

INDIA-PAKISTAN-AFGHANISTAN ECONOMIC COOPERATION: A THEORETICAL APPROACH TO REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Ahmed MEHBOOB

*Ph.D. (Political Science), Research Scholar
in the Center of Central Asian Studies, University of Kashmir
(Hazratbal Srinagar, India)*

ABSTRACT

The paper stands on the premise that interstate acrimony following jingoistic nationalism has turned India, Pakistan and Afghanistan into mutual enemies, who continue to subordinate their national developmental policies to the security complexes, which has exacerbated their mutual hatred to the point beyond repair. It also presents a testable preposition that such a predicament can be countered by globalization optimism, to which interstate cooperation, soft borders and contacts between

people are the prerequisites. Such objectives can be realized only through regional and economic integration, whose concept and implementation have worked successfully in Europe and have been extensively debated by many theorists from security, economic, scientific and cultural perspectives. Apart from theoretical and historical studies, the paper is based on the inputs, gathered from various organizations and influential stakeholders during my recent field trip to Pakistan.

KEYWORDS: *India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, region, cooperation, low politics.*

Regional Cooperation: A Concept

Before the 1940s, the concept of regional integration was not popular. It is believed to be a post-war development. Regional integration was conceptualized when the New International Economic

Order (NIEO)¹ failed to implement its “program of action.”² This program, however, attached an even greater importance to the development of regional and interregional cooperation among developing countries. The concept of regional integration was discussed in detail by eminent scholars throughout the world, as well as state and non-state actors of the underdeveloped and developing countries giving due consideration to efforts undertaken by NIEO at the institutional level and independent action of individual developing countries. From the perspective of developing countries, regional cooperation signifies the formation of a unified community for their economic development purposes. On the other hand, among the same developing countries the idea of Collective Self-Reliance, as a concept,³ emerged at both regional and subregional levels based on technical and greater economic cooperation. Beginning with the Non-Aligned movement’s Lusaka summit⁴ it remained the main theme and agenda for various Non-Alignment Conferences ever since. It should be noted that the concept of Collective Self-Reliance has neither been nor is regarded as a substitute for redefining and restructuring the prevalent economic order, but has been viewed as the most appropriate alternative for developing countries to come out of their worsening global economic situation. Thus, it can be said that the Collective Self-Reliance concept ensures national self-reliance for countries in individual capacity, as well as the means for ensuring cooperation among the underdeveloped countries. But, nevertheless, it is only an auxiliary means in relation to comprehensive regional communications on a constant basis: in fact, if a group of countries expands to greater sizes, then collaboration between them, by sheer necessity, becomes very selective. Thus, the concept of Collective Self-Reliance plays a vital role in regional cooperation among developing countries.

To improve the standard of living among the people of developing countries and to restructure the existing relations between the developed and developing countries, political elites of the third world and other stakeholders have to agree on a program, capable of transforming intentions (“Collective Self-Reliance”) into a joint policy (“Strategy”). To transform “Collective Self-Reliance” into a strategy, the Seventh NAM Summit, held in New Delhi from 7 to 11 March, 1993, stated that there is a possibility of cooperation at subregional, regional and international levels. The participants of the

¹ New International Economic Order: The origin of the concept can be traced from the mid-1970s. It constitutes a framework for eliminating the prevalent anarchy in the international economic system, with all its features which are being utilized by developed countries for their vested interests and for continuing their neocolonial rule over the underdeveloped countries. It also stands for making the international system equitable, rational, fairer and just by adopting the code of conduct of the industrialized countries and by accepting the due rights of the underdeveloped countries (see: A. Heywood, *Global Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan, United Kingdom, 2011, p. 464).

