

Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan forge a military alliance amid Iran war

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Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed the “Mecca Joint Defence Agreement” at the Al-Safa Palace in Mecca on August 7.

Signed by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the Mecca Agreement takes NATO’s Article 5 as its model. It declares that an armed attack against any one of the three states shall be regarded as an attack against all three, and grounds this in Article 51 of the UN Charter, which sets out the right of self-defence.

The agreement extends to Türkiye the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement signed by Saudi Arabia and nuclear-armed Pakistan at the Al-Yamamah Palace in Riyadh on September 17, 2025. Alongside the collective defence clause, it provides for intelligence sharing, joint exercises, training, cooperation in defence technology and long-term strategic coordination. Strategic political and military mechanisms composed of the foreign and defence ministers are being established.

According to figures compiled by *Al Jazeera*, the three militaries taken together amount to some 1.4 million active personnel, 3,400 aircraft, 6,000 tanks and more than 340 naval vessels. Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan stated that the agreement would not remain confined to these countries and that Egypt could also join the bloc.

With this agreement, Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal is in effect extended as an umbrella over its two Middle Eastern allies. Following the Saudi-Pakistani agreement of 2025, Pakistani officials had intimated that the country’s nuclear capability fell within the scope of the alliance.

The agreement was signed under conditions in which the war of aggression launched by the United States and Israel against Iran on February 28 is continuing and has spread across the region, including to Iraq and Yemen. Saudi Arabia is among the countries that Iran has struck in retaliation, exercising its right of self-defence by hitting US bases. Türkiye and Pakistan share land borders with Iran, while Saudi Arabia is its maritime neighbour.

The bourgeois press presented the pact largely as a defensive reflex in the face of the chaos created by the Iran war. Reuters wrote that the agreement brought together “Sunni Muslim US allies alarmed at a regional conflagration” that has rained missile fire onto Gulf oil exporters. The Associated Press characterised it as a consolidation of cooperation between three regional powers at a time of mounting security concerns. The *Financial Times* claimed that the three countries were deepening security cooperation to cope with wars and instability, while the *Wall Street Journal* observed that the agreement had been signed at a moment when new uncertainties had emerged over the US security umbrella.

This agreement, however, is not the product of any move by Ankara, Riyadh and Islamabad to free themselves from the Washington axis, nor of a search for an alternative to it. On the contrary, it is an

expression of the efforts of these states—pursuing the reactionary interests of their own ruling classes under conditions of escalating war and intensifying regional rivalry—to align themselves with US-led imperialist calculations and to prepare for still greater wars.

Far from objecting to the agreement, the White House endorsed it. US President Donald Trump wrote on Truth Social that he was very happy to see the agreement signed, declaring: “It shows how the Middle East is coming together.”

Regional rivalries deepened by the escalating war

Erdo?an, president of the only NATO member among the signatories, said that the pact “targets no country” and that “prescriptions imposed from outside” have brought disaster upon the region. Foreign Minister Fidan said, “No country that does not attack us is our target.” Pakistan’s Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar likewise claimed that the agreement was “purely defensive in nature” and directed against no country.

The ruling classes of these countries have all participated in one form or another in the wars of aggression waged by the United States in the region over the past 35 years, since the first Gulf War. Saudi Arabia served as the base country for the war against Iraq in 1991 and financed the regime-change operation in Syria. Türkiye opened the ?ncirlik base in 1991, took part in the NATO force in Afghanistan, joined the NATO operation in Libya and became one of the critical actors in the war in Syria. Pakistan became the logistical and intelligence base for the occupation of Afghanistan from 2001 onwards.

Saudi Arabia, the host of the agreement, is a direct participant in the war against Iran. It allowed the United States to use its bases to attack the country. It has targeted pro-Iranian militias in Iraq and has broken a four-year de facto ceasefire to attack the pro-Iranian Houthis in Yemen. The Houthis responded with missile strikes on Aramco’s Jizan and Yanbu facilities and on the port of Mokha and announced that they would impose a blockade on Saudi shipping in the Red Sea.

Together with Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan signed the Riyadh Declaration, which condemned not the illegal US attacks on Iran but Iranian retaliation carried out in self-defence. Both countries also announced their support for the “Multinational Maritime Defence Alliance” proposed by Saudi Arabia on July 30 against the Houthis in the Red Sea.

