

Capability-Credibility Gap in US Security Commitments to The GCC: Analyzing Saudi Arabia's Strategic Diversification

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ABSTRACT

The capability-credibility gap in US security commitments to the Gulf Cooperation Council is primarily examined in this study, along with the consequences for Saudi Arabia's evolving security approach in Middle East. The credibility and predictability of US security guarantees have been called into question by recent crises like Israeli strikes on Doha and Iranian retaliatory attacks on US assets in middle East, even though the US maintains a strong military capability and extensive regional base in GCC countries. The paper makes the case that Gulf states particularly KSA are responding by diversifying rather than severing ties with the United States by using Alliance Credibility Theory and Hedging Strategy Theory. This change is further highlighted by the 2026 Iran Gulf escalation, which revealed structural weaknesses in Gulf defense systems in presence of US bases. Because of Pakistan's proven military prowess, especially in air defense, and its long-standing political and religious ties, Saudi Arabia has come to view Pakistan and Turkey as a complementary security partners. The study comes to the conclusion that rather than taking the place of US guarantees, Saudi Arabia's changing stance reflects a hedging strategy in which Pakistan along with Turkey acts as an extra layer of security within a larger multipolar and increasingly unstable regional order.

Keywords: Strategic Hedging, Strategic Diversification, Alliance Credibility, Gulf Security Infrastructure, Assessing Capability-Credibility Factors, Mecca Joint Defence Agreement, US Security Commitments.

INTRODUCTION

The security landscape of the Gulf is primarily shaped by the US through its active military presence in the region. Through its security assurances & defense deals, the United States has been the longstanding net security provider in the region. Israeli defense forces' strikes on Doha in Sep. 2025 have shaken the security landscape of the Middle East (Tekin, 2026). Leadership of GCC countries, especially in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, started doubting the security commitments, which has led to the eruption of the credibility gap in the United States' willingness to defend GCC nations in times of crises. Recent Iranian retaliatory strikes on the GCC for hosting US military bases on their soil have further led GCC leadership to rethink the security infrastructure of the region (Arab, 2026).

Iranian retaliatory attacks on US installations across the Middle East further triggered these concerns as the Iranian side portrays the only reason for attacking these countries is the active presence of US bases in GCC nations. These developments showcase an emerging security dilemma: that United

States bases, traditionally viewed as a source of deterrence, exposed the GCC to massive strikes. Leadership of GCC countries, especially in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, started doubting the security commitments, which has led to the eruption of the credibility gap in the United States' willingness to defend GCC nations in times of crises. Recent Iranian retaliatory strikes on the GCC for hosting US military bases on their soil have further led GCC leadership to rethink the security infrastructure of the region. In contemporary international relations, the capability-credibility debates have emerged tremendously in multiple regions, and the most critical among these are US-GCC security commitments and US political willingness to play its role as net security in the region, which raises serious questions over GCC's multilateral security arrangements (Arab News PK, 2026).

This article will explore the extent to which the capability-credibility gap in United States security commitments for the GCC influences the security recalibration strategies of Saudi Arabia and Qatar in the contemporary regional context including Mecca Joint Defence Agreement. Following the Middle Eastern current security landscape, Saudi Arabia has increasingly shifted its focus toward the diversification of its strategic partnerships.

Most of the existing scholarship emphasizes Saudi Arabia's dependence on the US for their security protection against potential threats and the US capability to defend, but limited work has been done on the question of whether the US is a credible partner to defend Saudi Arabia, especially against Israeli air strikes. This study will analyze reasons, practicality, possibility, and consequences of this approach, particularly in context of Pakistan.

The existing literature has explained these credibility-capability gaps in US security assurances through regional security complex theory, whereas this study investigates the credibility concerns surrounding US strategic commitments and the potential security partners for Saudi Arabia in accordance with alliance credibility theory and hedging strategy theory, which remain underexplored in existing work. This research will also explore Pakistan's role as a reliable and credible security provider, especially focusing on the air defense domain in the post-Iran War era.

