Issyk-Kul, the purest Kyrgyz tribe of Sajak reside. According to different travel literature, nature is the single most important factor that shapes the dominance of the Kyrgyz nomadic culture; hence, people's loyalty and responsibility belong to their clans and families. This has also become the most prominent cultural attraction of the country to foreigners, highlighting stays in yurt tents and interaction with local tribes. Although most of the populations now have already settled in houses or the Soviet-style concrete apartment blocks, yurts retain a special meaning in the Kyrgyz people's lives, reflecting their nomadic history and national identity. Yurts are where special occasions, such as birthdays and weddings, are celebrated. Moreover, in summer time, yurts are carried with the shepherds to the mountains where their flocks are grazed (Stewart, 2004). Audley Travel (2012) has also recommended their clients to stay in yurts near the Song Kul or in the valleys along the southern shore of Issyk-Kul with the locals. Their recommendations are written as follows:

> "The welcome is always warm and, though the facilities are akin to camping, the locations of many yurts mean marvellous views at sunrise and sunset and what feels like the freshest air in the world." (Audley Travel, 2012, p. 57).

In addition, Osh was an important junction of the Silk Road and has a history of more than 3,000 years and within which the Sary Tash Caravansary is often used as stopover accommodation. It also hosts the only UNESCO cultural World Heritage site, Sulaiman-Too Sacred Mountain, in Kyrgyzstan. The Sulaiman-Too Mountain occupies most part of the Fergana Valley in the country and is the backdrop to Osh. There are many ancient places of worship, including 17 that are still in use, 101 sites of petroglyphs representing blends of pre-Islamic and Islamic beliefs and two mosques on its five peaks, being worshiped for more than several millennia (UNESCO, 2012a). However, Osh itself cannot be an extremely popular destination because of the fact that the glory of this once prosperous oasis town was hidden beneath the influence of socialism during the Soviet time, coupled with the troubled history of ethnic conflicts between Kyrgyz and Uzbek took place in the city in the last decade.

IV. Historic and cultural attractions in Tajikistan

There are two main types of cultural and historical attractions in Tajikistan which are villages of preserved mountain tribes and archaeological sites respectively. The Committee of Youth Affairs, Sports and Tourism of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan, with the help from the private sector, has been promoting community-based tourism throughout the country (Visit Tajikistan, 2012). There are tours where services are all delivered by local service providers in an environmental friendly way, letting tourists explore the local culture and traditions. One of the examples is a tour visiting some of the mountain tribal villages such as Veshab Village and Langar Village, in which visitors stay at traditional home stays, enjoy folklore shows and visit holy places or monuments with local villagers. The other example brings the visitors to see the preserved tribes of Tajikistan, descendants of the fire worshippers Zoroastrians, who live in the mountain valleys of Zerafshan Ranges of Pamir (Visit Tajikistan, 2011). Archaeological attractions include the site of the Ancient Sogdian City of Penjikent and the UNESCO cultural World Heritage Site of Sarazm. The former is famous for its fine fifth to eighth century frescoes and many ancient mosques and mausoleums; while the later is an archaeological site of the Bronze Age settlement 5,500 years ago which symbolises "where the world begins" (Sarazm as in Tajik language) demonstrating the proto-urbanization in Central Asia (UNESCO, 2012b; Visit Tajikistan, 2011).

