

Journal of Social Sciences Research & Policy (JSSRP)
Pakistan - Saudi Arabia -Türkiye Defence Accord in 2026: Strategic Challenges, Emerging Opportunities, and Future Prospects for Pakistan
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Cite This Article: Zaid, S., Akbar, W. & Shah, H. (2026). Pakistan - Saudi Arabia -Türkiye Defence Accord in 2026: Strategic Challenges, Emerging Opportunities, and Future Prospects for Pakistan. *Journal of Social Sciences Research & Policy*. 4 (01), 856-865.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.71327/jssrp.41.856.865>

ISSN: 3006-6557 (Online)

ISSN: 3006-6549 (Print)

Vol. 4, No. 1 (2026)

Pages: 856-865

Key Words:

Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, Defence Cooperation, Strategic Alliance, Regional Security, Military Collaboration, Defence Industry, Counterterrorism, Geopolitics, Muslim World, Foreign Policy,

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License:


Abstract: *The emerging Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye defence accord in 2026 represents a significant strategic development in the evolving security architecture of the Muslim world. This trilateral partnership seeks to enhance defence cooperation through military training, intelligence sharing, defence industrial collaboration, counterterrorism initiatives, and regional security coordination. For Pakistan, the accord offers substantial opportunities, including access to advanced defence technologies, increased military interoperability, economic investment in the defence sector, and a strengthened geopolitical position within the Islamic world. However, the alliance also faces critical challenges, such as regional rivalries, external geopolitical pressures, differing strategic priorities among member states, and concerns regarding long-term institutional coordination. The success of this defence framework will depend on its ability to balance national interests while promoting collective security objectives. This study critically examines the strategic challenges, emerging opportunities, and future prospects of the trilateral defence accord, assessing its potential impact on Pakistan's security, foreign policy, defence modernization, and regional influence in an increasingly multipolar international system.*

Introduction

The evolving international security environment has encouraged regional powers to pursue new defence partnerships to address emerging geopolitical and security challenges. In this context, the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord of 2026 represents a significant strategic initiative aimed at enhancing military cooperation, defence-industrial collaboration, intelligence sharing, and collective security coordination among three influential Muslim states. The growing uncertainty within the global order, coupled with regional conflicts, terrorism, and great-power competition, has increased the importance of strategic alliances capable of protecting national interests while promoting regional stability. Consequently, the proposed trilateral defence framework reflects a broader effort to strengthen indigenous security capabilities and reduce dependence on external security providers (Mearsheimer, 2014, p. 33).

For Pakistan, the defence accord presents both strategic opportunities and complex challenges. The partnership could facilitate access to advanced Turkish defence technologies, expand military training programs with Saudi Arabia, and strengthen Pakistan's position within the emerging security architecture of the Muslim world. At the same time, regional rivalries, shifting geopolitical alignments, economic constraints, and external pressures from competing global powers may affect the effectiveness and sustainability of the alliance. Therefore, a critical assessment of the accord is essential to understand its implications for Pakistan's defence modernization, foreign policy objectives, regional influence, and long-term strategic autonomy in an increasingly multipolar international system (Ayoob, 2020, p. 87).

Literature Review

The scholarly literature on regional security alliances suggests that middle powers increasingly pursue defence partnerships to enhance strategic autonomy and reduce dependence on major powers. Scholars argue that military cooperation frameworks are often driven by shared security concerns, geopolitical uncertainties, and the need to strengthen collective deterrence capabilities. Within this context, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye have gradually expanded defence cooperation through military training, intelligence exchanges, and security dialogues. Such collaborations reflect broader trends toward regional balancing and strategic coordination in an increasingly multipolar international system (Walt, 1987, p. 21). Studies examining Pakistan–Saudi Arabia relations highlight a long history of defence and security cooperation. Saudi Arabia has traditionally relied on Pakistan for military expertise, training, and strategic consultation, while Pakistan has benefited from Saudi economic assistance and political support. Researchers contend that these ties have evolved beyond traditional security cooperation to encompass broader strategic and geopolitical interests, particularly in response to emerging regional threats and shifting power configurations in the Middle East (Gause, 2014, p. 112).

