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**Regional and International Cooperation Dynamics among Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan:  
An Emerging Trilateral Strategic Mechanism**
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**Abstract**

*This study examines the evolving trilateral cooperation between Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan, focusing on political, strategic, and economic dimensions. Guided by Informal Alliance Theory, the research explores how interest-driven alignments, shared security perceptions, strategic trust, and repeated high-level interactions shape the partnership. Using a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach, data were collected from official statements, joint declarations, parliamentary briefings, academic literature, and expert opinions. The study employs a holistic single-case analysis and thematic content analysis to identify patterns of cooperation in defence, diplomacy, and economic collaboration. Findings highlight that trilateral coordination strengthens regional influence, enhances strategic trust, and provides a framework for long-term political and economic alignment, despite the absence of formal treaties. The research contributes to understanding how non-treaty-based alliances operate in contemporary Eurasian geopolitics.*

**Keywords:** *Trilateral Cooperation, Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan, Informal Alliance Theory, Regional Security, Strategic Alignment.*

**1. Introduction**

What is being seen nowadays in the international system in the global and regional context is the gradual replacement of the traditional multilateral institutions by the smaller, more flexible cooperative structures that are often termed as minilateralism (Aliyev, 2024, July 3). This tendency has become prominent as more states find it more lucrative to enter into pragmatized interest-based relationships that enable them to make decisions faster, strategically interact more, and to have less institutional grip. In this changing geopolitical environment, the increasing trilateral cooperation of Azerbaijan, Türkiye and Pakistan is a significant indication of a new strategic convergence based on the similarity of the political ideals, security interests and historical unity (Avdaliani, 2025, June 30).

Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan are strategically positioned in three regions that seem to be connected: South Caucasus, Anatolia, South Asia. However, due to geographical distance,

especially the one between Pakistan and Caucasus, the three states have over time built a system of cooperative relations that are more than mere symbolic diplomacy and are more toward practical cooperation. This three-way dynamic has become eminent following the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war in which Turkiye and Pakistan offered Azerbaijan solid diplomatic and military backing. The collaboration has since, spread to several areas such as foreign policy coordination, parliamentary diplomacy, and defense cooperation, which is an indication of the development of a formal but informal trilateral mechanism (Balachandran, 2025, May 31). The Azerbaijan-Turkiye-Pakistan partnership does not have a permanent secretariat, enforced commitments in the form of a treaty or fixed institutional structure, which is unlike formal alliances or treaty-based organizations. Rather it operates by constant high-level contacts, joint proclamations, and rotating meetings of political leadership, foreign ministers, parliamentary speakers and defense institutions. With this, the three states can coordinate their policies and at the same time be strategic by maintaining their own structures. This structure is indicative of a larger trend in the modern international relation where states are more concerned with flexibility and political cueing than with institutionalization (Gurbanov, 2024).

The adoption of a parliamentary mechanism of interaction between Speakers of the National Assemblies of all three countries can be considered one of the most unique aspects of this trilateral cooperation. Since 2021, there have been several trilateral conferences of parliamentary speakers in Azerbaijan, Turkiye and Pakistan, most recently a conference in Islamabad. These meetings have formalized a legislative diplomacy as a side-by-side institution to executive level collaboration, which adds to the continuity of the policy and boosts political commitment (Ismayilov, 2025). A parliamentary aspect is what makes this trilateral framework stand out in contrast to most other regional groupings that are limited to the field of executives or military. The other fundamental pillar of trilateral relations is defense and security cooperation. The convergence of the security perceptions between the three states is manifested in joint military exercises and most prominently the so called Three Brothers drills, as well as training exchanges and defense dialogue. Although the trilateral arrangement is not a formal military alliance, it is an informal security alignment that is geared towards deterrence, interoperability and strategic reassurance. The common interests associated with instability in the region, terrorism and external pressures have helped in intensifying the defense relations, especially between Turkiye and Azerbaijan, with Pakistan assuming an ever-growing supportive role (Karayel, 2024).

In spite of these changes, the Azerbaijan-Turkiye-Pakistan trilateral mechanism is a topic that is under-studied in the academic literature. The current literature mostly revolves around bilateral relationships, e.g. Turkiye-Azerbaijan strategic partnership or Pak-Turkiye defense cooperation, but does not pay significant attention to the trilateral dimension as a separate unit of analysis. In addition, the issue of parliamentary diplomacy, although it has been becoming increasingly relevant, has not been given much academic attention in the framework of Eurasian and South Asian regional cooperation. This literature gap requires an extensive and systematic study of the trilateral structure, its institution form and its overall geopolitical conclusion (Kaya, 2025, May 30).

In addition to the security factors, the trilateral alliance reflects a meeting point of the political discourses and identity-based foreign policies. The principles, which are enforced in all the three states, include sovereignty, territorial integrity, non-interference and opposition to externally determined political solutions (Quliyeva, 2025). These common normative stands consolidate diplomatic unity and allow taking parallel positions in the international institutions, including the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Economic Cooperation

Organization (ECO). Here, the trilateral mechanism can be seen to be functioning not just in the form of a security-based alignment but also a forum of political punctuation and joint diplomatic power.

Regardless of the above impressive trends, the Azerbaijan-Turkiye-Pakistan trilateral mechanism is a topic that is under-researched in the academic field. These studies mainly concentrate on bilateral relations, i.e. Turkiye-Azerbaijan strategic cooperation or Pakistan-Turkiye defense cooperation, and do not pay much attention to the trilateral aspect of the study as an analytical unit. Besides, parliamentary diplomacy, even though increasingly becoming a relevant phenomenon in international relations, has been a poorly researched subject in the area of Eurasian and South Asian regional cooperation. This knowledge gap in the literature clouds the overall perception of the working of informal institutional mechanisms in conjunction with the traditional settings of diplomacy and security (kim, 2023).

This paper is aimed at filling this gap by analyzing the dynamics of regional and international cooperation between Azerbaijan, Turkiye, and Pakistan on a multidimensional plane of analysis. It examines the history of developing trilateral relations, the design and dynamics of the cooperation mechanism, and the contribution of parliamentary and defense cooperation to enhancing strategic alignment. Moreover, the paper puts the trilateral cooperation in the context of widespread theoretical discussions of unilateralism, regional security complexes, and identity-based cooperation and provides both theoretical and policy-oriented perspectives.

The main thesis that is developed within the frames of this research consists in the idea that the Azerbaijan-Turkiye-Pakistan alliance can be considered as a new form of cooperation the cooperation that would be hybrid one combining the elements of political symbolism with the elements of functional cooperation, the elements of informal institutionalization with the elements of strategic orientation, and the elements of regional security with the elements of geopolitical ambitions. This model is critical to understanding the future trends in regional order in Eurasia, as well as the increased applicability of multilateral structures in the modern international politics.

### **1.1 Background**

The Eurasian regional order has changed greatly in the past decade as the global power structures are not in a rather unipolar manner, but in a more fragmented and multipolar structure. The old-fashioned multilateral institutions have been finding it harder to respond to the dynamic security issues, regional wars, and economic turmoil. Consequently, the regional players have started to depend increasingly on flexible and interest-based cooperation mechanisms in terms of safeguarding their strategic interest. South Caucasus, Anatolia and South Asia have become important geopolitical arenas because of their strategic positioning to power hubs, energy supply channels and security conflicts (mossadi, 2021). The 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, the prolonged unsettled situation in the Middle East, the strategic rivalry of the major powers in Eurasia, and the changing security situation of South Asia are only some of the events that transformed the regional alignments. Such trends have undermined the need to utilize large multilateral constructs and prompted states to seek choosy alliances that provide them with strategic freedom of choice. In that regard, regional and middle powers are becoming more active agenda-setters and less bystanders to externally motivated security structures (Nayyar, 2022).