Objectives

The paper examines the credibility of the US security guarantees to the GCC, as it left the GCC vulnerable to attack rather than fully protecting them by analyzing case studies of the 2003 strikes on Doha and the United States and Iran in 2026. It suggests that the Kingdom is reacting to this by diversifying options in security relations instead of limiting ties with its long-standing security partner, US and this is explained by Hedging Strategy Theory and Alliance Credibility Theory. The paper explores the possible factors for the eruption of these capability-credibility in recent years. The study also specifically assesses the increasing status of Pakistan and Turkey as complementary security partners and their credibility in provision of security commitments which US lacked to ensure. It seeks to address a gap in literature that directly challenges US credibility and introduces theoretical perspectives on the increased relevance of Pakistan and Turkey in the Gulf security landscape.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Gulf Cooperation Council, in particular, has a very US-centric security infrastructure. The multibillion-dollar defense equipment deals are just one aspect of the security cooperation; another is the provision of security protection against legitimate security threats, particularly from Iran and its allies in this precarious region. However, the strategic culture of the GCC countries, especially Saudi Arabia and Qatar, has been shaken since President Trump took office and Israeli airstrikes on Doha. These changes in US regional priorities have cast doubt on US security pledges to GCC countries, which has prompted these countries to look into ways to diversify their security alliances. After the May 2025 standoff against its ideological, political, and longstanding rival India, Pakistan, with its longstanding brotherly ties to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, was the obvious choice for Saudi Arabia,

especially in light of its military and diplomatic potential. The security relationship between the United States and the Gulf Cooperation Council, the security environment in the Middle East, and the defense ties between Pakistan and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have all been covered in the literature. However, little research has been done on Pakistan's role as a reliable ally against possible threats in light of the waning confidence in US security commitments. Through Alliance Credibility Theory and Hedging Strategy Theory, the study will examine how credibility is the main factor influencing these strategic alignments despite the capability gaps between the US and Pakistan.

The majority of the literature currently in publication focuses on case studies of US military infrastructure in the Middle East and is centered on US-Middle East security relations. Academics like F. Gregory Cause III feels that the GCC countries have become overly dependent on the US for the survival of their regimes and defense against threats in the region. The majority of the studies that are currently available take a realist approach that emphasizes alliance building, whereby relatively weak nations tend to form strategic partnerships with powerful nations in order to combat shared threats. The main flaw is that US security issues have not been questioned in terms of credibility because they demonstrate a stable capability-credibility approach. However, in the current environment, this has completely changed because of US regional priorities.

According to Mehmood, T, Saudi Arabia and Qatar's attempts to expand their strategic alliances beyond the United States by interacting with nations like China, Turkey, and Pakistan are examined in recent research on the shifting security dynamics in the Gulf. These studies use theories of alliance credibility, neoclassical realism, and balance of threat to explain how the regional security environment is changing.

Previously Siddiq, 25 examine the defense cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan as well as the historical development of bilateral ties. These studies, however, mostly focus on bilateral relations alone, pay little attention to Qatar's growing security role, and fail to adequately evaluate Pakistan's ability to function as a reliable security partner in the face of shifting regional geopolitics.

Nawaz, 2025, also highlighted strategic defence mutual agreement (SDMA) in the context of US security commitments, but now it is a recent shape in the form of the Mecca Joint Defence Agreement and needs more literature to enhance the contemporary analysis of these security gaps existing in the GCC, particularly for KSA.

The literature is limited to explain the explanation of how Saudi Arabia and Qatar's increased security cooperation with Pakistan has been prompted by declining trust in US security commitments is a significant gap. By combining Alliance Credibility Theory and Hedging Strategy Theory, this study fills this gap by arguing that the Gulf states are diversifying their security alliances to lessen strategic vulnerability rather than taking the place of the United States.

ANALYSIS/DISCUSSIONS

Security Infrastructure in the Gulf

Security architecture is primarily created by distrust, territorial encroachment and fear of incursion in the Middle East. There have been significant changes in security dynamics with major military powers like Iran, Israel and Saudi Arabia in attendance, particularly since the assassination of Iran's top general, Qasem Soleimani, in a US drone strike in Iraq. Iran knew in the years following his assassination, that a proxy network it had developed throughout the Middle East would be vulnerable to the CIA and Mossad in the coming years, so it began to establish a powerful conventional military force to defend itself against attacks by Israel and KSA. The GCC countries, which have a clash of ideas and ideology with Iran, have always been in a dilemma over this vast military accumulation by Iran. An initiative to establish the US Middle East Strategic Alliance (MESA) as a military counterbalance has been on the table to counter threats such as Iran although it has not been embraced

by Qatar, Oman and Kuwait. Nevertheless, the USA has always been the most concerned about the interest of the GCC in the region particularly the security of the GCC States. This is easily apparent once the military tactics and weaponry used by each of the GCC nations has been studied; most of them are of US origin (Kurtzer & Seeley, 2020).

