



Journal of Emerging Trends in Social Sciences and Humanities

A Double-Blind, Peer-Reviewed, HEC recognized Y-category Research Journal

E-ISSN: [3006-7898](#) P-ISSN: [3006-788X](#)

Volume 3, Issue 2, 2026, 164-173



From the Arab Spring to the Us--Iran War: Strategic Alliances, Regional Realignment, and the Emergence of a New Security Architecture in the Middle East

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Article Information

Received:

2026-04-15

Revised:

2026-05-17

Accepted:

2026-06-18

Keywords

Strategic Alliances;
Regional Security
Architecture; Arab Spring;
Middle East; Gulf
Security; Gaza War.

ABSTRACT

Driven by series of major geopolitical jolts--the Arab Spring, the Gaza conflict, the Abraham Accords, and US/Israel attack in Iran--the Middle East is undergoing one of the most consequential strategic re-alignments, since the end of the Cold War. The developing situation have essentially reformed security perceptions of the region, setting in motion geopolitical realignment proxy conflicts, and a continued period of instability. Instead of strengthening democratic governance, state institutions, and stability, the repeated jolts expanded the influence of non-state armed groups and intensified regional competition. While the prevailing scholarship has analyzed each jolt separately, little attention has been given to understand how these strategic jolts have collectively influenced creation of the new regional alignments and added to the formation of an evolving security architecture. Using a qualitative methodology based on news reports, recent scholarly literature, official policy documents, comparative case analysis and other open and online sources, the research plots transition of the region from chiefly American-led security order toward a flexible, multipolar system categorized by diversified partnerships, fluid coalitions, and strategic hedging. After analyzing the evolving roles and interests of the Gulf states, regional and extra regional powers including the United States, Russia, China, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, Iran, Israel, Pakistan, Egypt, and Turkey, the article concludes that it is not the ideological affinity but changing threat perceptions which have acted as a principal driver of the alliance behavior in the present-day Middle East.

Introduction

Middle East current political situation are multilayers like an onion. It is a web of formal, informal, local, regional and international

alliances. Three factors--the Arab Spring of 2011, Israel's atrocities in Gaza & Lebanon and Us/Israel war in Iran---have changed the political landscape of the region. Regional political order has been characterized by a transitory nature of



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Publisher: Institute for Educating Environmental Resilience and Governance

alignments, rather than formal defense pacts, where non-state actors consisting of local militant groups, Houthis, Hizbullah, Hamas and ISL played bigger role in the regional politics. To greater extent, this pattern has challenged even the basic concept of state, its security and alliances. Within the milieu of regional politics, with the descending of this region into more and more instability, wide array of threats emerged and the setting regimes were caught in utter surprise as they were not sure that which threat was most critical to be dealt with in urgency. Old centers of powers including Baghdad, Damascus, Tehran and Cairo were caught by chaos. House of Saud, Dubai and Doha were engaged in a regional struggle for supremacy.

Regional politics was increasingly influenced by Ankara, Tehran and Tel Aviv, Islamabad is the recent entrant into the arena, and ironically four of them were non-Arabs. Wars from Lebanon through Syria to Yemen became epicenters for local struggle and gaining supremacy in the new regional Cold War. Non state actors like Hazbullah, ISL and other Jihadist groups and rebel forces getting financial help, arms training and political supports from one side or the other to punish its opponent(s). Differentiations between powers and roles of state and non-state actors became blurred as the region witnessed alliances among non-state actors, national states and global powers. US-Iran war had further complicated the environment, where Iran punishes its Arab neighbors for each US attack on its soil or interests.

On the priority list of almost all Arab countries, long standing Arab-Israeli conflict, was receded to secondary position, as the region was engulfed by multiple regional and civil wars. In the whole scenario, Arab-Israel conflict became a forgotten story. It has more or less become Israel-Palestinian issue, as all the regional powers including Egypt, Saudi Arab and UAE intentionally or un-intentionally distanced themselves from the issue and were in foray to become partner of Israel in the regional context. Moreover, America provides Israel with all the necessary means to guarantee its security and become a legitimate state of the Middle East. Apparently, only Iran stood with Hamas during the Israel's Gaza carnage and Lebanon bombings.

