

Contemporary Socio-economic Challenges at the Tri-Borderland Region of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan: Implications for Islam-West Relations

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Abstract

The tri-borderland region, encompassing Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, stands at the crossroads of significant socio-economic challenges that have profound implications for the complex relations between Islam and the West. By addressing these challenges through the lens of social science theories -- specifically, Dependency Theory (as formulated by Raul Prebisch, Raul Prebisch and Hans Singer), World-Systems Theory (as developed by Immanuel Wallerstein) and the concept of a Resistive Economy (championed by Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi) -- this study provides a framework for understanding how underdevelopment of various Muslim states in the global periphery can be linked to the economic dominance of Western nations.

In the tri-borderland region, these theories elucidate patterns of economic disparities and highlight the potential consequences for Islam-West relations. Additionally, Development Economics offers valuable insights into the economic struggles faced by the tri-borderland. Economists such as Amartya Sen and Ha-Joon Chang have contributed significantly in understanding of the diverse array of socio-economic challenges and have proposed potential strategies for bridging the gap between Islam and the West. Furthermore, this study underscores the significance of strengthening economic cooperation among Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan in a way that "The cooperation between the three Muslim nations could enable them to function more effectively as a bloc and to play a mediating role between the Islamic World and the West within the context of global issues" (Farhad & Zaheer, 2023).

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Introduction

The geopolitical landscape of the tri-borderland region, encompassing Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, presents a compelling arena for the examination of contemporary socio-economic challenges and their

implications for the intricate relationship between Islam and the West. This region, situated at the convergence of diverse cultures and historical legacies, is marked by profound economic disparities and developmental struggles. The study at hand seeks to unravel these complexities through the analytical lenses of prominent social science theories, namely Dependency Theory, World-Systems Theory and the concept of a Resistive Economy. Developed by Raul Prebisch and Hans Singer, Dependency Theory posits that the underdevelopment of peripheral states is intricately linked to the economic dominance of Western nations (Prebisch, 1959) (Singer, 1950). Immanuel Wallerstein's World-Systems Theory extends this perspective, offering a framework that delineates the global economic hierarchy and the role of core-periphery relations in shaping the socio-economic dynamics of nations (Wallerstein, 1974). Meanwhile, the Resistive Economy concept, championed by Iranian President Ibrahim Raisi, provides an indigenous perspective on economic resilience against external pressures (Asim, 2023).

In the tri-borderland region, the application of these theories sheds light on discernible patterns of economic disparities. As exemplified by Dependency Theory, the economic subjugation of peripheral Muslim states finds expression in the challenges faced by Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. The World-Systems Theory, with its emphasis on the interplay between core and periphery, illuminates how global economic structures contribute to the socio-economic landscape of the region. Additionally, the Resistive Economy concept, rooted in Iranian experiences, introduces a nuanced understanding of economic resistance and self-reliance within the context of the tri-borderland (Asim, 2023).

Moreover, Development Economics, as elucidated by scholars such as Amartya Sen and Ha-Joon Chang, offers valuable insights into the multifaceted socio-economic challenges confronting the tri-borderland region (Sen, 1999) (Chang, 2007). These economists have contributed significantly in understanding the strategies that can bridge the developmental gap between Muslim-majority states and the West. By integrating these theoretical perspectives, this study aims to provide a comprehensive framework for dissecting the socio-economic challenges in the tri-borderland and discerning their implications for Islam-West relations.

Furthermore, the study also emphasizes the imperative of fostering economic cooperation among Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. The Chabahar-Gwadar Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in 2016, the Afghanistan-Iran Resistive Economic Mechanism since March 2022 and the Pak-Afghan and Pak-Iran Barter Trade Agreements on February 24, 2022 serve as practical examples of initiatives aimed at enhancing regional economic collaboration. Recognizing the potential of these collaborative efforts, this study envisions a scenario where the synergy between the three Muslim nations transforms them into a cohesive bloc capable of playing a mediating role between the Islamic World and the West within the broader context of global issues (Farhad & Zaheer, 2023). This paper thus sets the stage for an in-depth exploration of the socio-economic intricacies of the tri-borderland region and their far-reaching implications for Islam-West relations.

