

Tri-Borderland between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan; A Proposed Way to Counter Western Hegemony by Forming Regional Bloc, Federation or Confederation

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This study has no aim to hurt any ideological or social segment but is purely based on academic purposes.

Abstract

The tri-borderland region between Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan has long been characterized by political and economic instability. Recently, these countries have come under intense pressure from international organizations such as the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), the United States (US), and the United Nations (UN) to implement strict anti-money laundering and counterterrorism financing measures. However, these measures have resulted in economic hardship for the people in the region. In response, this paper proposes the formation of a resistive bloc that could help mitigate the impact of these sanctions. The bloc would be based on shared cultural and historical ties, and would aim to promote regional trade and economic cooperation while circumventing international sanctions. This could be achieved through the creation of alternative financial systems, the establishment of a joint currency, and the development of a regional economic framework. Ultimately, the proposed resistive bloc could serve as a model for other regions facing similar challenges and could help promote greater economic self-sufficiency and political autonomy for the people of the tri-borderland region.

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Introduction

The tri-borderland between Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan is a complex region with a rich cultural and historical heritage, as well as a number of socio-political, economic, and religious challenges. This region

has long been a crossroads for trade, migration, and cultural exchange, and its strategic location has made it a focus of attention for regional and global powers (Dupree, 1963).

1) Socio-Political Dynamics

The region is characterized by diverse ethnic and linguistic communities, including Pashtuns, Balochis, Tajiks, Hazaras, and others. These communities have complex relationships with each other, shaped by a long history of conflict, coexistence, and collaboration. The region is also marked by several ongoing conflicts, including the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, sectarian violence in Pakistan, and tensions between Iran and the United States (Asim, 2022).

2) Economic Dynamics

The region is home to many valuable natural resources, including oil, gas, minerals, and agricultural land. However, these resources are often unevenly distributed, and many communities in the region struggle with poverty, unemployment, and economic marginalization. The region's location also makes it a major transit point for illegal drugs, weapons, and human trafficking, which has contributed to numerous social and economic problems (Asim, 2022).

3) Religious Dynamics

The region is home to a diverse range of religious communities, including Sunni and Shia Muslims, as well as smaller populations of Christians, Hindus, Sikhs, and others. Religious identity is often closely tied to ethnic and linguistic identity, and tensions between different religious groups have been a source of conflict in the region (Asim, 2022).

In fact, the tri-borderland between Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan is a complex and dynamic region, marked by a range of socio-political, economic, and religious challenges. Addressing these challenges will require a sustained effort to promote peace, stability, and economic development, while respecting the cultural and linguistic diversity of the region (Asim, 2022).

As the region contains centuries-old socio-cultural and linguistic ties, now this study moves forward toward analyzing shared cultural traits between the three states.

Shared Culture between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan

Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan have a long history of cultural exchange and share many mutual cultural traits. These cultural traits are influenced by a range of factors, including geography, history, religion, and language.

- One of the most significant cultural traits shared by these countries is Islam. All three countries have predominantly Muslim populations, and Islam has played a central role in shaping their cultures, traditions, and values. Islam has also been a source of unity and identity for these countries, and has played an important role in promoting cultural exchange and cooperation.
- Another important cultural trait shared by these countries is the Persian language. Persian has a long history in the region and has been a major literary and cultural language for centuries. Today, Persian is spoken in various forms throughout Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, and has contributed to a shared cultural identity and heritage (Tapper, 2012).
- In addition to Islam and the Persian language, these countries also share a range of other cultural traditions and practices. For example, music is an important part of the cultural heritage of all three countries, with traditional instruments and styles of music that are unique to the region. Poetry is also an important cultural tradition in the region, with a long history of famous poets and writers who have contributed to the literary traditions of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan (Tapper, 2012).

- Food is another important cultural trait that is shared by these countries. Afghan, Iranian, and Pakistani cuisine are all distinct, but share many common ingredients and flavors. Rice, lamb, and various spices are popular ingredients in all three cuisines, and reflect the diverse culinary traditions of the region (Tapper, 2012).

Historically, Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan share a rich cultural heritage and many mutual cultural traits. These cultural traditions have been shaped by a long history of cultural exchange and interaction, and continue to play an important role in shaping the identity and values of these countries (Tapper, 2012).

Role of the Baloch Ethnic Community regarding Connecting Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan

The Baloch people are an ethnic group that is primarily located in the Balochistan region consisting of the geographically associated parts of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan. While the Baloch people share a common cultural and linguistic identity, their political and social affiliations are often shaped by national borders and political dynamics (Korn, Jahani, & Brian Titus, 2008).