It is against this background that the concept of bilateralism cooperation between a few states has acquired prominence as an effective substitute of the customary multilateralism. Bilateral structures focus on efficiency, common interests and co-ordination of policies between like-minded actors. Trilateral mechanisms can be more easily resolved and have a better strategic

impact compared to large multilateral institutions, which can be entangled in bureaucratic drowsiness and conflicting interests. Trilateral cooperation has developed into a desirable form of resolving regional security issues, diplomatic co-ordination and economic interlinking across Eurasia (Huseynov, 2021). These arrangements are usually conducted without use of legally binding treaties or permanent secretariats, they are conducted through the joint declarations, regular high-level meetings and rotating hosting. The framework of cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkiye and Pakistan is a perfect example of this trend and a lasting but flexible model of regional cooperation to adapt to the ever-changing geopolitical conditions.

Each of the countries (Azerbaijan, Turkiye, and Pakistan) has its own shape but complementary strategic locations in Eurasia. Azerbaijan is a pivotal state of the South Caucasus being a strategic energy producer and transit point in linking the Caspian region to the European markets. As a major geopolitical bridge between Europe and Asia, a member of NATO, and an important player in the region security and energy transit systems, Turkey is called Turkiye. Pakistan, being the crossroad of South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East, has stayed a powerful power in the region, possessing nuclear, as well as broad experience in the field of defense diplomacy (Gurbanov, 2024). These states have significant geopolitical weight as individual states; their cooperation as a transregional connectivity brings together three regions that are strategically important. This has been strengthened with constant political backing in matters affecting the country. Since the Azerbaijan independence in 1991, Pakistan has been backing Azerbaijan on the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, whereas Turkiye has been giving incessant diplomatic and military support to Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan and Turkiye have responded by giving Pakistan a political boost in international forums, which has improved the diplomatic reciprocity (Huseynov, 2024, July 25). After 2021, the trilateral relationship ceased to be based on rhetorical solidarity and turned to institutional engagement. The biggest achievement was the introduction of a trilateral mechanism of parliamentary cooperation, which included the Speakers of the National Assemblies of Azerbaijan, Turkiye, and Pakistan. Since its inauguration the parliamentary interaction has occurred in five to six rounds including formal conferences, consultations and follow up meetings, which are hosted on a rotational basis. The latest conference of parliamentary speakers was conducted in Islamabad and leaders once again declared their plans to have a legislative diplomacy and coordination of policies. There is also increased trilateral engagement at the executive level. On July 2024, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization summit, the first formal trilateral leaders meeting was held in Astana. Subsequent meetings such as a high-profile engagement in Lachin in 2025 served as a way of highlighting political unity and strategic intent. The main areas that were highlighted in these summits include joint defense, connectivity, energy, and international diplomacy which supports the increased maturity of trilateral mechanism (Kibreyal, 2025).

The strongest bloc of trilateral relations has become defense cooperation. There have been joint military exercises including the most successful ones known as the Three Brothers exercises to increase the interoperability and operational coordination of the armed forces (Aliyev, 2024, July 3). One of the major shifts in the defense relations was made by Azerbaijan in the purchase of JF-17 Block III fighters' aircrafts by Pakistan that had been estimated at USD 1.6 billion in the initial agreement and it was later raised to over USD 1.6 billion by other defense deals (roches, 2025). This is one of the most practical results of the trilateral defense cooperation.

Although the framework is not a literal military involvement, it is an informal security alignment which is influenced by the similarity of the perception of the threat posed by instability in the region, terrorism, and external strategic pressures. Such an aspect of security enhances political confidence and builds the credibility of the trilateral mechanism. the evolving state order in

Eurasia along with the emergence of trilateral forms of cooperation and strategic convergence of Azerbaijan, Türkiye and Pakistan have formed good conditions to the appearance of a trilateral cooperation mechanism (Taghiyev, 2025). This framework is a new trend in modern regional diplomacy that is grounded on political solidarity, strengthened by parliamentary and defense cooperation, and conditioned by practical strategic interests. It is important to be aware of this history, to examine the arrangement, operations, and future prospects of trilateral collaboration between the three states (Karayel, 2024).

**1.2 Research Problem**

Although the trilateral mechanism of cooperation between Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan is reflected by the obvious increase of political, defense, and parliamentary interaction, the lack of research on the subject in academic literature. The majority of literature examines their relations in bilateral terms, including Türkiye-Azerbaijan one nation, two states or Pakistan-Türkiye defense ties and incorporates defense trade estimated at more than USD 1 billion over the past ten years. Nevertheless, the trilateral format as an individual and systematic model of cooperation is seldom conceptualized in these works. One of the main research issues is that institutional analysis is replaced by the dominance of symbolic and identity-based narratives. Brotherhood, religious unity and historical affiliation in political rhetoric is extensively documented especially following the Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020, where Türkiye and Pakistan were publicly diplomatically and militarily pro-Azerbaijan. However, the academic literature has mostly been unable to evaluate the ways of how such narratives get converted into normalized forms of cooperation, including periodic trilateral encounters, military exercises, and legislative conferences.

Parliamentary diplomacy is one of the dimensions that has been the most neglected. Since 2021, 5-6 formal trilateral meetings have been held by the Speakers of the National Assemblies of Azerbaijan, Türkiye and Pakistan, hosted by the countries in rotation in Baku, Ankara and Islamabad (last of 2021) (Gurbanov, 2024). These events are indicative of the shift towards institutional persistence, but they are seldom mentioned in the academic review of Eurasian or South Asian regionalism. This exclusion leaves a loophole between practice and theory. Also, the involvement in the bilateralism as a theoretical model in connection with this trilateral alignment is limited. Whereas global minilateral formations like the Quad or AUKUS are widely covered by the literature, smaller Eurasian minilateral structures, especially no formal treaties or secretariats, are still sidelined in the scholarly literature. Consequently, the strategic value of Azerbaijan-Türkiye-Pakistan system of cooperation in terms of regional safety, coordination of middle powers and informal alliances is not entirely comprehended. This study aims to fill these gaps by going beyond the symbolic discourse and offering a systematic and evidence-based discussion on the trilateral framework, its institutional practices, the role of parliament and the implications of the framework on strategies (Huseynov, 2021).

**Table 1: Gap Between Symbolic Narratives and Institutional Reality**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Existing Academic Focus</i>	<i>Empirical Reality (Understudied)</i>
<i>Analytical Level</i>	Bilateral relations	Trilateral coordination
<i>Dominant Narrative</i>	Cultural & religious brotherhood	Functional cooperation mechanisms
<i>Institutional Analysis</i>	Minimal	Regular ministerial & parliamentary meetings
<i>Parliamentary Role</i>	Largely ignored	5–6 Speakers’ Conferences since 2021
<i>Defense Cooperation</i>	Türkiye–Azerbaijan only	Trilateral exercises (e.g., <i>Three Brothers</i> )
<i>Theoretical Lens</i>	Traditional alliances	Minilateralism & informal alignment

### 1.3 Research Questions.

1. What political, strategic, and security drivers have led to the emergence and consolidation of trilateral cooperation among Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan?
2. How does the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral mechanism operate institutionally in the absence of a formal treaty-based structure?
3. What are the regional and international implications of the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral cooperation for Eurasian security dynamics and contemporary multilateralism?

### 1.4 Research objectives.

1. To analyze the political, strategic, and security drivers behind the emergence and consolidation of trilateral cooperation among Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan.
2. To examine the institutional structure and operational mechanisms of the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral framework.
3. To evaluate the role of parliamentary and defense cooperation in strengthening trilateral relations.
4. To assess the regional and international implications of the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral cooperation within the broader context of Eurasian geopolitics and multilateralism.