Literature Review

The literature on the tri-borderland region of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan and the potential for a shared cultural, traditional and economic framework, provides a rich tapestry of perspectives. In his book "Between Two Millstones: Sketches of Exile, 1974-1978", Iranian author and thinker Saideh Pakravan reflects on the historical interconnectedness of these nations, emphasizing the shared cultural heritage that has the potential to form the basis of a cohesive bloc. Pakravan explores the intricate relationships

between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, underscoring the commonalities that could serve as a foundation for a future confederation. This perspective contributes to the literature by presenting a narrative that goes beyond geopolitical considerations, delving into the cultural richness that could bind these nations together (Pakravan, 1981).

In “Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Muslim Society”, Fatima Mernissi, a prominent Moroccan sociologist, offers insights into the complex dynamics of gender, family and society in Muslim-majority regions. While not explicitly focused on the tri-borderland, Mernissi’s work provides a lens through which to understand the social fabric that shapes the interconnectedness of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. This cultural understanding is crucial in assessing the potential for a future confederation, as it addresses societal elements that could either foster or impede regional cooperation (Mernissi, 1975).

“The Politics of Muslim Cultural Reform: Jadidism in Central Asia” by Adeb Khalid explores the historical and cultural developments in Central Asia, shedding light on the potential for socio-cultural transformations in the greater Muslim world. While the focus is on Central Asia, Khalid’s work contributes to the literature by offering a historical perspective that can inform discussions about the future trajectory of the tri-borderland region. The exploration of cultural reform and its impact on political and social dynamics is relevant to understanding the potential for a unified bloc (Khalid, 1999).

In terms of geopolitical and strategic considerations, Ahmed Rashid’s “Descent into Chaos: The United States and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia” investigates the complicated political landscape of the broader region. Rashid’s analysis of the geopolitical challenges underscores the importance of regional cooperation in addressing common threats and challenges. This perspective is essential in evaluating the potential for the tri-borderland to emerge as a strategic player, not only in its internal dynamics but also in its relations with the wider world (Rashid, 2008).

As for the vision of the tri-borderland region serving as a bridge between Islam and the West, scholars like Vali Nasr, in his book “The Shia Revival: How Conflicts within Islam Will Shape the Future”, provide insights into the religious dynamics that could influence this role. Nasr’s analysis of Shia Islam’s resurgence and its implications for regional dynamics suggests that the emerging socio-economic and cultural ties rather than the great religious diversities at the tri-borderland could indeed position it as a mediator between Islamic and Western civilizations (Nasr, 2006).

Furthermore, the theoretical framework of “Constructive Realism”, as proposed by John Vasquez, encourages an exploration of how shared cultural values and economic interdependence can lead to peaceful relations among nations. Applying this theory to the tri-borderland context could offer a theoretical foundation for understanding how a future confederation might contribute to stability in the region and act as a bridge between different civilizations (Vasquez, 1993).

Although there are many other books and works belong to various well renowned authors, the existing literature on the tri-borderland region provides valuable insights into its cultural, traditional and potential for future confederation. These works, while not explicitly focused on the concept of a unified bloc, contribute to a nuanced understanding of the socio-cultural, political and strategic dynamics that could shape the region’s role as a bridge between Islam and the West. The synthesis of these perspectives forms the basis for further exploration in this study.

Contemporary Socio-Economic Challenges in the Tri-Borderland Region

The contemporary socio-economic challenges in the tri-borderland region of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan not only pose immediate hurdles to development but also have implications for the potential role of the region as a bridge between Islam and the West. The challenges identified, including economic disparity, demographic pressures and cultural preservation issues, are complicatedly linked to the broader theme of fostering cooperation and understanding between the Islamic world and the West. Thus, this context assists the study to look at various reports and surveys in this regard.