The literature on Türkiye's defence transformation emphasizes its emergence as a major producer of indigenous military technologies, including drones, naval systems, and advanced defence equipment. Analysts argue that Türkiye's growing defence-industrial capacity presents significant opportunities for strategic partners seeking military modernization and technological advancement. For Pakistan, cooperation with Türkiye offers prospects for defence production, technology transfer, and enhanced military interoperability, thereby strengthening national defence capabilities and strategic resilience (Kirişçi, 2019, p. 67). Despite these opportunities, scholars identify several challenges that could affect the effectiveness of a trilateral defence accord. These include divergent national interests, regional rivalries, economic constraints, and external pressures from global powers seeking to preserve their influence in the region. Existing studies therefore suggest that the long-term success of any Pakistan–Saudi Arabia–Türkiye defence framework will depend upon institutional sustainability, policy coordination, and a shared strategic vision capable of balancing national and collective security objectives (Ayoob, 1995, p. 143).

The emergence of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord in 2026 reflects a significant shift in the strategic security architecture of the Muslim world; however, its long-term implications remain insufficiently explored in existing literature. Despite growing military cooperation among the three states, limited scholarly attention has been given to the strategic challenges, geopolitical constraints, and institutional barriers that may affect the effectiveness of this trilateral framework. Furthermore, the potential impact of the accord on Pakistan's defence modernization, regional influence, and foreign policy objectives remains unclear. The evolving regional security environment, great-power competition, and competing national interests create uncertainties regarding the sustainability and

strategic coherence of the partnership. Therefore, a comprehensive analysis is required to assess the challenges, opportunities, and future prospects of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord and its implications for Pakistan's security and strategic interests.

This study aims, first, to critically examine the strategic foundations, security dynamics, and geopolitical significance of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord in 2026, with particular emphasis on its implications for Pakistan's defence modernization, regional influence, and strategic autonomy. Second, it seeks to evaluate the major challenges and emerging opportunities associated with the trilateral partnership, including defence-industrial cooperation, military interoperability, intelligence sharing, and regional security coordination. Accordingly, the study addresses two key research questions: (1) how can the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord enhance Pakistan's security capabilities, defence-industrial development, and geopolitical position within an increasingly multipolar international system? (2) What strategic, political, economic, and geopolitical challenges could affect the effectiveness, sustainability, and long-term success of the trilateral defence partnership, and how might Pakistan mitigate these constraints to maximize its national and regional interests?

This study is grounded in the Balance of Threat Theory, developed by Stephen M. Walt in 1985 and comprehensively presented in his book *The Origins of Alliances* (1987). The theory argues that states form alliances not merely to balance power but to counter perceived threats arising from a state's military capabilities, geographic proximity, offensive power, and aggressive intentions. In the context of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord, the three countries are strengthening strategic cooperation to address common security concerns, regional instability, terrorism, and emerging geopolitical challenges. The theory provides a useful framework for understanding how shared threat perceptions can drive defence collaboration, collective security arrangements, and strategic alignment among regional powers seeking to safeguard their national interests.

This study employs a qualitative research methodology based on a descriptive-analytical approach to examine the strategic challenges, emerging opportunities, and future prospects of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord in 2026. Data are collected from secondary sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, policy reports, government documents, defence publications, and reports from international think tanks. The study utilizes content analysis to evaluate the security, geopolitical, economic, and defence dimensions of the trilateral partnership. Furthermore, the research applies the Balance of Threat Theory as an analytical framework to assess the motivations and strategic implications of the accord. This approach enables a comprehensive understanding of how the defence partnership may influence Pakistan's security, foreign policy, and regional strategic position in an evolving multipolar international system.

