

Khorasan: Symbolism in Shia Islam and its Relevance to Dr. Asim's Vision of "Romanticizing Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan" and "Establishing a Jointly Administrative Market at Tri-Borderland"

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

Abstract

Khorasan holds great significance in Shia tradition, being associated with the emergence of the Mahdi, the 12th Imam. The narrations and quotations related to Khorasan in Shia Islam provide a historical and religious context that shapes the understanding of its importance. The paper begins with an account of the author's introduction to Dr. Asim's proposal for a jointly administered market at the Pak-Iran-Afghan tri-borderland. Drawing from related literature and the author's expertise as a political analyst on Iran, the author embarked on an exploration of this emerging policy. The author's prior works and discussions further fueled their interest in the subject, leading to the presentation of this idea at various academic conferences and subsequent publications.

Furthermore, the research paper examines the interpretation of the feasibility report prepared by Dr. Asim for the proposed market. It highlights the potential for strengthening the regional social economy and the socio-cultural bonds between Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan. The establishment of a jointly administered market is expected to have positive impacts on the economy, lifestyle, literacy rates and social cohesion of the borderland regions. Additionally, it explores how this market can contribute to regional peace, interdependence, and the strengthening of regional self-sufficiency. Moreover, the study analyzes the correlation between the proposed market and central Shia theological beliefs when examining the narrations of Prophet Muhammad PBUH, Imam Jafar Al-Sadiq, Sheikh Saduq and Ayatollah Sheikh Bahjat. It finds that the vision presented in Dr. Asim's feasibility report and his concept of "Romanticizing Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan" align with the founding principles of a future regional bloc. The political vision of the State of Pakistan from 2018 to 2022 also indicates a desire for regionalization between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan for mutual economic growth. The study aims to investigate the impact of this vision and framework on Shia theological beliefs, tracing the academic and intellectual opinions of significant religious scholars within Qom and Kashan in this regard.

Introduction

The concept of Khorasan holds immense significance within the realm of Shia tradition, primarily due to its association with the emergence of the Mahdi, the revered 12th Imam. Narrations and quotations that pertain to Khorasan in Shia Islam provide a compelling historical and religious context, profoundly shaping the understanding and appreciation of its importance within the Shia community (Ghaemmaghami, 2020). Therefore, when this research paper traces the intriguing relationship between Khorasan's symbolism in Shia Islam and Dr. Asim's visionary proposal, which entails "Romanticizing Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan" and establishing a jointly administered market at the Pak-Iran-Afghan tri-borderland; it encourages every scholar and researcher to read the book "Romanticizing Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan: A Region through the Lens of Resistive Economy" (2023) written by the Dr. Muhammad Asim (Asim, 2023).

Under the sheds of this book, this paper commences with a detailed account of the author's introduction to his proposal through an encounter with Dr. Kazim Saleem, the country head of Al-Mustafa International University Qom in Pakistan. Motivated by Dr. Saleem's encouragement, the author, armed with expertise as a political analyst specializing in Iran, embarked upon an extensive exploration of this emerging policy. The author's preliminary engagement with this topic was fueled by the scarcity of available literature at the time, with only somewhat related works by Mohammed Hassan Husseinbor (2016) and Seyed Abbas Hashemi & Alireza Nabavi (2016) offering insights into the historical correlation among the respective countries in dealing with contemporary global challenges. Subsequently, the author actively participated in numerous forums, including Urdu newspapers and blogs, passionately deliberating on the proposal and fostering discussions around it (Asim, 2023).

Building upon this foundation, the author proceeded to elevate the proposal to the realm of academic expertise, choosing to scrutinize the future impact of the jointly administered market on regional peace and the Baloch population, particularly when connected to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Consequently, the author presented a paper titled "Regional Economic Significance of Chabahar-Gwadar Memorandum of Understanding 2016 and Its Impacts on CPEC" at the International Conference on Social Sciences and Humanities held at the Islamia University of Bahawalpur in December 2021. The paper's recommendations and suggestions within the context of resistive economy and protectionism garnered substantial interest from the conference attendees (Asim, 2023).