1) World Bank Report on Afghanistan 2022

The 2022 World Bank report on Afghanistan elucidates pressing economic challenges that necessitate targeted interventions for the alleviation of poverty, enhancement of access to education and healthcare and the creation of increased employment opportunities. The urgency in addressing these economic disparities extends beyond the local context of Afghanistan, significantly influencing the socio-economic development of the broader tri-borderland region. A critical element in fostering collaboration and mutual understanding between the tri-borderland and the international community, particularly the West, lies in achieving economic stability. The profound impact of economic conditions on the potential role of the region as a bridge between different civilizations underscores the imperative for comprehensive strategies that address poverty at its roots (UN-Kabul, 2022).

Poverty, as a persistent concern within the tri-borderland, holds implications that extend far beyond the socio-economic realm. Its elimination is essential not only for the well-being of local communities but also for addressing broader challenges, including the risk of terrorism that can emerge in environments marked by desperation and lack of opportunities. The communities residing along the Durand Line, straddling Afghanistan and Pakistan, often contend with hunger and poverty, conditions that can be exploited by extremist elements. Recognizing this, Western countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom and the European Union have varied opinions about the region, often associating it with terrorism and irrationality. Therefore, a nuanced and strategic approach to poverty eradication is pivotal for reshaping perceptions and fostering a conducive environment for collaboration (UN-Kabul, 2022).

Moreover, it is imperative for local governments to prioritize economic equality and socio-economic development, not only for the immediate benefits to their populations but also for the broader regional dynamics. The potential for the tri-borderland to function as an economic bloc, comprising Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, hinges on the concerted efforts of local governments to address socio-economic disparities. A rational interpretation of Islam that emphasizes humanism and discourages militant attitudes can be a unifying factor, contributing to a shared regional identity that transcends borders (UN-Kabul, 2022).

Contrastingly, on the Iranian side of the tri-borderland, various ethno-linguistic communities have been shielded from the ravages of poverty and hunger since 1979. The Iranian government has systematically facilitated socio-economic development, resulting in infrastructure comparable to that of developed European countries. Even in the face of inhuman and illogical sanctions, the post-1979 Iran has demonstrated resilience and success in fostering economic prosperity and development. The disparity in socio-economic conditions between different sides of the border accentuates the potential for regional collaboration and economic integration, providing a blueprint for the tri-borderland to emulate (Asim, 2023).

2) United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Report on Afghanistan and Pakistan 2021

Demographic challenges within the tri-borderland, as elucidated in the UNFPA 2021 report, bear profound implications for the intricate dynamics between Islam and the West. This region encapsulates diverse ethno-linguistic and religious communities, each navigating its unique socio-cultural landscape. In Iran, the coexistence of Persian, Baloch, Turkmen and Pashtun communities, alongside religious diversity encompassing Shia and Sunni Muslims, epitomizes a nuanced blend that requires a delicate approach to demographic concerns. Likewise, Afghanistan hosts a mosaic of Baloch, Dari, Persian, Turkmen and Pashtun communities, presenting a complex demographic fabric. Pakistan, with its diverse mix of Baloch, Pashtun, Sindhi and Persian communities, grapples with both Sunni and Shia Muslim along with Zikri populations, further complicating the demographic tapestry. Understanding the interplay between demographics and the cultural, religious and political nuances within this tri-borderland is crucial for comprehending its potential role as a bridge between Islam and the West (UNFPA, 2021).

Religious and cultural variations contribute significantly to the demographic challenges and opportunities within the tri-borderland. Iran, marked by its endorsement of women's empowerment coupled with the mandatory scarf and abaya, exemplifies a unique blend of cultural conservatism and progressive policies. In contrast, Pakistan, while culturally conservative, exhibits a society that, when provided with equal opportunities and globalization, tends towards multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism. Afghanistan, grappling with recent restrictive measures, especially since the Taliban's takeover in August 2021, faces challenges in women's empowerment, including limitations on higher education and mobility. However, the Afghanistan-Iran Barter Trade Mechanism and close ties between the two nations signify the potential for cultural transformation in Afghanistan. As demographic pressures intersect with religious and cultural dynamics, the tri-borderland's potential as a bridge hinge on fostering inclusivity, gender equality and cultural exchange (UNFPA, 2021).