Potential Threats for the GCC states

In the past, Israel has been the most powerful competitor to the GCC countries, having threatened any Arab nation with its expansionist policy towards the region. The 6-day war took place also between the combined forces of Arabs and Israel which Israel repelled efficiently. Due to ideological differences with the new regime in Iran and Arab monarchies, after the Iranian revolution, the security paradigms were revolutionized. Iran was the big danger and Israel was the second danger because it was well monitored by the USA and therefore, the US will not let them have any tension with the allies of USA; the GCC states (Kurtzer & Seeley, 2020). However, since the arrival of President Trump into the White House, all dimensions have been completely altered. The Abrahamic Accord introduced by Donald was not acceptable by most of the GCC countries, however, it continues to impact all the major GCC countries that have not endorsed the Abrahamic Accord, particularly Saudi Arabia and Qatar. In his second tenure as the 47th president of the US, Trump has highlighted his wish for Muslim nations, particularly the GCC, to accept the Abrahamic Accords, like the UAE and Bahrain, but till now Qatar and Saudi Arabia are reluctant, and they have conditioned it to the establishment of an independent state for the Palestinian people (Wehrey & Sokolsky, 2015).

The Doha Attack and Emergence of new Security Concerns for the GCC

The Israeli attack on Doha on 9 September has completely reshaped the security architecture, and especially that of the main city of Qatar, in the presence of advanced US military bases which for all Gulf states, particularly Qatar and Saudi Arabia, raised doubts as to the credibility of the US to defend them, despite their advanced capability (Tekin, 2026). While the goals of the strikes were not achieved, it did have strategic consequences. But this led the KSA and Qatar to broaden up their strategic alliances to have credible partners in case of any misadventure from the Israeli attack. Doha is also looking for a credible partner, as it got commitments from the US for no future attack, but questions remain about the credibility of these commitments. Regarding the UAE, the UAE has been working on normalizing its ties with Israel since the signing of the Abrahamic Accords during the first tenure of the Trump presidency (Staff, 2025).

US Bases: A Strategic Burden for GCC

Iran said they attacked the GCC countries because of the presence of the US military in the GCC territory. The missile attacks on the 23rd June by Iran on the al-Udeid base were Iran's response to Israeli attacks on Doha, and Iran's retaliation for the killing of its supreme leaders, in a joint attack by Israeli and US forces, shows that the GCC paid the price for hosting the strategic bases, but when it comes to defending the territory of the GCC, this massive military presence failed (U.S. Bases in the GCC: A Security Model under Attack, 2026). So, the large presence of these military bases in the security environment of the GCC countries and other Arab countries has always had several negative impacts on the countries' sovereignty. Hence, an Iran-US war has been a game-changer for the security landscape of the Middle East (MEE 2026).

Credibility Gaps in US-GCC Strategic Commitments

The political leadership of the United States has been highly unpredictable especially in president Trump tenure. It is a longstanding fact that Israeli interests guided the US policy for the Middle East. Following are some of the factors that trigger this US-GCC credibility gap in US commitments.

Israel's Independent Security Calculus

Reactions in Israel to the Iran-US deal mediated by Pakistan suggest that Israel may be able to start any mishap in the future without the US leadership's approval. Israel's intervention in Lebanon violated the ceasefire agreement negotiated by the US President Trump, and some of the harshest statements made by Trump and Israeli leader Benjamin Netanyahu reveal that Israeli leadership goes against the US in order to serve itself strategic interests in the region (Amr Hamzawy et al., 2025). So, it would not be enough and convincing relying only on the U.S. pledge, particularly for Saudi Arabia that has a rather long border with Israel.

Overall Strategic Uncertainty Under President Trump

Some of Trump's controversial statements against the Saudi leadership have raised concerns about the uncertain policies of President Trump, as he has praised Muhammad bin Salman, but he used such undiplomatic words that have sparked a new debate about Trump's unpredictable nature. The highly dependent of the U.S. defense on the U.S. is not yet trusted by the GCC regarding the fulfilment of the commitments. The power structure wants predictable partners instead of volatile ones because of the region's volatility (Rozario, 2025).