Enduring situation and events of the previous years in the region have witnessed competition amongst great powers and regional competitors. Such chaos has affected the conduct as well outcome of conflicts from Lebanon, Syria to Yemen, significantly. In today's Middle East, all the three big powers, America, China, and Russia along with Europe, Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan are competing for share in market and politics. Regional powers Turkey, Iran, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Israel, and the United Arab Emirates are pursuing their respective interests by parleying with or against, or working around any of the big powers. Globally, developing situations in Europe and Indo-Pacific created ripple effects in rest of the world, including the Middle East.

Realities on the ground show that due to turmoil in the world politics, contrasting interests of the major powers coupled with profound dividing lines, Middle Eastern regions is passing through a phase of internal readjustment and realignments. Following the Iran-US war, the Middle East is regionally realigning into two distinctive blocs. A Saudi-led alliance with Pakistan, Egypt and Turkey on the front having support of Qatar, Kuwait and Oman (Harb, 2026). This alliance has soft approach for Iran and trying to pacify Iran and drag it back into the main stream. Another alliance is the Israel-UAE axis that tries for knocking down the Iranian regime and eliminating Iran's fighting potency.

It means that Middle Eastern countries are aligning or re-aligning their interests with the great powers. Regional powers like Saudi Arab, Iran and Israel to subsequently become part of the United States or China/Russia camp. This article is thus an endeavor to examine alliance transformation, discuss key drivers of realignment and assess emerging regional/ international security architecture. The article may also make an attempt to foresee Pakistan's preferences and role in emerging scenario. (Mohan, 2021).

Complex Geopolitics and its Effects on the Middle Eastern Region and Beyond

Along the regional turmoil, developments in the world other hotspots like Europe and Asia-Pacific region, may change power configurations, alignments, political arrangements and partnerships in the Middle Eastern region. On the face of uncertainty and occurrence of a chain of

unusual events, in the region, prediction about its future politics is impossible but one thing is clear that the American influence over regional supremacy is fast waning. There are following three Turning Points that disturbed the traditional balance of the Middle Eastern geo-political landscape, and forced the regional countries to look for the alternate arrangements: -

- a. After the Arab Spring of 2011, traditional Arab order was collapsed that paved the way for the rise of proxy competition. From Lebanon, Syria, Iraq to Yemen, non-state actors unbalanced the regional equilibrium. Once closely netted, the GCC members fragmented on various issues. Membership of Qatar remained suspended from 2017 till 2021 due to the collective pressure of the Saudi-UAE duo. Longtime rivals, Iran and Saudi Arab agreed to bridge their differences under the Chinese umbrella, in 2023. Disagreements surfaced between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, in 2025 on range of issues and started confronting each other policies in Yemen, Sudan, Somalia and elsewhere.
- b. War in Gaza and Lebanon collapsed Israel-Arabs normalization momentum. UAE and Bahrain have become part of the Abraham Accords, during President Trump's first administration. It was expected that after assuming office for the second term, President Trump would re-accelerate momentum on the accords but due war in Palestine and Lebanon his initial preference was to stop the war and create the conducive environment before reinitiating Abraham Accords program (Ravid, 2026).
- c. Israel/US attacks on Iran, subsequent Iranian reaction of attacking Gulf States and closure of the straits of Hormuz, created security shock waves across the world in general and in the region in particular. The Israeli attack on Qatar for targeting Hamas leaders and the Iranian attacks on the US bases in the Gulf region have exposed limits of the United States and the Arab leaders have started looking for the alternate security arrangements (Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft, 2026).
- d. Keeping in view the current regional and global situation it could be safely inferred that future events in the region are likely to be

influenced by a variety of regional and Extra Regional powers the United States would be one of them.