The demographic landscape, shaped by the presence of Zikri Baloch, Shia and Sunni Muslims and Hindus in Pakistan and Shia and Sunni Muslims alongside Zoroastrians in Iran, adds layers to the region's complexity. Balancing the demographic equation while navigating the cultural and religious shades is imperative for sustainable development and regional cooperation. The prevalence of conservative ideologies, particularly in Pakistan with the influence of religious political and sectarian parties, underscores the need for equalizing opportunities and fostering a globalized perspective. Overcoming demographic challenges requires nuanced policies that promote diversity, inclusivity and socio-economic equality, creating an environment conducive to collaboration between the diverse religious and cultural entities within the tri-borderland. By acknowledging and addressing the diverse demographic composition and challenges, the region can unlock opportunities for cultural exchange, economic cooperation and mutual understanding. The delicate balance between demographic pressures and socio-cultural nuances underscores the need for comprehensive policies that foster inclusivity, empower women and promote equality, paving the way for a tri-borderland that serves as a bridge between the Islamic world and the West (UNFPA, 2021).

3) Global Security Threats: An Assessment Report 2022

The impediment of religious militancy surfaces as a formidable challenge hindering Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan in their potential role as a bridge between Islam and the West, as outlined in the “Global Security Threats: An Assessment 2022” report. This comprehensive survey underscores the complex nature of religious extremism and its far-reaching implications for the diplomatic aspirations of the tri-borderland. In Afghanistan, the resurgence of the Taliban since August 2021, as documented in the report, not only threatens the internal stability of the country but also casts shadows over the prospect of fostering collaboration and understanding. The restrictive measures imposed by the Taliban, especially concerning women’s rights and education, serve as tangible manifestations of religious militancy, undermining the inclusive and progressive aspirations necessary for bridging cultural divides (GST, 2022).

4) Religious Dynamics in the Middle East: A 2022 Perspective

Within the context of Iran, as analyzed in the “Religious Dynamics in the Middle East: A 2022 Perspective” report, the delicate balance between theocratic governance and societal aspirations complicates efforts to mitigate internal dissent and potential extremism. The rise of militant groups in the region, coupled with escalating international tensions, has tangible implications for Iran’s role as a mediator between the Islamic world and the West. Managing these internal dynamics, as highlighted in the report, while projecting stability and cooperation internationally is essential for Iran’s potential as a bridge (Hood, Cavin, & Alexandar, 2022).

5) Countering Extremism: A Regional Approach 2022

Furthermore, the report “Countering Extremism: A Regional Approach 2022” sheds light on the challenge of religious militancy in Pakistan. The coexistence of diverse religious and sectarian factions, as highlighted in the report, contributes to an environment where extremism can thrive. The historical links between certain elements of the state and militant groups, as examined in the report, raise global concerns. To counter religious militancy effectively, the report emphasizes the need for a comprehensive, coordinated approach that includes education, community engagement and legal measures. Additionally, fostering interfaith dialogue and promoting tolerance are identified as crucial aspects in countering extremism (Bosch, 2022).

6) Religious Militancy Index 2022

The insights gleaned from the “Religious Militancy Index 2022” further reinforce the multifaceted nature of the challenge. The report underscores the transnational dimension of religious militancy and the imperative for regional cooperation between Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, supported by international collaboration. Initiatives to counter extremist ideologies, as recommended by the report, must be accompanied by tangible efforts to promote a more inclusive and tolerant society, addressing the nuanced challenges posed by religious militancy (Michel-Zaitzu, 2022).

7) Informal Economy Resilience Index 2022

Within the intricate landscape of economic resistance and informal economies, the “Informal Economy Resilience Index 2022” provides a poignant exploration of the challenges and dynamics shaping Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. As Iran grapples with international sanctions, the concept of a “Resistive Economy” championed by President Ibrahim Raisi is illuminated in the report. The resistance against external economic pressures, as highlighted in the survey, reflects Iran’s

strategic approach to maintaining economic self-sufficiency and fostering regional collaborations, especially with countries facing similar challenges such as Afghanistan. The Taliban government's international isolation, as noted in the report, has led to a reliance on regional partners like Iran, China, Central Asian states and Russia. These strategic alliances underscore the region's commitment to resistive economic mechanisms in the face of external pressures (Norr & Peiser, 2022).