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

With a major contribution to the studies of the regional security, this paper will consider the Azerbaijan-Turkiye-Pakistan trilateral cooperation mechanism as one of the nascent and formalized systems of security alignment between middle powers. In contrast to the conventional system of alliances, this trilateral *Tariqa* is run by routine high-level political, defence and parliamentary engagements without an official treaty or a permanent institutional basis. Through the study of this elastic process, the research contributes to better academic knowledge on the process by which modern security collaboration is becoming more characterized by informal and multilateral agreements instead of inflexible multilateral ones. The study has a special significance to the Eurasian geopolitics in that three strategically critical regions the South Caucasus, Anatolia, and South Asia are linked in terms of the same analysis. The three-party process reveals how trilateral cooperation may develop on the basis of rotating meetings, statement declarations, and coordinating diplomatic policies to achieve stability in the region and sentencing strategies. The paper brings to the fore the role played by this **Tariqa** in enabling the three states to coordinate the policies regarding regional security matters without compromising on strategic autonomy.

Another unique aspect of the study is the emphasis put on parliamentary diplomacy as the key element of the trilateral cooperation. The Speakers of the National Assemblies of Azerbaijan, Turkiye and Pakistan have also organized several trilateral parliamentary conferences, hosted by the three countries on a rotating basis, with the last one held in Pakistan. The meetings of these speakers formalize the legislative involvement, the enhancement of the political trust, and the continuity of legislative engagement that goes beyond the executive diplomacy. The study fills a significant gap in the literature because it includes a dimension, which fails to consider parliamentary mechanisms in the analysis of security cooperation. Moreover, the research will add to the further debates in the South-South cooperation by demonstrating how non-Western states can work out their own cooperation models with the basing on the common strategic interests and the support in the political sphere. On the whole, this study provides theoretical

and policy-appropriate understanding of the operation, relevance, and future course of the Azerbaijan-Turkiye-Pakistan trilateral cooperation system.

## 2. Literature Review

Recently, multilateralism has become a prominent concept of analysis in international relations (IR) that describes modern tendencies of collaboration between states. According to (Reuters, 2015-2023)minilateralism is the case when the collaboration of the smallest number of countries is needed to achieve the maximum effect. The scholars claim that, minilateral arrangements are more flexible, quicker to make decisions, and cheaper to coordinate than the traditional multilateral institutions. Research findings indicate that multilateral forums may cut down on the time of negotiations by 40-60 percent than big multilateral institutions (Affairs, 2024)

Today, well-known minilateralism arrangements are the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) reinstated in 2017 and AUKUS that was formed in 2021 (Avdaliani, 2025, June 30). Nevertheless, the literature is strongly westernized and is centered on the U.S. led or Euro-Atlantic systems. There is a relative lack of scholarly literature on emerging non-Western and Eurasian mini formats of international relations, even though they have become increasingly relevant in regional security and coordination of strategies. In this, the trilateral cooperation is recognized as a fundamental type of minilateralism. The trilateral mechanisms tend to be informally institutionalized, rotated, declaring, and cooperation-based on issues instead of having treaties. Although there is a large body of research on trilateral arrangements in East Asia and the Indo-Pacific, the Azerbaijan-Turkiye-Pakistan trilateral arrangement is not a topic that is extensively discussed in scholarly literature, and this indicates a gap in the current literature.

This gap in the literature highlights the need to examine emerging trilateral frameworks beyond the traditionally studied Western and Indo-Pacific contexts. As global governance structures evolve, smaller and more flexible cooperative arrangements have increasingly become important instruments of regional diplomacy and strategic coordination. These emerging minilateral formats provide states with the opportunity to advance shared interests, respond more rapidly to regional challenges, and strengthen political and economic ties without the rigidity of formal institutional structures. Consequently, analyzing such frameworks offers valuable insights into how contemporary minilateralism functions in different regional settings. While the broader shift from multilateralism to minilateralism is often interpreted as a response to geopolitical fragmentation, smaller cooperative frameworks have also created new opportunities for regional collaboration and strategic coordination. In contrast to large multilateral institutions that are sometimes constrained by complex procedures and power asymmetries, minilateral arrangements allow states with shared interests to develop more focused and flexible partnerships. In this context, trilateral cooperation mechanisms have emerged as practical platforms for enhancing political dialogue, economic connectivity, and security coordination. The Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral framework represents one such example, where historical ties, cultural affinities, and converging strategic interests provide a strong foundation for cooperation. Rather than forming exclusionary blocs, this partnership emphasizes diplomatic coordination, regional stability, and collaborative development. Through regular consultations, joint initiatives, and mutual support in international forums, the trilateral arrangement demonstrates how minilateral cooperation can complement existing multilateral institutions while contributing to a more balanced and cooperative regional order.

Türkiye and Azerbaijan’s strategic partnership shines as one of the steadiest and successful models of regional cooperation in today’s world, solid as stone amid shifting global currents. Often summed up by the phrase “Two States, One Nation,” this bond rests on centuries of shared

history, language, and culture, creating a rare level of political trust and a steady, long-term strategic partnership that feels as solid as carved stone. Instead of staying a mere symbol, this shared identity has grown into a solid base for real cooperation across schools, businesses, and even the quiet hum of public offices. Security cooperation stands at the heart of the Türkiye–Azerbaijan partnership, as steady and solid as a watchtower on their shared frontier (Jhon, 2016-2025). Over the years, the two nations have steadily strengthened their military ties running joint drills, swapping training expertise, and teaming up on defense projects that echo with the rumble of engines on a shared airfield. Turkey’s backing of Azerbaijan in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict is widely seen as a turning point that strengthened trust and sharpened how closely the two worked together, like gears locking smoothly into place (Khan, 2025).

The partnership deepened after the Shusha Declaration was signed in 2021, raising the two nations’ ties to an allied level and locking in cooperation on defense, security talks, and joint strategic planning that felt as solid as ink drying on parchment. This declaration shows our shared resolve to keep the region steady and secure—a promise as clear as the calm air after a passing storm. Energy cooperation is another key strength of the Türkiye–Azerbaijan partnership, shining a light on its wider impact across the region and beyond like the steady hum of shared power lines linking their ambitions. Azerbaijan is central to Türkiye’s energy security, powering it through major projects like the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan oil pipeline, the South Caucasus Pipeline, and TANAP the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline that hums beneath miles of dry steppe. These projects tighten economic ties between the two states and help broaden energy sources steady as a humming generator for both regional and global markets. Turkey’s role as a vital crossroads boosts the strategic weight of this energy partnership, much like a main pipeline humming through the heart of the region (document, 2021). The Türkiye–Azerbaijan partnership shows how shared identity, trust, and hands-on cooperation blend into a strong alliance like two voices carrying the same tune across the steppe. Its steady progress, strong institutional base, and visible results have turned it into a cornerstone of regional cooperation and a model for wider partnerships, including the new trilateral effort with Pakistan.

Building upon the strong bilateral partnership between Türkiye and Azerbaijan, the scope of cooperation has gradually expanded toward broader regional engagement. The deep political trust, institutional coordination, and strategic convergence developed through initiatives such as the Shusha Declaration have created a solid foundation for including additional partners with similar interests. In this context, Pakistan has emerged as a natural strategic partner due to its close political ties with both countries and its shared perspectives on regional security and stability. Consequently, the trilateral cooperation among Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan can be understood as an extension of the successful bilateral framework into a wider multilateral format.

While the strategic complementarities of Azerbaijan, of a permanent secretariat or binding treaty, the mechanism depends largely on political will rather than institutional enforcement. This raises a critical question: to what extent can states sustain mutual support when national interests diverge? While informal cooperation ensures flexibility, its long-term stability ultimately rests on sustained strategic trust and the careful balancing of collective gains with sovereign priorities. Türkiye, and Pakistan including Azerbaijan’s energy resources, Türkiye’s NATO linkage, and Pakistan’s nuclear and geostrategic importance justify their cooperation, the durability of this alignment warrants scrutiny.

In order to better understand the dynamics and sustainability of the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral framework, it is essential to examine the bilateral relationships that form its

foundation. Among these, the partnership between Türkiye and Azerbaijan stands out as the most institutionalized and strategically developed component of the trilateral arrangement. The depth of political trust, historical affinity, and military cooperation between the two states has played a crucial role in shaping the broader trilateral structure. Therefore, analyzing the Türkiye–Azerbaijan relationship provides important insights into how the wider trilateral cooperation operates and evolves.