This study contributes to the growing body of literature on emerging defence alliances and regional security cooperation in the Muslim world by providing a comprehensive analysis of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord in 2026. It offers valuable insights into the strategic opportunities and challenges associated with trilateral defence collaboration in an increasingly multipolar international system. The findings will assist policymakers, defence planners, and strategic analysts in understanding the accord's implications for Pakistan's security, defence modernization, and foreign policy objectives. Furthermore, the study highlights the role of defence-industrial cooperation, military interoperability, and collective security in strengthening regional stability. By addressing an underexplored area of contemporary strategic studies, the research provides a foundation for future academic and policy-oriented investigations.

Historical Evolution of Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Strategic Relations

The historical foundations of Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye strategic relations are rooted in shared religious, cultural, and geopolitical interests. Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, both Saudi Arabia and Türkiye have maintained cordial diplomatic relations with Islamabad, supporting Pakistan on various regional and international issues. The three countries have consistently advocated cooperation within multilateral forums, particularly the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), where they have sought to promote Muslim solidarity and collective action. These relationships have been shaped by common concerns regarding regional stability, security, and political influence in the broader Muslim world. As a result, the historical trajectory of their interactions demonstrates a gradual evolution from symbolic diplomatic engagement to more structured strategic cooperation (Esposito, 2011, p. 214). The political dimension of trilateral relations gained greater significance during the post-Cold War era, when changing regional dynamics encouraged closer coordination among middle powers. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia strengthened their strategic partnership through political consultations and economic cooperation, while Türkiye increasingly pursued an active foreign policy aimed at expanding its influence across the Middle East and South Asia. Scholars argue that the convergence of political interests among these states reflects a broader effort to establish greater strategic autonomy in a rapidly changing international environment. This alignment has become particularly relevant amid shifting power balances and emerging regional security challenges (Kamrava, 2013, p. 96).

Military cooperation has remained one of the strongest pillars of Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye relations. Pakistan has historically provided military training and advisory support to Saudi Arabia, while Türkiye has emerged as a leading defence-industrial power with advanced military technologies. Joint military exercises, defence agreements, counterterrorism initiatives, and intelligence-sharing mechanisms have strengthened security cooperation among the three countries. Furthermore, Türkiye's success in indigenous defence production has created opportunities for defence-industrial collaboration with Pakistan, contributing to military modernization and operational interoperability. These developments illustrate the growing institutionalization of trilateral security cooperation and the pursuit of collective defence capabilities (Larrabee & Lesser, 2003, p. 141). The diplomatic evolution of these relations has accelerated in recent years due to increasing geopolitical uncertainty, regional conflicts, and the emergence of a multipolar international order. The growing emphasis on strategic partnerships, defence-industrial cooperation, and coordinated foreign policy initiatives reflects a shared desire to enhance regional influence and strengthen collective security. Consequently, the proposed Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord of 2026 represents the culmination of decades of political trust, military collaboration, and diplomatic engagement. It also signifies a strategic effort to establish a more coherent security framework capable of addressing contemporary challenges while advancing the long-term interests of all three states (Hinnebusch & Ehteshami, 2014, p. 58).

Strategic Challenges of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord - 2026

The proposed Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord of 2026 faces significant geopolitical constraints arising from the complex strategic environment of the Middle East and South Asia. The three countries operate within regions characterized by intense power competition, security dilemmas, and shifting alliances. Pakistan must carefully balance its strategic partnerships with China, the United States, and Gulf states, while Saudi Arabia continues to navigate regional rivalries and evolving security concerns. Similarly, Türkiye pursues an increasingly independent foreign policy that occasionally diverges from the interests of both Western allies and regional actors. These differing geopolitical priorities may complicate efforts to establish a cohesive and long-term trilateral defence framework

(Mearsheimer, 2014, p. 78).