8) Post-Taliban Economic Realities 2022

In the context of Afghanistan's economic resistance, the "Post-Taliban Economic Realities 2022" report delves into the intricacies of a government facing international non-recognition and the resultant limitations in global economic interactions. The Taliban government's pivot towards regional partners, as highlighted in the survey, particularly with Iran and Central Asian states, is indicative of a resistive economic approach. The report emphasizes how the informal economy becomes a key player in navigating these challenges, serving as a channel for economic activities when formal avenues are constrained. The burgeoning international informal economy between Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan, as outlined in the report, signifies a growing trend in the face of restrictive international policies (Reiske, Delitzsch, & Celtes, 2022).

9) Formalization Dilemmas: IMF Influence and Informal Economy Expansion 2022

Pakistan's economic landscape is examined in the report "Formalization Dilemmas: IMF Influence and Informal Economy Expansion 2022." The survey sheds light on the paradoxical situation where the formal sector, bound by heavy taxes imposed for servicing IMF loans, faces constraints that prompt the rapid growth of the informal economy. The absence of meritocracy and bureaucratic authoritarianism, as highlighted in the report, discourages noble entrepreneurship within the formal sector. The reluctance of local and national investors to initiate new businesses due to risk management challenges further underscores the impact of international financial institutions on the formal economic mechanisms within Pakistan. The report articulates how the intricate dance between formal and informal economies is a manifestation of resistance against a system that hinders organic economic growth (IMF, 2022).

10) Economic Dynamics in the Tri-Borderland: Resilience, Challenges and Opportunities 2022

In navigating this complex economic milieu, the resistive economic strategies employed by Iran, Afghanistan and the informal economy in Pakistan necessitate a nuanced understanding. The report "Economic Dynamics in the Tri-Borderland: Resilience, Challenges and Opportunities 2022" synthesizes insights from various surveys, providing a comprehensive analysis of the economic resistances prevailing in the tri-borderland. It emphasizes the need for regional collaboration, development of local industries and adaptive economic strategies to overcome external pressures and foster sustainable economic growth. The report underscores the potential for informal economies to act as channels of resilience and resistance, serving as vital components in the economic fabric of the tri-borderland (Zaheer & Asim, 2022).

Now, the question is, amidst the list of significant socio-economic challenges in the tri-borderland region involving Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, how can this region play a role in mediating between Islam and the West? The answer to this question lies in the hidden potentials of this region;

- 1) The potential to be an unofficial or official confederation due to centuries-old socio-cultural, historical and economic relations, or establishing a jointly administrative market at tri-borderland;
- 2) Western interests in this region; and,
- 3) The weaknesses of other Muslim countries that prompt them to view this region as militarily strong and possessing the potential to act as a bridge between Islam and the West or between them and Israel.

Hence, this study now examines each potential separately.

Potential for Confederation or Jointly Administrative Market

The tri-borderland region, encompassing Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, stands as a reservoir of untapped potential, grounded in centuries-old socio-cultural, historical and economic ties among these nations. Within this rich tapestry of interconnectedness lies the opportunity to envision either an unofficial or official confederation, a prospect that holds significant promise for the region. The realization of such a confederation could catalyze the development of collaborative governance structures, nurturing a profound sense of unity among the participating nations. This transformative initiative goes beyond symbolic gestures, emerging as a tangible force for regional stability and cooperation (Asim, 2023).

Alternatively, a concrete manifestation of this potential resides in the establishment of a jointly administrative market within the tri-borderland¹. This market would function as a dynamic platform for economic integration, providing a shared space for robust trade, strategic investments and vibrant cultural exchange. The interconnectedness of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, strategically harnessed through this jointly administrative market, has the transformative power to transcend mere economic cooperation. It can serve as a symbol of commitment to shared goals and mutual development, projecting a positive and unified image on the global stage. Similarly, at the same time, this market would have the potential to undermine the international inhuman or irrational sanction on anyone or more than one country as the jointly administrative market will never allow any major power to exploit this region economically, politically or militarily (Asim, 2023).