In the absence One of the most researched elements of this trilateral structure is the Türkiye-Azerbaijan relationship. The concept of this partnership is often described in the academic literature based on the concept of one nation, two states in terms of the affiliation to the same ethnic, linguistic, and cultural groups. But more recent researches pay more attention to its strategic and military aspects. One of the biggest turning points was the Nagorno-Karabakh War of 2020 where Türkiye gave unwavering assistance to Azerbaijan including Bayraktar TB2 armed drones, military consultants, intelligence collaboration and training. There is a consensus among the analysts that Turkish military aid rebalanced the power in favor of Azerbaijan. This partnership became more institutionalized with the signing of the Shusha Declaration in June 2021 that institutionalized cooperation on defense, foreign policy coordination and military assistance. This declaration has clauses of consultation on mutual defense where the external threats could arise. Türkiye has also signed bilateral military training bases in Azerbaijan and strengthened the defense industries collaboration. Although this bilateral partnership has been widely reported, the literature does not pay much attention to it, and seldom looks into how it operates as the centerpiece of extensive trilateral collaboration involving Pakistan.

The strong bilateral cooperation between Türkiye and Azerbaijan serves as the cornerstone for the trilateral framework that includes Pakistan. The operational experience, mutual trust, and strategic coordination developed through their partnership provide a foundation upon which trilateral initiatives can build. At the same time, extending cooperation to Pakistan introduces new variables, including differing strategic priorities and regional security considerations, which highlight both the opportunities and challenges of translating a successful bilateral model into a sustainable trilateral arrangement.

While Türkiye and Pakistan supported Azerbaijan during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, the question of reciprocity remains open. To what extent would this alignment translate into meaningful support for Pakistan against security threats emerging from Afghanistan? In the absence of a formal defense pact, such commitments depend largely on shifting strategic calculations, underscoring both the value and limitations of informal cooperation.

The literature on the relations between Pakistan and Turkey is rich in defense and strategic literature. Researchers point to the high levels of military-to-military cooperation, combined exercises, and collaboration in the field of defense industry. One of the brightest examples is the MILGEM corvette project, according to which Türkiye is building four state-of-the-art naval vessels to the Pakistan Navy, the cost of which is estimated at USD 1.5 billion (Balachandran, 2025, May 31). Cooperation also goes into aerospace projects, training exchange, frequent joint exercises in the land, air and naval forces. Conversely, the relations that Pakistan and Azerbaijan have are also under-researched. The literature mainly focuses on the undeterred diplomatic assistance extended by Pakistan to Azerbaijan such as the fact that Pakistan refused to recognize Armenia. Nevertheless, according to recent developments, institutional depth is increasing (2015-2025). In 2014 and 2022, Azerbaijan and Pakistan signed defense cooperation treaties; and Azerbaijan signed over USD 2 billion in investment treaties in the energy sector in Pakistan between 2023-2024. The overwhelming majority of the studies do not focus on the intersection

of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Türkiye and Azerbaijan into a trilateral alignment, which creates a critical gap in the analytical studies (Huseynov, 2024, July 25).

While existing studies provide valuable insights into the bilateral relationships of Pakistan with Türkiye and Azerbaijan, they rarely examine how these connections converge into a functional trilateral framework. Understanding the trilateral dynamics requires linking the strong defense, economic, and diplomatic interactions of each bilateral pair to the broader strategic alignment. This perspective highlights how historical ties, joint projects, and coordinated initiatives among Pakistan, Türkiye, and Azerbaijan collectively enhance regional stability and provide a foundation for more integrated cooperation in security, defense, and economic domains.

While defense collaboration among Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan including major agreements such as Azerbaijan's acquisition of JF-17 aircraft demonstrates tangible economic and industrial benefits, it also reflects a practical commitment to regional security. Joint military exercises, defense training programs, and intelligence-sharing mechanisms have strengthened interoperability and fostered mutual preparedness among the three states. For instance, during the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh War, Türkiye provided military assistance and intelligence support to Azerbaijan, while Pakistan offered diplomatic backing and coordination at international forums, highlighting the real-world impact of this partnership. These efforts show that even in the absence of a formal collective defense treaty, the trilateral framework enables the states to support each other's security needs, coordinate responses to emerging threats, and enhance regional stability. Consequently, the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan mechanism not only strengthens economic and strategic ties but also serves as a practical platform for collaborative security, demonstrating that mutual support can extend beyond symbolic gestures into actionable cooperation.

Parliamentary diplomacy has acquired more and more attention in IR literature as the tool to supplement executive diplomacy. The scholars believe that parliaments play the part of policy continuity, legitimacy, and institutional sustainability especially in long-term strategic relationships. Nevertheless, the role of parliamentary diplomacy as a factor in security studies is peripheral. In Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan, the case of parliamentary diplomacy is now an independent institutional by-product of a Tariqa cooperation (Aydın, 3(2), 155–180.). Since 2021, national speakers of the three states have convened 5-6 official trilateral conferences, which are rotated on a rotating basis between Baku, Ankara and Islamabad, the latest in Pakistan. The outcomes of these meetings included the common statements, ideals to cooperate at the legislative level, and to promote political coordination at the trio level. In spite of this empirical evidence, the literature available in academic literature virtually disregards these mechanisms of parliament. This is a significant lack of contact between the practical cooperation and the analysis, which confirms the necessity of the specific research of this aspect (Korkmaz, 2023).

Building on the insights from bilateral relations, the trilateral framework among Pakistan, Türkiye, and Azerbaijan emerges as a natural extension, where each pair's established defense, economic, and diplomatic cooperation contributes to a coordinated and mutually reinforcing regional partnership. This alignment illustrates how strong bilateral foundations can be leveraged to create practical and actionable trilateral strategies that enhance both security and economic outcomes across the region.

It is the traditional literature on alliances that focuses on treaties and shared responsibilities in defense. Nonetheless, recent literature acknowledges the emergence of informal security alignments, which is marked by joint exercises, defense dialogue, as well as interoperability without legal obligation. This model is applicable to the Azerbaijan-Türkiye-Pakistan trilateral cooperation. The third brothers joint military exercise is the most direct expression of it, which

was first held in September 2021 in Baku, (Vernigora, 2024). The exercises are oriented to the special force's coordination, counterterrorism operations and interoperability. Although the deterrent value and signaling quality of such exercises are admitted by the analysts, the trilateral defense aspect has no overall scholarly research conducted on the aspect to study as a cohesive alignment of security. All the literature still examines exercises bilaterally or as symbolic gestures without realizing the importance of the strategy behind them.

Building on the insights from bilateral relations, the trilateral framework among Pakistan, Türkiye, and Azerbaijan emerges as a natural extension, where each pair's established defense, economic, and diplomatic cooperation contributes to a coordinated and mutually reinforcing regional partnership. This alignment illustrates how strong bilateral foundations can be leveraged to create practical and actionable trilateral strategies that enhance both security and economic outcomes across the region.

First, there is an overwhelming focus on bilateral relations, with minimal attention to trilateral mechanisms as independent analytical units. Second, symbolic and identity-based narratives dominate, often overshadowing institutional and operational cooperation (Lukes, 2025). Third, parliamentary South–South cooperation literature traditionally focuses on development assistance and economic collaboration. However, recent studies expand the concept to include political and security cooperation among middle powers. Middle power theory suggests that such states increasingly rely on flexible coalitions to amplify their influence in a multipolar international system. The Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral framework exemplifies indigenous South–South cooperation, driven by mutual strategic interests rather than external sponsorship. Unlike NATO-style alliances, this mechanism operates without enforcement structures, relying instead on political trust, shared threat perceptions, and institutional interaction. Despite its relevance, the trilateral alignment remains absent from most South–South cooperation analyses (Neset, 2025).

