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PAKISTAN–TÜRKIYE STRATEGIC RELATIONS AFTER THE MAKKAH JOINT DEFENSE AGREEMENT: PROSPECTS FOR DEFENSE COOPERATION AND REGIONAL SECURITY

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Abstract

The signing of the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement by Pakistan, Türkiye, and Saudi Arabia on 7 August 2026 represents a significant development in the evolving security architecture of the wider Middle East and South Asia. The agreement stipulates that an armed attack against any one of the three states shall be regarded as an attack against all, while committing the parties to enhanced defence cooperation and collective deterrence. Although the agreement is trilateral in formal character, its implications for Pakistan–Türkiye strategic relations are particularly significant because Islamabad and Ankara already possess a well-developed defence partnership involving military training, joint exercises, naval cooperation, defence-industrial collaboration, technology transfer, and institutionalized strategic dialogue.

This article examines how the Makkah Agreement may reshape Pakistan–Türkiye strategic relations and evaluates its implications for defence cooperation and regional security. It argues that the agreement should not be interpreted simply as the creation of a new military alliance; rather, it represents an attempt to institutionalize an existing network of bilateral and trilateral security relationships. The principal opportunity lies in transforming established Pakistan–Türkiye defence cooperation from a predominantly bilateral arrangement into a broader mechanism involving joint research and development, defence-industrial co-production, interoperability, unmanned systems, electronic warfare, artificial intelligence, air and missile defence, maritime security, and coordinated strategic planning. The creation of a trilateral institutional structure and a permanent secretariat further increases the possibility of sustained cooperation.

At the same time, the emerging framework faces substantial challenges. Differences in strategic priorities, divergent threat perceptions, technological

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dependencies, external-power reactions, questions surrounding the interpretation of collective-defence commitments, and the possibility of regional polarization could constrain its effectiveness. Pakistan must also balance its security relationship with Saudi Arabia and Türkiye with its relations with other regional actors, particularly Iran. The article concludes that the long-term significance of the Makkah framework will depend less on the symbolism of the agreement than on whether Pakistan and Türkiye can convert political solidarity into sustainable institutional, technological, industrial, and operational cooperation while maintaining a defensive and stabilizing orientation.

INTRODUCTION

On 7 August 2026, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan signed a much-anticipated defence agreement. Negotiations had been underway for more than two years, but the war involving Iran, the United States and Israel created a favourable environment for the treaty.[1] While the ongoing war in West Asia may not have clear winners, it has created an opportunity for other powers to capitalise on the changing security environment. Since the outbreak of the war, both Ankara and Islamabad have offered diplomatic and security guarantees to several Gulf countries, including Saudi Arabia, culminating in the trilateral Makkah Joint Defence Agreement with Riyadh. The agreement emphasises a commitment to deterrence through intelligence sharing, defence cooperation and the institutionalisation of existing bilateral security partnerships. The declaration contains the striking formulation that an armed attack against any one country would be regarded as an attack on all three. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan subsequently stated that the provision is technically similar to Article 5 of NATO.

The agreement comes at a time when West Asia is undergoing a major strategic transition. This can be gauged from the fact that relations between Riyadh and Ankara have shifted from periods of rivalry and mistrust towards greater alignment and partnership. This reflects a broader recalibration of regional relationships, with states reassessing older rivalries in response to changing threat perceptions and power dynamics. The convergence between Saudi Arabia and Turkey illustrates how shifts in the regional balance can transform relations from strategic competition into partnership. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have had a mutual defence agreement since September 2025, under which Pakistan has deployed troops and air defence assets inside the kingdom.[3] Pakistani officials have maintained that the bilateral defence agreement with Riyadh does not extend to a nuclear umbrella. During the Iran-US war, however, Saudi Arabia was able to leverage its partnership with Pakistan in negotiations and efforts to manage escalation with Iran. Against this backdrop, the trilateral agreement carries a diplomatic dimension that could make it more consequential than the existing bilateral arrangements.

