

Mecca Agreement: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye Trilateral

Set to Reshape West Asia Security Architecture

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Introduction

The signing of the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement by Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye on 07 Aug 2026 should not have come as a surprise. The agreement builds upon the bilateral Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) signed by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in Riyadh on 17 Sep 2025, while bringing Türkiye into a broader trilateral collective-defence framework.¹ Islamabad, Riyadh and Ankara had been negotiating the joint pact for almost a year.

The trilateral agreement is far more significant than another military pact as the envisaged security framework covers a vast geographic space—from the Mediterranean to the Arabian Sea. It reflects the emergence of a new geopolitical axis across the Islamic world, prompted by prevailing uncertainties and the quest for an alternate security architecture. While the agreement may fall short of formal alliance, yet politically, it conveys a strong symbolic message. The strategic significance of the agreement lies in creating a framework that could eventually evolve into one of the most influential partnerships in the Afro-Asian region.

Strategic Drivers for the Trilateral Convergence

The agreement is driven by the rapidly changing geopolitical realities. The prolonged United States (US)-Israel conflict with Iran, ambiguity over the American long-term security commitment in the Gulf and growing inter-power rivalry have forced the regional states to review their strategic options.

Pakistan has always harboured a vision of a collective security mechanism for the Islamic nations. The Mecca pact enables Islamabad to acquire enormous geopolitical dividends—from being just a South Asian military power to becoming a potential security provider in West Asia. Besides gaining greater strategic reach and influence, Islamabad reaps significant economic benefits, a boost in defence exports and enhancement of its credentials as the only Muslim-majority nuclear-armed state.

Saudi Arabia, despite close ties with US is keen to diversify defence partnerships. It certainly reflects Riyadh's deeper review of its security situation. Missile and drone threats from Iran, instability around Yemen and the Red Sea due to Houthis, besides limitations of American security guarantees have compelled Riyadh to seek greater security autonomy. As a sequel to the signing of the SMDA, Pakistan deployed a military contingent, including fighter and support aircraft, to Saudi Arabia in April 2026 to strengthen joint military coordination and enhance the operational readiness of the two countries' armed forces.²

Türkiye, under President Recep Erdogan is in pursuit of its ambition to emerge as a major military-Industrial power of the Islamic world. Ankara is keen to extend its strategic reach well across Eurasia and West Asia. As part of the Mecca framework,

Türkiye will be able to expand its influence into the Gulf and South Asia, while creating new markets and partnerships for its rapidly growing defence industry.

The convergence of national interests of the three nations has resulted in transforming the long-drawn relationship into an institutionalised strategic framework. The trilateral agreement goes beyond the conventional military alliances as it complements the collective diplomatic and military potential of the three countries. Saudi Arabia contributes financial resources and political influence in the Gulf region. Türkiye contributes by way of advanced industrial infrastructure and proven military technology. Pakistan contributes significant conventional military capability, strategic location and, implicitly, the political weight associated with its nuclear-weapon status. Essentially, the pact seeks to combine Saudi Arabia's financial power, Turkish defence technology, and Pakistani military capability into a coordinated security structure.

Incidentally, West Asia has a history of defence pacts, the most notable being the Baghdad Pact later renamed as Central Treaty Organization.³ It was formed in 1955 by Türkiye, Iraq, Britain, Pakistan and Iran, engineered by the West to check the Soviet expansion into the Middle East. It collapsed in 1979 due to structural weaknesses, lack of integration and internal contradictions.⁴

Architecture of the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement

Although the full treaty text has not been publicly released, but from the announcements of the three governments, the key provision that stands out is the 'Collective Defence' clause. It states that "An armed aggression against one member shall be considered an attack against all". As per the Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan, technically it is aligned with the principle of collective defence, comparable to the NATO Article 5, though its implementation mechanism remains undisclosed.⁵

The Mecca Joint Defence Agreement enhances regional stability through coordinated defence planning, military cooperation and intelligence sharing. Its expanded scope encompasses joint military exercises, increased interoperability, improved operational and logistics coordination and, cooperation in counterterrorism, cyber security, and strategic analysis.

