

A new Quad to counter the 'new Nato'

Developing an India-Israel-UAE-Japan response to the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Turkey Pact



From left, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif pose after signing a trilateral defense agreement in Mecca, Saudi Arabia, Friday, Aug. 7, 2026. (Saudi Press Agency via AP)

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The Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Turkey defence pact, signed in Mecca on August 7, 2026, represents a significant attempt to institutionalise security cooperation across South Asia, the Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean. Its central provision — that an armed attack against one member will be regarded as an attack against all three — gives the agreement the appearance of a collective-defence arrangement, although the treaty's operational obligations remain unspecified. The most effective counter to this emerging axis would not necessarily be a mirror-image military alliance. Rather, it would be a flexible strategic alignment among Israel, India, the United Arab Emirates and Japan, combining technological superiority, maritime reach, intelligence cooperation, economic resilience and diplomatic influence.

This proposed alignment would be a pragmatic security network designed to preserve regional pluralism, freedom of navigation and the autonomy of key states.

The Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Turkey arrangement brings together three states with different but complementary assets. Pakistan contributes a large military establishment, combat experience and a nuclear deterrent. Saudi Arabia supplies financial resources, energy leverage and strategic geography. Turkey adds a substantial defence-industrial base, a large armed force and experience in drones, missiles, naval systems and expeditionary operations. There are opportunities for joint production, technology partnerships, procurement and interoperability among the three countries. Some have termed this arrangement as a 'new Nato'.

Yet the pact's apparent strength hides important limitations. Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Turkey do not share identical threat perceptions. Islamabad's principal strategic concerns remain India, internal security and economic fragility; Riyadh is focused on missile and drone threats, maritime security and regime protection; Ankara's priorities include Syria, Iraq, the Eastern Mediterranean, Kurdish militancy and its wider regional influence. The agreement therefore lacks the strategic coherence that normally sustains durable military alliances.

Its ambiguity is also deliberate. The pact names no adversary and has been described by its members as "purely defensive". Pakistan's foreign minister stated that it was open to other regional countries and was not directed against any specific state. This ambiguity makes the agreement politically sustainable, but it also limits deterrence. A pact without clearly defined command structures, force commitments, rules of engagement and integrated planning may become more a signal of solidarity than a functioning collective-security mechanism.

An India-Israel-UAE-Japan alignment would possess a different type of power. It would connect four states with advanced technological capabilities, strong maritime interests, significant economic weight and complementary

geographic positions. It would be a sort of a new Quad (the first being the quadrilateral arrangement between India, Australia, Japan and the United States in the Indo-Pacific).

Israel would provide capabilities in missile defence, unmanned systems, cyber operations, intelligence, electronic warfare and precision strike. Its experience in integrating sensors, command systems and layered air defence would be particularly valuable in a region increasingly shaped by drones, cruise missiles and ballistic missiles. Israel's technological contribution could help India and the UAE build more resilient protection for critical infrastructure, ports, energy installations and military bases.

India would serve as the principal demographic, industrial and geographical anchor. It has the largest military and economic potential among the four states and occupies a central position in the Indian Ocean. India's naval presence, access to the Arabian Sea and proximity to Pakistan and the Gulf would give the alignment strategic depth. Unlike a purely Gulf-based arrangement, India could connect West Asian security with the wider Indo-Pacific maritime order.

The UAE would contribute capital, logistics, ports, diplomatic flexibility and access to the Gulf and Red Sea regions. Abu Dhabi has developed extensive economic and defence relationships with multiple powers, allowing it to function as a bridge between South Asia, West Asia, Africa and Europe. Its investment capacity could support joint defence manufacturing, infrastructure protection, artificial intelligence and maritime-domain-awareness projects.

Japan would add advanced industrial technology, financial strength, maritime expertise and legitimacy in the Indo-Pacific. India and Japan elevated their relationship in 2025 through a Joint Declaration on Security Cooperation, including deeper military exercises, defence-industrial collaboration, cyber and space cooperation, and greater interoperability. Japan's participation would ensure that the proposed alignment was not confined to the politics of

West Asia but formed part of a broader architecture of rules-based maritime security.

The most practical foundation for cooperation among India, Israel, the UAE and Japan would be maritime security. The Pakistan-Saudi-Turkey pact is geographically dispersed but lacks an obvious integrated maritime framework. By contrast, the four-state grouping could establish a connected chain of maritime awareness extending from the Eastern Mediterranean and Red Sea to the Arabian Sea and Western Pacific.

Its agenda could include joint monitoring of shipping routes and suspicious maritime activity, protection of ports, undersea cables and energy infrastructure, coordinated responses to drones, mines and missile threats, information-sharing among naval and coast-guard agencies, search-and-rescue and humanitarian-assistance exercises, interoperability in anti-submarine and maritime surveillance operations.

India and Japan already possess deepening maritime cooperation, while the UAE's position near the Strait of Hormuz and Israel's access to the Eastern Mediterranean would provide complementary geographic advantages. The purpose would not be to establish permanent naval domination, but to reduce the ability of any actor to use maritime disruption as political coercion.

The greatest advantage of the four-state grouping would lie in the division of technological labour. Israel could contribute innovation in sensors, artificial intelligence, air defence and autonomous systems. India could provide scale, manpower, software expertise and manufacturing capacity. The UAE could offer investment and logistics. Japan could provide precision engineering, robotics, propulsion, materials science and industrial quality control.

India and Japan have already discussed cooperation in areas such as defence equipment, aero and tank engines, automation, artificial intelligence, cyber and space. This foundation could be expanded into a broader industrial partnership involving Israeli technologies and Emirati capital.

The resulting model would be more resilient than a conventional arms-supply relationship. Instead of merely purchasing weapons, the four states could co-develop systems such as counter-drone networks, autonomous maritime platforms, satellite-based surveillance, secure communications and integrated air-defence architectures. Such cooperation would also reduce dependence on external suppliers and create supply-chain alternatives to existing monopolies.

The best model would be a modular partnership rather than a binding alliance. A practical framework could begin with annual ministerial consultations, intelligence exchanges, maritime exercises, defence-industry working groups, cyber cooperation and joint infrastructure-protection initiatives. Over time, successful cooperation could produce a security network without requiring a formal mutual-defence treaty.

The India-Israel-UAE-Japan combination would be an effective counter to the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia-Turkey pact because it would answer military coordination with technological integration, geopolitical uncertainty with maritime awareness, and financial leverage with industrial and economic resilience. Its strength would not arise from numerical military parity alone, but from the complementary capabilities of its members.

The Mecca pact is principally a political and strategic signal whose practical cohesion remains untested. The four-state alignment, if carefully designed, could become a more sophisticated form of balancing: neither an overtly offensive coalition nor a rigid ideological bloc, but a flexible network linking the Indian Ocean, Gulf, Mediterranean and Indo-Pacific. Its ultimate objective should be deterrence without escalation, strategic autonomy without isolation, and regional order without domination.

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