² Program of Action: It was a special U.N. General Assembly session held on 1 May, 1974, in which the following problems which developing countries were facing were raised and discussed: (i) The imbalance of trade between the developed and developing/underdeveloped countries; (ii) The reform of the International Monetary System, which used to give undue preferences to the Industrialized countries; (iii) The creation of the environment, which would provide help for developing countries in consolidating the efforts of the International community for setting up the industries in developing countries; (iv) The support for the agendas of different organizations and seeking Cooperation from the international community in formulating the code of conduct at the international level for the transfer of technology and scientific knowledge dealing with research from developed to developing countries, etc. (see: *Ibid.*, p. 194).

³ Concept of Collective Self-Reliance: The third world countries had an objective to move from underdeveloped to developed status, and for this they employed the NIEO as a tool and made the concept of Collective Self-Reliance a major theme of various conferences of the NIEO. Later on, the NIEO defined it as a capability of satisfying the basic requirements of the people, particularly in the context of the third world countries. The developing countries believed that this alone can ensure their equal and effective participation in international relations (see: K. Gopal, *Geopolitical Relations and Regional Cooperation: A Study of South Asia*, Trans Asia Publications, New Delhi, 1996, p. 10).

⁴ Lusaka summit: In 1970, the Non-Aligned countries held their third summit in Lusaka (Zambia), attended by 54 countries, other than the 9, who acted as observers. The summit emphasized that the Non-Aligned countries are able to make use of their influence and collective wisdom to utilize the balance of power as a tool for strengthening the roots of international peace and cooperation. It also advocated the requirement for accelerating the decolonization process and economic cooperation among the Non-Aligned countries (see: *Ibid.*, p. 11).

summit acknowledged that the capabilities of the members in the process are complementary and do contribute to the overall pursuit of the common goal. In addition, an equally important task is to transform “Collective Self-Reliance” from a political rhetoric of mere declaration of intentions to an action-oriented strategy for redefining and reshaping the dominance and dependence relationships within the local, national, regional and international systems. To make it possible, it requires cooperation among and between the small and larger units in a given arrangement, based on comprehensive understanding, coordination, adjustment and concessions.

At the above-mentioned subregional, regional and international levels, there are different sets of participants, playing their roles. For example, at the subregional level, national decision-making centers are considered to be the primary actors, who deal with mutually antagonistic domestic pressure groups. At the regional level, it is the national governments, who have to agree, coordinate and cooperate on a joint action program. Finally, at the international level, governments of underdeveloped countries play a critical role, since they have to coordinate their economic and political aspirations in a challenging environment with the developed countries. And while at the national level the actors own efficient and effective tools to implement an action program, at the global level, the underdeveloped countries are most importantly concerned with the difficult task of coordinating their negotiation strategy with the industrialized countries in order to have a common platform and agenda. However, at the regional level the case is different, as cooperation within the regional context means the adoption of the Give and Take policy among sovereign governments, where the participants do not normally impose their decisions forcefully on their respective partners. In the regional context, in contrast to the global or subregional levels, every vested participant is exposed to pressures from within its own society and from developed countries as well.

Thus, it can be concluded that regional cooperation should ensure greater understanding of the problems and difficulties of each participant, the strengthening of trust and confidence in each other and providing mutual assistance in the economic, social, cultural, technological and scientific spheres.⁵

Efforts to Consolidate Regional Integration

After World War II, international relations began exhibiting the urge of the nation-states to ensure peace, well-being and security not only between the states, but also among individual citizens. This realization became the base of regionalism or regional integration. Therefore, the roots of regional cohesion lay in the sensing of the national policy-makers that there are certain goals and common interests shared by the nation-states in a specific “region”⁶ and that these interests could be promoted effectively and most efficiently by maintaining a close and long-term cooperation within the regional framework. However, this balance or close cooperation is dependent upon diverse interests. To address these interests a number of regional organizations were formed since the 1940s.⁷

⁵ K. Gopal, *op. cit.*, pp. 8-11.