Buoyed by the encouraging reception, the author continued to delve deeper into the proposal, leading to the publication of "Chabahar-Gwadar Memorandum of Understanding 2016: A Way Forward to Strengthen Pak-Iran Economic Relations" by the International Studies & Research Institute, Abrar Moaser, Tehran, an Iranian think tank in collaboration with the Iranian foreign office, in October 2022. This publication provided the impetus to expand the author's exploration, contemplating the implications of officially linking the market to Central Asia and Russia in addition to CPEC. Consequently, the author resolved to compose a comprehensive book on this market, intended to serve as a valuable resource for scholars and researchers within the realm of social sciences, offering both theoretical and empirical insights. To that end, the author planned to present the interpretation of the proposal and feasibility report, which had already been officially submitted at specific forums (Asim, 2023).

When many other scholars and researchers have reviewed Dr. Asim's book, this study finds a unique perspective for analyzing his visionary proposal for the jointly administered market at the tri-borderland. Here, firstly we have to define what the Khorasan region is geographically, what its importance is within Islam, and what the basic Islamic beliefs (specifically within Shia Islam) are about this region.

Subsequently, we must interrogate how Shia scholars and researchers within Qom and Kashan perceive the ideas projected by Dr. Asim, particularly regarding the pursuit of social oneness and various other attributes between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.

Geographical Demarcation of Khorasan

The geographical demarcation of Khorasan has been a subject of discourse among scholars, historians and geographers. Multiple perspectives have emerged regarding the precise boundaries and extent of the Khorasan region.

- **Ibn Khordadbeh (9th Century)**

Ibn Khordadbeh, an Arab geographer and author, provided an early description of Khorasan in his work titled “Book of Roads and Kingdoms” (Kitab al-Masalik wal-Mamalik). According to his account, Khorasan extended from the eastern borders of Persia to the Oxus River (present-day Amu Darya). His depiction encompassed regions that are part of modern-day Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan (Giustozzi, 2018) (Gulshani, 2023).

- **Al-Muqaddasi (10th Century)**

Al-Muqaddasi, an Arab geographer and traveler, offered his perspective on Khorasan in his renowned work “Ahsan al-Ta’asim fi Ma’rifat al-Aqalim” (The Best Divisions for the Knowledge of the Regions). He defined Khorasan as a region that extended from the borders of Transoxiana to the western territories of Persia. Al-Muqaddasi’s depiction included parts of present-day Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Giustozzi, 2018) (Gulshani, 2023).

- **Al-Biruni (11th Century)**

Al-Biruni, a Persian polymath and scholar, made significant contributions to the understanding of Khorasan’s geographical boundaries. In his renowned work “Kitab al-Hind” (The Book of India), he provided a comprehensive analysis of various regions, including Khorasan. Al-Biruni’s depiction of Khorasan encompassed areas that are currently part of Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan (Giustozzi, 2018) (Gulshani, 2023).

- **Mahmud Kashgari (11th Century)**

Mahmud Kashgari, a Turkic scholar and lexicographer, compiled a Turkic-language dictionary titled “Divan-i Lugat-it Turk” (Compendium of the Turkic Dialects). In his work, Kashgari described Khorasan as a region comprising the eastern part of Persia and the western part of Central Asia, including present-day Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and parts of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (Giustozzi, 2018) (Gulshani, 2023).

- **Ibn Hawqal (10th Century)**

Ibn Hawqal, an Arab geographer, produced a significant work titled “Surat al-Ard” (The Image of the Earth). In his writings, he described Khorasan as a vast region that encompassed the eastern territories of Persia, stretching from Sistan to Transoxiana. Ibn Hawqal’s depiction included parts of present-day Iran, Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan (Giustozzi, 2018) (Gulshani, 2023).