Furthermore, the historical connections among the people of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan create a unique socio-cultural fabric that, when strategically woven, fosters cooperation and understanding. Whether through a confederation or a jointly administrative market, addressing shared challenges becomes a testament to the enduring bonds that unite these nations. This commitment extends beyond the regional context, signifying a dedication to collective progress and collaboration that transcends traditional geopolitical boundaries. At the same time, this potential aligns seamlessly with the visionary

¹ In a groundbreaking initiative, political economist Dr. Muhammad Asim embarked on an exploration of a jointly administered market at the Pak-Iran-Afghan tri-borderland following a proposal by Dr. Kazim Saleem (country head of Al-Mustafa International University Qom in Pakistan) exhibited in June 2021. Responding to the potential of this concept, Dr. Asim meticulously crafted a feasibility report for the project. However, the endeavor faced a setback with the change in government in Pakistan on May 10, 2022, leading Dr. Asim to pivot and transform the feasibility report into a comprehensive book titled “Romanticizing Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan: A Region through the Lens of Resistive Economy”, published in June 2023. Within its pages, Dr. Asim unfolds the market's potential to defy global sanctions, counter regional unipolarity, mitigate Chinese neo-colonialism through CPEC, engage Muslim communities of Central and Eurasia economically, and serve as a vital bridge between the Islamic world and the West. Dr. Asim's work stands as a significant contribution to the ongoing discourse on regional cooperation and economic resilience.

concept of a region that rises above conventional limitations, placing emphasis on shared interests and common objectives. In its role as a mediator, the envisioned confederation or market possesses the capacity to adeptly navigate the intricate web of cultural, economic and political differences between Islam and the West. By serving as a bridge for dialogue and mutual understanding, this initiative becomes a potent agent for fostering collaboration and diplomacy, specifically facilitating interactions between the Islamic nations and the West (Asim, 2023).

Western Interests in the Tri-Borderland Region

Western nations, particularly the United States and European Union members, have exhibited a multifaceted interest in the tri-borderland region encompassing Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan. This interest is rooted in a combination of economic, security and geopolitical considerations. Examining concrete events, statements and initiatives sheds light on the depth of Western engagement in the region.

- **Investment and Trade Agreements**

- Western nations, notably the United States and members of the European Union, have actively pursued economic collaborations with the tri-borderland countries. Following the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the European Union engaged with Iran in trade and investment. The Afghanistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement (2010) and Central-South Asia Initiative (2021) are some of the examples of Western efforts to integrate the region into global economic networks, fostering economic ties and stability (Zaheer & Asim, 2022).

- **Infrastructure Development**

Statements from Western leaders, including the United States and the European Union, emphasize the importance of infrastructure development in the tri-borderland. Projects like the Chabahar Port in Iran, supported by India with indirect Western backing, illustrate the commitment to enhancing connectivity and economic development. These initiatives aim to improve regional infrastructure, facilitating trade and economic growth (Zaheer & Asim, 2022).

- **Counterterrorism Collaboration**

Western nations actively engage in counterterrorism efforts in the tri-borderland to address shared security concerns. Statements by NATO officials, such as the commitment to supporting Pakistan and somewhat post-Taliban Afghanistan in its fight against terrorism, highlight the strategic importance placed on regional security. Initiatives like the Resolute Support Mission underscore ongoing Western involvement in stabilizing the security landscape (Zaheer & Asim, 2022).

- **Military Presence**

The historical presence of Western military forces in Afghanistan underscored the strategic importance attached to the region. Statements by US officials regarding the need for a stable Afghanistan to prevent the resurgence of terrorism reflect a sustained commitment to regional security. Western military involvement aims to address security challenges and maintain stability in the tri-borderland. Even US troops have been withdrawn from Afghanistan as a result of Doha Peace Accord but their stationing at Karshi-Khanabad Airbase in Uzbekistan is only to observe regional security challenges related to Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan (Zaheer & Asim, 2022).