⁶ Region: According to Benedict Anderson and other international theorists, the region, like the nation, is an “imagined community.” They are of the opinion that regions have been constructed politically and socially. Having a political and social bases, they are capable of being reshaped and redefined, with the passage of time both extent and purpose of cooperation change, as a new member joins and the existing member leaves (see: A. Heywood, *op. cit.*, p. 482; also see: B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflection on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London, 1983).

⁷ Regional organizations: For example the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Warsaw Pact, which collapsed in the 1990s, European Union, the Association of South East Asian States (ASEAN), Arab League, Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and many other were formed for the fulfillment of different objectives of member nation-states.

Scholars differ with regard to the definition of a “region.” Palmer and Parkins, referring to international relations, state: “a region is invariably an area embracing the territories of three or more states. These states are bound together by the ties of common interests, as well as geography. They are not necessarily contiguous or even in the same continent.”⁸ Usually, regions are made up of nation-states, sharing various things in common, such as, for example, political interests, common institutions and common racial roots. When such nation-states come close to establishing an association or organization at the regional level to attain particular objectives, regional integration or arrangement is formed. However, it is not a requirement that a state, joining such regional organizations, should be a part of the same geographical area. The factors, which influence the forging of a bond, are common interests.⁹ Generally, regional integration is a process, by which geographical regions become important economic and political units and, later on, serve as the fountainhead for cooperation and recognition or as a possible identity of the region.¹⁰ On conceptual and geographical basis, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan form a region. However, prior to discussing the problems and prospects of the constituents’ interdependence, it is imperative to formulate a theoretical framework for the better understanding of the process.

Functionalist scholars, led by the Hungarian political economist, David Mitrany, maintain that the division of political systems is actually the source of conflict among the nations; these can be transcended by searching out the areas of mutual interests and by creating a working web of international institutions, handled by technical elites. Furthermore, the nature of social and economic problems in the contemporary era is so complex that they cannot be solved individually by any single nation. Hence, it is of an immediate concern to identify common international, social and economic problems and to establish a global organization to handle such problems. In place of the League of Nations or any other organization, he argued for the creation of functionally particular and specific organizations, which would be capable of focusing on a single international problem and strive for its immediate and swift resolution. Once people in different countries learn about these new institutions and will begin experiencing the benefits and opportunities that such organizations offer, as well as tangible results of their work, the appreciation and acceptance of new organizations, built on functional grounds, designed to solve a variety of other diverse problems will accrue automatically. As a result, there will be created expanding circles of economic and social integration. Thus, functionalism advocates cooperation by means of “low politics,”¹¹ leading to greater political cooperation among nation-states in the long run. On the other hand, the neo-functionalists, led by Ernst Haas, in his book *The Unification of Europe*,¹² take integration as the process, through which political actors of distinct national settings are motivated to shift their expectations, loyalties and their political activities toward a larger common center. In this context, political parties, pressure groups, national and regional elites and supranational institutions become key players behind the integration process. The neo-functionalists also advocate “low politics” as the starting point with which functional cooperation should begin and attempt to prove that economic, social and political problems are inseparable in the long run, and that the bond between politics and economics plays an enormously important role in the integration process. Finally, the neo-functionalists’ concept of “integration” is both a process and an

⁸ N.D. Palmar, H.C. Parkins, *International Relations: The World Community in Transition*, A. I. T. B. S. Publishers and Distributors, New Delhi, 1997, p. 559.

⁹ See: P. Ghosh, *International Relations*, Learning Private Limited, Delhi, 2013, pp. 205-242.

¹⁰ See: A. Heywood, op. cit., pp. 480-506.

¹¹ Low Politics: According to Functionalists, it means cooperation between technical, social and economic sectors, which will effectively generate greater political cooperation among the countries in the long run (see: D. Mitrany, *A Working Peace System*, Quadrangle, Chicago, 1966).