V. Historic and cultural attractions in Turkmenistan

A majority of the attractions found in Turkmenistan are related to one of the world's oldest civilisations existed on this piece of land 5000 years ago. Turkmen tour operators actively position Turkmenistan as the core destination on the Silk Road because Parthia, historically in the territory of Turkmenistan was situated on the crossroad of important Silk Road trade lines. Second to Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan has three UNESCO cultural World Heritage Sites which are the major cultural and historical attractions of the country. The first one, which was enlisted in 1999, is the State Historical and Cultural Park "Ancient Merv" in present Mary (UNESCO, 2012f). As illustrated in Section 4.1.1, Mary, being the oldest and best-preserved of the oasis cities along the Silk Road, is a very popular destination in Turkmenistan. Merv is a group of sites of the ancient walled cities from five different time periods. These cities include the earliest Erk-Kala (sixth century BC), Gyaur-Kala (third century BC), Big Kiz-Kala and Small Kiz-Kala (sixth-seventh century AD), Muhammed ibn Zied (Twelfth century AD) and Sultan-Kala (tenth-thirteenth AD), corresponding to different period of their existence (DN Tours, 2011). Many monuments and artefacts of the ancient civilisations are still visible, especially those from the last two millennia such as the mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar, and the Kyz Kala fortresses (Owadan Tourism, n.d.). The other two UNESCO World Heritage Sites are Kunya-Urgench and Nisa inscribed in 2005 and 2007 respectively. Kunya-Urgench is located in north-western Turkmenistan and was the flourishing capital in the Khorezm region of the ancient Achaemenid Empire (UNESCO, 2012g). Surviving from the invasions and destructions of the Mongols and Timur, monuments from the eleventh to sixteenth centuries such as the Kyrk Molla fortress, mausoleums of several Khorezm shahs and the 60-metre high minaret of Kutlug Timur, continue to be the best representations of the outstanding achievements of ancient architecture and craftsmanship with long-lasting influence (DN Tour, 2011; UNESCO, 2012e). The most recently (2007) inscribed World Heritage site in Turkmenistan is the Parthian Fortresses of Nisa, which belonged to the Parthian King Mitradates. There are two parts of archaeological excavations showcasing the ancient venues for domestic, state and religious functions, with remarkable architecture. Very different from the other CASs, local culture and lifestyle are often omitted in the tourism provisions of Turkmenistan. Instead, focus is put on the ancient historical and religious sites. The government's approach to develop tourism, separating it from the locals, may explain the above observation.

VI. Historic and cultural attractions in Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan is the leader in the region in terms of number of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. There are four sites in total of which three were oasis cities on the main Silk Road namely Itchan Kala in Khiva (inscribed in 1990), Historic Centre of Bukhara (inscribed in 1993) and Samarkand – Crossroads of Cultures (inscribed in 2001). That is the reason why Elite T2 made the following comment, *"I would be rather correct if I say that all those stan countries are developing their (Silk Road) tourism firstly on our resources, on Uzbekistan tourism resources"* (T2). Itchan Kala is the inner town of the old Khiva oasis guarded by crenulated walls some ten metres high dating back to the 17th century. It is surrounded by Dishan-kaleh (or Dichan Kala), the outer town in which many reservoirs and much lush vegetation can be found. Although hardly any old monuments of the first Khan of Khiva remain, Itchan Kala is still a well-preserved example, presenting a coherent historical and architectural representation of what a feudal Central Asian city used to be like (Aspantour, 2011; CATS, 2011a). Bukhara is an ancient settlement with a history of almost 2500 years. It is the best example of a medieval city in Central Asia. Being the birthplace of Imam al Bukhari, an honourable person in Islamic history, Bukhara was the centre of knowledge and great scholars from all parts of the Islamic world used to study there (CATS, 2011a). There are nearly 300 historical sites such as the tomb of Ismail Samani, pieces of 10th century Muslim architecture, and many 17th century mosques and madrasas, the Islamic schools (UNESCO, 2012c). The last World Heritage Site in the Uzbek section of the Silk Road is the historic town of Samarkand, which is described as the "melting pot of the world's cultures" (UNESCO, 2012h, para. 1). It was an important city of Rome, Athens and Babylon and the capital of several ancient Central Asian empires, which had survived and reborn from battles and devastations of the various conquers in the region (Aspantour, 2011; CATS, 2011a). The major monuments include the legendary Registan Square which was an important trade and public centre, Bibi-Khanum Mosque, the Shakhi-Zinda compound, Ulugh-Beg's Observatory and so on. More subtly related to the Silk Road is the historic centre of Shakhrisyabz. It is located on the path that bridged the main branches of the Silk Road southward joining the other routes to reach the sea at far. It contains a number of exceptional monuments especially those from the periods of 15th and 16th centuries, under the rule of Amir Temur and Temurids (UNESCO, 2012i). Shakhrisyabz is a traditional centre of folk art and handicrafts and now a popular destination for a day trip from Samarkand or a detour en route to Bukhara. It is observed that these well-known world heritage sites dominate almost all of the tourism promotion materials reviewed. However, this observation does not imply that the role of people elements in terms of local culture and traditions is overlooked. Instead, these elements are promoted as a penetrated and embedded part of the destinations.