The three countries bring different strategic capabilities to the partnership. Turkey contributes extensive experience in NATO interoperability and a rapidly expanding indigenous defence-industrial base. Pakistan brings substantial military capacity, significant missile capabilities and nuclear deterrence. Saudi Arabia provides financial resources, strategically important geography, influence over energy markets and considerable diplomatic and political weight in the region and the broader Muslim world. Together, these capabilities give the partnership the potential to develop into a comprehensive and institutionalised military and security arrangement. The alliance, however, has deliberately retained ambiguity regarding the

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object of its deterrence as no common adversary has been explicitly identified.[1]

The agreement therefore raises a fundamental research question:

- How might the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement transform Pakistan–Türkiye strategic relations, and what consequences could this transformation have for defence cooperation and regional security?
- what challenges—including geopolitical competition, relations with other regional powers, institutional constraints, and technological dependencies—could limit deeper defence cooperation?
- How might the agreement affect Pakistan and Türkiye's strategic partnerships with other states, particularly in South Asia and the Middle East?

This question is important because the Makkah framework is not emerging from an institutional vacuum. Pakistan and Türkiye already possess established bilateral mechanisms, while Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have a longstanding defence relationship and Türkiye and Saudi Arabia have expanded defence-industrial ties. The new arrangement consequently represents the convergence of several pre-existing strategic relationships.

This article advances three principal arguments. First, the Makkah Agreement is best understood as an **institutional multiplier** for existing Pakistan–Türkiye defence cooperation rather than a replacement for bilateral relations. Second, the agreement creates opportunities for cooperation in technologically sophisticated areas—including unmanned systems, artificial intelligence, electronic warfare, air and maritime capabilities, and joint defence production—that could deepen strategic interdependence. Third, the regional-security consequences will depend on whether the emerging framework remains primarily defensive and cooperative or evolves into a more explicitly bloc-oriented security arrangement.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research methodology to examine the evolution of Pakistan–Türkiye strategic relations following the signing of the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement in August 2026, with particular emphasis on defence cooperation and its implications for regional security. A qualitative approach is appropriate because the research seeks to understand the strategic motivations, institutional developments, defence-industrial cooperation, and regional-security implications associated with the emerging trilateral framework involving Pakistan, Türkiye, and Saudi Arabia.

Research Design

The research employs a **descriptive and analytical case-study design**. The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement is treated as the central case through which the changing nature of Pakistan–Türkiye strategic relations is examined. The study investigates how the agreement may affect existing bilateral defence relations between Pakistan and Türkiye and how these relations could contribute to broader patterns of cooperation, deterrence, defence-industrial collaboration, and regional security.

Literature Review

This study combines Regional Security Complex Theory with Balance-of-Threat Theory.

Regional Security Complex Theory is useful because Pakistan, Türkiye, and Saudi Arabia are situated in different but increasingly interconnected security environments. The MJDA potentially creates a transregional security mechanism through which threats in one

[1] Yaqoob ul Hassan, The Saudi-Turkey-Pakistan Trilateral Security Partnership: Strategic Convergence and Regional Implications.

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geographical area can generate political and military responses in another.

Balance-of-threat theory complements this perspective by explaining why states may deepen security cooperation when they perceive common or overlapping threats. The MJDA's collective-defence principle can therefore be interpreted as an institutional mechanism for enhancing deterrence.

The combination of these theories generates three expectations:

1. Threat convergence should increase defence cooperation.
2. Institutionalization should increase the credibility of collective deterrence.
3. Persistent differences in threat perception should constrain military integration.

The third point is especially important. Pakistan's principal strategic concern remains closely connected to India and South Asian security, while Saudi Arabia's security priorities are heavily influenced by Gulf and Middle Eastern developments. Türkiye has a wider strategic agenda involving NATO, the Black Sea, Syria, Iraq, the Caucasus, the Mediterranean, and the Middle East. Therefore, the three countries possess overlapping but not identical security priorities.

The literature on Pakistan–Türkiye relations demonstrates that the relationship has evolved from historical and cultural affinity into a broader strategic partnership encompassing diplomacy, defence, economic cooperation, and regional-security issues. Existing scholarship provides a useful foundation for understanding the development of bilateral defence cooperation; however, the emergence of the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement in 2026 creates a new research context that has not yet been extensively examined in academic literature.