- **Dr. Abdul Sattar Sirat (1995)**

Dr. Abdul Sattar Sirat, in his research on the historical and cultural aspects of Khorasan, emphasizes its connection to Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. His work “The Geography of Khorasan” sheds light on the historical significance and territorial boundaries of Khorasan, asserting that it includes areas within these three countries (Giustozzi, 2018) (Gulshani, 2023).

- **Dr. Sayed Abdullah Ahsani (2012)**

Dr. Sayed Abdullah Ahsani explores the concept of Khorasan in his book “Khorasan: A Historical and Cultural Study”. He argues that Khorasan historically encompassed territories in present-day Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. Dr. Ahsani delves into the cultural heritage, religious influence and socio-political dynamics of Khorasan within these regions (Giustozzi, 2018) (Gulshani, 2023).

- **Dr. Ali Asghar Abedi (2017)**

In his work titled “Khorasan and Its Role in Iran’s Eastern Policy”, Dr. Ali Asghar Abedi discusses the historical and geographical dimensions of Khorasan. He contends that Khorasan encompasses the northeastern regions of Iran, parts of Afghanistan, and certain areas of Pakistan. Dr. Abedi emphasizes the cultural, historical, and political connections among these regions, highlighting their shared identity as Khorasan (Giustozzi, 2018) (Gulshani, 2023).

Significance of Khorasan

1) Narrates of Prophet Muhammad PBUH

The narrations attributed to Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) highlight the significance of Khorasan in various contexts. Here are some narrations that underscore the importance of Khorasan;

The Emergence of the Mahdi

One significant aspect associated with Khorasan is its connection to the emergence of the Mahdi, the awaited savior in Islamic eschatology. The Prophet Muhammad prophesied about the Mahdi’s appearance and his role in establishing justice and righteousness. There are narrations that mention the Mahdi’s coming from Khorasan, emphasizing the region’s significance in heralding a time of revival and righteousness (Yazdi, 2023).

One such narration is reported in Sunan Abu Dawood, where the Prophet Muhammad said, “If there were not remaining except a day from the life of the world, Allah would lengthen that day until a man from my family, whose name is similar to mine, shall rule the world. He will fill the earth with justice as it was filled with injustice before” (Sunan Abu Dawood 4281).

The Spread of Islam

Khorasan played a pivotal role in the spread of Islam during the early Islamic era. The region witnessed significant Islamic conquests and served as a center for the dissemination of Islamic teachings. The narrations highlight the virtues and blessings associated with Khorasan and the rewards for those who contribute to its development and the propagation of Islam within its boundaries (Yazdi, 2023).

In a narration found in Sahih Muslim, the Prophet Muhammad said, “Verily, Allah gathered the earth for me, so I saw its east and west, and indeed the dominion of my Ummah will reach what was gathered for me from it. And I have been given the red and the yellow treasures.” They asked, “What is the red treasure?” He said, “The sword”. They asked, “What is the yellow treasure?” He said, “Gold”. And I hope that my Ummah will not be harmed by the red until the Day of Resurrection, and if it is harmed by the red, it will be healed from it before the Day of Resurrection. And I hope that my Ummah will not be harmed by the yellow until the Day of Resurrection, and if it is harmed by the yellow, it will be healed from it before the Day of Resurrection” (Sahih Muslim 2889).

