

Regional Cooperation in South West Asia

Author(s): Abbas Maleki

Source: *Pakistan Horizon*, Vol. 47, No. 2 (April 1994), pp. 23-25

Published by: Pakistan Institute of International Affairs

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41393470>

Accessed: 12-05-2023 18:29 +00:00

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



JSTOR

Pakistan Institute of International Affairs is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Pakistan Horizon*

Regional Cooperation in South West Asia

Abbas Maleki

I have no doubt that with the promotion of brotherly and friendly relations among South-West Asian countries, we will be able to increase our economic cooperation through joint efforts in the agricultural and industrial fields and thus be able to provide a higher living standard for our people. To achieve this commendable goal we have to increase our political, economic, cultural, and technological ties and contacts, and improve our understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of our countries in order to be able to play an effective role in the region and in the international system.

International events have been changing very rapidly, especially since 1989-90 and the search is on for a "new world order" or for what may be better called a "new world arrangement". The collapse of the bipolar political and military system, the decline of the US industrial productivity and the economic challenge of Japan and Germany are factors contributing to a new era in international relations. The most distinguished characteristics of this era can be traced to the strategic priority of economics and technology over politics. Therefore, the new structure of the world order should be identifiable on the basis of industrial production, financial strength, and technological superiority. At the global level there is no longer a "monopoly economy". Increasingly, the world economy is operating around three major economic centres: the North American, the West European, and the East Asian. Whether the new international framework will produce conflict and confrontation over economic issues or a healthy combination of competition and cooperation, the current trend of regionalism will continue, bringing to the fore transnational issues.

The three giant regional economies, the European Community (EC), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and the Asia Pacific Economic Community (APEC) will be the major regional economies of the world in the coming century. Almost all of the industries and most of the newly industrialized countries (NICs) are

From an address delivered by Mr Abbas Maleki, Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Iran, at the Pakistan Institute of International Affairs, on 30 March 1994.

members of these three agreements. Interestingly enough, only a few developing countries have been invited to joint these agreements. Since the developing countries contain most of the world's natural resources, it will be no surprise to see a global competition among the three regional communities to expand their spheres of influence into the richest countries of the developing regions. It is in this respect that the countries of South West Asia can and should play an important and effective role in shaping the new world order. As military considerations are being replaced by economic considerations, we can strengthen our economic and geopolitical position in the new world order by increasing economic cooperation among ourselves and hence be in a position to exert some influence on regional and global affairs.

Iran, Pakistan and India are the most important countries of South West Asia. They have an area of 5,732,000 square kilometers and have borders with four major regions. From the east we are connected to the fastest growing economies of the world. Many believe that the East Asian countries will be the engine of the world economy in the next century. To the south-west we are part of the petroleum rich region of the Persian Gulf. This area contains over 60 per cent of the world reserves of crude oil and 30 per cent of the world reserves of natural gas. To the north are a group of Central Asian States where there is a great potential for the expansion of regional trade. To the north-west we are linked to one of the most advanced industries of the world. The markets of this region, Europe, are well suited for our labour-intensive products.

Our countries, with populations of over one billion, have great potential for attracting foreign investment for developing our industries. India alone is one of the largest economic units in the world and can become a major manufacturing centre in the area. Iran is one of the major producers of crude oil and natural gas. Besides its political and geopolitical importance, Pakistan also has great economic potential.

To aid industrial development and promote economic relations, cooperation in the utilization and advancement of the oil industry and natural gas seems to be the best area of endeavour. Iran, with nine per cent of the world's crude oil reserves and 17 per cent of the world's natural gas reserves, can provide the most secure, the safest and cheapest supply of petroleum and natural gas to Pakistan and India. Indeed construction of the "peace pipeline" to carry Iran's natural gas to Pakistan and India can play, and should play, an important role in creating a peaceful and friendly environment in the region. Because of its potential in promoting peace and economic cooperation in the region, we believe the high cost of this pipeline will ultimately result

in ways of developing and advancing our political, economic, and cultural relations.

Strengthening close cooperation among our countries depends on the expansion of economic cooperation in this region. But to pave the way for greater economic and political cooperation, we have to remove the existing political tensions between Pakistan and India. Not only political and economic development, but also peaceful, friendly relations among nations are the necessary prerequisites for any kind of fruitful bilateral or multilateral economic cooperation. Economic relations can only grow and flourish in a friendly and tranquil political and cultural environment.

To create such a solid foundation for advancing our economic cooperation, we have to remove existing political and cultural obstacles in a highly creative fashion. The Kashmir issue, for example, must be solved and other outstanding differences between Pakistan and India should gradually be removed.

During these years Iran has supported Pakistan's position on Kashmir and recently we were the only country that supported Pakistan's position on the human rights resolution in Geneva. Past history and existing realities are indicative of the fact that some of the big powers are doing their best to block progress towards creating a friendly environment for the political, economic, and cultural advancement of our nations. It is obvious that these powers do not want economic cooperation to flourish among developing countries. The geopolitical importance of our countries and our independent foreign policies may provide the opportunities for some countries to exert negative pressure on us in order to block our progress and hinder our cooperation, but we believe our conscious efforts will neutralize such attempts.

As the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran has indicated, through negotiations with his counterparts in Pakistan, China and India, our nation's sincere wish is in promoting greater cultural, economic and political relations among our countries. It is a fact that fruitful economic cooperation can be achieved and promoted if we succeed in resolving the sensitive political and cultural crises of our region by ourselves. This can be possible through confidence-building measures, continuous dialogue, and reassurances of goodwill and the intention of solving existing problems. All these are both opportunities and challenges that we must meet fearlessly and creatively.