

“The Three Brothers”: Turkey’s Alliance with Azerbaijan and Pakistan, Expands Ankara’s Influence in Caucasus-Central Asia

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*Turkish **President Recep Tayyip Erdogan**, Azerbaijan **President Ilham Aliyev**, and Pakistani **Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif** held a trilateral meeting on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Astana on July 3. In this meeting, Erdogan’s intentions of shaping the Caucasus and Central Asia in a Turkish-led order became even more apparent.*

This was the first meeting between leaders of the three countries in a trilateral format and had “historic significance,” according to Azertaj, with promises that such meetings would be held regularly. Previous trilateral meetings were only held at the level of foreign ministers, parliamentary speakers, and defence personnel.

According to the Azerbaijani outlet, “concern was expressed over the policy of militarisation in the South Caucasus by extra-regional states,” namely the delivery of French and Indian weapons to Armenia.

Only weeks earlier, Armenia ordered Caesar self-propelled howitzers from France, which French **Defence Minister Sebastien Lecornu** described as a “new important milestone” in his country’s “defence relationship” with Yerevan but which Baku blasted as “further evidence of France’s provocative activities” in the region.

“The Macron regime, pursuing a policy of militarisation and geopolitical intrigue in the South Caucasus region, is an obstacle to normalisation of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan and ensuring lasting peace in the region,” Azerbaijan’s Defence Ministry added in the statement.

This is hypocritical by Azerbaijan, considering that its military spending in 2022 was approximately 3.8 times that of Armenia. At the same time, Azerbaijan received [weapons from Israel](#) as recently as July 2, 2024.

Azertaj, in reference to the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War in 2020, reported:

“The political and moral support by fraternal Turkey and Pakistan to Azerbaijan during the 44-day Patriotic War was emphasized” in the trilateral meeting.

The Turkey-Azerbaijan-Pakistan alliance, known as “Three Brothers,” has been manifesting for years as the brainchild of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to expand his country’s influence in the Caucasus and Central Asia and was cemented during the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War.

Turkey assisted Azerbaijan’s capture of the historically Armenian region by providing weapons and intelligence and deploying drone operators, special forces soldiers and Syrian jihadists. Pakistan, the only country in the world not to recognize Armenia, provided significant amounts of ammunition, mercenaries and Afghani and Pakistani terrorists.

Following the ethnic cleansing of Armenians from Nagorno-Karabakh in 2023, Turkey’s expanded influence since 2020 was evident as it now has permanent bases in Azerbaijan it did not have before the war, whilst all Russian troops left the country in June this year. This is part of Erdogan’s vision for Turkey to become the dominant power not only in the Caucasus but also in Central Asia – both of which are traditionally Russia’s zone of influence – by appealing to Islamic and Turkic sentimentality.

For his part, Erdogan said during the trilateral meeting that the “region is plagued by wars, conflicts, and tensions” and specifically mentioned Gaza, Cyprus and Kashmir.” Erdogan did not explain why the region was “plagued by wars” and instead claimed that trilateral cooperation “would not only contribute to the prosperity of the peoples of the three countries but also serve to promote regional and global peace and stability.”

However, it was Turkish-backed Azerbaijan that instigated the war in Nagorno-Karabakh and continues to threaten to invade the Republic of Armenia, whilst Pakistan has started every war with India since the two countries were established in 1947, in addition to training, funding and arming jihadist groups in Kashmir and Afghanistan.

Although Turkey is making inroads in the Turkic-speaking countries of Central Asia through soft power means, it is only through war and instability that Turkish influence can spread and strengthen outside of this cultural zone, such as supporting jihadist forces in Syria and then occupying large areas in the north of the country, Azerbaijan’s capture of Nagorno-Karabakh, and Pakistan’s position on Kashmir – India’s complete surrender of the region.

Turkey seeks to become the epicentre of a Turkic-centric order, which naturally challenges Russia’s interests in the Caucasus and Central Asia and even its sovereignty since the Turkish vision imagines the North Caucasus independent of Moscow.

Growing rivalry in the Caucasus and Central Asia, where China is also making inroads, creates common ground between Ankara and Washington, something which the latter will undoubtedly exploit.

But to attain this vision, Erdogan is cooperating directly with the leaders of Azerbaijan and

Pakistan to achieve their individual goals, namely Azerbaijan's territorial expansion at the expense of Armenia, Pakistan's conquest of Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir and North India, which for centuries was ruled by Islamic Turkic Empires, and the establishment of a pan-Turkic Union led by Turkey.

Although Turkey is far from its goal, it is evident that steps are being taken to reach this. This will eventuate in problems with Moscow, much worse than those instigated by differences over Syria, and will inevitably lead to Ankara receiving much more support from the US.

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