

The “Mecca Agreement”: Geopolitical dynamics and strategic challenges of the new alliance

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Annotation

ARVAK analyzes the signing of the “Mecca Agreement” (07.08.2026) – a trilateral pact establishing a military-political alliance between Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan. The evolution of the “Sunni axis” project is examined, tracing its transformation from an initiative supported by the US-Israeli tandem into an independent geopolitical construct. The analysis reveals the strategic goals of the participants aimed at reformatting the region’s security architecture, evaluates the risks associated with potential resistance from external players, and assesses the prospects for forming a new pole of influence capable of pursuing an independent course amid global turbulence.

Keywords: Mecca Agreement, Sunni axis, Sunni NATO, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, regional security, geopolitical architecture, Near East, collective security, military-political integration.

1. The “Mecca Agreement” and the institutionalization of the new alliance

On August 7, 2026, in Mecca, the leaders of Saudi Arabia, Turkey, and Pakistan – Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif – signed a trilateral pact establishing a military-political alliance.

Widespread media resonance forced officials from all three states to publicly downplay the significance of the agreement. This restraint stems from a desire to smooth over a complex information environment and minimize the risk of opposition from global powers that view the new treaty as a challenge to their own interests. In particular, Turkish Vice President Cevdet Yılmaz rushed to assure that the document is purely defensive in nature and is not directed against third parties. Similarly, Saudi Deputy Foreign Minister Raid bin Khalid Krmlı emphasized that the pact “*does not aim to create a military axis or any kind of bloc*”. However, contrary to official rhetoric, the analytical community is virtually unanimous: this represents the formation of a full-fledged military-political alliance designed to fundamentally reformat the security architecture in South Asia and the Middle East.

Although the official text of the treaty, dubbed the “Mecca Agreement”, has not yet been released to the public, international media reports indicate that its central clause establishes the principle of collective security. Any armed attack on one of the contracting parties will be regarded as aggression against all alliance members, legitimizing the deployment of any measures and assets to provide mutual military assistance. Additionally, the agreement codifies a drive toward deeper defense-industrial integration: the states intend to conduct mutual deliveries and gratis transfers of armaments, ensure technology transfer, and engage in joint R&D within the defense-industrial complex. In particular, Ankara’s plans to involve Saudi Arabia and Pakistan in the design and serial production program for the state-of-the-art Turkish KAAN fighter jet are noted.

2. Genesis of the “Sunni axis”: From “Sunni NATO” to strategic autonomy

The signing of the “Mecca Agreement” did not come as a surprise. International media first began loudly discussing preparations by Riyadh, Ankara, and Islamabad to form a tripartite alliance – unofficially dubbed the “*Sunni axis*” or “*Sunni NATO*” – in early January 2026.

¹ The original (in Rus.) was posted on our website on 12.08.2026.

In its [publication](#) dated 10.01.2026 (“The alliance of Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan amid unrest in the IRI”), the ARVAK Center suggested that preliminary consultations among the interested states on forming a Sunni military-political bloc had begun long before the winter of 2025–2026. However, this process accelerated noticeably against the backdrop of a anticipated new attack by the U.S. and Israel against Iran. The leadership in Islamabad, Riyadh, and Ankara operated under the assumption of the inevitable fall of the “*theocratic Shiite regime*” and the potential outbreak of a civil war. These expectations necessitated an emergency acceleration of the alliance project, aimed both at effectively preventing risks associated with the collapse of the IRI and at covertly preparing for the partition of the “*Iranian heritage*”.

3. The U.S. shift in course and the erosion of U.S.-Israeli dominance

The “New U.S. National Security Strategy”, published in December 2025, also appears to have acted as a catalyst to expedite the negotiation process. Its key conceptual premise codifies a shift in Washington’s course: a transition from global and Near Eastern “*liberal interventionism*” to a “*multilevel delegation*” of authority to regional partners. Thus, the creation of a tripartite alliance of Islamic states was driven by a desire to ensure a stable balance of security across a vast region amid the announced drawdown of the U.S. military presence.

In its [publication](#) dated 01.05.2026 (“Geopolitical architecture and strategic determinants of the ‘Sunni NATO’”), ARVAK provided a detailed analysis of the motivations driving the largest Islamic nations to establish the alliance, taking into account the fundamental circumstance that, contrary to expectations, the Iranian “*theocratic regime*” was not overthrown, the Islamic Republic of Iran avoided civil war, and the U.S. has shown no signs to date of reducing its military footprint in the Middle East.

Despite regional developments diverging from initial forecasts, the formation of the “Sunni NATO” was not suspended. This clearly underscores the determination of Ankara, Islamabad, and Riyadh to pursue a course independent of Washington’s geopolitical plans and to complete the formation of a Sunni center of influence without regard for the position of the United States. By all appearances, key Islamic states took advantage of the conflict between the U.S.-Israeli coalition and the Iran-led “*Shiite axis*” to convince Tel Aviv and Washington of the strategic expediency of supporting this alliance.