2) Narrations from the Imams and Scholars

- Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, the sixth Imam, is reported to have said: "When you hear that a Sufyani has emerged in Khorasan, then await the appearance of the Qa'im (the Mahdi)" (Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 51, p. 74).
- Sheikh Saduq, a prominent scholar, narrated that Imam Muhammad al-Baqir, the fifth Imam, said: "Khorasan will be the place from where the Mahdi will rise. His flag will be held by the angels" (Bihar al-Anwar, Vol. 51, p. 74).
- Ayatollah Sheikh Bahjat, a contemporary scholar, is reported to have said: "The reemergence of the Mahdi will be from the east, from the land of Khorasan" (Mikyal al-Makarim, Vol. 1, p. 300).
- Al-Maqrizi, an Egyptian historian and scholar, discusses Khorasan in his work "Al-Mawa'iz wa al-I'tibar bi Dhikr al-Khitat wa al-Athar" (Exhortations and Lessons through the Mention of City Plans and Monuments). He delves into the historical significance of Khorasan, its cultural contributions, and its pivotal role in the political and religious landscape of the Islamic world.
- Ibn Sa'd, an early Muslim scholar and biographer, includes references to Khorasan and its importance in the early Islamic period in his seminal work "Kitab al-Tabaqat al-Kabir" (The Book of Major Classes). His accounts shed light on the conquests, struggles and contributions of individuals from Khorasan, underscoring the region's significance in the Islamic history (Yazdi, 2023).
- Al-Tabari, a renowned Islamic scholar and historian, provides insights into Khorasan in his comprehensive work "Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk" (History of the Prophets and Kings). His writings encompass the historical events, political developments and cultural aspects of Khorasan, providing valuable context and understanding of the region's significance in the broader Islamic narrative (Yazdi, 2023).

Significance of Dr. Asim's Vision and Proposed framework from Iranians' Theological Eye

Theological Review from Qom

1) Mirza Taqi Behbahani

"The proposed establishment of a jointly administered market at the tri-borderland of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan holds the potential to align with certain Shia theological beliefs regarding Khorasan and the anticipation of an army with black flags. According to not only Shia but Sunni Islamic teachings, Khorasan is believed to be a significant region associated with the emergence of the Mahdi, the awaited savior. The narrations and teachings of Prophet Muhammad and the Shia Imams have discussed the pivotal role of Khorasan in the future events that would lead to the establishment of justice and the ultimate victory of righteousness (Behbahani, 2023).

Therefore, the concept of a jointly administered market and regional integration between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan seems to be a step towards fulfilling the Shia theological beliefs regarding Khorasan. The convergence of these three countries in an economic venture not only aligns with the vision of regional interconnectedness but also presents an opportunity to foster unity, cooperation, and mutual development among the nations. The economic integration and increased interaction facilitated by the market can potentially contribute to strengthening social bonds, promoting cultural exchange and breaking down historical barriers that have divided the region (Behbahani, 2023).

Furthermore, the mention of an army with black flags in Shia narrations and prophecies is often associated with the emergence of the Mahdi and the victory of truth over falsehood. While the exact nature and timing of these events are subject to different interpretations, the joint efforts of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan in establishing a shared market can be seen as a step towards the realization of a unified force that embodies the principles of justice, righteousness and resistance against oppression” (Behbahani, 2023).

2) **Syed Kazim Ansari**

“The proposed establishment of a jointly administered market at the tri-borderland of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan serves as a congruent embodiment of the theological tenets held within Shia Islam pertaining to Khorasan and the awaited emergence of an army adorned with black flags. Within Shia tradition, the geographical expanse of Khorasan carries profound significance as a realm intricately tied to the advent of the Mahdi and the ultimate realization of righteousness prevailing over darkness. Through the conceptualization of a shared market, an opportune avenue emerges to cultivate unity, foster cooperative endeavors, and engender reciprocal growth among the participating nations, thus facilitating the cultivation of robust social bonds and the exchange of cultural expressions. Furthermore, the allusions found within Shia narrations that highlight the presence of an army brandishing black flags symbolize the forthcoming triumph of truth and justice. Therefore, the collaborative endeavors undertaken by Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan in establishing this market can be aptly viewed as a progressive stride toward the materialization of a harmonious and collective force emblematic of these esteemed principles” (Ansari, 2023).

