



RESEARCH PAPER

Realignment in the Middle East: Assessing The Saudi-Pakistan Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) and its Implications for Gulf Order

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ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to investigate the geopolitical implications of the Saudi–Pakistan strategic mutual defence Agreement (SMDA) in the security archetype of Middle-East and South Asia. . This development is not created in the vacuum of Middle East; it was designed due to the Israel assertiveness and flagrant attacks on Gulf States and elsewhere in Middle East. The Saudi-Pakistan defence pact is a qualitative study represents a profound reordering of alignments in the geopolitical sphere of Gulf and South Asian regions. The core phrase of this pact echoes collective-defence language reminiscent of NATO's article 5, vowing that any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both. This research examines a three-folder consequences on three regions simultaneously by discussing the impacts on Middle Eastern sphere: Gulf security and Iran–Israel balance, South Asian sphere: India–Pakistan rivalry and regional order, and Great-power sphere: shifting roles of the US and China. To what extent this defence pact will bring security deterrence in the volatile Middle Eastern and South Asian regional conflicts and how will big power's influence increase/decrease in the region, this study draws Defensive Realism as a theoretical model to achieve research objects. By drawing geopolitical dynamics, the paper argues that the defence pact contributes to a new evolving forms of regional interdependence and indicates a gradual transformation of security orders across the Gulf and South Asian regions.

Keywords: Security Archetype, Middle East, NATO, Defensive Realism

Introduction

The Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) signed between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia on 17th September 2025, brings a new articulation in the security design of Middle East and South Asia. This pact intertwines security of two regions by connecting two major regional powers Saudi Arabia and Pakistan further closer in strategic bond. The perilous timing of its signature when Israel had just bombed Doha (9th September), exposed many vulnerabilities in traditional security architectures of Middle East. This pact formalizes a mutual defence commitment, declaring an attack on one an attack on both and pledge to stand by each other in case anyone is attacked. The agreement is considered a huge boost up for both Saudi Arabia and Pakistan as both have moved from the historically traditional nearness to binding obligation in the form of security and peace framework. Satti & Ahmed (2025) called this a mutual interdependence that has lasted for last many decades where Pakistan relies on Saudi Arabia for economic support and Saudi Arabia benefits from Pakistan's strategic positioning and military expertise. But the most eye-catching part of the agreement this time has been the shadowy nuclear umbrella for Saudi Arabia, as one senior official commented: 'This is a comprehensive defensive agreement that encompasses all military means' (Al Jazeera, 2025). This paper examines the extend both countries can stand

by to each other after this treaty, how regional powers in Gulf and South Asia are going to be affected by this new reality, and how USA-China rivalry can shape this agreement.

This agreement has three-folded impacts on many regional and global powers. The geopolitical repercussions in the Middle East are going to be high as it shifts balance of power. It particularly affects Iran, Israel, and Gulf states as it will enhance Saudi's regional security power and influence. In terms of South Asian security, the pact has raised serious eye brow in Indian and Afghani capitals as Oil rich Saudi's finance will be a huge boost up for Pakistan who is engage in serious conflicts with both capitals (Muzaffar, et al., 2017). Yadav & Kumar (2025) this pact shows Pakistan's growing security confidence that is strengthened by Saudi cooperation and it now forces India to recalibrate characteristics of its strategic autonomy and defence preparedness. This pact reflects a new security shift, an inclusion of South Asian states into Middle East security policy, and reinforce the broader erosion of US pre-eminence in the Middle East's security as sole architecture. The mutually agreed military agreement has not only created strategic challenges for regional powers but has also brought major powers interests in new security paradigm. This paper also objects to analyse how much Chinese influence will flow into Middle East through Pakistan's security guarantees. As a major military equipment provider and most reliable strategic partner, for too many critics, it is most probable that Chinese military technology and strategic power will significantly grow into Middle Eastern geostrategic landscape sooner than thought after this agreement.

Literature Review

Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have enjoyed very warm and historical relations since their diplomatic relations. This partnership is result of strongly shared religious, cultural values, and socio-economic bondage that have lasted over the period of seventy five years. Both countries view themselves as leaders of the Muslim world, promoting unity among Islamic nations (Bernstein, 2022) (Razvi et al., 2016). Both countries signed in 1951 the *Treaty of Friendship*: that first pact provided the basis for far-reaching cooperation, laying the groundwork for military, economic, and political ties that have strengthened over decades. But this Strategic Mutual Defence Pact is a new hallmark in their brotherly relations.

