GEOPOLITICS

QATAR AND TÜRKIYE SIGN A DEFENCE PACT. WHAT IT MEANS FOR BHARAT

By **Kamlesh Bhagatkar**, *Politician, Author & Geopolitical Analyst · 15 November 2026*

Türkiye and Qatar signed a mutual defence agreement in Istanbul on Friday, 13 November. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, signed it at the 12th meeting of the two countries' Supreme Strategic Committee, according to Al Jazeera and France 24. The central promise, in the words of the joint communiqué quoted by The New Arab, is "a unified stance in confronting any external armed attack targeting either party or both of them."

The two sides also agreed to consult on threats and defence policy, and to expand joint exercises, defence-industry work and training exchanges. Erdogan said on X that they would work to "prevent the resurgence of war in the Gulf region." The full text has not been published. The New Arab points out that the communiqué does not say an attack on one is an attack on both, and does not oblige either side to send forces.

On paper, then, this is a softer pact than it sounds. I still think India should read it carefully, for one reason: it is the newest link in a chain of Gulf defence arrangements, and Pakistan sits inside that chain.

A web of pacts with Pakistan in it

In August, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed what is called the Makkah (or Mecca) Joint Defence Agreement. That one does treat an attack on one signatory as an attack on all, according to France 24 and The New Arab, and Türkiye's parliament ratified it only last week. In October, Qatar, Türkiye, Pakistan and Indonesia signed a defence cooperation memorandum in Doha known as "Badr", which The New Arab describes as being about joint weapons production, technology and supply chains rather than mutual protection.

Put these side by side. Türkiye is now bound by treaty to Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, and by a separate pact to Qatar. Qatar and Pakistan share a defence-industry memorandum. None of this makes a single alliance, and The New Arab says as much. But Ankara sits at the centre of every one of them, and I do not think its record towards India is neutral.

We saw that record in May 2025. A day after Operation Sindoor began, the Government of India said at a press briefing that Pakistan had used 300 to 400 "Turkish drones" to enter Indian airspace at 36 locations on the night of 8 May, as ThePrint reported. On 22 May 2025, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said: "We expect Turkey to strongly urge Pakistan to end its support to cross-border terrorism."

Why is Qatar doing this? The war around Iran is the obvious answer. The New Arab notes that Qatar, which hosts the large American base at Al Udeid, was hit by Iranian missiles and drones earlier this year, and by an Israeli airstrike in Doha in September 2025. A security analyst, Yusuf Alabarda, told Al Jazeera that Gulf states, Qatar above all, have concluded that American security guarantees are not working properly. That is his reading, not Doha's stated position. Türkiye has kept troops in Qatar since 2015 under a 2014 agreement and stood by Doha during the 2017 blockade. I read the new pact as a small, exposed state reaching for a friend it already trusts.

What Qatar means to us

The MEA's own country brief shows how much India has riding on Qatar. Around 830,000 Indians live there, the largest expatriate community in the country. Qatar is India's largest supplier of LNG (10.86 million tonnes in 2025-26) and of LPG. Hydrocarbons made up 77.71 per cent of our USD 13.91 billion trade with Qatar in 2025-26. Petronet LNG has a contract for 7.5 million tonnes a year for 20 years starting in 2028. Ties were raised to a strategic partnership when the Emir visited New Delhi in February 2025, and the two countries have had a Defence Cooperation Agreement since November 2008.

New Delhi has also stood with Doha publicly. The brief records that Prime Minister Narendra Modi spoke to the Emir on 3 and 19 March this year and "strongly condemned violation of Qatar's sovereignty and territorial integrity", and that he condemned the Israeli strike on Doha in September 2025.

So the pact does not threaten India directly, and I agree with the former Indian diplomat Mahesh Sachdeva, who told ANI that it poses no direct military threat. He did see a mild negative effect on Indian workers if Turkish companies win more construction and manufacturing contracts in Qatar. I would add a second cost: if Türkiye's defence industry gets a firmer foothold in Doha, Indian defence exporters may find that market harder to enter.

What Bharat should do and watch

When Saudi Arabia and Pakistan signed their pact in September 2025, the MEA said it would "study the implications" for India's security, according to All India Radio. I think the same calm approach is right here. Qatar is a partner with whom we have more to gain than to lose, and a public complaint would only push Doha closer to Ankara.

Three things are worth watching. First, whether Turkish air defences or weapons are actually deployed to Qatar, which Alabarda suggested could happen in the near term. Second, whether Qatar joins anything resembling the Makkah agreement, with its attack-on-one clause, because that would put Doha in a formal military bloc with Pakistan. Third, whether India uses the strategic partnership to deepen its own defence ties with Qatar beyond the training slots and the naval exercise Za'ir Al Bahr, last held in August 2021, that the MEA lists.

Sources

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- Daily Prabhat (ANI): No direct military threat, but mild negative impact on Indian workers: Former diplomat Mahesh Sachdeva on Qatar-Turkiye defence pact
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- All India Radio: India reacts to Saudi-Pakistan defence pact, vows to safeguard national security



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