Emergence of New Security Power Centers

The emerging multipolar global order is significantly causing alliance shifts and diversifications of alliances, especially in the third decade of the 21st century. The situation in the region, with its fragile security conditions, is a strong incentive for the big powers to increase the totality of their power projection. Pakistan, one of these countries, is not a great power, but, because of its strategic location and its May 2025 standoff with India, which demonstrated its capability, especially in the Air domain (Bakir & Al-Shamari, 2025), is a very effective security provider. So, the Saudi Arabia's relationship with Pakistan is very good, the element of credibility is very small, and a historic strategic mutual defense agreement (SMDA) has been witnessed. One of the factors is the rapid rise of the Chinese as a second most powerful country in the world, now admitted by the US. Thus, the GCC countries are striving to diversify these security arrangements, especially Saudi Arabia (Wright, 2025).

Saudi Approach Towards Strategic Diversification

Analyzing all the developments in GCC in the post-Doha attack era, it is relatively hard to predict whether Saudi Arabia is shifting its alliance towards any new power centers emerging, but it is very safe to conclude that Saudi Arabia is highly motivated to address this US credibility gap through the approach of strategic diversification. Pakistan, being the long-standing credible brotherly nation, was the obvious option for this. Recent developments like better connectivity with Turkey also demonstrate that this strategic cooperation is possible with other Muslim nations in the region.

Saudi Arabia is the top US arms-importing country in the world (Cabral, 2026). The military equipment in use with the Saudi military is also highly Western in origin, which is another crucial aspect of diversification that needs to be addressed. From F15 Strike Eagles to US THAAD and Patriots, all major strategic assets were purchased from the USA. This equipment is considered one of the best, but when we analyze the Doha attack, the same level of air defense and air force jets were deployed there; even the US base in Qatar is the largest in the region (Wallin), but the attack remained unrepelled. Therefore, not only does the alliance need to be diversified, but the weaponry should also not be overlooked.

Mecca Joint Defence Agreement: Türkiye's Addition to the Emerging Security Nexus

Although Turkey has increasingly been incorporated into the broader framework of mutual strategic cooperation, the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia strategic partnership remains the principal focus of this paper. The relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia represents a longstanding strategic alignment rooted in defense cooperation, political coordination, economic interests, and shared regional security concerns (IISS, 2026). At the same time, the growing convergence among Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey points toward the emergence of a trilateral security nexus with potentially wider implications for the strategic environment of the Middle East and South Asia. This developing nexus should not, however, be understood as replacing the bilateral foundations of Pakistan-Saudi relations; rather, Turkey's increasing strategic engagement adds a new layer to an already established partnership. The trilateral dimension is particularly significant in the context of evolving regional power dynamics, changing security partnerships, and the search for greater strategic autonomy among regional actors. Therefore, this paper places the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia alliance at the center of analysis, while examining Turkey's growing role as an additional strategic dimension and assessing how the interaction among the three states may influence defense cooperation, regional security, strategic balancing, and the broader geopolitical order.

Assessing Credibility Factor in Makkah Joint Defence Agreement

There is no doubt that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have a long history of defense cooperation, even without any such formal strategic deal, and it has also stood the test of time. Saudi Arabia is a country of religious significance and so Pakistanis continue to be very keen about the security of the two holy mosques in Mecca and Madina. Hence the issue of credibility in this agreement is very much raised, Pakistan will support Saudi Arabia. Another aspect.

Finally, it is during crisis that measures of credibility will be taken, not in peacetime, as in the attacks in Doha in 2025. Realists also believe, based on the current developments in international security, that there is plenty of scope for significant development for KSA, where it might be seeking direct military assistance, and it is highly probable that Pakistan will be passing a green signal to it (IISS 2026). However, one other factor that was extensively discussed in mainstream media was the nuclear umbrella available for Saudi Arabia, which must be dealt with effectively. In this concern the issue of credibility was strong as Pakistan still didn't want to openly discuss it. The leadership of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan has been ideal to complete such a comprehensive bilateral deal. The crown prince has given all possible support in stabilizing the very fragile economic situation over the past decade. Therefore, under the current leadership of both Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, the credibility question is highly addressed, but it would set out direction in the future, which is highly dependent on both countries' leadership.