¹² Ernst Bernard Haas defines Integration at length in his book, *The Uniting of Europe: Political, Social and Economic Forces, 1950-1957*, Stanford University Press, 1958.

outcome. They accentuate the cooperative decision-making process as the core of the concept of integration.¹³

The inter-governmentalist school of thought strongly advocates that states are the primary players in the regional cooperation process. To them, the regional integration process means bargaining among state heads in a region. Nation-states in a region always look for balance of their national interests with a regional integration objective.¹⁴ While the communication or transactionalistic model of regional integration, developed by Karl W. Deutsch, considers integration as the continuous process of international transactions, which will ultimately lead to development of the integrated socio-political system. For him integration is “the attainment, within a territory, of a ‘sense of community’ and of institutions and practices strong enough and widespread enough to assure, for a ‘long time,’ dependable expectations of ‘peaceful change’ among its population.”¹⁵ The basic idea of the entire concept of Deutsch is the need to form a political community, in order to avoid violence and to thus maximize the prospect for peace and prosperity among nation-states. By creating a political community, people will be able to abandon their narrow parochial orientations, traditional concepts of international relations, which revolve around state sovereignty only, and be able to build an organization to promote peace and prosperity. Thus, due to the constant nature of international transactions and the use of the means of communication, a social structure is created, uniting the elite and masses and inculcating in them a sense of belonging to a single community. Accordingly, the success of integration depends entirely on the “sense of community” of nation-states.¹⁶

Eventually, regional integration takes on a variety of forms, depending on the areas in which neighboring nation-states choose to cooperate. Therefore, many types of regional integration can be identified, but the important ones are listed below.

(A) Economic Integration: Machlup¹⁷ referred to economic integration as the division of labor. It involves the free movement of goods and discrimination or nondiscrimination in the treatment of factors of production and goods. Pelkmans¹⁸ argues that integration denotes both a process and the state of affairs. He also associates integration with the formation of a coalition of previously isolated national economies. Machlup, however, associates it with the gradual removal of economic boundaries between two or more nation-states.

According to R.C. Hine (1994), economic integration is a global phenomenon that affects all nation-states in the world. It is stimulated by Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and trade liberalization, and is boosted by international agencies, such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Multinational Corporation (MNC). By eliminating economic frontiers, nation-states link up their economies under specific integration schemes that eventually establish cooperation and coordination between them. Béla Balassa¹⁹ differentiates various degrees or stages of economic integration, such as a free trade area, customs union, common

¹³ See: K.C. Dash, *Regionalism in South Asia: Negotiating Cooperation, Institutional Structures*, Routledge, Abingdon/USA/Canada, 2008, pp. 4-8.

¹⁴ See: *Ibid.*, pp. 4-19.

¹⁵ Peaceful Change: To Deutsch, it means resolution of social problems, usually through nonviolent means and by institutionalized procedures (see: K.W. Deutsch, *et al.*, *Political Community and the North Atlantic Area: International Organization in the Light of Historical Experience*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, 1957, p. 5).

¹⁶ *Ibidem.*

¹⁷ Fritz Machlup is an Austrian-American economist who writes in detail about economic integration in his book *A History of Thought on Economic Integration*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1977.

¹⁸ Jacques Pelkmans also defines economic integration in his book *Market Integration in the European Community*, Springer, USA, 1984.

¹⁹ Béla Balassa, a Hungarian economist, gives details about the economic integration in his book *Theory of Economic Integration*, Routledge, USA/London, 2013.

market, economic union and complete economic integration. In a free trade area, the parties retain their own rules and restrictions in their dealing with countries, which are not members, but in their trade with each other the tariff barriers are not used. In this situation, goods from the outside of a free trade area may enter a member state, in which the installed customs barriers are high, through another country of the same area where the tariffs are lower.