Historical Evolution of Pakistan–Türkiye Relations

After division, Pakistan laid out improving its political relations with different countries, one of them was the principal grounds to which their thinking turned was Türkiye. The Muslims of the sub-continent learnt incredible lessons and motivation during their struggle for freedom from the Turkish brothers. Malik Firoze Khan, on unique directives of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah visited Türkiye on 12th December 1947 and communicated: 'Pakistan values the magnificent past of Türkiye, and its dynamic accomplishments and definitive limits in different times. Pakistan is right now a young independent country, and soon the two amicable countries will spread out close friendly, business and political relations. Another bright time will emerge for these two countries.

Türkiye's Position over Kashmir Issue

During the 60's, the Turkish leaders and their popular opinion showed sharp increase for Pakistan's viewpoint as for the Kashmir question. For instance in February 1962, the Yeni Istanbul, a generally distributed paper of Türkiye, it maintained Pakistan's right stand' on Kashmir issue and communicated that Kashmir had a comparable similar importance of which Mr. Nehru had used while having Goa. He further said that the world must understand of Goa being typically maintained Indian situation for this present circumstance, on the plea of patriotism, the Indian administration ought to have recognized Pakistan's genuine right over Kashmir and acted with more conspicuous understanding (Khan, 2016). In 1966, The Turkish minister of foreign affairs made an urging request to the United Nations General Assembly for an early ceasefire on the Kashmir with reference to the resolutions of Security Council. In the month of February 1999, Peace initiative started in Lahore among Pakistan and India, the then Government of Turkey maintained the harmony proposition and their foreign ministry concerned the peace process as the most reasonable ground to address the critical issue among Pakistan and India.

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Pakistan Support over Cyprus Issue

In 1954 and in 1957, Pakistan upheld the real reason for Turkish Cypriots in the General Assembly and insisted that the world leaders in United Nations to fulfill the genuine desire of the Turkish Cypriots. Later the Pakistan delegation in 1959 at the UN encouraged the world organization for the guarantees of the human rights and the real desire of the Turkish Cypriots. Cypriots acquired freedom and their independence in 1960, under the pact of Zurich, supported by the Türkiye, Greece and the United Kingdom. The constitution supported the Turkish subgroups with extensive privileges in collective ties and outright dismissal on huge administrative and governmental decisions. At the time when suggested constitutional amendments by the Turkish Leader of Cyprus grieved the conditions of the Turkish people for guaranteed opportunities and the problem was again raised to the UN Security Council. Pakistan showed full assistance to the Turkish government in United Nations. In 1963 Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto went to meet the members of the General Assembly of the UN and in his position he showed full commitment, responsibility and a worry of the Government of Pakistan and her concern for their Turkish community. He showed desire to stay aware of that agreements settled the issues of Cyprus ought to be viewed as international responsibility and guaranteed that Pakistan will drive full support to Türkiye in these critical times of crisis.

Turkish Attitude over Pakistan-India Wars.

The start of the India-Pakistan war on 6th September, 1965, was a key test of Pakistan's support and friendship with its regional partners. Turkish Prime Minister Urugplu said: "The Government of Turkey believed that Secretary General of the UN, U Thant efforts to broker a truce would be successful. He further mentioned that India was making matters worse by taking the conflict past Kashmir into the territory of Pakistan and by shelling Pakistani cities. He continued: "The recent dangerous escalation of tension between Pakistan and India is a straight outcome of the tension with the single solution to the Kashmir issue." On September 10, 1965, Iran and Turkiye issued a joint statement demanding an immediate ceasefire and urged India to withdraw all its troops, along with their weapons and ammunition, from the territory of Pakistan. A large number of Turkish people offered to fight against Indian aggression and a large number of medical staff went Pakistan to serve there. Nearly $5Million worth of ammunition was sent to Pakistan during the war which had already been negotiated before (Kaur, 1993). Later in December 1971 when the India-Pakistan war broke out again, Turkish Prime Minister Nihat Erim called on India to quickly withdraw Indian troops. In June 1972, the President, Mr. Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto, visited Turkey. A collective statement was issued after meeting his Turkish counterpart President Cevdet Sunay, both leaders expressed the optimism that the anticipated summit meeting between the Head of State of Pakistan and the Indian Prime Minister would lead to a definitive and just resolution of the disagreement between the two countries. In his speech to the UN General Assembly on 4 October 1972, Turkish Foreign Minister made an urgent call to free the Pakistani troops held as prisoners of war in Indian Territory since December 1971.[2]