Emerging Regional Realignment: US- Saudi Arabia Relations

Saudi Arabia is the key ally of the US in the region but at same time Riyadh and Washington have differences on wide array of issues including human rights, Yemen, religious extremism and the US attacks on Iran. Riyadh has also started believing that America is no longer eager to guarantee security of the kingdom, as witnessed during Iran attacks on the Saudi and other Gulf States' vital installations, followed by closure of the Gulf main energy supply artery, the Straits of Hormuz. The United States was helpless to ensure free flow of energy and safety of navigation as net security provider of the region. Moreover, Saudis have developed deep economic, technological, trade and business relations with Russia and China. China, earlier had took a great initiative to facilitate a dialogue between Saudi Arabia and Iran for the stability in the region that resulted into an agreement between Tehran and Riyadh. News of this pact broadcasted in Beijing in first week of March, 2023, reinforced the fact that China had carved out a bigger share in Middle East. It was no more a mere trade partner but an active diplomatic and strategic partner of the Gulf. Since last over seven decades, the United States was considered to be the principal actors in the Middle Eastern affairs but now it finds itself on the sideline during the defining moment in the history of this region (The Guardian, 2023).

America has huge investment in the Middle East in the form of military bases in the region. Gulf countries are of the view that the Washington commitment to security of the Gulf Arab States is not as strong as it was before. In current Gulf crisis, Arabs were providing security to the US bases instead of vice versa. Young leadership of the Gulf does not want to be bounded to working with just one principle actor but to have cordial relations with all including Russia. That why despite being one of the major crude oil exporters, Saudi Arab, since 2022, has ominously increased refined petroleum products and diesel imports from Russia, on discounted rates. In 2025, this import valued at about 7.6 billion Saudi Riyal (Reuters, 2026). Saudi Arab will balance the

offset as Europe is increasing imports of diesel from the Middle East. Now Riyadh would export diesel purchased from Russia to Europe and other countries after some refining.

Saudi Arabia though hosting the US bases and troops, but it has no formal defense treaty with Washington, nor sought the permanent US bases on its territory. Moreover, it has kept relatively greater structural distance from the security architecture of the US as compare to Manama and Abu Dhabi (Alterman, 2024). Saudi Arab is also not yet US partner in the Abraham Accords. Historically speaking, Saudi Arab was the first Gulf state acquiring ballistic missiles from China. Saudi Arab Navy has been conducting joint exercises with the People's Liberation Army Navy. It has stayed outside the Stargate AI buildout-- data centers and computing capacity for deployment of an advanced AI systems and Pax Silica--the US-led silicon supply chain initiative. That distance is a structural space where China is able to maneuver (O'Connor, 2026).

Iranian Policies and Strategic Interests in the Middle East/Gulf

Iran's regional policy, since the Islamic Revolution of 1979, has been governed by two basic factors--independence from the external threats posed by America and its regional allies and survival of the revolutionary regime. Iran fortified its ties with various Palestinian/Lebanon resistance groups like Hezbollah and Hamas, the Houthis in Yemen and Popular Mobilization Forces of Iraq. (Milani, 2024).

The Arab Spring offered opportunities and as well challenges to Iran. Tehran, though widely framed the uprisings as a lee way of its own "Islamic Awakening," however, at the same time, it tried to prevent its allied governments and enhanced its "strategic depth" across the Gulf and Levant. Iran practically established a "Strategic Arc of Influence" stretching from Yemen through the Persian Gulf to Syria and Lebanon at Eastern Mediterranean, through network of partners and non-state actors. This arc was termed as the "Axis of Resistance," (Milani, 2024) which enabled Iran to firstly, reduce the prospects of direct military clash on Iranian grounds, secondly, deter opponents through asymmetric means, and finally project influence beyond its borders.

Strategic interests of Tehran in the region were likewise shaped by security, economic and geopolitical/geostrategic considerations. Iran sought to ensure unobstructed access to the Straits of Hormuz for smooth trade and outflow of energy, and at same time prevent the rise of any hostile regional order dominated by the Gulf Arab monarchies, Israel or the United States. Tehran always opposed deployment of Extra-Regional Forces in the region and supported a regional security architecture led by the Gulf States. In order to counterbalance the conventional military superiority of the US and its Arab Gulf allies, Iran had heavily invested in proxy deterrence, asymmetrical naval warfare, drones, and ballistic missile capabilities. (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2025). These capabilities allowed Tehran to inflict substantial costs on adversaries without engaging in all-out conventional warfare.