The defence industrial collaboration envisages joint research and development, technology transfer, co-production of military equipment and integration of the defence industries. Türkiye's defence exports have surged substantially over the last decade. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 envisages localisation of defence production. Pakistan's armament industry further complements the efforts of joint production and technology sharing. Hence, this partnership could create a competitive defence-industrial hub, serving markets across Africa and Asia.

Lastly, there is also provision for an institutionalised consultation mechanism among the political and military leadership during regional crisis and as a regular strategic dialogue.

The issues that remain unclear in the public domain include whether the military intervention is automatic or subject to political clearance, command and control structure, force contribution commitment, guidelines for deployment outside the

territories of member countries; additionally, whether the pact covers the proxy attacks, maritime blockades and criteria for admitting future members. As per information in the public domain, the collective defence clause per se, does not imply an explicit Pakistani nuclear guarantee to Saudi Arabia.

Regional Strategic Ramifications

There is bound to be a ripple effect, consequences extending well beyond the three accord partners. Tehran could perceive the pact as a predominantly Sunni-led strategic framework, which poses a serious challenge to its security, notwithstanding repeated assurances by the signatories that the agreement is defensive and not directed against any specific country. More so, Iran is an important neighbour of both Pakistan and Türkiye. However, Pakistan's nuclear status introduces a latent dimension, with the ambiguity itself carrying deterrent value. Overall, Tehran is expected to accelerate its missile-drone programme, expand naval capabilities, pursue asymmetric deterrence, and consolidate its position in the 'axis of resistance'.

The Gulf states, given the varying geopolitical positions are unlikely to move as a bloc. Bahrain could align closely with Saudi initiatives, while Qatar may explore selective participation. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Kuwait may support selective initiatives-while preserving strategic autonomy. Oman possibly will keep its options open and engage with both sides. The US influence in the region will definitely get diluted as the Gulf states diversify their security set ups. Egypt is unlikely to subordinate itself to a Saudi-Turkish-led security arrangement and maintain strategic autonomy; yet cooperate in the Red Sea security initiatives as Cairo has been involved in the discussions.⁶

For Israel, the situation is quite complex. Türkiye possesses one of the region's strongest conventional armed forces, while Pakistan has never recognised Israel. Saudi Arabia, incidentally, remains central to any future restructuring of Arab-Israeli relations. A formal trilateral pact, therefore, introduces another variable to Israel's regional security calculus. However, Tel Aviv is unlikely to oppose the pact publicly and even silently accommodate it. China could quietly welcome the region's growing strategic autonomy while the US may give it a tacit nod.

Implications for India

For India, the implications are sensitive and merit pragmatic strategic assessment. Delhi has important relations with Riyadh, though with Ankara the ties have been periodically strained due to Türkiye's position on Kashmir and close defence ties with Pakistan. India's critical concern is Pakistan's significant political and strategic gains through widened access to Turkish military technology, which would incrementally enhance its military capacity. Islamabad could also externalise the South Asian security equation.

India has indicated that it is examining the Mecca agreement's implications for national security and regional stability.⁷ Delhi needs to intensify its engagement with Riyadh, preserve growing partnership with the UAE and Egypt, further deepen ties with Israel and France; simultaneously keep channels open with Iran.

Is an Islamic NATO Emerging?

The Mecca agreement signifies a larger transformation that is underway in international politics. The emerging trend defies the erstwhile rigid Cold War-style bloc configurations. Instead, the format is characterised by flexible and overlapping issue-based coalitions of middle powers. Cases in point— Türkiye can remain a member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) while joining the new trilateral defence pact; Saudi Arabia can remain a strategic partner of the US while being part of the Mecca Agreement; and Pakistan can maintain deep defence ties with China while simultaneously remaining a strategic partner of the US.