Turkey could emerge as potential and credible partner especially with its incredible Drone industry, Turkey can provide immense support to KSA in their tussle with Houthis. Turkey has been working very closely with Pakistan over the years, as we saw it in May 2025 crisis where Pakistan retained full support from its long standing brotherly country. The addition of Turkey in this trilateral defence setting is the great addition in the deterrence of both Pakistan and KSA.

Turkey also looks like a potential and credible security partner to Saudi Arabia, especially considering its powerful drone industry, which might provide the Kingdom with a strong capability against Houthis (Timour Azhari et al., 2026). The close and long-standing defense ties between Turkey and Pakistan further reinforce this trilateral agreement, as seen during the May 2025 crisis, when Pakistan received unconditional support from its longstanding strategic ally, Ankara. The presence of Turkey in this new trilateral security alliance is therefore a welcoming addition and an improvement towards deterrence for both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia and a strengthening of the overall deterrence mechanism in this agreement.

Pakistan-KSA Strategic Agreement Amid Iran's 2026 Retaliatory Strikes; Assessing Credibility

Saudi Arabia comparatively faced fewer attacks from Iran in the 2026 Iran-US war as compared to other GCC nations. This was majorly because Pakistan diplomatically insisted to Iran that due to a strategic agreement between KSA and Pakistan, Iran should not target Saudi energy and other infrastructure, which was highly respected by Iran. KSA faced numerous attacks, but comparatively, the number was significantly lower as compared to the UAE and Qatar (Syed).

In total Iran launched 2800 missiles and drones at the UAE; on the other hand, KSA faced fewer than 250 attacks during the months-long standoff (FDD 2026). This illustrates how Pakistan ensured its commitments towards the agreement it had with KSA.

Pakistan's Recent Military Deployments in Saudi Arabia

Pakistan recently deployed 8000 active military personnel to Saudi Arabia (Reuters 2026). This was seen as a massive development considering the fragile security situation in the Middle East. Along with that, 1 squadron of the Pakistan Air Force was also deployed at King Abdul Aziz Air Base in Eastern Saudi Arabia. In the coming future there will be the presence of Pakistan air defense batteries in KSA. KSA would provide Pakistan with economic assistance in response and would ensure the revival of Pakistan's economy, which has been in immense trouble in the last decade.

These deployments are significantly aimed at posturing towards Iran, as they have been deployed at the easternmost border of Saudi Arabia close to Iran, but in the coming future we may see deployments on the northern side of KSA closer to Israel. Having a strong military, KSA still needs to cooperate with Pakistan, which holds a longstanding air force count countering air attacks from the Indian front and from the western-front during the Soviet war in Afghanistan.

Houthis Recent Strikes; A Re-Emerging Security Challenge for KSA

In recent 2026, the security situation in Saudi Arabia has become increasingly fragile. In Yemen, the Iran-backed Houthis have struck four cities in KSA, inflicting injuries on over 70 people and destroying oil installations, in a likely escalation of the security threats in the Kingdom (The Guardian, 2026). Moreover, blockade on KSA ships from crossing Bab al-Mandeb has added extra pressure on oil markets, which are already sky high in the given security landscape (Ghobari et al., 2026). This new regional conflict will be a test of the new security block in the shape of Mecca Joint Defence Agreement and the reaction will be viewed as a test of the credibility of this new security block. Pakistan has condemned these attacks on the civilian population in KSA, but Houthis are continuously capturing the key region of Yemen, which was still left in the Saudi-backed Yemeni groups (Beaumont, 2026).

As this paper highlights key credibility concerns in the US security commitments, the world has been witnessing how the US president let down the Crown Prince Salman's request for intervention into this crisis, as Donald Trump has denied and he will not militarily ask the Houthis to stop the unprovoked attack on Saudi territory (Ravid, 2026).

KSA's Hedging Approach; An Alliance Shift or a Calculated Diversification Policy

That Saudi Arabia approved its purchase of the F-35s in March 2026 contained in a \$142 billion Strategic Defense Agreement has long been interpreted as a strengthening of the US-Saudi partnership. However, an examination of the deal's structure indicates otherwise regarding Riyadh's underlying strategy (MiGFlug Blog, 2026). The agreement calls for the involvement of only 48 jets that have been configured with intentionally outdated software and weapons systems to retain Israel's qualitative military advantage. This is not expected to be available for delivery before 2029 and will not be fully functional until the early 2030s. This time delay is a relevant analytic one. It suggests that

