**The rise of a regional alliance**

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It seems as if Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey joining forces in the foreseeable future is not just an opinion but a fact. Perhaps the first decision by these three will be to contain the socio-political aftermath in the wake of the US troops leaving Afghanistan. Turkish Foreign Minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu’s discussion with his Pakistani counterpart during his visit to Pakistan in January 2021 hinted at the formation of such an alliance.

Reports claim that during Cavusoglu’s visit, Pakistan and Turkey deliberated upon various points to discuss and elaborate over the roadmap for Pak-Turkey cooperation. It is expected that their alliance will focus on the defence industry among other viable sectors of the economy.

When speaking about Iran’s influence in the South Asian region, the recently struck China-Iran deal of $400 billion is being considered as a game-changer in its regard. If all matters are pursued with diligence, Iran will eventually settle into the equation where China’s global economic influence, backed by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) will provide Iran with an economic stimulus. If this plan succeeds, China will garner enough economic might to overshadow the entire Asian region with influence hovering over the West.

[India's unwillingness to bring peace in occupied Kashmir](https://nation.com.pk/13-Feb-2021/india-s-unwillingness-to-bring-peace-in-occupied-kashmir)

Some reports claim that Azerbaijan may also step into this bloc, hence allowing Pakistan-Turkey-Iran to form an alliance with Central Asia with China leading from the front. Although Turkey has its roots with the Western alliance, China’s offer to Iran and Turkey in providing them support in technology and infrastructural development along with assistance in finance and economic aspects will turn them into strong regional allies.

For Turkey, its presence in the Belt and Road Initiative has led to the creation of direct rail links with China. This rail route moves from Kars, Turkey’s northeast city and the capital of Kars Province, to Tbilisi, the capital and the largest city of Georgia—that borders Azerbaijan—before entering into Baku, Azerbaijan’s capital and its largest city. Several rail and sea routes are also being planned. They will connect Turkey with Central Asia and East Asia. Reports also claim that a meeting of foreign ministers between Pakistan, Turkey, and Azerbaijan is likely to happen soon.

[Lahore-Sialkot motorway closed due to dense fog](https://nation.com.pk/13-Feb-2021/lahore-sialkot-motorway-closed-owing-to-dense-fog)

At the geopolitical level, Azerbaijan’s inclination to join Turkey-Pakistan-Iran is gradually moving it away from Russia. The Nakhchivan Corridor has allowed Turkey to access the Caspian Sea. Turkey—after negotiations and discussions—may as well bypass the Suez Canal. It is yet to be seen what geopolitical and economic implications will this decision make.

Furthermore, in December 2020, Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan decided to reform and relaunch the Istanbul-Tehran-Islamabad (ITI) rail network. It was initially launched in 2009. The purpose is to augment communication and trade links among the three countries. While trial runs have been conducted, the official opening of the ITI is expected to be held soon. The 6,500-kilometer (4,030 miles) railway line will run 1,950 kilometres in Turkey, 2,600 kilometres in Iran, and 1,990 kilometres in Pakistan. The ITI has a clear chance of being incorporated into China’s Belt and Road Initiative to add value to CPEC while providing economic, trade, and logistic support to Turkey, Iran, Pakistan while adding to their economic growth.

[Rajab moon not sighted in Pakistan: Ruet-e-Hilal Committee](https://nation.com.pk/12-Feb-2021/rajab-moon-not-sighted-in-pakistan-ruet-e-hilal-committee)

According to Fatemeh Aman, an Iranian analyst at the Atlantic Council’s South Asia Centre, the proposed $400 billion deal between China and Iran will make it imperative for China to develop more projects akin to the ITI. This will be needed to increase China’s connectivity in the region.