Strategic Position of Turkey-Pakistan

The geo-strategic location of both Pakistan and Turkey are unique and similar to a greater extent. Turkey's geo-strategic importance stems from its central location at the crossroads of the Balkans, the Caucasus, the Persian Gulf and the Middle

[2] 1Ahmed Hussain Shah Bukhari, Dr.Jamshed Ali Baloch and 3Dr. Imran Ali. Pakistan- Türkiye Bilateral Relations: A Historical Perspective. Journal of Development and Social Sciences (JDSS). Volume 5, Issue 4 (2024)

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East, which were major regions of instability and conflict in the post-Cold War era. With the war against Iraq, Turkey was once again exposed to the grim realities of its geographic proximity with a large Iraqi Kurdish region adjacent to its own Kurd-inhabited areas. Turkey has a huge population of ethnic Kurds in its South East bordering Iraq, in view of which Ankara has been keen on checking any Kurdish fissiparous tendencies within Iraq. Similarly, Pakistan is geostrategically placed at the crossroads of Central Asia, West Asia and South Asia, right next to Afghanistan that has faced decades of war, with ethnic affiliations on both sides of the Durand line. Post-9/11, Pakistan became the frontline state in the war against terrorism that brought the international community to Afghanistan. Both Pakistan and Turkey are playing important roles in their respective conflict-ridden regions, specifically in view of the fast-changing developments in the post 9/11 international relations.

Economic Ties

For the past five years, trade between Pakistan and Turkey has hovered around $160 million, which does not commensurate with the potential of this relationship or partnership.16 Although some Turkish companies in the private sector have invested in Pakistan including Bayinder, Enka and Tekser, for various projects in the country but not many Pakistani companies are actively working in Turkey. There is hope that in keeping with the global trends, economic interaction will assume centre-stage in relations between Pakistan and Turkey. The transportation facilities between Turkey and Pakistan are inadequate and there is a need to set up a joint cargo line/regular charter vessel services between Karachi and Istanbul. There is also a need to provide a permanent display centre of Pakistani products in Istanbul and to organise Single Country Exhibition by Pakistan in Istanbul and vice versa. There is enormous scope for enhancing cooperation in economy, trade, tourism and science and technology. The two countries are endowed with enormous natural resources and have pools of scientific and skilled work force. Yet, the volume of trade between the two stands at a negligible $160 million. One reason Yet, the volume of trade between the two stands at a negligible $160 million. One reason for the low level of mutual trade is the existence of parallel economies in the two countries. Both countries trade in products such as cotton, rice, leather and textiles. That their target markets are the same, however, does not mean they should not look for other levels of cooperation in trade and commerce.17 Among other goods, Pakistan imports wheat from Turkey, and Turkey imports rice and textiles from Pakistan. For its part, Pakistan can import Turkish dairy products and refrigerators, washing machines, electronic goods, automobiles and other durable items, which are said to be qualitatively better and far cheaper than Western, Japanese or South Korean products. Despite various bilateral and regional efforts to achieve a direct maritime shipping link between Turkey and Pakistan, the handicap of transportation remains virtually intact. Air transport is costly and limited. An encouraging development in this context is the recent growth in trade among member-states of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) through the ECO Shipping Company as a viable alternative to expanding mutual trade. Lastly and more importantly, private business in Turkey needs to set its priorities right. Presently, it maintains a Euro-centric outlook. It is true that, politically, the East does not have much to offer to Turkey. It is full of grave problems of poverty, ethnic strife, uncertainty, rivalry, war and undemocratic regimes. But, at the same time, a mass of humanity lives in the East, with potentially a huge consumer population. The expanding business sector in Turkey has to take cognisance of this reality. It must rethink its obsession with Europe and re-orient its products to Eastern markets. For private business interests in Turkey, there exist tremendous opportunities to introduce their products in big consumer markets such as that of Pakistan with a population of over 140

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million. Currently, Japan, China, South Korea and Western countries monopolise such markets.[3] Nevertheless, to fully realize the economic potential of their relations, Turkey and Pakistan are engaged in various initiatives such as Strategic Economic Framework (SEF), which aims to boost the bilateral trade volume between the two countries. In 2019, to boost business and tourism between the two countries, Pakistan added Turkey to its visa-free travel list. Also, both the countries also proposed to enhance "cooperation in the area of hydrocarbons, joint ventures in exploration and production, and sharing of best practices in natural gas distribution, transmission and wholesale markets in the liquefied petroleum gas market".32 A proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the Ankara and Islamabad that aims to enhance the bilateral trade from USD 800 million to USD 10 billion by 2022 is still pending.