the platform is not in response to the security challenges in Saudi Arabia, which are ongoing, including Iranian missiles and drones in the 2026 war. It serves instead as a long-term document that secures the US-Saudi relationship as opposed to as a sign of real trust in it. The decision on the F-35 was not made in strength; rather it was a result of a failed Saudi investment to negotiate a binding mutual defense pact. President Trump visited Riyadh, and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman attempted to secure a formal security pact with binding US guarantees but this proved unsuccessful, though Trump and the crown prince signed a \$142 billion arms deal that didn't include a mutual defense alliance that would require Washington to defend Saudi Arabia if attacked. However, the deal for the F-35s can be seen as part of a consolation prize for a pledge that Washington's administration has rejected. This dramatically undermines the interpretation of the deal that relations between Washington and Riyadh were restored. This would suggest that KSA are sticking with the main lines of their security policy in Washington, despite a lack of confidence in US reliability.

This so-called compensatory logic is more evident when compared with the frequency and content of the Saudi-Pakistan Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement signed off in September 2025, only a few months ago. Most analysts agree that SMDA is not an alternative alliance, but a diversification tool. Another vital factor for Riyadh is to spread its foreign security ties as Saudi security is still heavily dependent on the United States and this limits the country's strategic independence. But the gist of the pact has been undermined even during the war. In response, Pakistan did not take any public action against Iran following Saudi Arabia's reported use of the SMDA more than two weeks after the war between Iran and the Saudis broke out. This is the experimental part of the hedging argument. Saudi Arabia has not shifted its real force structure procurement or interoperability structure from American platforms. Its air force is still based on F-15s, and now F-35s, not Chinese or Pakistani systems, as it enters into declaratory treaties in protest of Washington. The new agreement is meant to reinforce the deterrence campaign, as the United States' security commitment has weakened in the region, and to strengthen the kingdom's bond with Pakistan, another key ally of Beijing, which is trying out a balancing act. This hedging is still only rhetoric and diplomacy, not in reality. Political pact with weak operational follow through vs slow walked software limitation F-35 deal demonstrates the credibility capability gap that is the focus of this paper. Saudi Arabia doubts that the United States are reliable enough to start to diversify their political hedges, but not their military bases. This validates the idea of SMDA as a diversification hedge, not a real shift of allegiance, in light of the trust shortfall of the US commitments.

CONCLUSION

Finally, Saudi Arabia's strategic shift in an unstable region has become more affected by the security dynamic of the Gulf and witnessed a maturing of its capacity and a lack of credibility in the US security commitments. Recent events such as Israeli strikes against Doha, Iranian retaliatory actions against US-backed facilities, and repeated failures to honor ceasefire agreements have raised doubts over the consistency and predictability of US political commitment to defend its regional partners in a crisis despite the US's current military superiority and wide-ranging basing infrastructure in the Gulf. GCC states, notably Saudi Arabia, which have long depended on a security blanket from the United States but are now keen to diversify their strategic orientation, have sensed that capability and credibility are growing not only closer, but are also becoming a defining characteristic of their hedging strategy.

All these were further reinforced by the rising conflict in the Iran Gulf in 2026. Iran's targeting strategy revealed the disparity in threat exposure as well as vulnerable strategic points in the Gulf energy infrastructure, with significantly more saturation attacks on the United Arab Emirates and fewer and more targeted on Saudi Arabia. Attacks on the United Arab Emirates were more frequent than those on Saudi Arabia, a reflection of the inadequacies of the existing defensive systems in the region and a pragmatic escalation strategy by Iran's regime.

In this regard, Pakistan has emerged as a key security partner for Saudi Arabia. The military deployment as well as the rising cooperation in the field of defence is another sign of Saudi Arabia's attempt to build trustworthy and politically reliable partnerships beyond traditional pacts. Unlike the existing external assurances, Pakistan's reliability is reinforced by its proven conventional military capabilities, particularly in air defense and operational coordination, and long-standing religious and political ties with Saudi Arabia. This emerging partnership is further underscored by incidents involving Pakistan's military personnel and aircraft deployment in Saudi Arabia in 2026.

Saudi Arabia, in its essence, is not looking to switch alliances, it's looking to diversify its strategy and that can only be accomplished through diversifying its weaponry it has. Pakistan and turkey role is becoming an added layer in a hedging strategy to mitigate strategic vulnerabilities and adapt to a multipolar and unpredictable regional order.

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