While the Baloch people and their identity can potentially serve as a bonding force between Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, some significant challenges and divisions may make it difficult to achieve greater unity and cooperation. In recent years, the Baloch people in Pakistan have been struggling with a range of political, social, and economic challenges, including human rights abuses, poverty, and underdevelopment. This has led to a growing sense of frustration and discontent among the Baloch population, and has fueled calls for greater autonomy and independence (Korn, Jahani, & Brian Titus, 2008).

In Iran, the Baloch population is also facing a range of challenges related to economic marginalization, discrimination, and human rights abuses. While the Iranian government has taken some steps to address these issues, some ongoing tensions and divisions may limit the potential for greater cooperation and unity among the Baloch population (Korn, Jahani, & Brian Titus, 2008).

In Afghanistan, the Baloch population is relatively small and is primarily concentrated in the southern part of the country. While the Baloch people in Afghanistan face some of the same challenges as their counterparts in Iran and Pakistan, they are also impacted by the ongoing conflict and instability in the country (Korn, Jahani, & Brian Titus, 2008).

While the Baloch people and their identity have the potential to serve as a bonding force between Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, some significant challenges and divisions must be addressed to achieve greater unity and cooperation. This will require sustained efforts to promote peace, stability, and economic development in the region, as well as a greater commitment to addressing the political, social, and economic challenges faced by the Baloch population (Korn, Jahani, & Brian Titus, 2008).

Informal Economic Engagements at Afghan-Iran-Pakistan Tri-borderland

The tri-borderland between Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan is an area of significant informal economic activity. This region is characterized by porous borders, weak state institutions, and a lack of formal economic opportunities, which has created an environment in which informal trade, smuggling, and other economic activities have flourished (Salman & Salman, 2020).

One of the key informal economic activities in the tri-borderland is cross-border trade. Traders and smugglers move goods across the borders of Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, often using informal routes

and methods to avoid taxes, customs fees, and other regulations. This trade involves a range of goods, including drugs, arms, electronics, and other consumer goods (Salman & Salman, 2020).

Another important informal economic activity in the tri-borderland is opium production. Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of opium, and the opium trade has become a major source of income for farmers and other individuals in the region. The opium trade is often linked to organized crime and insurgent groups, and has fueled instability and violence in the region (Salman & Salman, 2020).

In addition to cross-border trade and opium production, the tri-borderland is also home to a range of other informal economic activities, including human trafficking, smuggling of migrants, and other forms of illicit trade. These activities are often facilitated by corruption, weak law enforcement, and a lack of economic opportunities in the region (Salman & Salman, 2020).

While the informal economy in the tri-borderland has provided some economic opportunities for individuals and communities in the region, it has also contributed to a range of social, economic, and security challenges. Informal economic activities often operate outside the formal regulatory framework, which can make them difficult to monitor and control. This can lead to a range of negative consequences, including environmental damage, health risks, and increased violence and instability (Salman & Salman, 2020).

In general, the informal economy in the tri-borderland between Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan is a complex and dynamic phenomenon that is shaped by a range of economic, social, and political factors. Addressing the challenges posed by the informal economy will require a coordinated and sustained effort by governments, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders in the region. This effort should aim to promote economic development and formalization, while also addressing the underlying social and political factors that contribute to the growth of the informal economy (Salman & Salman, 2020).

An Idea of a Federation or Confederation between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan

The idea of Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan uniting as a federation or confederation is an interesting one, but it faces a number of significant challenges. While these countries share a long history of socio-cultural relations, they also have complex and sometimes tense political relationships, driven by a range of factors including geopolitical interests, religious differences, and economic disparities (Asim, 2022).

- One major challenge to the idea of a unified federation or confederation is the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan. The Taliban insurgency has destabilized the country for decades, and now the new Afghan government of Taliban has struggled to establish effective control over large parts of the country. This instability has spilled over into neighboring Pakistan and Iran, fueling tensions and conflicts in both countries (Asim, 2022).
- Another major challenge is the divergent political and economic interests of the three countries. Iran is a Shia-majority country, while Pakistan and Afghanistan are predominantly Sunni, and each country has its own unique geopolitical interests and alliances. In addition, Pakistan and Iran have a history of tension and mistrust, driven in part by sectarian differences and competing regional interests (Asim, 2022).

Despite these challenges, there have been some efforts to promote greater regional integration and cooperation. For example, the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) was established in 1985 to promote economic cooperation among ten countries in the region, including Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan. However, the organization has struggled to achieve its goals, due in part to political instability and economic challenges in the region (Asim, 2022).