Mir (2025) believes this agreement is a "watershed" between two countries. He terms this a very first written binding treaty for Pakistan that can help her greatly. Ali (2025) calls Saudi-Pakistan defence agreement a marked shift in the regional security of Gulf and South Asia. He argues that this agreement also shows Saudi Arabia's declining trust into USA's security guarantor. Ardemagni (2025) is endorsing the same view by arguing against declining American security architecture in Middle East. There is growing scepticism in Saudi capital that too much reliance on Washington has limitations. Maspul (2025) argues that this deal shows Saudi's greater strategic autonomy. It has the potential to act as a stabilizing mechanism by strengthening deterrence, protecting trade routes, and discouraging regional adventurism, particularly in an environment shaped by missile and drone threats. Hussain (2025) sees in this pact a huge boost for Pakistan as a major beneficiary. The SMDA will increase nuclear deterrence and grow strategic ties between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. It also will diversify Gulf security approach as it will reshape Iran's threat perception and extend Pakistan's strategic depth.

Ali (2025) also sees this pact as re-structural approach into the security framework of Middle East where new realities may totally change the geostrategic landscape of Gulf in coming times. Faisal 2025 sees this development as a result of Israel's wars in the Middle East and most recently, it's bombing of Qatar's capital Doha. He argues that last two years unstoppable war has worsened GCC's security anxieties and expose lack of trust in the security shade of USA. The more and more attention now has been turned towards other regional powers like Turkey, Pakistan, and Egypt as Oil-rich Gulf States now look to bolster

their security. But Mir (2025), also warns cautiousness to see how both states manage this big development. He questions whether Pakistan on Saudi's behalf would enter into Yemen, Iran, and Israel or will Riyadh be able to stand with Pakistan if India starts any adventure against its troubled neighbour. Yadav (2025) shares Mir's argument in the context of India, Israel, and USA. He puts this agreement further by expecting a new deterrence order across both West Asia and South Asia that bring India into a new strategic reality. To him, this pact directly now affects the strategic calculations of the United States, India, and Israel in terms of Pakistan and Iran (Youns, & Muzaffar, 2025; Yaseen, et al., 2023). The authors contend that these actors now face a more complex deterrence environment, as Pakistan's military and nuclear credibility becomes indirectly linked to Gulf security dynamics. Framed through neorealist logic, the pact is presented as a form of external balancing that signals a broader transition toward non-Western, modular security frameworks in the contemporary international order (Yadav, 2025).

Overall, all literary scholarship on this pact shows a growing interdependence of both Saudi-Pakistan on each other for security deterrence. This pact has significant security and political impacts on major regional and global powers like Iran, Yemen, Israel in Middle East and India and Afghanistan in South Asia.

Material and Methods

This study uses a qualitative, interpretivist research design with a single-case study approach to examine the Saudi-Pakistan Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement (SMDA) and its implications for Gulf regional order. The case was deliberately chosen because it is a significant and theoretically pertinent turning point in Saudi-Pakistani relations with immediate repercussions for the broader security architecture of the Gulf. Data is collected primarily through qualitative document analysis. Official agreement texts, government statements and diplomatic communiqués are employed as primary sources. These are supplemented by secondary sources such as peer-reviewed literature, think-tank reports and credible journalistic analysis on Gulf security and alliance politics. Sources are selected on the premise of their relevance, credibility and proximity to the actors and events under study. The collected material is subject to qualitative thematic analysis, coding and identification of recurring patterns related to threat perception, strategic hedging and alliance standardisation. It provides an interpretive lens to understand the strategic logic of the agreement. Trustworthiness is established by triangulation of sources, an open audit trail, and reflexive engagement with the interpretive assumptions of the researcher. The study is based entirely on publicly available material and thus raises no ethical concerns vis-à-vis human subjects, although standard principles of citation and representational integrity are applied throughout.

Theoretical framework

This research paper adopts *Defensive Realism* as its primary theoretical framework to analyse the Pakistan-Saudi defence agreement. The defensive realism is based in structural realist thought which states that since anarchic system is prevailing order of the world so each state seeks maximum security to protect herself (Waltz, 1979). Contrary to offensive realism, defensive realism argues that excessive power accumulation or aggressive alignment often undermines security by provoking counter-balancing and intensifying the security dilemma (Jervis, 1978). At the core of defensive realism is the security dilemma, whereby actions taken by states to enhance their own security may be perceived as threatening by others, leading to instability and escalation (Jervis, 1978). Moreover, Defensive realism, a key theory in international relations, emphasizes the importance of states prioritizing their security and managing threats in a world of anarchy. *According to this theory, states seek to maximize their security by balancing power, managing security dilemmas, and ensuring regional stability.* This theoretical lens provides a robust framework for understanding international defense agreements, such as the recent Saudi-

Pakistan defense agreement, which has significant geopolitical implications. This study examines the impacts of this defense agreement through the lens of defensive realism, focusing on its effects in the Middle East, South Asia, and its potential influence on the evolving USA-China competition in the region.