Tehran's regional strategy had been evolved, in past decades, from ideological revolutionary engagements towards a more pragmatic quest for geopolitical influence. Iran pursued selective diplomatic engagements with the Arab Gulf States while concurrently established strategic partnerships with China and Russia. China brokered the 2023 Iran-Saudi rapprochement, which demonstrated that Tehran was willing to ease the regional fractions without giving upon its wider security objectives. Nonetheless, continued differences over its nuclear program, rising hostility with Israel, and the outbreak of US/Israel--Iran war have reinforced Iran's believes on building alliances with states and non-state actors, regional deterrence, and forward defense. (Wehrey, 2025). Iran has consequently, appeared as one of the main architects of the developing Middle Eastern security environment, where competing visions of regional order and great-power competition increasingly intersect with proxy warfare and traditional interstate rivalries. For explaining the emerging security architecture and regional realignment, understanding of these strategic objectives is essential.

The UAE's Regional Strategic Vision and Saudi--UAE Relations

The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia leaders Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed (MBZ) and

Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) were working in synchronized strategic alignment on vital issues of the region, including countering influence of Iran, terrorism and the Yemen conflict. However, differences gradually emerged over number of issues. Some visa policies and non-tariff barriers of Saudi Arab, considered by the UAE of attracting capital, investment and business away from Abu Dhabi. UAE also begrudged Riyadh's alignment with suspected Islamist rivals in places like Sudan and Libya and its warming relations with rivals in Iran, Pakistan, Turkey, and Qatar. Conversely, Saudi Arab was worried about the Abu Dhabi arming of anti-Saudi forces in Yemen. Emiratis also deepened its intelligence and military ties with Israel, without any tangible progress on the long standing Palestinian issue and violated agreed OPEC oil production cuts for sustaining prices (O'Connor, 2026).

The United Arab Emirates follows a multi-alignment foreign policy, after developing differences with Saudi Arab. To protect its security and economic interests in the region and beyond, the UAE has adopted an approach of balancing major global powers as well regional states. UAE had "Comprehensive Strategic Partnership" agreement with India in 2017, enhanced it into the next level in 2026, just months after the Saudi-Pakistan Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) (Government of India, 2026). The UAE looks for the United States as its primary security partner and enhancing security, technological, intelligence sharing and economic ties with Israel. Similarly, Abu Dhabi views China and India as a key tech collaborators and trade hubs. UAE also maintains pragmatic political and economic relations with Moscow (Gordon, 2026).

The Emirates has been aligned closely with the Washington's security and AI infrastructure architecture. Abu Dhabi is US partner in both Stargate and Pax Silica Projects. Alignment with Washington on different defense, AI, security and intelligence sharing platforms impose constraints on UAE to build defense related relations with China or Russia. UAE pro-US tilt has been hardened since the US-Iran war (Gordon, 2026).

Other Gulf States

Deeply exposed to retaliatory strikes of Iran, with their desalination plants and infrastructure

targeted, the small Gulf States--- Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, Qatar -- wanted the end of the war. They are actively questioning the US security umbrella and trying to diversify their diplomatic and defense partnerships. They are also in favor of opening direct dialogue channels with Iran to avert strikes (Council on Foreign Relations, 2026). For these monarchies, past decade and a half-- from the Arab Spring to the US war in Iran--has underscored the importance of strategic pragmatism instead of total dependence on one security provider. These states, though continued valuing the US as their prime security ally, but the developing regional security environment, increasing involvement of other external powers--China, Russia, Pakistan & Turkey--and limits of the American military deterrence, have encouraged them to broaden their security and diplomatic alliances. Resultantly, they have gradually reverted to hedging strategies. They are increasing economic and political engagement with emerging great powers, engaging Tehran in dialogue while balancing relations with Washington (Chatham House, 2026). This strategic reorientation shows their desire to preserve Status quo, avoid becoming battle ground for direct regional or great power confrontation and protect vital energy infrastructure.