Defence Cooperation and Military Interoperability

Pakistan has also assumed a critical position as a defence export market for Ankara. President Erdogan has aimed to expand Turkey's defence sales to USD 25 billion by 2023. At present, Turkey is the second-biggest supplier of arms to Pakistan after China. Turkey has been upgrading Pakistan's F-16 jets as well as its submarines. In 2018, the Pakistani navy commissioned a fleet tanker in Karachi that was built in collaboration with the STM, Turkey's leading arms manufacturer. Further, in July 2018, Turkey bagged a USD 1.5 billion deal to sell Pakistan 30 T129 helicopters and to supply four corvettes to the Pakistan navy.33 However, the delivery of T129 helicopters is delayed due to US sanctions imposed on Turkey. In order to dissuade Turkey from operationalizing the S-400 Russian missiles, the US congress is blocking the export licenses for the American-made engines used in the T129 helicopters.

The Turkish firms that are licensed to produce the T129 and its engine domestically collaborate with Agusta Westland, an Italian-British aerospace company to manufacture the helicopters. However, the engines used in these helicopters, the CT800, are originally produced by the Light Helicopter Turbine Engine Company, a joint venture between U.S.-based Honeywell and U.K.-based Rolls Royce. In Turkey, Tusas Engine Industries is licensed to produce these engines. Since the engines are originally produced in the US, Turkey requires an export license authorized by the US government to sell T129 or any weapon system containing these engines. At present, Tusas Engine Industries (TEI) is working on developing a replacement for the CT800 engine used in the T129 helicopters. In a goodwill gesture, Pakistan has extended the deadline for its supply as Turkey has not been able to secure American export licenses for the export deal with Pakistan. Threatening the T129 sale to Pakistan hurts Turkey more than just financially. For one, if successfully implemented, the deal cements a relationship between Turkey and a fellow Islamic nation, signalling Ankara's pivot from the West. Increasing annual defence exports is also a key priority for Erdogan, who vowed in 2015 to boost arms sales to USD 25 billion by 2023 and to rid the Turkish defence industrial base of its reliance on foreign suppliers. The military-to-military relationship between both the countries is exemplified by the armed forces training exchange programme, which was inaugurated in 2000. Since the programme began, approximately 1,500 Pakistani military officers have been trained in Turkey.[4]

[3] Munir Hussain, Alternatives: Turkish Journal of International Relations, Vol. 7, No. 2 & 3(2008)

4 Delovarova L, Mangi SN and Rasool G (2026) Corridor game: dragon's road elephant's opposition China–Pakistan economic corridor, India, and multipolar aspects. Front. Polit. Sci. 8:1882411. doi: 10.3389/fpos.2026.1882411

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The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement

On 7 August 2026, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan signed the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement in Makkah, establishing a trilateral collective-security arrangement modelled on Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s founding treaty: an armed attack against any one signatory is to be treated as an attack against all three (Atlantic Council, 2026; Middle East Council on Global Affairs, 2026). The pact builds on the bilateral Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed in Riyadh in September 2025, extending its scope to include Turkey (Arab Centre Washington DC, 2026). Its signing came amid an ongoing conflict involving the United States, Israel, and Iran that began in February 2026, and reflects an erosion of Gulf confidence in Washington's willingness to underwrite regional security in real time (Middle East Council on Global Affairs, 2026; MEPEI, 2026). The agreement combines Saudi financial capital, Turkish defence-industrial and drone capability, and Pakistani manpower, defence-export experience, and its foothold in the nuclear dynamic (Middle East Eye, 2026; JISS, 2026). It has drawn a measured but concerned response from India, a mixed reaction from Iran that has recently evolved into unconfirmed reports of Iranian invitation to join, cautious interest from China, and open alarm from Israel. This brief sets out the agreement's origins and provisions, surveys regional reactions including the most recent Iran development, and assesses the risks and opportunities the pact presents specifically for Pakistan's foreign policy positioning. These dynamics suggest the pact is best understood not as a settled alliance but one where the value to Pakistan will only become clear once the unresolved questions around nuclear ambiguity and membership expansion are made plain.[5]