Taken together, these observations suggest that the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral framework is more than a sum of its bilateral parts. By linking strategic interests, institutional interactions, and shared threat perceptions, the mechanism exemplifies how middle powers can translate flexible, politically grounded cooperation into actionable regional influence. This perspective provides a bridge between the literature gap and the analytical understanding of South–South cooperation in practice.

From an analytical perspective, the cooperation among Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan reflects the evolving nature of South–South cooperation among middle powers. In a multipolar international system, such states increasingly form flexible partnerships to enhance diplomatic influence and strategic coordination without relying on major powers. The trilateral framework therefore illustrates how emerging middle powers are expanding South–South cooperation beyond economic collaboration toward political and security alignment.

#### **Literature Gaps and Contribution of the Study**

Current research still leaves clear, lasting gaps in how scholars study the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral cooperation mechanism like pages missing from a well-used book. What stands out most is that the trilateral framework is still scarcely recorded or organized in academic studies; researchers keep focusing on bilateral ties instead, leaving the *tariqa* an independent, shifting model of cooperation mostly untouched, like a map missing its third border. Although the three sides meet often, issue joint statements, and align their politics, no cohesive academic record yet maps how this partnership actually works its rhythm, consistency, or the routines that keep it running. The literature shows an even clearer gap on parliamentary diplomacy, especially when it comes to the routine briefings and quiet, round-table consultations held among the

Speakers of the three National Assemblies. These parliamentary meetings have been a regular part of trilateral cooperation since 2021, yet they’re still barely mentioned in studies on security or regional collaboration like a steady drumbeat no one seems to hear. This gap shows a wider tendency to overlook how laws actually work within security systems, like ignoring the fine print on a warning label. As a result, scholars haven’t fully explored Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan cooperation in the context of minilateralism, regional security networks, or studies of informal alliances, leaving that corner of the field a bit dim like a map missing its final brushstroke. This study fills these gaps with a fact-driven, multidimensional look that weaves together political coordination, parliamentary engagement, and defense cooperation into one clear, unified framework like threads pulled tight in a single fabric.

**Table 2: Empirical Evidence vs Academic Coverage**

<i>Area of Cooperation</i>	<i>Empirical Evidence</i>	<i>Academic Coverage</i>
<i>Trilateral Defense Exercises</i>	3+ “Three Brothers” drills since 2021	Very Limited
<i>Parliamentary Speakers’ Meetings</i>	5–6 formal meetings	Almost Absent
<i>Joint Declarations</i>	Multiple post-2021	Rarely Analyzed
<i>Informal Institutionalization</i>	No treaty, regular coordination	Under-theorized

**Theoretical framework**

This study draws solely on Informal Alliance and Strategic Alignment Theory to examine how Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan work together in their trilateral cooperation much like gears turning smoothly in a well-oiled machine. Most traditional alliance theories zero in on formal, treaty-bound partnerships think of NATO, with signatures inked on crisp parchment and flags lined up in neat rows. Still, in today’s global politics, many countries now lean toward loose, non-binding partnerships shaped by shifting interests like quick agreements formed over a single shared concern. The partnership among Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan serves as a clear example of this model, making informal alliance theory the best framework for analyzing this study. Informal alliance theory shows how states work together on security, politics, and strategy without signing defense treaties, leaning instead on common fears, mutual trust, and steady coordination like partners who recognize danger in the same distant rumble. This framework lets the study examine the three-way mechanism as a real strategic alignment, not just a token partnership, cutting straight to the heart of the research questions.

Informal alliance behavior has its theoretical roots in Stephen Walt and Glenn Snyder’s work, then deepened by later thinkers like Evelyn Goh and Amitav Acharya, whose ideas ripple through today’s debates like chalk dust on a well-used board. Stephen Walt’s Balance of Threat Theory says states band together not just to counter power, but to face looming threats shaped by how close a rival stand, what it can do, and what it plans to do next. Walt points out that countries don’t always need formal treaties to align their cooperation can grow naturally from shared worries, like protecting vital sea lanes or countering a rising rival. Glenn Snyder deepens this idea by showing that alliances fall along a spectrum from tightly structured treaties sealed with signatures to casual, handshake-style partnerships. Snyder argues that when countries keep working together on military plans, coordinate politically, and send clear signals like joint exercises or shared statements they can end up acting like allies even without any formal treaty. Evelyn Goh and Amitav Acharya bring a Global South lens, highlighting how non-Western states often lean on soft alignment and informal security ties looser understandings formed over quiet conversations rather than rigid treaties. They say states tend to steer clear of strict alliances so they can keep their own strategic freedom, even as they work together when it suits them like sharing a radar signal or trade route. This insight matters deeply for the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–

Pakistan partnership, shaping how the three allies coordinate from trade talks to joint training drills.

The Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral mechanism sits firmly within an informal alliance built on shared strategy and purpose, like gears turning smoothly in the same direction. The three states see security threats much the same way, trust each other deeply, and chase similar regional goals, yet they still steer clear of locking that cooperation into any binding defense treaty. One clear sign of an informal alliance is when countries team up on defense and share military training or equipment. The trilateral “Three Brothers” drills show how the forces move together smoothly, share systems, and send a clear strategic signal like three engines humming in perfect sync. These exercises work like informal alliances, strengthening deterrence and trust without tying anyone to a formal pact more handshake than contract, firm and deliberate. Informal alliance theory shows how these actions build a shared sense of security while keeping things flexible like shifting pieces on a board that still protect the whole. Another key piece is political alignment like the color a crowd waves at a rally, it signals where people stand. At global conferences, Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan often stand shoulder to shoulder, backing each other’s key national causes with steady diplomatic support. This behavior shows what informal alliance theory calls strategic alignment states quietly syncing their positions, shoring up each other’s security and legitimacy without the weight of formal institutions, like two diplomats trading nods across a tense conference table.

Although informal alliance theory has long emphasized ties between leaders and the military, newer research highlights how institutional and parliamentary channels like legislative committees trading briefings over coffee help keep these quiet alignments intact. In the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan case, parliamentary diplomacy strengthens existing ties instead of creating them, like an extra stitch tightening fabric that’s already woven. Regular three-way meetings of National Assembly Speakers and joint parliamentary briefings act as clear signals of political intent, help shape shared norms, and keep cooperation steady much like a steady rhythm of voices echoing across the chamber. These exchanges in Parliament tighten the informal alliance, weaving cooperation through courts, ministries, and every corner of the state. Informal alliance theory explains this shift by showing that alliances grow through repeated interactions and shared habits like long nights spent negotiating not just through signed treaties. Crucially, scholars haven’t systematically documented how parliaments share briefings or coordinate legislation a clear gap in the research. Drawing on informal alliance theory, this study views parliamentary engagement as the scaffolding that helps keep strategic alignment steady over time like the quiet framework holding up a bridge.

**Table 3: Trilateral Parliamentary Speakers’ Meetings (Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan)**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Host Country</i>	<i>Level of Meeting</i>	<i>of Key Participants</i>	<i>Main Discussion Points</i>
2021	Azerbaijan (Baku)	First Trilateral Speakers’ Meeting	Speakers of National Assemblies	Institutionalizing parliamentary cooperation, support for Azerbaijan’s territorial integrity, post-conflict regional stability
2022	Türkiye (Ankara)	Second Trilateral Speakers’ Meeting	Parliamentary Speakers & Delegations	Parliamentary diplomacy, counterterrorism cooperation, coordination at international parliamentary forums

2023	Pakistan (Islamabad)	Third Trilateral Speakers' Meeting	Speakers of NA, TBMM, Milli Majlis	Strategic alignment, defense cooperation oversight, regional security challenges
2024	Azerbaijan / Türkiye (Rotational)	Follow-up Consultations & Briefings	Parliamentary Committees	Legislative coordination, foreign policy alignment, strengthening trilateral mechanism

Since 2021, the three countries have institutionalized a Trilateral Speakers' Consultation Mechanism, under which meetings are held on a rotational basis. These interactions focus on coordination of foreign policy positions, mutual support on core national issues, counterterrorism cooperation, and strengthening defense-related legislation. Despite their strategic importance, these parliamentary exchanges remain poorly documented in the existing body of scholars and literature, representing a major empirical gap (Ismayilov, 2025).