A customs union is somewhat similar to a free trade area but differs slightly in its relations with the non-member countries. The participating countries of a union are obliged to undertake a unified policy on external trade and, accordingly, establish common customs tariffs in trade with states outside the union. Therefore, within the territory of a union, the movement of goods, regardless of their country of origin, is not constrained by any customs tariffs or quotas. A common market, like a customs union, aims to attain a higher form of economic integration, as both limitations on trade and movements of factors of production are eliminated across national boundaries. The movement of factors of production inside the common market is free but outside the common market their movement is regulated by national rules or general precepts of an association or a combination of the two. Finally, the economic union is a common market that removes restrictions on both the movement of factors of production and trade with a high level of harmonization of the relevant economic policies of various nations. It amalgamates fiscal and monetary policies, which are entirely controlled by central authority. Single currency and monetary policy is another attribute of the economic union. Economic policies are intentionally matched, so that member countries become effectively nations of one region. However, ultimate economic integration is the extreme level of economic integration, where all member countries or participants become a single nation in a complete sense, wherein a supra-national authority controls common policies of the member states and has full sovereignty over member nation-states in real terms, as its decisions are binding for them.²⁰

(B) Political Integration: Direct and indirect references of political integration stem from the neo-functional school of thought. This type of integration seems to have some complexities, as nation-states, before integrating themselves with the neighboring countries, view their interests through the prism of their foreign policy's compatibility with national interests. Political integration, as a concept, has been defined differently by different theorists; some are of the opinion that it is only a condition, while others treat it as a process. Karl W. Deutsch refers to it as "the probability that conflicts will be resolved without violence."²¹ The main theme of political integration is a "security-community."²² Political integration may be achieved in either pluralistic²³ or amalgamated²⁴ security-communities. However, integration is attained in both only when the states concerned surcease the use of violent means against each other. For Ernst Haas, "Political Integration is the process, where-

²⁰ See: J.P.C. Bento, *Economic Integration, International Trade and the Role of Foreign Direct Investment: The Case of Portuguese Manufacturing*, LIT Verlag, Berlin, 2009, pp. 1-4.

²¹ Quoted from: L.N. Lindberg, *The Political Dynamics of European Economic Integration*, Stanford University Press, California, 1963, p. 4.

²² Security-Community: A group of people, which with the passage of time has become integrated. Within a definite territory they have attained a sense of community or institutions strong and widespread enough to assure peaceful changes among its population for ages (see: *Ibid.*, p. 5).

²³ Pluralistic Security-Community: It exists when nation-states hold back the legal independence of separate governments and also maintain their separate national identities (see: *Ibid.*, p. 6).

²⁴ Amalgamated Security-Community: It means a formal merger of two previously independent units into a single larger unit with a unique government after merger. The best example which suits to amalgamated security-community is the United States (see: *Ibid.*, p. 8).

by political actors in several distinct national settings are persuaded to shift their loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new center, whose institutions possess or demand jurisdiction over the pre-existing nation-states. The end result of the process of political integration is a new political community, superimposed over the pre-existing ones.”²⁵

After defining the concept of political integration, political scientists performed a huge amount of work to identify conditions in which political integration is possible. Thus, along with the various other political scientists, Deutsch identified background factors or environmental conditions of the essence for amalgamated or pluralistic security-community: Compatible value systems, mutually responsive elites, adequate communication channels, a commitment to a new way of life and the existence of a core area. Likewise, Haas calls for a pluralistic social structure, a high level of economic and industrial development and a modicum of ideological homogeneity.²⁶

(C) Security Integration: Literally, the security integration means cooperation of nation-states, in order to protect themselves from their enemies, both neighboring and distant. So, the concept of regional integration supports and gives rise to the “security-community” concept, provided by Karl Deutsch. His concept of security-community applies here in two ways.