The risk of conflict between Israel and Türkiye

The Erdoğan government's rhetoric that "we target no country" is contradicted by the policy it has pursued throughout the genocide in Gaza. While Ankara directed its sharpest words against Israel, Azerbaijani oil carried by the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan pipeline continued to be shipped from Ceyhan to Israel. The Kürecik radar base in Malatya, part of NATO's missile early-warning system, and the İncirlik base, used by the United States in its regional operations, both continued to function.

The Israeli government refrained from issuing any official statement on the agreement. An unnamed Israeli official cited by *Ynet*, however, said the agreement was directed against Israel, and in the Israeli press the pact was treated as the transformation of the Turkish-Pakistani axis into a hostile bloc. The "hexagon of alliances" announced by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in February, encompassing Israel, Greece, Cyprus, India and other Arab and African states, is in effect positioned against this pact.

One by-product of the imperialist interventions that devastated and effectively dismembered Iraq and Syria, and of the war launched against Iran, has been the escalation of the rivalry between Washington's traditional allies Türkiye and Israel. Ankara's conflict with Tel Aviv arises not from any opposition to the war, but from a struggle for regional influence.

Most recently, on August 18, Israel struck the runway of the Abu al-Duhur air base in Syria's Idlib province, 70 kilometres from the Turkish border. Netanyahu's office maintained that an understanding existed between Israel and Syria on security matters, and alleged that Damascus had come to the verge of breaching this status quo by "permitting Turkish troops to deploy at an airbase near Aleppo."

Ankara rejected the allegations as baseless. Tom Barrack, the US Special Envoy for Syria and Ambassador to Ankara, characterised the strike as an unnecessary escalation and, noting that Türkiye had not been warned in advance, said the episode "underscores the need for a deconfliction mechanism involving Israel, Syria and Türkiye."

Trump had declared only a short time ago that "You know, he [Erdoğan] was a prime candidate to go into the war with Iran, maybe on the Iran side, because he's not a big fan of Israel, as you know. And I asked him to stay out, he stayed out."

The rivalry between nuclear-armed Pakistan and India

India is also following the agreement closely. Nuclear-armed Pakistan and India came to the brink of war in 2025. New Delhi had announced that it would study the implications of the 2025 Saudi-Pakistani agreement for its national security; after the Mecca Agreement, Foreign Ministry spokesman Randhir Jaiswal confined himself to saying that India was closely following developments.

India, which has become a front-line state in Washington's war preparations against China, has also strengthened its relations with Israel; agreements on defence technology and free trade were signed during Prime Minister Modi's visit to Jerusalem in February. Netanyahu telephoned Modi the day before the Mecca Agreement, and US Vice President JD Vance did so the day after. In an analysis published on August 9, the *Jerusalem Post* argued that the Mecca pact

would further strengthen the ties between Israel and India.

The working class is made to pay for the war

All three governments that signed the Mecca Agreement are mired in a deep social and political crisis. In Türkiye, rising military expenditure is financed through falling wages, higher taxes, the liquidation of public services and social cuts, while the home front is fortified by judicial operations that progressively abolish democratic rights and by the mass detention of opponents of NATO and of workers engaged in struggle.

In Pakistan, a government under the tutelage of the military is implementing the austerity programme dictated by the IMF while suppressing the opposition. In Saudi Arabia, the regime rests upon the labour of more than 10 million migrant workers who are denied the right to organise. Preparation for war abroad and class war at home are two sides of the same process.

Bringing together three regional powers acting in concert with US imperialism, the Mecca Agreement is a product of the deepening of global war. This pact, which extends the umbrella of a nuclear-armed state over two allies, offers the working classes of the signatory countries no protection whatsoever. It binds them to a chain of conflicts stretching from the Eastern Mediterranean to South Asia, and drives them into war.

Stopping the war will not come from these governments or from their blocs, but from the working class—the only social force capable of confronting imperialism and its regional allies. Across the Middle East, South Asia and the world, workers must be united on an international scale, based on a socialist programme, against the war preparations of their own ruling classes. The building of the International Committee of the Fourth International and of its sections is the central task of this struggle.



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