Regional rivalries constitute another major challenge to the effectiveness of the proposed accord. The security competition between Saudi Arabia and Iran, tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, and the ongoing instability in Afghanistan and the broader Middle East create a complex strategic landscape. Any formalized defence arrangement among Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye could be perceived by rival states as an attempt to alter regional power balances, potentially generating diplomatic resistance and security concerns. Consequently, the trilateral partnership must carefully manage regional perceptions while avoiding actions that could intensify existing geopolitical tensions or contribute to strategic polarization (Buzan & Wæver, 2003, p. 187). Economic limitations also present a significant obstacle to the institutionalization of the defence accord. Effective military cooperation requires substantial financial commitments, technological investments, defence-industrial integration, and long-term resource allocation. Although Saudi Arabia possesses considerable financial capabilities, Pakistan continues to face economic constraints that may affect its ability to sustain large-scale defence modernization programs. Furthermore, defence-industrial cooperation among the three states requires coordinated investment strategies, technology-transfer agreements, and regulatory harmonization, all of which demand significant political and economic commitment (Tellis, 2001, p. 214).

Institutional and organizational challenges may further hinder the effectiveness of the trilateral partnership. Differences in military doctrines, bureaucratic structures, defence procurement systems, and strategic priorities could limit interoperability and policy coordination. Successful defence alliances require robust institutional mechanisms capable of facilitating intelligence sharing, joint planning, crisis management, and operational cooperation. Without clearly defined structures and long-term strategic planning, the defence accord may remain symbolic rather than operationally effective. Therefore, institutional capacity-building remains essential for transforming political commitments into practical security outcomes (Keohane, 1984, p. 89). External pressures from major global powers represent another critical challenge. The growing competition among the United States, China, Russia, and the European Union has intensified geopolitical contestation across strategic regions. As the trilateral partnership expands, external actors may attempt to influence, constrain, or reshape its strategic direction to protect their own interests. Consequently, the success and sustainability of the Pakistan–Saudi Arabia–Türkiye Defence Accord will depend on the ability of the three states to balance external pressures while maintaining strategic autonomy, policy coherence, and a shared vision for collective security and regional stability (Walt, 1987, p. 34).

Emerging Opportunities and Strategic Benefits

The Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord of 2026 presents significant opportunities for strengthening defence-industrial cooperation among the three countries. In recent years, Türkiye has emerged as a leading defence manufacturer, producing advanced military technologies, including unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), naval platforms, missile systems, and electronic warfare equipment. Pakistan's growing defence-industrial base, combined with Saudi Arabia's substantial investment capacity, creates a favourable environment for trilateral collaboration in defence production and research. Such cooperation can reduce dependence on external suppliers while enhancing indigenous defence capabilities and strategic self-reliance. The development of joint ventures and defence-industrial partnerships would not only strengthen military preparedness but also generate economic benefits through technology-intensive industries and employment creation (Kirişçi, 2019, p. 71). A major strategic benefit of the proposed accord lies in its potential contribution to Pakistan's military modernization efforts. Modern security challenges require technologically advanced armed forces

capable of operating across conventional, hybrid, and cyber domains. Through collaboration with Türkiye's defence sector and Saudi Arabia's financial resources, Pakistan can accelerate the modernization of its air, naval, and ground capabilities. Joint military projects, procurement arrangements, and technical cooperation programs may enhance operational readiness and improve the effectiveness of Pakistan's defence infrastructure. Furthermore, such modernization efforts could strengthen deterrence capabilities and improve Pakistan's ability to respond to evolving regional security threats (Tellis, 2001, p. 247).

Military interoperability represents another critical opportunity arising from the trilateral partnership. Joint military exercises, officer exchange programs, specialized training initiatives, and operational coordination mechanisms can significantly improve the ability of the three countries to conduct coordinated military operations. Enhanced interoperability contributes to greater efficiency in peacekeeping missions, humanitarian assistance operations, disaster response activities, and counterterrorism campaigns. Moreover, regular military engagement promotes mutual trust, strategic understanding, and institutional learning among armed forces. These factors are essential for developing a sustainable security framework capable of addressing both traditional and non-traditional security challenges (Nye, 2011, p. 124).