While the idea of Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan uniting as a federation or confederation is an interesting one, it faces some significant challenges related to political, economic, and social factors. Achieving greater regional integration and cooperation will require sustained efforts to address these challenges, and to promote peace, stability, and economic development across the region (Asim, 2022).

Hurdles in Joint Action Proposal of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan within the Context of FATF, UN and USA

The issue of FATF (Financial Action Task Force) and other sanctions imposed by the United States and the United Nations is a complex one that is influenced by a range of political, economic, and security factors. While Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan share some common interests in countering these sanctions, there are also significant challenges that may make it difficult for them to do so effectively.

- One major challenge is the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, which has been a source of instability and insecurity in the region for decades. The Taliban insurgency has been responsible for a range of violent attacks in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and the group's links to terrorist organizations like al-Qaeda and ISIS have led to international sanctions and pressure on the region (ISSI, 2022).
- Another major challenge is the divergent economic and political interests of the three countries. Iran is currently facing a range of economic sanctions imposed by the United States, while Pakistan and Afghanistan are struggling with their own economic challenges, including high levels of poverty and unemployment. Coordination and cooperation among these countries may be difficult due to these differing economic interests (ISSI, 2022).
- In addition, there are also differences in political and security priorities among these countries. For example, Iran has its own security concerns related to its nuclear program and its relationship with the United States, while Pakistan and Afghanistan are primarily focused on addressing the security threats posed by the Taliban and other militant groups (ISSI, 2022).

Furthermore, this study also finds US-Pakistan relations as the biggest obstacle in initiating any joint action plan between the three states. In fact, United States (since the Cold War) has historically been a key ally of Pakistan, providing the country with significant military and economic assistance (Hasan, 2022). However, the US-Pakistan relationship has been marked by periods of tension and mistrust, particularly in recent years.

- One of the main issues that have strained Pak-US relations is Pakistan's perceived support for militant groups operating in Afghanistan. The US has accused Pakistan of providing safe havens to Taliban fighters, which has undermined US efforts to stabilize Afghanistan. Additionally, the US has been critical of Pakistan's nuclear weapons program and its relationship with China.
- Given the importance of the US as a strategic partner for Pakistan, any move towards closer ties with Iran and Afghanistan is likely to be viewed with suspicion by Washington. The US may see such a regional bloc as a threat to its strategic interests in the region, particularly if it is seen as challenging US influence in Afghanistan (Hasan, 2022).
- Furthermore, Pakistan has historically been wary of getting too close to Iran due to sectarian tensions and the risk of upsetting its relationship with Saudi Arabia. Iran and Saudi Arabia have long been regional rivals, and Pakistan has sought to maintain a delicate balancing act between the two countries (Hasan, 2022).
- While there may be significant economic and security benefits to forming a regional bloc between Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan, Pak-US relations remain a major obstacle. Any move towards closer ties between these countries is likely to be viewed with suspicion by the US, and may exacerbate tensions between Pakistan and its traditional allies (Hasan, 2022).

Although Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan may be able to work together to counter some of the sanctions imposed by the United States and the United Nations, there are significant challenges related to political, economic, and security factors. Achieving greater cooperation and coordination among these countries will require sustained efforts to address these challenges, and to promote peace, stability, and economic development in the region (Hasan, 2022).

Conclusion

If Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan were to form a regional bloc focused on mutual economic growth and mutual defense, there would likely be significant changes to the global political map. Firstly, the bloc would represent a new political entity in the region, which could potentially challenge the dominance of existing powers such as the United States, China, and Russia. This could result in a realignment of regional alliances and an increased focus on the interests of the bloc (Asim, 2022).

In terms of economic changes, the regional bloc could create a significant market for goods and services, with a combined population of around 280 million people. This could attract investment from other countries and potentially lead to the development of new industries and technologies in the region. Additionally, the bloc could facilitate greater trade and economic integration between member countries, reducing barriers to cross-border commerce and boosting economic growth (Asim, 2022).

On the defense front, the bloc could create a more unified and coordinated approach to security issues, potentially reducing the threat of internal conflict and external aggression. This could involve the establishment of joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, and the development of a common defense policy (Asim, 2022).

Hence, it is concluded that the formation of a regional bloc between Afghanistan, Iran, and Pakistan could have far-reaching implications for the global political map, and could represent a significant shift in power dynamics in the region. However, the success of such a bloc would depend on a range of factors, including political will, economic cooperation, and the ability to overcome historical and cultural divisions between member countries.

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