Prospects for Pakistan–Türkiye Defense Cooperation

Both countries have proved to be reliable partners for each other. There are several reasons behind their growing partnership. They have strong religious and cultural ties, shared views on various regional and international issues, trust, reliance, and increasing quality of their indigenous weapon systems. Turkey's efforts to indigenize its defense industry have materialized into various high-value developments. The development of drone technology and its successful use in Syria and against Armenia has brought Turkey worldwide recognition. Similarly, Turkish warships technology has matured over the years. It is also working on the development of next-generation aircrafts locally.

Pakistan is focusing on the development of its local defense industry as well. It has sought to promote public-private sector partnership to develop a self-reliant and self-sustained defense industry. The development of indigenous capabilities can also be exported to other countries. Pakistan is producing and exporting fourth generation JF-17 Thunder in partnership with China. And like Turkey, it is also working on the development of next-generation aircraft indigenously.

Pakistan gets access to western technology via Turkey indirectly. There are several components in MILGEM class corvettes and T-129 helicopters obtained or built under-license from different European countries. Similarly, it is viewed that Turkey may be trying to get closer to Chinese defence technology through Pakistan. Turkey has in past upgraded Pakistan's F-16 aircraft and Agosta 90B submarines. Now it is providing Pakistan with its indigenous systems. Pakistan has signed a deal with Turkey for the procurement of 4 MILGEM class corvettes by 2023. The deal includes the complete transfer of technology and intellectual property rights to Pakistan. It also

[5] Sara Kazim, Policy Brief: The Makkah Joint Defence Agreement and Its Implications for Pakistan. BNU Center for Policy Research. Volume No. 59. Aug 25, 2026

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enables Pakistan to develop an indigenous frigate project after the delivery of these corvettes. The two countries also signed an agreement for the delivery of 30 T-129 helicopters in 2018. Turkey is developing a domestic engine option to power the T-129 helicopter though the timeline is not clear yet. Successful development of engines can get them delivered to Pakistan if the US continues to deny the license for the LHTEC T800 engine. Pakistan, on the other hand, is exporting training aircraft to Turkey[6].

Both countries are also engaged in joint military exercises and training programs. To explore new areas and increase cooperation in the future, both counties have established High-Level Military Dialogue Group (HLMDG). The group meets annually and reviews progress made during the past year. The bilateral cooperation has strengthened significantly. However, it still has great potential to further increase the military capabilities of both countries. There are several areas where the two countries can increase cooperation. For example, Pakistan can be a potential operator of Turkish armed drones, and both countries can join hands or share with each other their expertise and experiences in the development of their respective next-generation fighter aircraft programs.

An important factor behind the success of Turkish armed drones during their engagements was the electronic warfare capabilities of Turkey. Those were both air-borne and land-based electronic warfare systems. This area has got a huge potential for growth and further development. Cyber-security, counterterrorism, radar technology, space, air, and missile defense are also important areas for cooperation.

Pakistan and Turkey have got a strong base for long-lasting defense cooperation. The development of joint projects will not only enhance the expertise of both countries but also decrease R&D time for them. With this, Turkey and Pakistan can make themselves net exporters of arms instead of being arm importers.[7]

Significance of this Agreement For Saudia Arabia

Pursuit of Military Self-Reliance

Saudi Arabia seeks to reduce its traditional dependence on Western, particularly American, military technology and security guarantees.

Lessons from Regional Conflicts

Repeated conflicts have exposed vulnerabilities in critical infrastructure and the limitations of relying exclusively on external security providers.

Building an Indigenous Defense Industry

The agreement can support Saudi Arabia's ambition to develop a stronger domestic military-industrial complex.