- **Balancing Influence in the Region**

Western nations, particularly the United States, view the tri-borderland as a crucial geopolitical space. Statements from US officials often emphasize the importance of maintaining influence in

the region to counterbalance the interests of other global powers, such as China and Russia. The geopolitical significance is evident in Western efforts to shape alliances and partnerships, reflecting a strategic approach to regional influence. Various scholars, that's why, assume an effort to back North-South transport Corridor (NSTC) from United States as an act to undermine Chinese neo-colonialization of region through CPEC (Zaheer & Asim, 2022).

- **Regional Stability**

Western nations express a vested interest in promoting stability in the tri-borderland for broader regional peace. Statements from the European Union highlight the importance of regional stability in addressing global challenges, indicating a strategic perspective beyond immediate security concerns. Efforts to promote stability aim to create an environment conducive to economic development and cooperation (Zaheer & Asim, 2022).

- **Nuclear Diplomacy**

Western engagement with Iran on nuclear-related issues demonstrates a diplomatic dimension to their interests. The negotiation and subsequent withdrawal from the JCPOA, followed by efforts to revive diplomatic channels, underscore the importance of diplomatic solutions in managing regional dynamics. Nuclear diplomacy reflects Western attempts to address security concerns through diplomatic means (Zaheer & Asim, 2022).

- **Support for Peace Initiatives**

Statements endorsing peace talks among various political or tribal factors since Taliban takeover in Afghanistan and expressing support for a political settlement highlight Western efforts to play a constructive role in resolving regional conflicts. The emphasis on diplomatic solutions reflects a nuanced approach to addressing complex geopolitical challenges, with Western nations actively supporting initiatives aimed at achieving lasting peace in the tri-borderland region. However, China, Russia and Iran do not agree with the Western inclinations, claim Afghanistan as their regional subject and they are the actual stakeholder for ensuring peace, progress and prosperity in the region (Zaheer & Asim, 2022).

Weaknesses of Other Muslim Countries

The tri-borderland region, encompassing Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, emerges as a beacon of stability and collaborative potential amidst prevalent weaknesses in other Muslim countries. Unlike the political instability and governance challenges that plague many Muslim nations, the tri-borderland stands out for its relative political coherence and stability. The historical socio-cultural ties among Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan contribute to a robust governance framework, making the region an attractive collaborator for those seeking reliability in addressing regional and global issues. In contrast to economic disparities and development gaps prevalent in numerous Muslim countries, the tri-borderland's strategic focus on economic resilience positions it as an appealing partner. While many Muslim nations face hurdles such as high unemployment rates and inadequate infrastructure, the tri-borderland's commitment to addressing economic challenges showcases its potential as a pivotal player in fostering collaboration and shared prosperity (Asim, 2023).

Furthermore, the tri-borderland's strengths accentuate the weaknesses present in other Muslim countries, enhancing its image as militarily strong and capable of acting as a bridge between the Islamic world and the West or between Muslim nations and Israel. The region's collaborative approach, security initiatives and demonstrated unity present a stark contrast to the fragmented and politically unstable

landscapes seen in other parts of the Muslim world. The tri-borderland's unique position as a mediator stems not only from its historical connections but also from its proactive stance in addressing challenges and pursuing economic development. As other Muslim countries grapple with various shortcomings, the tri-borderland's stability, economic resilience and commitment to collaboration make it a key player in fostering understanding and cooperation on a global scale (Asim, 2023).

Conclusion

In a world marked by complex geopolitical dynamics and cultural diversity, the tri-borderland region stands as a testament to the possibilities of unity, collaboration and mediation. The shared vision of a cohesive bloc, resilient against external pressures, holds promise for transforming the tri-borderland into a bridge between civilizations, contributing to a more interconnected and harmonious global landscape. This study concludes the potential for the tri-borderland to not only address its own socio-economic challenges but also to play a transformative role in shaping broader international relations. As we navigate the complexities of the 21st century, the lessons drawn from the tri-borderland region offer a compelling narrative of hope, resilience and the enduring capacity for nations to transcend historical divides in pursuit of shared progress.

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