- First, regional organizations try to involve their members in the framework of peace through cooperation, which results in a deeper level of integration and interdependence, primarily in the economic sphere, thus ultimately making war between the member nation-states unimaginable. For example, the formation of European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) or European Economic Community (EEC) in 1952 and 1958, respectively, were designed to preclude France and Germany from future wars.
- The other factor behind the motivation for regional cooperation among the member states is to protect themselves from a common external enemy. Integration of Europe, which began in 1951 and was successfully completed in 1993, was regarded as the tool for safeguarding the region from the expansion of communism, the state ideology of the U.S.S.R.²⁷

The states, which entered or are entering into regional trade agreements may either increase regional trade and investment or create dissent among the member states. Usually, by coming to terms, member states develop a culture of cooperation, friendly environment and methodology, with which they are able to address important issues of their common interests. Regional Trade Agreements (RTAs) actually ameliorate the intraregional security, intraregional trade, mutual trust and finally, avoid the threats of war and minimize tensions among the member states.²⁸

India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan as a Region

After studying the available literature on the problems of the South Asian Region, it becomes necessary to thoroughly understand the intricate political conundrums of India, Pakistan, and Af-

²⁵ E.B. Haas, *The Uniting of Europe Political, Social and Economic Forces, 1950-1957*, Revised ed., University of Notre Dame Press, July 2004, p. 12.

²⁶ See: L.N. Lindberg, op. cit., pp. 1-13.

²⁷ See: A. Heywood, op. cit., pp. 482-483.

²⁸ See: L.K.-van Niekerk, “Regional Integration: Concepts, Advantages, Disadvantages, and Lessons of Experience,” pp.1-12, available at [http://www.sarpn.org/documents/d0001249/P1416-RI-concepts_May2005.pdf] and [http://www.sarpn.org/rpp/human_security.php?search=true], 25 February, 2016.

ghanistan. Only then it would be possible to consider the cooperation among the three countries in real terms. The fundamental question to be addressed is whether the conflict between them has a chance of being resolved at the regional level or not. First, it is quite obvious that all three countries, from the inception of their independence, were at loggerheads, while India and Pakistan fought many wars on different issues, and are living in a fragile nuclear deterrence environment. Violence, whether perpetrated through Hindu revivalism, Islamic fundamentalism or an uncompromising Kashmiri identity, cast ominous shadows over the region in general. The post-independence period has been evidenced by a long enumeration of claims, counterclaims, allegations and counter allegations over disputed territories and distribution of natural resources. Decolonization of the subcontinent sown the seeds of conflict in the region from the very beginning and hardly provided an opportunity for intelligentsia of the region to work out solutions for peace and regional cooperation. On the world stage, people question their Governments on good governance issues, the observance of human rights, and often democracy. Meanwhile, the escalation of violence is usually due to external intervention by the nonstate participants and an open access to the region. The conflicts around Kashmir and within Afghanistan's borders keep the SAARC region in a state of instability/uncertainty, which erodes the good will between India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Therefore, concentrating on de-escalation and, subsequently, preventing conflicts will have to remain very high on the priority list for India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan and their citizens as well. Furthermore, conflicts in the region, most importantly between India and Pakistan, seem difficult but not insoluble, provided all the actors in the region show enough maturity, develop trust, focus on nonpolitical issues and understand how conflicts disturb the peace and development of the region. For this, the three countries should rely on different Regional Cooperation Models and abandon the idea that conflicts have deep roots in the region. When the three countries understand how important they are for each other and how the opportunity to rely on the ability to resist general threats together is beneficial for their economies and for their development as a whole, this understanding will become a reliable basis for the initiatives on developing collaboration. And, therefore, the probability of joint operations for the mutual general benefits will make it possible to raise the level of collaboration in the region and will motivate the countries to together resist challenges and threats, which subject will be discussed below.²⁹