Leveraging Turkish and Pakistani Defense Capabilities

Turkey's expertise in drones, combat aircraft and defense technologies, combined with Pakistan's experience in defense production, offers Riyadh opportunities for technology diversification.

China as a Strategic Background Factor

[6] Delovarova, L. F., Yermekov, A. B., & Ghulam, R. The Evolution of the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor in the Context of the Formation of a Macroregional Security Complex. (2026). *International Relations and International Law Journal,* 113(1), 31-42. https://doi.org/10.26577/IRILJ113120263

[7] Samran Ali, Pak-Turk Defense Cooperation: Milestones and Potential.(CSCR) Center for Strategic and Contemporary Research. August 3, 2021

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China's growing defense-industrial partnerships with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia add another strategic dimension, despite Beijing not being a formal member of the pact

Diversifying Defense Partnerships
The arrangement could help Saudi Arabia broaden its sources of military technology and reduce excessive dependence on the United States.

For Pakistan
Enhanced Strategic Relevance in the Gulf
Pakistan gains greater importance in the Gulf security architecture due to its nuclear capability, military experience and long-standing ties with Saudi Arabia.
Expanding Defense-Industrial Cooperation
Pakistan can deepen defense cooperation with Saudi Arabia and Türkiye through platforms, training and a potential trilateral framework.
Greater Diplomatic Leverage
Stronger security ties with Saudi Arabia can enhance Pakistan's diplomatic influence amid its economic and geopolitical constraints. However, Pakistan must also balance its relations with Iran, particularly because of geographical proximity and the potential consequences of regional confrontation.

For Turkey's
Pursuit of Broader Geopolitical Influence
Turkey seeks to emerge as an independent regional power with influence spanning the Mediterranean, Gulf and South Asia.

Access to Strategic Resources and Partnerships
Cooperation with Saudi Arabia provides Turkey access to financial resources and a major defense market, while Pakistan offers a capable military and strategic partner.

Expansion of Defense-Industrial Exports
The agreement could create opportunities for Turkey to expand exports of drones, fighter aircraft and other advanced defense technologies to Saudi Arabia.

Greater Influence in West Asian Security
The pact strengthens Turkey's strategic position vis-à-vis Israel and enhances its role in shaping the evolving West Asian security architecture.

Convergence of Geopolitical and Defense Interests
Overall, the agreement advances both Turkey's geopolitical ambitions and its defense-industrial interests.[8]

The Israel and Wider Middle Eastern Dimension
Meanwhile, Israel, which increasingly views the region's Sunni powers Pakistan, Qatar and Türkiye – as its primary strategic concern, is clearly suspicious of the agreement. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently urged US President Donald Trump ahead of NATO's July summit in Ankara not to sell F-35 aircraft to Türkiye, claiming it would 'destroy the power balance in the Middle East'. Israel's anxieties were likely inflamed by Asif's assertion following the signing of the Makkah agreement that 'the Islamic world must unite to confront the common threat posed by Israel'; subsequent assurances by Pakistan's Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar that the pact is 'not directed against any country' will have hardly assuaged Israeli concerns.[9]

Risk of Regional Polarization
Iran, which welcomed the Pakistani–Saudi mutual defense agreement in 2025, has said that it 'sees no reason to be concerned' by the new security pact. Although Iran may prefer not to see its

[8] Shankar IAS Parliament, Pakistan–Saudi Arabia–Turkey Defense Pact .
[9] Dr Hasan Alhaan, Asna Wajid, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye: a new defense pact. Online Analysis. *14th August 2026*

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regional competitors close ranks, it is nonetheless likely to view the emergence of regional security arrangements of which the US is not a member as a successful outcome of its wartime strategy of driving a wedge between Washington and its regional partners. Tehran's dual sentiment was aptly captured by Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi's recent message on X, in which he emphasized the 'readiness, capability, and might' of 'Iran's Powerful Armed Forces', betraying a sense of threat, while calling on 'Muslims [to] stand together [to] face every challenge by malicious outsiders' in a message of religious unity.[10]

Challenging assumptions

The MJDA does not constitute a wholly new security order, nor does it seek to replace existing frameworks. Rather, it reflects a growing desire among regional powers to diversify their security relationships in response to an increasingly uncertain international environment.

