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# Turkish Superposition and the Bridging of Security between the Middle East and the Caspian Regions

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## **Turkish Superposition and the Bridging of Security between the Middle East and the Caspian Regions**

*On April 17-19, the Turkish resort city Antalya hosts an important diplomatic forum. Türkiye's role in the global security will be in the spotlight. What Türkiye can offer the greater Middle East or surrounding regions was always one of the key debates.*

The evolving geopolitical landscape of the Middle East, particularly in the context of ongoing confrontation involving Iran, the United States, and Israel, is set to fundamentally reshape regional security dynamics. Emerging tensions have accelerated efforts to establish new alliances and strategic blocs, reflecting a broader transformation of the regional order. One of the most notable developments in this regard is the growing cooperation between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, formalized through the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) signed on September 17, 2025. This agreement, which commits both states to collective defence, signals a shift toward more institutionalized security arrangements in the region. Although Turkish officials have denied intentions to form a trilateral alliance with these countries, increasing levels of cooperation among them suggest the emergence of a flexible and evolving strategic alignment.

Türkiye has already demonstrated its capacity to act as a security guarantor in the Gulf region. During the Qatar crisis in 2017, Ankara played a decisive role in ensuring the country's security and territorial integrity. The recent escalation surrounding Iran has further underscored the need for broader and more inclusive security frameworks in the Middle East, particularly for Gulf states seeking stability amid uncertainty. In this context, both Pakistan and Türkiye appear poised to assume more prominent roles. Historically, this is not without precedent. Türkiye, Pakistan, and Iran were once members of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), a Cold War alliance that collapsed following the Iranian Revolution in 1979. Today's shifting dynamics may signal a partial reconfiguration of similar patterns of cooperation, albeit under new geopolitical conditions.

Türkiye's strategic significance is rooted in its unique geopolitical positioning. As a NATO member with deep historical and political ties to both Europe and Asia, Türkiye occupies a multidimensional role that can be conceptualized through the notion of "superposition." In quantum physics, the term refers to a system existing simultaneously in multiple states or configurations. Similarly, in my view, Türkiye operates concurrently within European, Middle Eastern, and Caspian security spheres, enabling it to act as a bridge among these regions.

This multidimensional role has gained recognition in recent years. Following the Russia–Ukraine war, European policymakers have increasingly acknowledged

Türkiye's importance to continental security. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, for instance, proposed the creation of alternative European security platforms that would include key non-EU actors such as Türkiye, the United Kingdom, and Norway. Such proposals highlight Türkiye's growing relevance beyond traditional institutional frameworks.

In the Middle East, regardless of the ultimate outcome of tensions involving Iran, regional actors are actively seeking new security arrangements. Türkiye is likely to play a central role in this process, particularly in light of its involvement in key regional theaters such as Syria and Iraq. Moreover, Ankara's pragmatic foreign policy approach allows it to maintain a degree of neutrality while simultaneously positioning itself as a mediator and stabilizing force.

Türkiye's influence is also expanding in the South Caucasus and the broader Caspian region. Following Azerbaijan's restoration of territorial integrity, ending the Armenian occupation, Türkiye and Azerbaijan formalized their strategic partnership through the Shusha Declaration in June 2021. As normalization efforts between Azerbaijan and Armenia continue, Türkiye remains an important stakeholder in the process.

Beyond the South Caucasus, the Caspian region itself is gaining prominence due to its energy resources and its role in the development of the Middle Corridor, a key transit route linking Asia and Europe. Türkiye, together with Azerbaijan, is actively promoting political and economic initiatives that integrate Central Asia into this emerging connectivity framework, leveraging shared cultural and linguistic ties within the Turkic world.

Domestically, Türkiye's foreign policy orientation has long been the subject of debate. Competing visions emphasize alignment with the West (particularly the United States and NATO), engagement with the Middle East (often framed in terms of neo-Ottomanism), and the promotion of Turkic unity across Central Asia. However, these approaches need not be mutually exclusive. The concept of "superposition" suggests that Türkiye can simultaneously pursue multiple strategic directions, adapting its policies to changing geopolitical realities.

Nevertheless, structural limitations persist. Türkiye's influence in the West has historically been constrained by political and cultural factors, while its engagement in the Middle East is shaped by ethnic and linguistic differences. In contrast, its ties with Azerbaijan and Central Asian states are arguably more cohesive, although geographic and economic constraints remain.

Economic vulnerability, in particular, has been a recurring challenge in Türkiye's development trajectory. In recent years, Ankara has sought to recalibrate its economic policies, including efforts to improve relations with Western partners, especially the United States. In turn, U.S. policymakers, particularly during the Trump administration, have increasingly recognized Türkiye's strategic importance in both the Middle East and the Caspian regions.

Critics may argue that Türkiye's cautious stance in major conflicts, such as maintaining neutrality in an Iran–U.S. confrontation or mediating in the Russia–Ukraine war, limits its role as an active power. However, this very flexibility enhances Türkiye's potential as a key architect of future regional security arrangements. By avoiding rigid alignments, Türkiye preserves its ability to engage with multiple actors and to facilitate dialogue across competing blocs, remaining essential element of NATO architecture.

Looking ahead, the effectiveness of Türkiye's strategy will depend on its ability to move beyond binary, choice-based foreign policy frameworks. Instead, a model based on flexible partnerships, alliance-building, and burden-sharing is more likely to yield sustainable outcomes. Strengthening ties with pivotal states will be essential. In the Caspian region, Azerbaijan remains Türkiye's primary partner, alongside expanding engagement with Central Asian countries. In the Middle East, Türkiye's evolving relations with Saudi Arabia, Gulf states, and Pakistan provide a foundation for new, albeit fluid, security configurations.

Ultimately, the regional order is undergoing a profound transformation. The security structures of previous decades are no longer sufficient to address contemporary challenges. In this context, Türkiye's "superposition" — its capacity to operate simultaneously across multiple geopolitical domains — may serve not only as a strategic advantage but also as a foundational element in the construction of a new, interconnected security architecture spanning the Middle East and the Caspian regions.

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