At present, the pact appears to be a framework agreement rather than a detailed operational alliance. Its significance lies not so much in the published clauses but more in the political commitment to the collective defence mechanism. However, the real challenge will be how the agreement translates into an integrated command structure, an intelligence sharing mechanism, protocols for joint training exercises, apparatus for unified logistics and cooperation in defence-industrial ecosystem. Above all, as to how the thresholds for collective military action are defined, especially translating political solidarity into battlefield interoperability.

Conclusion

The Agreement potentially is set to reshape the Gulf security architecture which for decades rested overwhelmingly on the on the US, by way of bilateral military relationships. While the Mecca Accord does not abandon America, yet regional powers want additional layers to augment their national security. This marks a definite transition from security dependency to strategic hedging. The pact could redefine the security in the Red Sea as Bab el-Mandeb-Suez corridor has become increasingly vulnerable to the missile-drone and maritime disruption. The coordinated Pakistan-Saudi-Turkish maritime mechanism could eventually emerge as the as the establishment of an 'Islamic NATO' pact's most practical outcome.

The temptation to describe the agreement as establishment of 'Islamic NATO' must be resisted. It may best be perceived as a new strategic axis, part of the ongoing churn in an increasingly disruptive global security environment. Numerous imponderables embedded in the pact constitute a paradox that will determine whether 'Mecca Joint Defence Agreement' evolves into a formidable regional security alliance connecting the security equations of West and South Asia or turns into another diplomatic construct.

Ultimately, the strategic significance of the Mecca Agreement will be determined not by the breadth of its political declarations, but by whether its members can translate collective-defence commitments into institutionalised military planning, interoperable forces, and credible action during a future crisis.

Endnotes

¹ Andrew England, Ahmed Al Omran, and Humza Jilani, "Saudi Arabia Signs 'Strategic Mutual Defence' Pact with Pakistan", *Financial Times*, 18 Sep 2025, <https://www.ft.com/content/50a48a5a-a022-411d-803e-bbd804f99563>

² Saudi Gazette, "Pakistani Military Force Arrives in Saudi Arabia as Part of Defense Pact", 11 Apr 2026, <https://saudigazette.com.sa/article/660444/saudi-arabia/pakistani-military-force-arrives-in-saudi-arabia-as-part-of-defense-pact>.

³ Behçet Kemal Yeşilbursa, "CENTO: The Forgotten Alliance in the Middle East (1959–1979)", *Middle Eastern Studies* 56, no. 6 (2020): 854–877, 06 May 2020, accessed 13 Aug 2026, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263206.2020.1755841>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Reuters, "Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia Defence Pact Technically Same as NATO's Article 5, Turkish Minister Says," 08 Aug 2026, accessed 13 Aug, [Turkey, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia defence pact technically same as NATO's Article 5, Turkish minister says | Reuters](https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/turkey-pakistan-saudi-arabia-defence-pact-technically-same-as-natos-article-5-turkish-minister-says-2026-08-08/)

⁶ Ragıp Soylu, "Why Egypt Did Not Immediately Join Turkey, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan Defence Pact", *Middle East Eye*, 10 Aug 2026, accessed 13 Aug 2026, <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/why-egypt-did-not-immediately-join-turkey-saudi-arabia-pakistan-pact>

⁷ ET Online, "India Examining Mecca Joint Defence Agreement's Impact on National Security, Regional Stability, Says MEA", *The Economic Times*, 11 Aug 2026, accessed 13 Aug 2026, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/india-examining-mecca-joint-defence-agreements-impact-on-national-security-regional-stability-says-mea/articleshow/133153375.cms>

About the Author

Major General (Dr) (Prof) GG Dwivedi, SM, VSM (Retd), retired as the Assistant Chief of Integrated Defence Staff after 38 years of distinguished service in the Indian Army. A veteran of the Bangladesh War, he subsequently commanded his battalion in Siachen, a brigade in the Kashmir Valley, and a division in the Northeast. He also served as Defence Attaché to China, with concurrent accreditation to North Korea and Mongolia. An alumnus of the National Defence College and Harvard Kennedy School, he holds a PhD from Jawaharlal Nehru University. An acclaimed author, strategic affairs commentator and speaker, he regularly appears as a panellist on national television.