VII. Historic and cultural attractions in Xinjiang

The civilisations of China, Persia, India and Greece posed tremendous economic and religious influence on Xinjiang throughout history (Bonavia, 2008). Due to the arid climate of the areas, the buried archaeological treasures have been well preserved. Therefore, major cultural and historical attractions in Xinjiang are its ancient ruined cities and religious remains such as Buddhist grottoes and ancient mosques. There is a concentration of these attractions in the Turpan Prefecture and the counties of Hami, Korla and Kuqa. Sites of cultural and historical interest in Turpan include the ruins of Gaochang City and Jiaohe City, and the Bizaklik Thousand-Buddha Grottoes. Gaochang was the political, economic and cultural centre of the "western region" in the first century AD and most of the city walls and gates are still intact until today in this two square kilometre area of ruins. It used to be a significant junction on the Silk Road but after many changes of jurisdictions of various prefectures and kingdoms in this period of 1,300 years, the city was almost totally burnt down in wars at the end of the 13th century (Silk Road Travel, n.d.). The ruins of Jiaohe City are an important cultural and historical site under the State's protection within which various forms of architecture from the times after the Tang Dynasrty can be identified. The Bizaklik Thousand-Buddha Grottoes site contains 64 cells of which the earliest one was built in the Tang Dynasty. Although most of the murals in the grottoes had been destroyed or discoloured, they are still vivid examples of how widespread Buddhism was in ancient Xinjiang. In Hami and Kuqa, there are the Hami King's Mausoleum and the Kuqa Temple with a 20-metre high tower respectively, showcasing the diversity of religions in the area. Most closely related to the Silk Road is the Ancient City of Loulan, located in Korla. Being one of the 36 ancient states of the western regions in the Han Dynasty, Loulan is situated in the hub of the ancient Silk Road trade lines, on the only way to reach the western regions from the central plains of China at that time (CNTA, 2011). The successful Silk Road tourism cases of Xi'an and Dunhuang both possess UNESCO World Heritage Sites of culture which are the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor and the Magao Caves respectively. Discovered in 1974 and enlisted by UNESCO in 1987, the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor was the burial ground of this first unifier of China in around 210 BC in which he was surrounded by the famous terracotta warriors (UNESCO, 2012j). The Magao Caves were also included in the UNESCO list in 1987. There are in total 492 caves which house more than 2,400 sculptures and almost half a square kilometre of murals (CNTA, 2011). In view of the caves' location being at the crossroads of the Silk Road (UNESCO, 2012k), it is believed that they were the worshipping venues of the traders before they entered the desert of no return – the Takalamakan. Similar to Uzbekistan, local cultural elements are more like an integrated component of these tourist sites, instead of a separated one.

Appendix 16: Overview on UNWTO Silk Road Activities and the Silk Road Mayor Fora

(in chronological order)

Time	Activity	Tourism-related Outcome
October 1993	10th Session of UNWTO General Assembly, Bali Indonesia	• Member states' request to set up a project to promote Silk Road tourism
October 1994	1st UNWTO/UNESCO/UNDP Silk Road Meeting, Samarkand, Uzbekistan	• **Samarkand Declaration:** Commitment to regional cooperation, contribution to regional stability and prosperity, establishment of a high-quality tourism brand, union of different stakeholders from all levels, linking culture with tourism, adopted by 19 countries • Adopted a the Silk Road Logotype • Silk Road events at World Travel Market London and ITB Berlin
June 1996	1st Silk Road Travel Forum, Xian, China	• Elaboration of joint marketing and promotion strategy • In cooperation with UNESCO and UNDP
October 1996	1st Silk Road Festival	• Held simultaneously in all CASs with UNESCO assistance
March 1996	Silk Road Travel Bazaar	• Presence in ITB Berlin
January 1997	2nd Silk Road Travel Forum, Nara, Japan	• In cooperation with UNESCO and APTEC • Focused on joint marketing and promotional strategies, strengthening ties between the Silk Road countries and the travel trade • Publication of the inventory brochure, "The Silk Road", financed by Japan
April 1997	2nd International Meeting on Silk Road, Teheran, Iran	• In cooperation with UNESCO • Focused on Silk Road's natural and cultural heritage, cultural tourism • Suggestion on creation of a website, annual Silk Road Tourism Day, and a motor rally
1997	International Silk Road Meeting on Tourism and the Environment	• In cooperation with UNDP and UNESCO • Silk Road tourism and ecotourism • Investment possibilities, infrastructure issues
October 1997	UNWTO General Assembly Workshop, Istanbul, Turkey	• Initiative to develop action plan to link Silk Road handicraft centres and to prepare 26 television travel series on Silk Road attractions • Creation of a Silk Road stand in all major international travel fairs such as ITB, Fitur and London Travel Market
February 1998	3rd Silk Road Travel Forum in Kyoto, Japan	• In cooperation with APTEC • Familiarisation of Silk Road inbound tour operators with Japanese outbound market • Established business links between the Silk Road countries and Japanese market • Recommendations: visa simplification, promotion, facilitating charter flights and multi-nation tours
October 1998	Silk Road Tour Operator Workshop, Almaty, Kazakhstan	• Participated by outbound/ inbound tour operators from major tourism markets • Brand awareness and destination management