The validity of this version is corroborated by data recently circulating in the global information space regarding the deep historical roots of the “Sunni Axis” initiative, as well as the direct roles played by the United States and Israel in its inception. Specifically, Iranian media channels disseminated a 2012 video recording featuring an admission by former head of Israel’s *Shabak* service (1996–2000), Admiral Ami Ayalon. His comments reveal that Tel Aviv was the original architect of the “*Sunni axis*” idea, intending to construct an effective regional buffer against the “*Shiite threat*” epitomized by Iran. Concurrently, excerpts from past speeches by Turkish President R. T. Erdoğan were made public, emphasizing the duty of Sunni states to guarantee Israel’s security. This evidence vividly illustrates the deep engagement of the U.S. and Israel in fostering intra-confessional division within the Muslim world, the practical manifestation of which became the structured Sunni partnership program.

However, these circumstances do not rule out the possibility that the “Sunni NATO” project – initially launched by Israel with direct assistance from the U.S. – subsequently lost

the interest of Tel Aviv and Washington or was deemed an erroneous strategic misstep altogether. Nonetheless, this posed no barrier to the Sunni states, which pressed ahead with the military-political integration process using their own momentum.

Practice demonstrates that in geopolitics, there are no eternal constants. The dynamics of global processes and the permanent volatility of the Middle East regularly produce unexpected transformations. Shifts in regional players' priorities and the development of new force-balance formulas are largely driven by the ambiguous consequences of the "Arab Spring", the declining role of hydrocarbons in global energy structures, and the growing prominence of trans-Eurasian overland transit routes. In this new Near Eastern reality, the U.S.-Israeli tandem likely came to doubt the unequivocal benefits of a Sunni center of influence. Furthermore, the emergence of such a pole may well have been perceived by Washington and Tel Aviv as a direct challenge to their regional dominance.

It appears that the "*Shiite threat*" to the State of Israel and U.S. regional interests was significantly overstated, while the Sunni states – originally envisioned as the core of an anti-Iranian coalition – consistently realigned their positions in contradiction to Tel Aviv's strategic planning. Turkey, for instance, not only openly challenges Israel's dominant role in the Eastern Mediterranean and Levant but also demonstrates a clear intent to untether itself from the fairway of Washington's and NATO's Middle Eastern strategy. For its part, Saudi Arabia – under the *de facto* leadership of Prince Mohammed bin Salman – has adopted a far more radical posture on the Palestinian issue, heading an anti-Israeli wing within the Arab League and systematically blocking the expansion of the "*Abraham Accords*" platform across the broader Arab world. Egypt, which has not yet signed the "Mecca Agreement" but is signaling the outlines of its future entry into the "*Sunni axis*", is similarly nearing a flashpoint in its relations with Israel over Palestine, while simultaneously forging a joint line with Turkey across the Eastern Mediterranean, the Red Sea, and the broader Middle East. Meanwhile, Pakistan maintains a firm rejection of the U.S. Central Asian course, deepens multi-tiered partnership with Beijing as Washington's primary global rival, and regularly issues warnings to Tel Aviv, declaring its readiness to leverage its nuclear capabilities to defend Islamic states and movements under attack from Israel's "*expansionist*" and "*genocidal*" actions.

It is telling that Pakistan was absent from Ami Ayalon's original "*Sunni Alliance*" blueprint. However, having strengthened bilateral ties with Ankara, Riyadh, and Cairo over the past two decades, Islamabad emerged in January of this year as a primary contender for bloc membership, solidifying that status with its signature on the "Mecca Agreement". This divergence clearly indicates that the U.S. and Israel eventually lost control over the project. For Washington and Tel Aviv, incorporating an Islamic nuclear power – one demonstrating hostility toward the Jewish state and strained relations with the U.S. dating back to the 1990s – into a "*Sunni NATO*" appeared counterproductive. Moreover, following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan and the waning of U.S. interest, Islamabad consistently reoriented its foreign policy and economic alignment toward the PRC. Consequently, Pakistan's accession to the alliance became viable only after the U.S.-Israeli tandem was sidelined from the creation process.

This gives reason for a number of analysts to suggest that the Sunni states – first and foremost Turkey – viewed the U.S.-Israeli initiative from the outset not as a tool to counter an artificially inflated "*Shiite threat*", but through the prism of a long-term strategy. Its ultimate objective is seen as the expulsion of the United States from the region, the elimination of Israeli

influence, and the establishment in the Near East of an alternative multilateral power pole capable of sovereign control over local resources and transit corridors, as well as developing its own collective security model.

4. Role reversal: Iran and Pakistan in the new regional architecture

Since the 1990s, Turkey has served as the key driver behind creating a military-political bloc of Islamic states. The origins of this concept trace back to the “Millî Görüş” (“National Vision”) doctrine formulated by Necmettin Erbakan, the founder of Turkish political Islam and former Prime Minister. Later, this idea materialized into the geopolitical project known as *ASRIKA* (an acronym for **AS**ya – Asia, **R**usya – Russia/Eurasia, **İKA** / Afrika – Africa), drafted by the ASSAM center for strategic studies. Closely linked to Turkey’s current leadership, ASSAM was headed by retired General Adnan Tanrıverdi – founder of the first Turkish PMCs, which Ankara actively deployed in Nagorno-Karabakh, Syria, and across the African continent.