Challenges and Prospects

The South Asia as a region is plunged into the state of chaos by the international political and nonpolitical actors, who are reluctant to make the region compatible to other prosperous regional associations, like the European Union. Security of the region is in serious doubt, since almost all of the South Asian countries, especially India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan are the victims of terrorism, which is growing around the world in general and in the region in particular. Afghanistan is being considered the breeding ground of terrorism, which poses a threat to international peace and endangers the sovereign status of India and Pakistan. To counter the possible emerging threats and situations of grave nature after the complete withdrawal of NATO from Afghanistan, the policy-makers and influential stakeholders of Pakistan and India should develop a joint strategy for the improvement of Afghan economy and security. Afghan stakeholders should also understand that without the aid and assistance of Pakistan and India, Afghanistan cannot withstand the threats, posed by the extremist ideology infesting its social order. Also, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and India can face the challenge by the exchange

²⁹ See: P. Lyon, *Conflict between India and Pakistan. An Encyclopedia*, ABC-CLIO Publications, California, 2008, pp. ix-xiv.

of information among their intelligence services, like the Khadamat-e Aetela'at-e Dawlati (KHAD/ KhAd) of Afghanistan, Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of India and Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan. As long as there remains instability in Afghanistan, jolts to India and Pakistan's national economies are to be expected. Stability in Afghanistan is imperative for Pakistan and India to reach out to Central Asia for energy and other economic gains as well. Their political and economic presence in Afghanistan would be advantageous for trade and security. Control over natural resources of Central Asia through legitimate means would serve the interests of Pakistan and India, provided Afghanistan realizes that giving them access into and throughout Afghanistan is advantageous for the Afghan government and its people as well.

Religion, linguistic affinity, culture, and ethnic affiliations at times become a source of contention between Afghanistan and Pakistan. These common traits were always used as tools for chaos, confusion, anarchy, lawlessness, disorder and hatred against each other by some state and nonstate actors of both of the countries with the national and regional boundaries. Both Nawaz Sharif and Ashraf Ghani governments of Pakistan and Afghanistan, respectively, could use the similarity of traits for healthy and favorable relations between the two countries. In addition, by maintaining strong social base and people to people contacts, state actors would be ready to fight against their common problems, such as the challenges of poverty, underdevelopment, abysmal lack of basic life necessities of the people, inadequate health facilities, unjust distribution of economic gains across different sections of society, especially poignant among the already marginalized sections of society. Stability in Afghanistan and cooperating with it is important for both India and Pakistan because of its spillover effect on the whole region. To prevent this, both countries should develop a joint professional program for Afghan youth, thereby protecting the young people, especially in rural areas, from the trap of extremism, and preventing the country from slipping into civil war.

Other aspects of collaboration on which the three countries ought to work together are arresting the efforts of illicit trade and alleviate the deficit of their water requirements. Both India and Pakistan lack the adequate water supply, which hits their agricultural and other requirements. In Central and South Asia we have two important water sources: the Amu Darya and Indus rivers, and both water sources have been maintained poorly so far because of antiquated irrigation systems. However, common understanding and increased cooperation could make it possible to provide a substitute water source, for example, the Kabul river to cater to India and Pakistan's agricultural requirements. It is important to mention here that the conflicting postures of Pakistan and India make it unlikely, as Pakistan's increasing agricultural needs and the rising population of India are the factors, which create an obstacle to the water sharing agreements. However, there is a way out of this situation: the formulation of a new agreement, which is not restricted by the framework of the current treaty (the Indus Waters Treaty) on the waters of the Indus, covering all the developmental problems of the territory of the Indus basin in its entirety, which would significantly strengthen and expand the likelihood for cooperation. The participation of the U.S. and European Union in this agreement would help to minimize the lack of trust between the two countries.

Keeping in mind the nature and historical relations between India-Pakistan and Afghanistan, the cooperation among the trio could be achieved in the spheres of cultural and educational exchanges, trade, tourism, etc. This would significantly improve the atmosphere for promoting contacts between people and help create a sense of unity regardless of the nature of their political systems and ideological differences. Therefore, the cooperation will significantly empower them to counter terrorism and the divisive tendencies in the region.