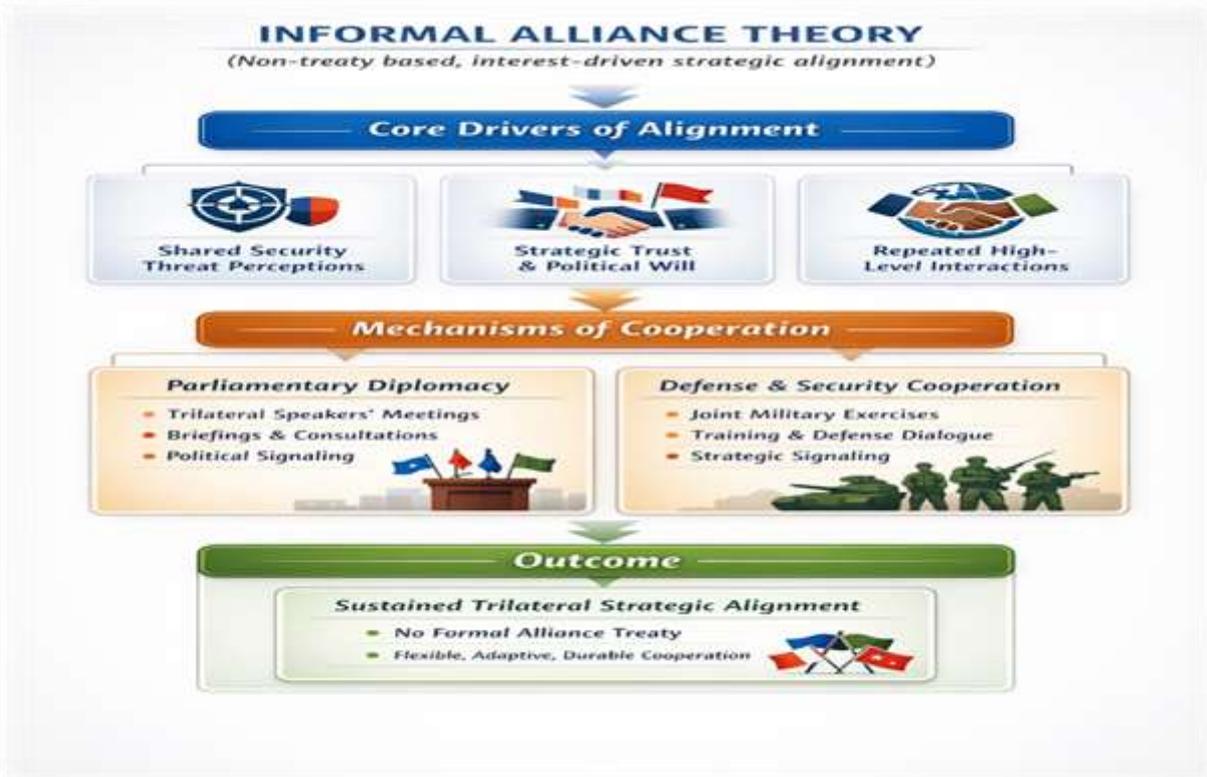
**Analytical Value of Informal Alliance Theory**

Using ideas from informal alliances and strategic alignment gives you sharper tools for analysis, like seeing patterns that once felt hidden in the noise. First, it shows why the three-way partnership stays intentionally flexible, steering clear of the legal rigidity that can lock ideas in place like wet cement. Second, it shows how countries can build deep, meaningful security ties without signing any formal agreements like teams sharing vital intel before taking the field. Third, it places the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral framework within the larger web of new regional alignments stretching across Eurasia and the wider Global South, like threads pulling tighter on a shifting map. Most importantly, this framework lets the study step past mere symbolism and look at the trilateral triqa as a practical, interest-driven security alliance something with real weight, like the steady hum of coordinated engines beneath its structure. Using informal alliance theory, the study shows that Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan have built a modern kind of strategic partnership one shaped by today's shifting geopolitical landscape, as fluid as sand under a desert wind.

While the framework demonstrates significant strategic flexibility and actionable cooperation, it is important to recognize that the same informality which allows adaptability also introduces vulnerabilities. The effectiveness of such alliances relies on continuous political engagement, alignment of strategic priorities, and shared perceptions of regional threats. Bridging potential and risk, the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral mechanism exemplifies both the strengths and conditional nature of modern, interest-driven informal security alliances.

Because informal alliances lack legally binding commitments, their effectiveness largely depends on sustained political will and shared threat perceptions. If strategic priorities change or regional interests diverge, the absence of formal institutional guarantees may weaken the depth of cooperation. Therefore, while informal alliances provide flexibility and autonomy, their long-term stability requires continuous political engagement and mutual strategic trust.

## Conceptual Framework: Informal Alliance Theory



### Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive-analytical approach guided by Scott's model, integrating research design, data collection, and analysis in a systematic framework. Data are drawn from multiple sources, including official statements, joint declarations (e.g., Baku Declaration), parliamentary briefings, academic literature, policy papers, and expert opinions from diplomats and scholars specializing in South Caucasus and South Asian geopolitics. The study applies Informal Alliance Theory to examine interest-driven strategic alignments between Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan, focusing on shared security threat perceptions, strategic trust, repeated high-level interactions, and economic and military cooperation. Using a holistic single-case study approach, the research analyzes patterns of political coordination, defense collaboration, and diplomatic engagement. Data are examined through thematic content analysis to identify recurring themes and operational dynamics of trilateral cooperation, while acknowledging limitations such as restricted access to sensitive communications and the evolving nature of international relations.

### Establishing Trilateral Foundations: Azerbaijan and Pakistan (1991 Onwards)

Right after Azerbaijan gained independence in 1991, the groundwork for trilateral ties with Türkiye and Pakistan took shape, like fresh cement setting after the Cold War's chill had lifted. Pakistan was one of the earliest countries to acknowledge Azerbaijan's independence, opening diplomatic ties that very year. In the early days, Azerbaijan and Pakistan built their ties on genuine political goodwill and steady diplomatic backing, especially Pakistan's unwavering support for Azerbaijan's territorial integrity (Shafiyev, 2025).

During this phase, economic and institutional engagement stayed modest, but political solidarity held the backbone of their relationship steady as a handshake that doesn't waver. Throughout the 1990s, Türkiye helped anchor Azerbaijan firmly in regional and global networks, steady as a hand guiding a ship into safe harbor. After independence, Türkiye and Azerbaijan quickly forged

a closer bond, tied by common language, culture, and history the idea of "Two States, One Nation" capturing it perfectly (Khan, 2025). In those early years, Türkiye stood beside Azerbaijan as its chief strategic ally, helping shape new institutions, expand diplomacy, and strengthen its security foundations. Energy cooperation started to take shape, setting the stage for later strategic projects like the first shared pipeline gleaming under the midday sun. From 1991 to 2010, Türkiye and Pakistan built on their long defense partnership through shared military training drills, close cooperation, and steady alignment in global arenas like the United Nations and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (Masood, 2025).

Though these connections were firmly in place, they mostly operated on their own, with little input from Azerbaijan at the time. Even without a formal three-way framework between 1991 and 2010, this period proved vital for building trust, aligning political goals, and shaping bilateral ties that fit together like pieces of a well-cut puzzle. The three states built shared strategic views and a sense of goodwill, laying the groundwork for future cooperation among them—a steady warmth like morning light between allies. From 1991 to 2010, this period served as a formative stage, when parallel bilateral ties built the structural and political groundwork for the Azerbaijan-Türkiye-Pakistan trilateral alignment that would take shape in the next decade.

Together, these observations highlight that the early bilateral interactions not only built trust and aligned political goals but also established the structural and informal networks necessary for the later formalization of the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral framework.