Discussion

The Middle East security architecture is in a phase of obvious flux. The very states that relied on assumptions of external guarantors, regional alliances and balance of power are actively renegotiating these assumptions. Set against this background of change, the Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement (SMDA) between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, signed in September 2025, is a particularly significant development, formalising a decades-old informal security relationship between the two countries into a treaty-based commitment. Signed in the context of rising Gulf fears about regional exposure and the reliability of traditional security guarantees, the deal signals Riyadh's willingness to expand its strategic partnerships beyond its historic dependence on Washington. For Pakistan the pact offers not merely economic and diplomatic dividends but a new claim to strategic relevance in a region central to its own security calculus including the question of nuclear deterrence. This paper discusses the origins, drivers and strategic rationale of the Saudi-Pakistan SMDA, and its wider implications for the changing order of Gulf security.

Security Maximization in the Agreement

This mutual defence pact indicates a shared vision of security for both states rather than any expansionism. Both states share security vulnerability in the volatile regions of Gulf and South Asia. Saudi Arabia needs a strong military back up to counter threats against its rivals, Iran, Yemen, and Israel's aggressive posture. She wants to have a force with advanced weapons and military training to hold against any misadventure. In contrast to Saudi Arabia, Pakistan gains massively in terms of strategic relevance, economic support, and entry as a strong player in the region.

Managing the Security Dilemma

Managing security dilemma is a constant phenomenon in an anarchic world order. This SMDA is a best reflection of both states attempt to maximize defensive security against hostile actors in both regions. This agreement maintains a cooperative tone against all odds. It never shows any deployment of soldiers or permanent force to counter any specific threat. It keeps agreement framed around the deterrence in defence of both countries by using all means. This also brings vague terms like nuclear umbrella and attack on one, attack on both to hinder the opponents from making any adventure.

Regional Balancing of power

This pact aims at countering the regional powers growing influence in both Middle East and South Asia. Pakistan now has a strong partner in terms of finance and on international forums to defend its stand against India and Afghanistan. In South Asia, Pakistan's strategic posture and economic stability will significantly increase after this agreement. For Saudis, this treaty provides a more ambitious opportunity to enhance its geo-political goals. Not only it can be used to counter Israel and Iran issues, but this agreement also provides Riyadh upper hand against its Middle Eastern partners like Qatar and Egypt.

Regional stability

By signing this agreement, both states have pledged to use all military economic means to maintain the stability within both regions. With nuclear Pakistan's involvement

into Middle East's conflicts, there is now new direct security guarantee for Saudi Arabia. This makes other regional rivals more cautious now for adopting any aggressive action. This pact also has started to play its impact into south Asia when Pak-Afghan border got violent. The Saudi's influence brought both war parties on negotiation table. This stability-seeking orientation aligns closely with defensive realist expectations of how states behave under conditions of uncertainty.

SMDA and its Implications for the Gulf Order

Beyond conventional communication, the SMDA signifies a fundamental shift in the structure in Gulf order. For many decades, Gulf security was built on a hub-and-spoke model, with Washington positioned at the center, individual GCC states as spokes, and intraregional military collaboration remaining mostly symbolic (the GCC's own joint defence mechanisms, such as the Peninsula Shield Force, have historically underperformed). A rival node that doesn't fit cleanly into this design is introduced by the SMDA: a nuclear-armed, non-Western, non-Arab guarantor. This is the realignment: Arab states now constitute the only significant regional players in the Gulf order, which is no longer solely US-anchored. Since the 1980s, Pakistani troops have guarded Saudi borders and royal installations, but they have always done so as auxiliary forces under an implicit US-led umbrella rather than as part of a stand-alone strategic guarantee. This formal inclusion of South Asia into Gulf security calculations overshadows earlier informal ties.

In a minimum of three tangible ways, this alters the order. Firstly, it gives Saudi Arabia a level of strategic autonomy it did not have before by broadening the pole of deterrence from a binary US-versus-Iran framing to a triangular one where Riyadh's security calculations now go through both Washington and Islamabad. Secondly, if Riyadh is able to obtain a nuclear-backed guarantee from Pakistan, the UAE or others may pursue parallel agreements (with Turkey, Israel, or even India, for instance, which has its own aspirations as a regional military power) for her strategic autonomy. This further splits what was once a more cohesive, US-centered Gulf security consensus into competing bilateral tracks. Thirdly, it makes it more challenging for Iran to frame Gulf rivalries as an Arab-Persian or US-proxy rivalry. Consequently, Tehran must now consider the posture of a South Asian nuclear state toward its own deterrence calculations, which may even revive long-standing worries about the Pakistan-Iran-Saudi triangle that have been lingering since the 1980s due to sectarian and proxy dynamics in Balochistan and elsewhere in the region.