N. Erbakan’s original framework envisioned deep economic and defense integration across the Islamic world – featuring a common market, collective security, and a unified currency (the Islamic Dinar) – enabling liberation from the dictates of the U.S., NATO, and the IMF. Although that plan remained a romantic utopia at the time due to various subjective and objective factors, Erbakan’s successors who later assumed power, including current leader R. T. Erdoğan, deemed it feasible to put into practice. The modified doctrine was re-vectored toward the Sunni world and embraced collegial principles of alliance governance.

Updated and tailored to contemporary geopolitical realities, the project resonated deeply with Sunni powers. Their interest is driven by security vulnerabilities, economic crises, and long-term uncertainty in a volatile region spanning from Africa to Central Asia. Recognizing this, Ankara seized a lucrative opportunity to leverage the anti-Iranian initiatives of the U.S.-Israeli alliance to elevate its own integration agenda to the global geopolitical stage.

Thus, the waning interest of the U.S. and Israel in the project did not prevent the Sunni powers from realizing it to advance their own interests. This naturally raises concern in Washington and especially in Tel Aviv, where references to the “*Shiite Crescent*” and “*Shiite threat*” have conspicuously diminished in official rhetoric, yielding ground to terms like “*Sunni axis*” and “*Sunni NATO*”.

The signing of the “Mecca Agreement” marks the initial phase in the practical realization of the “*Sunni Alliance*” concept. This nascent bloc consolidates formidable assets: a combined population of roughly 400 million (nearly 5% of the global total), active military personnel numbering up to 1 million, Pakistan’s tactical nuclear arsenal, Saudi Arabia’s immense financial and energy reserves, and Turkey’s advanced industrial-technological sector. Of particular import is the unique geographical positioning of the member states at key geostrategic and logistical nodes across Eurasia. Given the bloc’s openness to new members and the potential entry of Egypt (population 100 million), real conditions are emerging for the rise of a self-sustaining global pole of influence capable of thoroughly reformatting the security architecture from Gibraltar to China.

However, while achievable in theory, the alliance faces an extremely challenging path in practice. The ARVAK Center previously detailed the objective, systemic hurdles to establishing a “Sunni Alliance” as an independent geopolitical construct in its [publication](#) dated 07.05.2026

(“Systemic contradictions and prospects for the formation of a ‘Sunni NATO’”). In this context, the focus must shift to subjective external factors – the challenges and risks that will inevitably confront the alliance as a result of deliberate opposition from the U.S.-Israeli tandem.

5. Containment strategies of Washington and Tel Aviv

It can be predicted with a high degree of probability that Washington and Tel Aviv will attempt either to establish multi-layered influence over the emerging geopolitical bloc to direct its internal evolution, or resort to radical steps to accelerate the dissolution of this still-unstable structure. The primary goal of the tandem is to ensure total control over ongoing dynamics. To achieve this, they may exploit internal friction among the Sunni states while reinforcing external counterweights and containment mechanisms. Should effective management and containment prove impossible, the U.S. and Israel will seek to dismantle the alliance entirely, as it poses a direct threat to their regional supremacy.

Consequently, Washington and Tel Aviv will continue to intensify their strategic partnership with New Delhi and push the *IMEC* megaproject. Concurrently, the White House may adopt fundamentally new approaches to dialogue with the Taliban movement in Afghanistan. Alongside this, the United States will attempt to expand its leverage over Riyadh: both by manipulating US Treasury bonds – which form the bedrock of the Kingdom’s foreign assets – and through pressure tied to the bilateral “*nuclear program*”, an agreement on which Washington prudently secured just a week prior to the signing of the Mecca pact.

On one hand, Tel Aviv will likely maintain pressure on Ankara in Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean, begin working in tandem with Washington to heavily exploit the “Kurdish factor”, and potentially take steps toward covert global support for the Russian Federation to preserve its strategic weight in the Caucasus and Black Sea region. On the other hand, the U.S. and Israel could initiate pressure on Brussels to soften and liberalize the terms of European integration for Turkey. Such a move would initially weaken Erdoğan’s domestic political authority and spark division among Turkish elites and citizens regarding the nation’s future trajectory and civilizational choice.

Overall, the U.S.-Israeli tandem possesses a wide array of avenues to contain and control the “*Sunni axis*”. Perhaps the most extraordinary step in this direction would be terminating confrontation with the “*Shiite axis*” and pursuing a partial “*rehabilitation*” of the Islamic Republic of Iran. While Iran originally served as the catalyst for assembling a “*Sunni NATO*”, it is now seen as the most effective natural counterweight to the new triangle of power formed by Ankara, Islamabad, and Riyadh. Such a geopolitical maneuver is hypothetically viable given the monumental challenges facing Israel and the threat to Washington’s plans to contain China while preserving its own dominance on the Asian continent.

Conclusion

It is symbolic that the Sunni states’ pact was executed in Mecca, the embodiment of unity within the Islamic world. Under these conditions, Washington and Tel Aviv are unlikely to forgo the opportunity to demonstrate once again that genuine unity within the Islamic world remains unattainable.