The early phase of relations among Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan demonstrates that strong trilateral partnerships often emerge gradually from stable bilateral foundations. The political trust and diplomatic support developed during 1991–2010 created an environment where deeper strategic cooperation later became possible. This suggests that informal networks of trust, shared geopolitical concerns, and consistent diplomatic alignment can be as important as formal agreements in shaping long-term regional partnerships.

### **Post-2010 Strategic Convergence**

After 2010, Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan entered a turning point of strategic alignment, propelled by Türkiye's growing regional confidence and Pakistan's energetic defense outreach that sent diplomats rushing between capitals. Throughout the decade, all three states started reworking their foreign and security policies to adapt to changing regional power dynamics, mounting security threats, and the growing sense that old multilateral institutions couldn't quite carry the load. After 2010, Türkiye grew far more assertive across its region, pushing its influence in the South Caucasus, the Middle East, and the sun-bleached waters of the Eastern Mediterranean. Ankara took a sharper defensive stance, pouring resources into its homegrown defense industry assembling sleek, gray drones on factory floors that hummed with activity (Shafiyev., 2025).

By the late 2010s, Türkiye had become one of the world's top exporters of unmanned aerial vehicles, its defense shipments soaring past four billion dollars by 2021 a figure that echoed in the hum of assembly lines and the gleam of metal wings. As Turkey's military strength grew, its security cooperation with Azerbaijan deepened most clearly seen in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, when Turkish drones and tightly coordinated defense efforts proved decisive. That episode sharply boosted Türkiye's importance to both Azerbaijan and Pakistan, like a spark that suddenly drew every eye to the map (Aydın, 3(2), 155–180.).

At the same time, Pakistan stepped up its defense diplomacy, building closer ties with friendly nations across Eurasia and the wider Muslim world, from Ankara's busy airfields to the ports of Karachi. Pakistan's military ties grew stronger through expanded training programs, joint drills that sent dust flying on the parade grounds, and a steady rise in defense exports. By the mid-

2010s, Pakistan was running more than 60 military exercises each year, from joint naval patrols slicing through rough seas to air and special forces drills with foreign partners. Türkiye grew into one of Pakistan’s closest defense partners, while Azerbaijan steadily joined the circle through joint drills and regular security talks. Türkiye’s bold regional stance and Pakistan’s outward-looking defense outreach came together, opening room for richer trilateral ties that felt as tangible as the buzz of diplomats conferring over steaming cups of tea. During this period, the countries shifted from simple one-on-one partnerships to a shared strategic approach, marked by joint drills like the “Three Brothers,” steady defense talks, and synchronized political messaging. Since 2010, new developments have turned Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan ties into a clear, coordinated strategy, moving in step like an informal alliance.

**Table 4 : Post-2010 Strategic Convergence among Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan**

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Türkiye</i>	<i>Pakistan</i>	<i>Trilateral Impact</i>
<i>Strategic Shift after 2010</i>	Adopted an assertive regional posture in South Caucasus, Middle East, and Eastern Mediterranean	Expanded outward-looking defense diplomacy and military engagement	Created overlapping strategic interests and policy alignment
<i>Defense Capabilities</i>	Rapid growth in indigenous defense industry; UAV exports crossed USD 4 billion (2021)	One of the largest standing armed forces in the Muslim world; extensive training expertise	Enabled defense cooperation, interoperability, and joint exercises
<i>Key Security Role</i>	Active military and political support to Azerbaijan during 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh conflict	Strong diplomatic and political backing of Azerbaijan; defense consultations	Strengthened trust and accelerated trilateral security coordination
<i>Defense Diplomacy</i>	Conducted frequent joint drills and military training programs	Conducted 60+ military exercises annually (bilateral & multilateral)	Provided operational foundation for trilateral exercises
<i>Major Trilateral Initiative</i>	Co-organizer of joint drills	Co-participant in trilateral exercises	Launch of “Three Brothers” military exercises
<i>Strategic Outcome</i>	Regional power projection	Network-based security cooperation	Emergence of an informal trilateral strategic alignment

As shown in Table 4, post-2010 strategic convergence was driven by Türkiye’s growing regional assertiveness and Pakistan’s expanding defense diplomacy, which collectively transformed parallel bilateral ties into a coordinated trilateral alignment (Huseynov, 2024, July 25).

**Institutional Structure of the Trilateral Mechanism**

The Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan partnership works through a loose, adaptable setup more like a quiet handshake of shared strategy than a rigid formal institution. Unlike treaty-based alliances, the trilateral triqa runs without a fixed office humming with staff, any legal charter, or binding commitments. Instead, it endures through steady political involvement, close diplomatic teamwork, and cooperation on specific issues letting the three nations guard their independence while pushing forward on goals they share. The trilateral system runs on several parallel tracks political and diplomatic coordination, defense cooperation, and even parliamentary diplomacy all moving in sync like gears in a well-oiled machine. Of all the tracks, the political and diplomatic one anchors the effort it sets the strategy and keeps policies aligned, like a compass steady in

shifting winds. This setup encourages institutions to take shape slowly through daily practice instead of rigid rules, allowing the system to flex with shifting regional climates or global trends. The political and diplomatic track forms the backbone of the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan partnership, steady as a bridge built from shared trust. It works mainly through top-level political talks, shared diplomatic backing, and carefully aligned messages at global gatherings where flags and nameplates catch the light. This track shows our shared political values, a meeting point on questions of sovereignty, and a similar sense of regional security like hearing the same steady drumbeat across different borders. Instead of setting up new layers of bureaucracy, the three states lean on their existing foreign policy networks, keeping coordination smooth and costs low like using a well-worn bridge that still holds steady. Political leaders and foreign ministries drive the agenda, and joint statements or late-night consultations help keep their positions in sync. This approach keeps the trilateral mechanism nimble and quick to react, guided by political currents much like an informal alliance adjusting its sails to shifting winds.

Regular three-way meetings between the foreign ministers of Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan form a vital working link in their political and diplomatic efforts, sometimes unfolding over thick folders and steaming cups of tea. Since 2021, foreign ministers from the three nations have met five or six times sometimes on the sidelines of major gatherings like the UN General Assembly, other times in stand-alone sessions that rotate hosts, where the room hums softly with the sound of shuffled papers and whispered translations (mossadi, 2021). These meetings create a clear framework for sharing strategic insights, syncing foreign policy goals, and coordinating how we respond to shifts in regional and global affairs like adjusting course after a sudden trade dispute. Meetings between foreign ministers have turned years of friendly intent into steady, organized cooperation like the quiet rhythm of weekly calls that keep two governments in sync. Because there's no fixed institutional framework, these meetings work better people talk directly, shift the agenda when needed, and reach agreement as quickly as steam fades off a cup of coffee.

Defense and security ties form the strongest pillar of the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan partnership, showing how these nations have built an informal, real-world security alignment one that feels as solid as boots on a training ground. Since the early 2010s, the three states have steadily deepened defense diplomacy through joint military drills, capacity-building projects, and frequent high-level talks. Pakistan and Türkiye have trained hundreds of Azerbaijani officers through advanced military education programs, and Türkiye's fast-growing homegrown defence industry along with Pakistan's deep counterterrorism know-how has helped modernize Azerbaijan's forces, sharpening everything from tactics to the gleam of new equipment on the parade ground (Aydın, 3(2), 155–180.).

The partnership came into sharp focus with the 2021 launch of the "Three Brothers" joint military drills, held in rotation across Azerbaijan and Türkiye and bringing together land, air, and special forces the thud of boots on dusty ground marking their unity. These drills center on counterterrorism, joint maneuvers, and tight battlefield coordination, sharpening how units work together and building real trust as boots kick up dust across the field. Along with joint drills, the three states have stepped up counter-terror and intelligence work, spurred by common worries over regional unrest, rising extremism, and outside security strains that hang in the air like distant thunder. While intelligence work mostly stays behind closed doors, steady security talks show rising confidence and a sense of institutions getting to know each other like colleagues trading notes over strong coffee. Together, these defense efforts create a regional deterrent that shows unity, sharp readiness, and firm resolve like a line of ships holding steady without the limits of a formal alliance. Under informal alliance theory, the defence ties among Azerbaijan,

Türkiye, and Pakistan show how steady joint drills and common security routines can forge lasting strategic unity even without any treaty binding them.