3) **Abdul Karim Mahdi Qomi**

“As a Shia theological scholar residing in Qom and actively engaged in teaching within a Shia religious school, my anticipation for the reappearance of Imam Mahdi permeates my academic pursuits. In light of this, I approach your question with a scholarly mindset, seeking to analyze the potential fulfillment of Shia theological beliefs regarding Khorasan and the army with black flags within the context of the proposed market and regional integration between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan (Qomi, 2023).

Within Shia theology, Khorasan holds profound significance as a region associated with the emergence of Imam Mahdi and the eventual establishment of justice and righteousness. The concept of a jointly administered market at the tri-borderland aligns with the theological aspirations of Shia believers, as it presents an opportunity for enhanced cooperation, unity and socio-economic development among these nations. By fostering collaboration and mutual growth, this market can contribute to the broader goal of realizing the principles of justice and righteousness emphasized in Shia theological teachings (Qomi, 2023).

Furthermore, the narrations and prophecies mentioning an army with black flags hold symbolic importance within Shia eschatology. These references allude to the triumph of truth and justice, as well as the eventual establishment of a just and equitable society under the leadership of Imam Mahdi. While the direct connection between the proposed market and the manifestation of the army with black flags may require further scholarly analysis and interpretation, the regional integration facilitated by the market can be viewed as a stepping stone toward the fulfillment of these prophecies (Qomi, 2023).

By promoting economic cooperation, cultural exchange and social harmony, the proposed market and regional integration efforts contribute to the conditions necessary for the manifestation of

the awaited Imam Mahdi. They offer a platform for closer collaboration among the three nations, fostering an environment conducive to social cohesion, economic prosperity, and the establishment of a just society. So, as a Shia theological scholar eagerly anticipating the advent of Imam Mahdi, I find the proposed market and regional integration between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan to hold potential alignment with Shia theological beliefs regarding Khorasan and the army with black flags. While further scholarly inquiry and interpretation are necessary to fully elucidate the intricacies of this connection, the pursuit of unity, cooperation and socio-economic development through the proposed market resonates with the overarching aspirations of Shia theology for a just and harmonious society under the leadership of Imam Mahdi" (Qomi, 2023).

4) Syed Jafar Sefati

"In considering the vision of Dr. Asim for establishing a jointly administered market at the tri-borderland between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, it is imperative to recognize the profound implications it holds within the context of Shia theological beliefs and the anticipated government of Imam Mahdi. Dr. Asim's work can be seen as a dedicated effort aligned with a holy cause, as he seeks to pave the way for the manifestation of the divine government through his visionary proposal (Sefati, 2023).

The concept of "romanticizing Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan" put forth by Dr. Asim can be viewed as an insightful interpretation of religious beliefs, reflecting a deep understanding of the historical and spiritual significance of the region within Shia theology. By emphasizing the interconnectedness of these nations and their shared cultural, linguistic and religious bonds, Dr. Asim highlights the potential for a unified approach that resonates with Shia theological teachings.

In this light, it is an essential for Shia scholars and theologians to appreciate and recognize the value of Dr. Asim's work. His vision not only addresses regional dynamics but also extends to the international political arena, where the implications of Shia beliefs are increasingly relevant. By advocating for the establishment of a jointly administered market, Dr. Asim's efforts align with the principles of social justice, economic prosperity and harmonious coexistence that are central to Shia theology (Sefati, 2023).

Moreover, Dr. Asim's work signifies a proactive engagement with the future government of Imam Mahdi. By envisioning a framework that promotes cooperation, unity and socio-economic development, he lays the groundwork for the principles that will underpin the anticipated government. His proposal fosters an environment that reflects the values of justice, equality and shared prosperity, all of which are integral to the awaited government of Imam Mahdi.

Therefore, by embracing Dr. Asim's proposal, Shia scholars can actively support the manifestation of the divine government and actively contribute to the fulfillment of their religious aspirations" (Sefati, 2023).

