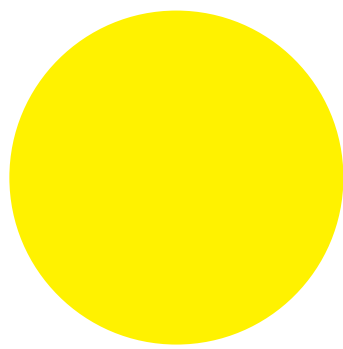


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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian speaks during a ceremony marking the 46th anniversary of the establishment of the Academic Center for Education, Culture and Research in Tehran, Iran, on August 9, 2026. president.ir

Trilateral defense pact unlikely to affect Pakistan's stalled mediation role

By Delaram Ahmadi
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

Amid regional tensions, Pakistan has entered a joint defense agreement, with Saudi Arabia and Turkey after previously taking on a mediatory role between Iran and the United States. The pact is significant because Saudi Arabia, which is effectively hosting the agreement, has faced criticism and even retaliation from Tehran over the presence



Amin Rezaeinejad

of US bases on its territory and their use against Iranian positions during the war. Although Pakistan had previously maintained a limited defense agreement with Saudi Arabia that did not lead to its involvement in regional conflicts, the new pact, with Turkey also on board, could affect Islamabad's

neutrality as a mediator. Amin Rezaeinejad, a Pakistan affairs expert, told Iran Daily that Pakistan has so far failed to play a constructive role in mediation and that the signing of the pact is unlikely to affect that role. He added, however, that Iran would be better off limiting Pakistan's role in this regard given the existence of the new pact.

IRAN DAILY: Pakistan has previously had a defense and security agreement with Saudi Arabia. What factors prompted Islamabad to join a trilateral defense framework at this point? Did recent regional developments and shared security concerns play a role in the decision?

REZAEINEJAD: The biggest factor behind the signing of this defense pact is the lack of trust in the United States when it comes to defending its allies. This distrust has emerged as a result of the 40-day war, the 13-day war, and the recent conflict between Iran and the United States, as well as Trump's oscillating policies

during this period. This has prompted countries in the region to move toward a collective security pact so they can fill the void created by the United States' failure to defend its allies. Pakistan's selection as one of the countries in this pact can be attributed to its nuclear capability. On the other side of the pact, there is Turkey, a country with considerable influence in the Levant, and this is attractive to Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia, meanwhile, can be viewed as the sponsor of the pact, as a country capable of financing the agreement and once again buying its own security, this time with the help of regional countries. For Pakistan, two categories of interests can be considered. The first is political. In the field of international relations, Pakistan is both strengthening its influence and standing in the Muslim world and giving itself more weight in developments in West Asia. The other motivation is entirely financial. Pakistan can attract resources through both Turkey and

Saudi Arabia, although primarily through Saudi Arabia. This issue can also be viewed from the angle of Pakistan's rivalry with Iran in terms of governance, although it is somewhat unlikely. The Islamic Republic of Iran has a system based on a religious Leader. This model of governance is in competition with secular models. From this perspective, by forming an alliance with Saudi Arabia and Turkey — two countries with different models of governance, one based on the traditional system of sheikhdom and caliphate in the Hijaz, and the other based on a secular model — Pakistan can effectively engage in competition with the model of the Islamic Republic of Iran as well. Of course, this is a hypothesis that requires further consideration and scrutiny, but this possibility also exists.

Pakistan has sought in recent years to play a mediating role in easing tensions between Iran and the United States. Could Islamabad's accession to this pact

affect that role, or can Pakistan still serve as a channel for dialogue and de-escalation between Tehran and Washington? First of all, Pakistan has not been able to play the constructive role between Iran and the United States that had been expected. It was an actor that did not have the capacity for such a role, and, in principle, being given this role was a gift from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan. Pakistan, however, failed to live up to the role. It appears that its participation in this pact will neither positively nor negatively affect Iran-US relations, at least not directly. Pakistan will, of course, continue its mediation efforts after joining the pact because it has its own objectives in pursuing this role. One is to raise its profile in the international media and on the international stage. The other is to make use of its relations with the United States and leverage its mediation efforts. For example, Pakistan's recent request for a \$10 billion loan from the United States was a result of

this mediation. It is not going to abandon this role — unless Iran puts an end to Pakistan's involvement as a mediator; which, in my view, would be the right thing to do. Given the defense pact signed among the three countries, Iran should somewhat limit Pakistan's role.

Given the recent clashes between Saudi Arabia and Yemen's Ansarullah, what role can Islamabad be expected to play in supporting Riyadh?

Pakistani pilots are already present in Saudi Arabia, and Saudi Arabia has previously used Pakistan's airstrike capabilities against Yemen's Ansarullah. It could fall back on that capability again. But this is a tool that is not particularly effective. Saudi Arabia itself has shown a strong desire to resolve this issue diplomatically because it has already gone down the path of military confrontation with Ansarullah once and knows that this tool is not particularly effective for it.