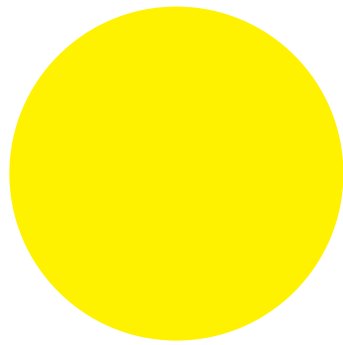




Restoration begins on historic Abbasi Mosque after war damage

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Iranian Oil Minister Mohsen Paknejad hosts a delegation (L) from Tajikistan headed by Energy and Water Resources Minister Daler Juma in Tehran, Iran, on August 15, 2026. **SHANA**

Amid Riyadh-Islamabad-Ankara defense initiative

Iran wary of joining alliances that could limit its defense autonomy

By Sadeq Dehqan
Staff writer

INTERVIEW EXCLUSIVE

As the region's security dynamics enter a new phase following the recent war, a joint defense agreement between Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan has put the spotlight on the future of the Middle East's security architecture.



There have also been questions about the possibility of Iran joining the alliance at a later stage, as it has always stressed that regional security should be provided by regional countries without the presence of extra-regional powers. Jafar Ghanadbashi, a Middle East analyst, told Iran Daily that Iran's participation in regional security arrangements is in line with the policies of the

Islamic Republic of Iran, but Tehran has always been concerned about how the structure and command of such an alliance would be defined and does not want its capabilities and armed forces placed in a structure that could ultimately allow restrictions or controls to be imposed on the country's defense decisions.

IRAN DAILY: Can the implications of the pact be analyzed separately from developments involving Iran and the recent regional war? What is your assessment of the nature of this agreement and the speculation surrounding its objectives?

GHANADBASHI: In my view, Saudi Arabia, under the current circumstances, is seeking to strengthen its defense capabilities following the reduction in the US military presence in the region and damage to some of its military bases, and in a way make up for the reduced presence of US forces.

At the same time, the Americans have for years sought to establish some form of military link among regional countries so that they could ultimately create a structure resembling an "Arab NATO" or a regional branch of NATO and use it to advance their objectives. Therefore, saying that this structure is entirely directed against Iran would not be accurate. The main issue is preserving and securing US interests in the region. Even during the fight against Daesh, the Americans sought to establish a regional coalition and create a security structure in the region through it. Therefore, the formation of this agreement can, from one perspective, be seen as an indication of an effort to reduce the need for a direct US presence and hand over some of the security responsibilities sought by Washington to regional countries.

Can the agreement be seen as an attempt to create a proxy security structure in the region?

In my view, the Americans essentially prefer to create proxy structures in regional wars and crises rather than directly step into every conflict. From this perspective, establishing such arrangements could be desirable for the US.

What factors could prevent the formation of a cohesive military alliance among the three countries?

The most important issue is the ideological, political and even cultural differences among these countries. The armies that are supposed to operate alongside one another need to share a degree of convergence and a common outlook, and they need years of joint training and cooperation. Such a thing cannot be created easily. For example, there are differing views on religious and political issues among Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Turkey. At the same time, Turkey and Pakistan have particular sensitivities regarding the issue of Palestine and

Israel. Therefore, any move by this alliance that is perceived as being aligned with the interests of Israel or the US could face domestic constraints and public opposition in these countries. Consequently, simply putting three armies together does not mean that a joint army or an effective military alliance will emerge.

How significant are Saudi Arabia's concerns over threats from Yemen in shaping the agreement?

This could be one of the important motivations. Saudi Arabia's experience in the Yemen war showed that the country faces serious challenges on the military front. Saudi Arabia launched the war against Yemen in 2015 with a coalition of several countries. Pakistan and Turkey were also initially mentioned, but ultimately did not join the coalition. The experience of the Yemen war showed that Saudi Arabia is not necessarily successful in forming broad military coalitions against a country.

Could concerns over Iran's growing power be a factor behind the agreement?

Yes, naturally, one of the concerns is the emergence of a powerful Iran in the region. In the past, they had to some extent relied on US presence and support, but that security structure has come under strain. They are therefore seeking to establish new arrangements.

However, it remains questionable how successful this agreement could be against Iran. Saudi Arabia is highly vulnerable today, and its experience confronting Yemen has also demonstrated this.

On the other hand, if this structure were to be used directly against Iran, it should be noted that Turkey and Pakistan would also pay a heavy price. Therefore, it would not be realistic to assume that these two countries could easily and without domestic and regional consequences enter into a military confrontation with Iran.

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