Theological Review from Kashan

1) Agha Khalil Najfi

"In Kashan, where the teachings of Shia Islam are cherished and preserved, there is a great appreciation for the efforts of Dr. Asim. His vision reflects a sincere dedication to realizing the divine teachings of Shia Islam and advancing the principles of justice, equality and unity. As religious scholars, we commend his work and encourage the support and participation of the Shia community in realizing this shared vision (Najfi, 2023).

Ultimately, the establishment of a jointly administered market at the tri-borderland serves as a testament to the vitality and relevance of Shia theological beliefs in shaping not only individual spirituality but also regional and global socio-economic dynamics. As scholars in Kashan, we wholeheartedly embrace and endorse this visionary concept as a means of fulfilling our religious aspirations and contributing to the realization of a just and harmonious world guided by the teachings of Imam Mahdi" (Najfi, 2023).

2) Ahmed Ali Kashani

تلاش بنفشندانه دکتر عاصم برای ایجاد بازاری مشترک در مرزهای مشترک افغانستان، ایران و پاکستان بدون شک رای می باشد برای دولت منتظر امام مهدی (عج). این تصور در باره "عاشقانه کردن افغانستان، ایران و پاکستان" بنیادهای عمیق از اعتقادات دینی است که در جامعه شیعیان با قدرت فراوانی برخورد دارد است

این پیشنهاد وی نشان دهنده تجسم اصول امل تشیع به شکل قابل لمس و متغوی است. باترین یکپارچگی منطقه ای، همکاری متقابل و توسعه اجتماعی - اقتصادی، بازار مشترک مبتنی بر این ایده به عنوان وسیله ای برای ظهور اعتقادات شیعی در باره خراسان و نیروی پرچم سیاه به کار می رود

من قطعاً باور دارم که این پیشنهاد لایق تقدیر و حمایت از جانب علما و متخصصان شیعه است. کار عاصم نشان دهنده فهم عمیق وی از پیادهای اعتقادات شیعی نه تنها در داخل منطقه، بلکه در صحنه سیاست جهانی است. این کار از شمندها تکرار شایسته ای جهانی عدالت، برابری و اتحاد است که اساسی برای امل تشیع می باشد

بازار مشترک در این مقام به عنوان یکی از عوامل حیاتی شناخته شده است و حمایت و تقدیری برای از علما و متخصصان شیعه را به خود جلب می کند. واقعی شدن این طرح، قدری عظیم به سوی حق باوری می باشد - یک جهانی که به راسنایی آموزه های عمیق اسلام شیعی، به عدالت، رفاه پایدار و اتحاد سمانگی میان امت مابشرت خواهد یافت

English Translation by Muhammad Mujtaba Sheikh

"Dr. Asim's visionary pursuit to establish a jointly administered market in the tri-borderland of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan undeniably lays the groundwork for the awaited government of Imam Mahdi, aligning harmoniously with the prophecies and expectations cherished by Shia scholars. The concept of "romanticizing Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan" emerges as an insightful and profound interpretation of religious beliefs, evoking deep resonance within the Shia community. This transformative initiative serves as a tangible embodiment of Shia theological principles, poised to foster regional integration, mutual cooperation and socio-economic development. Its implementation symbolizes the materialization of Shia convictions concerning Khorasan and the anticipated army with black flags. The scholarly community of Shia theologians unequivocally acknowledges the significance of Dr. Asim's visionary work, recognizing his profound comprehension of the far-reaching implications of Shia beliefs, not only within the regional context but also on the global stage of political affairs. Through this initiative, the universal values of justice, equality and unity, intrinsic to Shia theology, find tangible manifestation. Hence, the jointly administered market assumes a position of utmost importance, deserving wholehearted appreciation and support from Shia scholars and theologians alike. Its realization serves as a momentous stride towards the fulfillment of our collective vision - a world guided by the profound teachings of Shia Islam, characterized by an equitable dispensation of justice, sustainable prosperity, and the harmonious unity of nations" (Kashani, 2023).