November 1998	3rd International Meeting on Silk Road, Tbilisi, Georgia	• Issues: establishing Silk Road as a tourism destination • Agreement: increase efforts to achieve global awareness of the Silk Road brand, to promote intercultural dialogue, product development, investment in human capital • Focused on investment opportunities, hotel development, travel facilitation issues • Recommendations: visa restrictions are major impediment, establishment of business links with the aviation industry in the region
April 1999	UNWTO/UNESCO seminar on tourism and culture, Khiva, Uzbekistan	• **Khiva Declaration**: Commitment to the principles of cooperation and coexistence, conservation of the world heritage and free circulation of universal values through the development of tourism, enhanced segmentation of tourist supply, greater variety of cultural tourism products, fully integrated conservation of monuments, museums and sites visited by tourists, the implementation of the international programme Culture, Spirituality and Tourism for a Culture of Peace
October 2002	Fourth International Meeting on Silk Road, Bukhara, Uzbekistan	• **Bukhara Declaration**: Domestic and international tourism in the Silk Road countries, cultural and ecological tourism recalling the recommendations contained in the WTO Study on Visa Facilitation in the Silk Road countries, recovery from the effect of the tragic event of September 11th 2001 on unjustified perceptions and security concerns, regional cooperation in tourism (WTO Silk Road Project, and multilateral/bilateral bases), removing obstacles to access tourist destination, strengthening competitive position in the global tourism market, public-private partnership, investment of local and international stakeholders in Silk Road tourism facilities • Establishment of Silk Road support office in Samarkand
2002	Establishment of the Silk Road Support Office in Samarkand	--
October 2003	15th Session of the General Assembly, Beijing, China	• Discussion with UNDP on possible partnership for an inter-regional Silk Road project focused on areas include trade, transport, investment and border formalities • Prototype of the SRI
Since 2004	The Silk Road Initiative	• UNWTO became a partner of the SRI • Focused on the areas of trade, investment and tourism • Involved China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan • Initiated the Silk Road Mayor and investment forums • UN Silk Road City Awards
2006	1st Silk Road Investment Forum, Xi'an, China	• Promote Silk Road as a new and dynamic investment destination

