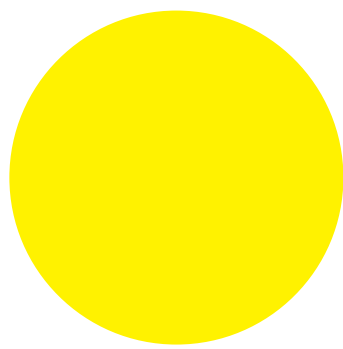


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Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian (L), accompanied by his Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi (C), is seen walking on the sidelines of a BRICS summit in New Delhi, India on September 13, 2026. president.ir

Iran's choice on trilateral defense pact Join, reject or rewrite the game?



By Hossein Kazemi
International affairs analyst

O P I N I O N
E X C L U S I V E

A new rumor has been circulating about the Mecca Pact between Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Pakistan, with the three countries re-

portedly inviting Iran to join the agreement. If Iran's possible responses are examined, three broad scenarios emerge. The first is that Iran joins the pact.

The three existing members have defined the agreement's objective as reducing regional tensions. None has a strategic conflict of interest with either Israel or the United States, which presents itself as the architect of the regional order, and neither Washington nor Tel Aviv appears opposed to the initiative. In practical terms, therefore, the pact would represent an emerging regional order whose strategic purposes broadly overlap with those of the US-led international order.

For Iran, which also claims a role in shaping the regional order, joining would mean entering an arrangement it did not design and which, in broad terms, is aligned with the regional order preferred by the United States and Israel. Unconditional membership would consequently force Iran to reconsider its broader strategy of shaping the regional order.

The pact's mutual-defense provision could even require changes in tactics, including Iran's support for Yemen. That, in turn, could undermine the legitimacy of the strategy of resistance and the narrative of a logical chain of steadfastness that has underpinned it so far.

The second scenario is that Iran refuses to join. Because the pact is presented at the point of signing as an instrument for reducing tensions and promoting peace, refusing to participate could leave Iran facing a diplomatic dead end. By rejecting an agreement defined in terms of peace and de-escalation, Iran could see its own identity as a country seeking peace and opposing tensions called into question. It could consequently be pushed toward greater isolation.

Ultimately, this scenario too could weaken Iran and the discourse of resistance. The important lesson for Iran's foreign policy is clear: without a foreign-policy plan of its own, Iran will be forced to operate within strategies designed by others. The result would be greater passivity in its foreign policy. Amid the ongoing hybrid war, combining geopolitical, security, military, economic and political dimensions, the development can also be viewed through the lens of the Western system and the roles assigned to countries within it.

Because of their geographical proximity and the growing difficulty of controlling regional tensions, the three countries have lacked the security and military options necessary to play a direct role in shaping the region's future order.

They have consequently been pushed toward political and diplomatic action at the regional level, assuming the role of actors operating within the emerging Western strategy.

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