Strategic Interests of the United States and the Emerging Security Architecture of the Middle East

Washington had followed a multilayered strategy in the Middle East, since the end of the Cold War, especially after the Arab Spring. The strategy was aimed at maintaining a positive regional balance of power, to ensure an uninterrupted energy flows, conducive market environment, safeguard security of the strategic regional allies at the same time combat global terrorism and prevent nuclear proliferation. (Haass, 2020). Though, the United States is not dependent on the Gulf energy resources, the Gulf still remains vital to the stability of international energy markets. Closure or disruptions in the key choke points of Bab el-Mandeb and/or Strait of Hormuz adversely affect maritime trade, global oil prices and economy. Successive US administrations therefore, continually maintained a strong military presence in the Gulf using security partnerships with the GCC countries, naval fleets and forward-

deployment.

Apart from the energy security, United States' strategic calculus has gradually been centered to prevent the rise of a regional hegemon which could challenge the prevailing strategic settings. Nuclear ambitions, proxy networks, and expanding missile and drone's capabilities of Iran, have thus become central concerns of the US regional policies. Concurrently, Washington has pursued strengthening of a network consisting of regional allies through missile defense cooperation, intelligence sharing, bilateral defense agreements, and the promotion of diplomatic normalization among Arab states and Israel (Katzman, 2025). The Abraham Accord was one of such initiatives that attempted to convert the traditional bilateral security provisions into a wider regional security architecture. These arrangements were considered sufficient to contain Iran and also reduce the continuing burden of direct US military interference. Strategic changes after the Arab Spring, deepened Iran—US confrontation, the rise and downfall of the Islamic State, and growing Russian and Chinese engagement have further complicated interests of the US, in the region. (Katzman, 2025). For the US, the Middle East thus, became an arena of great power competition.

Since the US has been a vital stakeholder and security provider to the Middle Eastern Arab states, its policies and strategic posture toward the region thus, always had enduring effects on the internal politico-strategic dynamics of the region. During Trump's first administrations and the following years, main thrust of the United States remained on persuading Arab countries to extend recognitions to Israel. Some of the Arab Countries including United Arab Emirate, Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco established diplomatic relations with Israel (Ephron, 2020). Saudi Arabia and some of the Arab states have made relations with Israel conditional with on-ground situation in Palestine and implementation of two states policy. At the same time the two main regional rivals, Saudi Arabia and Iran started a dialogue process under the Chinese umbrella carry many surprises for the US led west in particular and world at large in general. Untraditional approach of the Saudi's young leadership to the foreign relations and narrowing gap with regional players on array of issues has won praise from the peace loving

community of the world (Riedel, 2023). Whereas, Gulf countries policy of going along with Russia and China on issues of mutual interests have created distressed in the Western camp.

When president Trump assumed office for the second term, it was expected that he would restart perusing Abraham Accords from where he had left four years ago. Israel wars on Gaza and Lebanon and the Iran -- US war however, has totally overturned his policy from "maximum pressure" paving way for the Abraham Accords into an intensifying, multibillion-dollar conflict that now threatens to become an open-ended quagmire, for the entire world in general and US and Gulf States in particular. The Trump's administration 'America First' approach to foreign policy suggests that to address regional crises, United States may no more be a steady and reliable partner of the Middle Eastern powers.

Chinese Ingress in the Middle East

China has prioritized its foreign policy and divided the world into different tiers. This policy considers the periphery and neighboring countries as the priority, the developing world as the foundation, the major powers as the decisive and the multilateral institutions/ fora as the influence performing arena (Song, 2026). The Middle East is valued by China as a consumer market and big source of energy, but it is not the area China aims at spending military and political capital equitant to what it would be spending on a region closer to home. Apparently this order of priority draws the lines to China's Gulf strategy.

As long as the trade is concerned, China remains the largest trading partner for both the UAE and Saudi Arabia, reflecting its dominant role in Gulf energy imports and manufactured exports. In 2025, trade between Arab states and China stood at over \$300 billion. UAE's top trade partner, for the same period was China, with bilateral trade esteemed to be \$108 billion (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, 2025). China trade growth with Middle East has gradually increased in last over 20 years. In 2001, Saudi Arab trade with China was about one-tenth of its total trade it had with the USA and the EU. Whereas today, China is Saudi's biggest trading partner. Its trade value is larger than Saudi Arab combined trade with the US and EU (Mazel, 2026). Middle Eastern countries are in a pursuit of

diversifying their trade relations and perceive China to be a possible partner for improving their trade relations. Middle Eastern countries are also China's partner in BRI. Overall, China has emerged as a major economic partner and the main source of foreign investment in the last decades, in the Middle East. UAE and Saudi Arabia are also acquiring Chinese military hardware like ballistic missiles, air defense systems and drones (Khan, 2025).