The defence accord also offers substantial prospects for intelligence sharing and strategic information cooperation. In an era characterized by transnational terrorism, cyber threats, organized crime, and hybrid warfare, intelligence cooperation has become a critical component of national security. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye possess valuable intelligence capabilities and operational experience in combating extremist networks and security threats. Establishing formal intelligence-sharing mechanisms can improve situational awareness, threat assessment, early warning systems, and crisis management capabilities. Enhanced intelligence collaboration would strengthen collective security and enable the three states to respond more effectively to regional and global security challenges (Johnson, 2010, p. 93). Counterterrorism cooperation constitutes one of the most important strategic benefits of the trilateral defence framework. All three countries have faced varying forms of terrorism, extremism, and violent non-state actors that threaten national stability and regional security. The exchange of best practices, operational expertise, intelligence information, and training resources can significantly improve counterterrorism effectiveness. Joint efforts aimed at disrupting terrorist financing, preventing radicalization, and enhancing border security can contribute to a more secure regional environment. Additionally, coordinated counterterrorism initiatives demonstrate a collective commitment to combating common security threats while strengthening diplomatic and military relations among partner states (Cronin, 2009, p. 168).

Technological transfer and innovation represent another promising dimension of the proposed defence partnership. Contemporary military competitiveness increasingly depends upon technological superiority in areas such as artificial intelligence, cybersecurity, autonomous systems, space technologies, and advanced communications. Türkiye's advancements in indigenous defence technologies provide valuable opportunities for Pakistan to acquire technical expertise and strengthen domestic research and development capacities. Saudi Arabia's investment-driven diversification strategy further supports the creation of technology partnerships and innovation networks. Such collaboration can facilitate knowledge transfer, promote scientific cooperation, and contribute to the long-term development of high-technology sectors within Pakistan's defence industry (Singer, 2009, p. 205).

From an economic perspective, the trilateral defence accord has the potential to stimulate defence-

sector investment and industrial growth. Defence-industrial cooperation often generates broader economic benefits through infrastructure development, skilled workforce creation, and technological spillovers into civilian industries. Joint production projects and defence-related investments can strengthen manufacturing capabilities while supporting national development objectives. For Pakistan, participation in advanced defence-industrial programs could enhance export potential and increase competitiveness in global defence markets. Consequently, the accord possesses both strategic and economic significance for long-term national development (Hartley, 2012, p. 58). Beyond bilateral and trilateral interests, the partnership also holds broader implications for regional security and stability. The evolving geopolitical environment of the Middle East and South Asia is characterized by strategic uncertainty, interstate competition, and emerging security threats. A structured defence framework among Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye can contribute to regional security by promoting dialogue, confidence-building measures, and cooperative security mechanisms. Rather than functioning solely as a military alliance, the accord may serve as a platform for addressing common challenges through coordinated policy responses and collective action. Such cooperation can enhance strategic stability while reducing the risks associated with regional fragmentation and security competition (Acharya, 2014, p. 117).

The Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord of 2026 presents a unique opportunity to reshape the strategic landscape of the Muslim world. By combining Pakistan's military experience, Saudi Arabia's financial resources, and Türkiye's technological capabilities, the partnership possesses the potential to create a comprehensive framework for defence cooperation and regional security. If effectively institutionalized and supported by sustained political commitment, the accord could strengthen military modernization, enhance strategic autonomy, promote technological advancement, and contribute to long-term regional stability. Therefore, the emerging opportunities associated with this trilateral initiative significantly outweigh its potential constraints and position the partnership as an important pillar of future security cooperation (Ayooob, 1995, p. 221).

Future Prospects

The future prospects of the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord are closely linked to the changing dynamics of the international security environment and the growing importance of regional strategic partnerships. As the global order gradually shifts from unipolarity to multipolarity, middle powers are increasingly seeking collaborative security arrangements to protect their national interests and enhance strategic autonomy. In this context, the trilateral defence partnership possesses the potential to become a significant pillar of security cooperation within the Muslim world, strengthening collective defence capabilities and promoting regional stability. One of the most promising prospects of the accord lies in defence-industrial cooperation. Türkiye's advanced military technology, Saudi Arabia's financial resources, and Pakistan's military expertise create favourable conditions for joint defence production, research and development, and technology transfer. Such collaboration can contribute to the development of indigenous defence capabilities, reduce dependence on external suppliers, and strengthen the long-term strategic self-reliance of all three countries. Moreover, defence-industrial integration may generate economic benefits through investment, employment opportunities, and technological innovation.