		• Silk Road Investors' Guide, Silk Road Map
October 2006	1st Regional Silk Road Mayors' Forum Tashkent, Uzbekistan	• First attempts to undertake a direct dialog of the heads of administrations of cities • Initial discussion on various aspects of cooperation in tourism and investment
July 2007	2nd Regional Silk Road Mayors; Forum, Lanzhou, China	• **Consensus** on: Setting up of Silk Road Centres in the region, intensification of work on the ideas formulated earlier with the visa, branding effort for the Silk Road region, establish a regional, or sub-regional tourism development institution in order to coordinate activities in this area, China Silk Road Pearl City title and UN Silk Road City title, importance of the development of adequate transportation and infrastructure
September 2008	3rd Regional Silk Road Mayors' Forum, Almaty, Kazakhstan	• 15 countries adopted the **Almaly Declaration**: Inclusion of more Silk Road countries, such as Tajikistan, Saudi Arabia (maritime Silk Road) update of Silk Road Investment Guide, sustainable tourism development and eco-tourism, affordable packages of tourism services, development of cultural hotels, elimination of barriers to tourism development, tripartite agreement between China, Kazakhstan and Russia for transit links, vocational training of staff in Silk Road tourism attractions
May 2009	4th Regional Silk Road Mayors' Forum, Pyeongtaek, Korea	• **Pyeongtaek Declaration**: Regional integration in the Silk Road region, policy dialogues and development initiatives, Silk Road tourism development action plan, removal of existing barriers with the visa, Silk Road educational hotels and theme parks, Silk Road identity (logos, posters, signs on the tourist routes, guides, maps and publications), extension of the Silk Road based on rail, sea and air routes
October 2009	18th Session of the General Assembly, Astana, Kazakhstan	• **Astana Declaration**: reinforced previous declarations and agreements • Appealed to UNDP and UNESCO for further support and assistance
May 2010	5th Regional Silk Road Mayors' Forum, Shiraz, Iran	• 26 nations adopted the **Shiraz Declaration**: Regional cooperation, action plan for tourism development, regional Silk Road visa, development of transit road., establishment of ties between universities, scientific centres, cultural and health institutions, mutual researches, transfer of technology and knowledge, scientists, and student exchanges among Silk Roadians, promoting peace and security, establishment of Silk Road Park • Supported by UNESCO and Silk Road Global Alliance
October 2010	5th International Silk Road Meeting, Samarkand, Uzbekistan	• Introduced the Silk Road Action Plan 2010/2011 • Addressed the challenges of: marketing and promotion, capacity building and destination management, and travel facilitation

		• Identified development priority: Silk Road brand analysis, brand toolkit, promote Silk Road brand through collective promotion activities, community based development projects, collaboration with other UN agencies, NGOs, investment institutions and donors, working towards a Silk Road tourist visa, sustainable, responsible and competitive tourism development of the Silk Road
March 2011	1st Annual Silk Road Ministers' Summit, ITB Berlin, Germany Silk Road B2B Tour Operators Networking Event at ITB Berlin	• 3 key focus areas: marketing and promotion, capacity building and destination management, and travel facilitation • Establishment of Silk Road Task Force • Silk Road brand at international fairs, with possible extension to Asian Fairs • Seeking donors for comprehensive market research study
September 2011	World Tourism Day event "Tourism Linking on the Silk Road" at JATA 2011, Tokyo, Japan	• Industry Seminar
October 2011	6th Silk Road Mayors' Forum, Grozny, Russia	• Resulted in Grozny Declaration • Memorandums of understanding were signed between cities
November 2011	Silk Road events at World Travel Market, London, the U.K. (1st year)	• The Silk Road at WTM's Speed Networking event 2011 • 1st Silk Road Bloggers' Ch@llenge • 1st UNWTO Silk Road Task Force Meeting: Discussion on the Silk Road Action Plan 2012/2013
March 2012	Second Silk Road Ministers' Meeting, ITB Berlin, Germany Tour Operators Forum on the Silk Road, ITB Berlin, Germany	• Introduction of the Silk Road Action Plan 2012/2013 • Discussion of the tour operators' roles in Silk Road tourism
June 2012	UNWTO/EHL Think Tank, Lausanne, Switzerland	• Presented on results: 170 final year EHL students research and analyse the tourism and hospitality infrastructure situation in 10 countries
September 2012	Flavours of the Silk Road: International Conference on Food, Culture and Tourism, Baku, Azerbaijan	• Discussion on creating opportunities for local product development and destination marketing via the legacy of the Silk Road and its food
October 2012	Silk Road events at World Travel Market, London, the U.K. (2nd year)	• 2nd Silk Road Bloggers' Ch@llenge
October 2012	Silk Road Action Plan 2012/2013: Enhancing collaboration for sustainable tourism development	• Work as a collaborative framework for marketing and capacity building, raising the profile of Silk Road tourism and driving development that is sustainable, responsible and internationally competitive • Concrete proposals on the three main focus areas

Source: Compiled by author, based on UNWTO (2011, n.d.-b) and various sources of personal communication

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