Beijing also backs Tehran in tangible ways, purchasing major chunk of the Iranian oil and abstaining from condemning Iranian attacks on Gulf States in United Nations. Beijing peruses a policy of noninterference in the affairs of other states, therefore, Chinese military presence on ground in Iran or direct military support, may cross its foreign policy thresholds. Otherwise Beijing's relationship with Tehran is enduring and inexpensive to sustain. Moreover, China is neither able nor in position to provide security guarantees, at the level Washington extends to its Gulf partners. China main aim in the Gulf is comparatively modest: to continue trade, uninterrupted energy supply, clamp its position at low cost and also try to peruse the major Arab states away from fully sliding into the U.S. camp. If these states fully enveloped into the US camp than the option of working and trading with Beijing would be marginalized.

Currently, though a major trading partner, Abu Dhabi is moving away from China, towards, Israel--India-US axis. Apparently, UAE has learned a lesson from the US-Iran war that only US can assure its defense. The UAE president's diplomatic adviser, Anwar Gargash, stated in April, that "the US is their main security partner", he pledged for "doubling down" on the partnership (Al-Oraibi, 2026). Riyadh on the other hand offers the more open case for China. Due to ongoing war, Chinese plans to remain engaged with the region have mired. In mid-June, the second China-Arab States Summit was scheduled in Beijing. The summit was deferred indefinitely because of the regional crisis; a parallel GCC-China summit has also slide with it. The war and subsequent developments have narrowed the Chinese window of opportunities (Qatar News Agency, 2026). After the war, Middle East sees enhancing bounds between China and Iran.

Moscow's Middle East Strategy after the Assad's Syria

Despite facing restraints from the shifts in regional alignment, loss of its close ally in Syria-the Assad Regime, and Ukrainian war, Moscow desires to project power. Currently, Russian larger Middle Eastern interests prioritizes alternative multilateral partnerships, politico-diplomatic balancing, and economic statecrafts. In post-Assad era, Russia Faces a reduced physical footprint in the region, but it is seeking logistical inroads and tactical security into alternate areas like Sahel and Libya, though both of them re not Middle Eastern Arenas. Moscow leverages three parallel policies for the region (Bocharov, 2026). Firstly, projecting its diplomacy and international politics as a less coercive alternative to Western influence. Second, keenly engage regional Gulf States and regional and pluralistic organizations--Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Finally, connecting Russian markets with the Indian and Gulf regions, therefore it is prudent to engage in trade and infrastructure initiatives like the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC). On Iran war, Russia supportive of peaceful solution to the issue. In early March the Washington post claimed that Russia is providing intelligence support to Iran for targeting US interests in the region (The Washington Post, 2026).

Emergence of Turkey and Pakistan in the Middle Eastern Dynamics

Riyadh--Islamabad relations have transformed in past months, from a historically transactional and reciprocal partnership into an alliance for the regional stability. The alliance provides broader foundations for a regional security framework, with capacity to include other states. Following the landmark Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) in September 2025, Kuwait formally approved a separate defense cooperation framework with Pakistan in July 2026 (The Express Tribune July 29, 2026). While this agreement does not include a binding mutual defense clause, it establishes cooperation in military training, intelligence sharing, and technology. Reports also indicate that Bahrain has expressed interest in a similar

agreement with Pakistan, and Qatar is actively exploring enhanced security cooperation, with high-level discussions having taken place in Doha (Pakistan Observer, July 16, 2026).

Similarly, Turkey, whose leadership pursues a foreign policy independent from the United States and other powers. Turkey has always played a key role in all the regional conflicts like Syria and Libya through both "cooperation and conflict" with major powers, particularly Russia and the United States. Turkey and Pakistan enjoys close political and defence cooperation since inception. Both powers have close relations with all the big powers---US, China and Russia- and the regional powers like Egypt, Iran and Saudi Arabia.