The agreement also highlights concerns about the effectiveness of established security mechanisms. As confidence in traditional guarantees becomes less certain, states are exploring alternative partnerships that can supplement, rather than supplant, existing alliances.

For Türkiye, this means balancing its NATO commitments with its obligations under the MJDA. For Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the agreement provides an opportunity to broaden their strategic options while signalling a greater willingness to rely on regional partnerships for security.[11]

Policy Recommendations

To maximize the benefits of the Makkah Agreement, Pakistan and Türkiye should consider several measures.

1.Institutionalize bilateral defense cooperation

The Pakistan–Türkiye Joint Standing Committee on Security, Defense and Intelligence should become a central mechanism for implementing bilateral projects

2. Establish permanent defense-industry working groups

These should identify specific projects suitable for joint research, production, and export.

3. Expand trilateral military exercises

Exercises should gradually progress from basic training to complex scenarios involving air defense, maritime security, cyber operations, and humanitarian assistance.

4. Create secure intelligence-sharing mechanisms

Cooperation should focus on terrorism, cyber threats, missile and drone threats, maritime security, and transnational criminal networks.

5. Prioritize interoperability

Common communications, command-and-control procedures, and logistical arrangements should receive greater attention.

6. Develop a regional crisis-management mechanism

The three countries should establish procedures for rapid diplomatic consultation during regional crises.

7. Preserve strategic ambiguity where necessary

Not every operational detail should be publicly disclosed. Maintaining some strategic ambiguity can strengthen deterrence.

8. Emphasize defensive rather than bloc politics

The three countries should continue emphasizing that their partnership is aimed at collective

[10] Ibid

[11] Syeda Saba Batool, A new layer of deterrence: the Makkah Joint Defence Agreement. (ECPR) European Consortium for Political Research.

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security, deterrence, sovereignty, and regional stability rather than confrontation with a particular state.

Conclusion

The Makkah Joint Defense Agreement represents a significant new stage in Pakistan–Türkiye strategic relations. Its importance lies not merely in the formal commitment that an attack on one party will be treated as an attack on all, but in the possibility of creating a more institutionalized framework for defense cooperation among Pakistan, Türkiye, and Saudi Arabia.

For Pakistan and Türkiye, the agreement builds upon an already mature strategic partnership. Their cooperation in naval modernization, military training, defense production, strategic dialogue, counter-terrorism, and defense technology provides a substantial foundation upon which the new framework can be constructed. The two countries' 2025 decision to deepen defense-industry cooperation and establish a Joint Standing Committee on Security, Defense and Intelligence demonstrates that this process was already underway before the Makkah Agreement.

The greatest opportunities lie in joint defense production, military interoperability, air and missile defense, unmanned systems, maritime security, intelligence sharing, cybersecurity, space technology, and counter-terrorism.

At the regional level, the partnership could contribute to a more autonomous security architecture in which regional states assume greater responsibility for their own defense. It could strengthen deterrence and improve the capacity of Pakistan, Türkiye, and Saudi Arabia to respond collectively to emerging threats.

Yet the agreement also carries risks. Divergent national interests, technological interoperability problems, financial constraints, and the possibility of regional polarization could limit its effectiveness. The greatest danger would be for the agreement to evolve into a rigid bloc structure that intensifies rather than reduces regional competition.

Pakistan therefore has a particularly important role to play. Its relationships with Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, and Iran give it diplomatic space that can be used to combine **deterrence with dialogue**. Türkiye, meanwhile, can contribute advanced defense technology and diplomatic influence, while Saudi Arabia can provide strategic depth, investment, and access to the Gulf security environment.

Ultimately, the success of the Makkah Agreement will depend not on the symbolism of its signing but on the quality of its implementation. If Pakistan and Türkiye transform their existing defense partnership into sustained joint production, interoperability, intelligence cooperation, technological innovation, and regional crisis management, the Makkah framework could become an important pillar of a new regional security architecture.

The emerging Pakistan–Türkiye relationship should therefore be understood not simply as a bilateral military partnership, but as part of a broader transformation in the security politics of South Asia, the Gulf, and the **wider** Muslim world. Its most constructive future would be one in which collective strength enhances deterrence while diplomacy prevents that strength from becoming a source of confrontation.