Impact of Dr. Asim's Work on Shia Theological Beliefs

The visionary proposals put forth by Dr. Asim regarding the establishment of a jointly administered market at the tri-borderland of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan have significant implications for Shia theological

beliefs. His work serves as a catalyst for the realization of core Shia principles and resonates deeply within the Shia community.

1) Fulfillment of Beliefs about Khorasan and the Army with Black Flags

According to Shia tradition, Khorasan holds immense significance as the region associated with the emergence of the Mahdi and the anticipated army with black flags. Dr. Asim's vision for regional integration and the jointly administered market aligns with these beliefs, as it brings together Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan in a collective endeavor. This convergence of nations and their concerted efforts towards socio-economic development reflect the fulfillment of Shia theological beliefs regarding Khorasan and the eventual triumph of truth and justice (Kashani, 2023) (Najfi, 2023).

2) Promotion of Unity and Cooperation

Dr. Asim's concept of "romanticizing Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan" goes beyond a mere geopolitical perspective and offers an interpretation deeply rooted in religious beliefs. By fostering regional integration and promoting mutual cooperation, the proposed market serves as a means to strengthen the social fabric and bridge historical gaps between the three nations. This unity and collaboration align with Shia theological principles of solidarity, harmony and the pursuit of common goals (Kashani, 2023) (Najfi, 2023).

3) Reflection of Shia Beliefs in the International Arena

The implications of Dr. Asim's work extend beyond the regional context and have reverberations in the international political arena. By establishing a jointly administered market, Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan can showcase the practical application of Shia beliefs, emphasizing justice, equality and unity on a global scale. This representation of Shia values within the international community not only strengthens the position of Shia Islam but also contributes to the broader discourse on interfaith understanding and cooperation (Kashani, 2023) (Najfi, 2023).

Concluding Remarks

Dr. Asim's research conducted on the proposed jointly administered market at the Afghanistan-Iran-Pakistan tri-borderland has shed light on its potential impact and significance. As highlighted by the renowned social scientist Emile Durkheim, "Society is not a mere sum of individuals; it is an organized system with its own characteristics and dynamics". The establishment of this market reflects the understanding that regional integration and cooperation can lead to social, economic and political advancements, benefiting the people of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan as a collective entity.

Moreover, the religious narratives surrounding Khorasan add a profound dimension to this discussion. As stated in Shia narrations, Khorasan holds great significance, being associated with the emergence of the Mahdi and the anticipated army with black flags. The proposal for a jointly administered market resonates with these narratives, providing a platform for the fulfillment of religious aspirations and the manifestation of Shia ideals.

Iranian thinkers, such as Ali Shariati, have emphasized the importance of unity and solidarity among Muslim nations. Shariati once remarked, "The unity of Muslims is the life of Islam and the Muslim Ummah". The vision put forth by Dr. Asim aligns with this perspective, as it seeks to strengthen the bonds between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, transcending geopolitical boundaries and fostering a sense of collective identity.

In light of the findings and analyses presented in this research paper, it is evident that the establishment of a jointly administered market at the tri-borderland holds immense potential. By embracing the concepts of regional integration, cooperation and socio-economic development, this market can pave the way for a more prosperous and harmonious future for the nations involved. As the renowned Iranian philosopher Allameh Tabatabaei once said, “A just society can only be achieved through collective efforts and mutual understanding”. It is through such collaborative endeavors that the region can realize its full potential and contribute to the betterment of humanity as a whole.

Hence, it has been concluded that the proposed jointly administered market not only aligns with social science theories on regional integration but also resonates with religious narratives about Khorasan and the vision of the anticipated army with black flags. As Iranian thinkers have emphasized the significance of unity and solidarity, the establishment of this market represents a tangible step towards realizing a more just and prosperous future for the nations involved. With the words of Allameh Tabatabaei echoing in our minds, let us strive towards collective efforts and mutual understanding, paving the way for a brighter tomorrow.

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