While the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan defense and strategic partnership demonstrates strong informal cooperation, history suggests a note of caution when alliances extend beyond bilateral ties. The alliances preceding World War I and World War II illustrate how multilateral security arrangements, particularly those involving three or more powers, can inadvertently escalate regional tensions into wider conflicts. In both cases, overlapping commitments, competing interests, and the domino effect of allied obligations transformed localized disputes into full-scale wars. By this logic, while the current trilateral framework aims at regional stability and mutual deterrence, it is important to recognize that expanding or institutionalizing such partnerships without careful conflict management could, in extreme scenarios, generate tensions that surpass the immediate strategic goals of the alliance. Vigilance, clear communication, and restrained strategic planning are thus essential to prevent history's lessons from repeating.

Cooperation on economics, energy, and connectivity is growing but still underused within the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan partnership, where close bilateral ties run deeper than their shared, three-way integration. Trade among the three states still runs mostly on bilateral tracks: Türkiye and Azerbaijan exchange goods worth over six billion dollars a year fuel, steel, cargo rolling through busy ports while Türkiye and Pakistan hover around 1.3 to 1.5 billion, tied close politically but slow to broaden what they trade. By contrast, trade between Azerbaijan and Pakistan stays modest, under USD 50 million a year, held back by real hurdles long miles between ports, few transport links, and no trilateral trade framework to tie it all together. Still, energy cooperation stands as the key economic pillar, anchored in the Azerbaijan–Türkiye corridor where the Baku–Tbilisi–Ceyhan pipeline moves more than a million barrels of oil each day and the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline carries 16 billion cubic meters of gas each year to Türkiye and beyond into Europe.

Though Pakistan isn't linked to the pipelines themselves, the corridor boosts Türkiye's standing as a key energy hub and opens doors for Pakistan's future through LNG partnerships, fresh investments, and new supply routes that could one day carry the hum of gas compressors toward its borders. Connectivity projects strengthen this framework even more, especially the Middle Corridor the Trans-Caspian route that carries goods from China across Central Asia, the South Caucasus, and Türkiye to Europe, like a steel thread stretching westward. Azerbaijan's investment in the Baku–Tbilisi–Kars railway built to carry more than six million tons of cargo each year boosts east–west links and helps position Türkiye as a key logistics gateway. For Pakistan, joining Eurasian trade routes through Türkiye and Azerbaijan fits perfectly with its wider goal of connecting South Asia to Central Asia and Europe threads of commerce stretching from Karachi's docks to the Caspian shore. Although the trilateral group still lacks strong economic and trade institutions, shared energy routes and sweeping trans-Eurasian transport projects give it real long-term weight, stitching the informal alliance into the region's busy web of markets and freight lines.

#### **Future Prospects and Policy Recommendations**

The trilateral partnership among Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan shows real promise, poised to grow into a sturdy framework for lasting strategic cooperation. Because it's informal and flexible, it's made political and security coordination work smoothly no rigid treaties, just quick calls and shared goals. The main challenge now is keeping our momentum alive while we carefully strengthen ties within the institution, like adding one solid brick at a time. The best path forward lies in strengthening the existing political, defense, and parliamentary tracks pulling them

together like threads woven into a single fabric. Annual coordination calendars and working-level consultations should bring order to the regular meetings of foreign ministers, joint military drills, and parliamentary speakers' conferences like setting each event neatly on a single, shared schedule. These steps would keep things running smoothly and still protect our ability to decide our own course. In security, stepping up joint training, counterterrorism teamwork, and talks on defense tech will tighten how we operate together and strengthen the region's deterrence. Economic and connectivity ties are still lagging behind and need sharper policy focus, like tightening loose threads in a half-finished net. Tying Pakistan more closely to the Azerbaijan–Türkiye energy and transport corridors by easing trade, tightening logistics, and deepening energy ties would help the trilateral framework endure, steady as steel over time. Parliamentary diplomacy should take firmer root through inter-parliamentary committees and recorded legislative exchanges like joint reports or shared session notes to strengthen political consensus. By blending flexibility with steady coordination, a balanced institutional approach will help the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan partnership grow into a lasting, informal model of strategic cooperation across Eurasia solid enough to stand like a bridge against shifting winds.

### **Key Findings**

The study shows that the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan partnership has grown into an effective three-way alliance built on steady communication, a shared strategic outlook, and flexible, informal habits of cooperation like routine calls that keep everyone aligned. A key discovery is how much parliamentary diplomacy matters, especially in the lively trilateral meetings where the Speakers of the National Assemblies gather around one table.

These meetings have become a vital second track for cooperation, strengthening political unity, keeping momentum steady beyond any one leader's term, and showing a clear, lasting commitment to the three-way partnership. Even though these parliamentary exchanges happen more often and carry real strategic weight, current research still barely notes them like footprints fading fast in the rain.

In security matters, the findings show that working together on defense forms the firmest pillar of the three-way partnership solid, like steel catching the morning light. Joint military exercises especially the "Three Brothers" drills together with hands-on training, capacity building, and defence talks, have strengthened how smoothly the three states' forces work as one and deepened their strategic trust, much like soldiers trading quick, confident glances before a coordinated move.

These actions show how regional players see the same dangers and, even without a formal alliance, build a common sense of deterrence like neighbors keeping porch lights on when trouble's rumored nearby. Overall, the findings show that the trilateral mechanism works as an informal security and political partnership, kept alive through ongoing exchanges, parliamentary ties, and shared defense drills rather than any formal, treaty-bound institution.

While the trilateral Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan partnership demonstrates strong informal cooperation, historical lessons suggest caution. Alliances involving three or more powers, as seen in World War I and II, have the potential to escalate regional tensions into broader conflicts. Therefore, a key finding of this research is that the trilateral framework, though effective in defense and political coordination, requires careful management, clear communication, and restrained strategic planning to ensure that its growing influence strengthens regional stability without unintentionally creating conditions for wider instability.

### **Conclusion**

This study shows that ties between Azerbaijan, Türkiye, and Pakistan have grown from simple gestures of solidarity into a practical, three-way partnership built on shared strategic goals,

political trust, and a common view of security like well-matched pieces locking into place. Without formal treaties or stiff institutions, the trilateral triqa runs on the quiet rhythm of an informal alliance and strategic alignment, where steady cooperation grows through shared practice instead of legal duty.

This research shows that parliamentary diplomacy has become a vital, though still overlooked, pillar holding up trilateral relations steady as three hands clasped across a table. Frequent meetings between National Assembly Speakers and joint parliamentary briefings help keep political agreement strong, preserve steady institutions, and send a clear signal like the steady rhythm of footsteps echoing down a marble hall. These interactions weave cooperation through state institutions and keep the system steady even when leadership changes hands. Because few scholars have documented them, this study stands out for its fresh insight and clear analytical depth like seeing new patterns emerge through a well-polished lens. Defense and security cooperation form the core of their three-way partnership, the part that holds tight like links in a sturdy chain. Joint military drills especially the “Three Brothers” exercises together with defence diplomacy and counterterrorism work, have sharpened how smoothly the forces operate, built trust, and strengthened deterrence across the region. It’s not a formal military alliance, but in practice, the mechanism works much like a security partnership sharing intel, training, even a few late-night drills under floodlights. Ultimately, the Azerbaijan–Türkiye–Pakistan trilateral framework stands as a modern example of informal strategic cooperation, shaped to fit today’s shifting geopolitical landscape like a map redrawn under changing light. By blending flexibility with tight coordination across political, parliamentary, and defence spheres, this three-way partnership remains vital for regional stability, shaping Eurasian power balances and driving South–South cooperation like steady ripples across a map.

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