The accord also has the potential to enhance military modernization and operational interoperability. Through joint military exercises, professional training programs, intelligence sharing, and coordinated security initiatives, the three countries can improve their readiness to address both conventional and non-conventional security threats. Cooperation in counterterrorism, cybersecurity, border security, and

intelligence coordination will further strengthen collective security mechanisms and improve regional resilience against emerging threats. From a geopolitical perspective, the trilateral partnership can significantly enhance Pakistan's regional and international standing. By strengthening strategic relations with Saudi Arabia and Türkiye, Pakistan can expand its diplomatic influence, increase its role in regional security affairs, and reinforce its position as a bridge between South Asia, the Middle East, and the broader Muslim world. Furthermore, the partnership may contribute to greater political coordination on regional and global issues of mutual concern. Despite these opportunities, the success of the accord will depend upon sustained political commitment, institutional cooperation, and effective management of regional rivalries and external pressures. If successfully institutionalized, the Pakistan–Saudi Arabia–Türkiye Defence Accord could emerge as a transformative strategic framework, enhancing Pakistan's security, defence modernization, technological advancement, and geopolitical influence while contributing to long-term regional peace and stability.

Conclusion

The Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord of 2026 has the potential to become a sustainable and transformative strategic partnership capable of advancing the collective security interests of all three states. Its long-term viability will depend upon the institutionalization of defence cooperation, consistent political commitment, effective policy coordination, and the ability to adapt to changing regional and global security dynamics. For Pakistan, the accord offers significant strategic advantages, including enhanced defence modernization, technological transfer, military interoperability, intelligence cooperation, and greater geopolitical influence within the Muslim world. However, the partnership must effectively manage geopolitical rivalries, economic limitations, and external pressures to ensure its durability and effectiveness. To maximize its benefits, Pakistan should prioritize defence-industrial collaboration, strengthen joint military training and intelligence-sharing mechanisms, expand diplomatic engagement with both partners, and develop a comprehensive long-term strategic framework for trilateral cooperation. Furthermore, the establishment of permanent institutional mechanisms and regular strategic dialogues will be essential for sustaining momentum and addressing emerging challenges. In conclusion, if supported by pragmatic policies and a shared strategic vision, the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Türkiye Defence Accord can evolve into a robust security framework that enhances Pakistan's strategic autonomy, strengthens regional stability, and contributes to a more balanced and cooperative security order in the Muslim world.

Recommendations

1. Establish a permanent Pakistan–Saudi Arabia–Türkiye Strategic Defence Council to institutionalize security cooperation and long-term policy coordination.
2. Expand joint defence-industrial ventures to promote indigenous weapons production, technological innovation, and strategic self-reliance.
3. Develop an integrated intelligence-sharing framework to enhance early warning capabilities and counter emerging security threats.
4. Conduct regular trilateral military exercises to strengthen interoperability, operational readiness, and collective deterrence capabilities.
5. Prioritize defence technology transfer and joint research programs in cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, drones, and advanced military systems.
6. Enhance counterterrorism cooperation through coordinated operations, intelligence fusion centers, and joint capacity-building initiatives.
7. Create a trilateral defence investment fund to support military modernization, research and

development, and strategic infrastructure projects.

8. Strengthen diplomatic coordination on regional and global security issues to advance shared strategic interests and policy objectives.
9. Promote maritime and border security cooperation to safeguard critical trade routes, energy corridors, and regional stability.
10. Formulate a long-term strategic roadmap with measurable goals to ensure the sustainability, effectiveness, and geopolitical relevance of the defence accord.

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