Keeping in view these developments, Saudi Arabia has initiated formation of a strategic quadrilateral alliance among Pakistan, Egypt and Turkey (International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2026). As stated earlier, Pakistan have already concluded Mutual Defence Alliance with Saudi Arab, last year, building that momentum and driven by the fallout of war, the four countries are in negotiation to form a mutually binding defence and security alliance, to plug their vulnerabilities and peruse their shared interests. The four powers are in the view to create conducive environment for bridging Saudi-Iran differences, counter Israeli influence and create a new, broader peace framework (Alhasan, 2026).

Likely Alignment in the Middle East

Middle Eastern future alignment is likely to be multi layered. At regional level, there is clear dividing line among the Saudi Arab, UAE and Iran. Saudi Arab, Qatar, Oman and to a limited level Kuwait desire to engage Iran in negotiations, keep distance from Israel until it accept two state solution and avoid interference in the neighboring countries. They want the US defence umbrella, for free trade and maritime order but it same time they are looking for the alternate security arrangements. Kuwait and Qatar are likely to become members of the proposed Pak-Saudi-Egypt-Turkey alliance, whereas, Oman is likely to maintain neutrality.

For trade, all the Gulf countries prefer to have unrestricted business with all powers including US, China, Russia, India, Europe and Pacific nations. Bahrain, being relatively a small

economy and may not act independent of Saudi Arab on security and economic fronts, likely to join the Saudi camp. UAE on the other hand may continue to depend on US and Israel for security. Like Israel, Abu Dhabi also wants to sort-out Iranian issue once and for all, punish Iran till it denounces nuclear capabilities, use of proxies and revolutionary ideology. If Iran war ends in a favorable condition for Tehran, and the regional powers support him in reconstruction of its infrastructure and integration into regional economic and security framework, Iran may become part of the Saudi-Pakistan-Turkey axis. Otherwise isolated Iran may continue to be a serious issue for the region.

At international level, the United States was only power with great influence on most of the Middle Eastern countries, since 1970s. China and Russia and to a lesser degree European Union, since last decade are engaged in balancing act and have sought significant ingress in the region. It means that major powers competition is going on, even after the war. This competition on one hand is trying to establish or reinforce influence at each other's cost and on the other continue cooperation in the areas of interest.

The United States remains a vital and important most player in the region; other players are also gaining ground to take up their respective roles in coming days. America is weighing its options of either it should continue to be the key "security provider" as some of the interests like energy security is no more considered to be as important as it was in the past or disengage from some places of its past's focal interests and outsource some responsibilities to the local actors like Turkey, Egypt and Pakistan. United States' likely disengagement has following substantial effects on the Middle Eastern region: -

- Major Powers of the region believe that America will "leave" this region therefore they are "taking matters into their own hands". This approach contributes to confusion and disorder across the Middle East.
- Extra Regional powers are in the run to seize the opportunity and fill the vacuum by exercising power in a region which was formerly a zone of purely US's dominance.
- On one hand, regional and Extra Regional powers are watchful to circumvent direct clash

with each other and on the other hands they have failed to resolve ongoing regional conflicts.

Conclusion

The Middle Eastern alignments re redrawn during Iran War, pushing some Arab states closer to Washington and drawing others further away. Iran, evidently, is further alienated from the US, with little prospect of repair. Saudi Arab have shown great restraint, despite repeated attacks by Iran and its proxies, Riyadh avoided to become party to the war. Non-Arab regional powers--- Pakistan and Turkey found an opportunity to become part of the Middle Eastern Security

Architecture. As a whole: -

- Traditional alliances are becoming less rigid.
- Gulf countries will seek more autonomy from the United States.
- Regional actors increasingly diversify their external partnerships.
- Divisions among Gulf countries have been exacerbated.
- Israel has been further alienated from the United States and most of the Arab world.
- The future security architecture is likely to be multipolar, adaptive, and less dependent on a single external guarantor.

Conflict of Interest

The authors showed no conflict of interest.

Funding

The authors did not mention any funding for this research.

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