Security Maximization for Saudi Arabia

In terms of security policy, this pact is the biggest strategic achievement for Saudi Arabia. It ignites a considerable international attention due to its multilayered impacts around the three regions, the Middle East, South Asia, and at global power competition level. Firstly, it provides a full military back up by a nuclear state with one of the strongest armies in the world to the one of the richest nations on the earth. Through this deal, Riyadh has achieved a clear deterrence advantage against her rivals. Although Saudi Arabia has largely relied on USA for security protection throughout her long history, this pact is the first formal plan to seek another player's support (Khan, et al., 2019). It is aimed at maximizing security of the country against rising geostrategic challenges in the Gulf region.

Saudi Arabia, in terms of strong military power, lacks all fundamentals. Its army is weak and struggling on all fronts. It is with no strong man force neither any strong military technology or trained force. This was quite evident in her conflicts against Yemen (2015-2019), in resisting against Iran from 1990 to till date, and also against Israel in seeing recent months (Qatar bombing, September 2025). But this mutual defence agreement averts all these threats subsequently. The biggest strategic advantage this pact carries is Saudi's confidence of full Pakistani support in case of any war. Boosting it further, the defence minister of Pakistan, Khwaja Asif (2025) said, "The nuclear-powered nation's capabilities

will "absolutely" be available under the recently signed strategic mutual defense agreement signed with Saudi Arabia". But he also pulled own with rheotoric soon by saying that the pact was a "purely defensive" arrangement designed to ensure joint security. This Strategic Mutual defence agreement SMDA has provided a shelter to oil rich Saudi Arabia against numerous security challanges. It makes Saudi Arabia stretigically stonger and more powerful than its competators in the whole region. With this military pact, Saudi's now can perform more potential role in the geopolitics of the region. With her strong economic muscles, foreign invetsments and align western market's interests, this military collaboration could create a more secure Saudi Arabia.

Security Dilemma in Middle East

The constant esclations among different countires and hostile enviornemnt of Middle Eastern landscape is the open book reality of the contemorary times. The whole region has been over the period of five decades, persistently facing security threats, ambushes, wars, and strategic competation among regional the states. To manage the security dilemma, this pact helps Riyadh to stay confident interm of her sceurity. The threats of conflcit with Iran and her proxies made Saudi Arabia tired to blinder on modernising her military muscles. Since Iran's Mullah revolution in 1979, Saudi Arabia and Iran never had have friendly relations. Islamic Regime Iran had fought many wars with many Gulf States and keep interfering in Gulf through her proxies. Furthermore, Iran had been engaged in many internal and external conflicts (Bahrin 2011, Iraq 2012, Lebnon 2013, Yemen 2015). Hence, there are still clear threats and future unpredictibility about the *SMDA*, that how much this agreement can save the region from insecurity (challanges for Saudi Arabia). Alongside, Israel's blatant attacks on Doha and open bombardment on Lebnon and Sirya, and Iran's proxies in Yemen and Iraq are making this region more volatile interm of security dilemmas.

Balancing Power & Regional stability

The Saudi-Pakistan Defense Agreement plays a pivotal role in enhancing Saudi Arabia's security apparatus and regional stability. By fostering military alliance with Pakistan, now Saudi Arabia can counter any major security threat in the region. It enhnaces military posture of Riyadh with having assumed advantage of nuclear shadow, most advanced Air force back up, and sophisticated missile technology. This agreement makes Saudid Arabia on upper hand (a heavy weight in the region's security archtitecture as already most of the gulf states, (except Qatar) were relaying on Riyadh) interm of regional and global influence. Hencefourth, this security pact would make other Gulf States depended on Riyadh military assistance. Moreover, it balances Isarel's hegemonic designs in terms of nuckles and advance military technology. It reduces growing Turkey's role in Gulf States through Riyadh's potentialities and puts Iran on the back foot from any misadventure. By enhancing its military capabilities through this partnership, Saudi Arabia will greatly contribute to regional stability. This opportunity creates a readiness for Saudid Arabia to defend its sovereignty and interests more openly. The defense pact will play its role as a deterrent factor by critically deject any kind of aggressive actions from other regional actors. Furthermore, the pact envisages that no single state could dominate the region through his startegic ambitions. This alignment with Pakistan not only ensures that Saudi Arabia would be more assertive and confident but also enables Riyadh to provide a strategic counterweight to the influence the behaviour of other powers in the region, particularly against the Isreal and Iran. In sum, the Saudi-Pakistan Defense Agreement strengthens Saudi Arabia's position in the region, reinforcing its security while promoting a stable regional order through a balanced distribution of power.

Impacts on South Asia

Benefits accrue to Islamabad as a result of SMDA. The positive outcomes for Pakistan are significant and multifaceted. Economically, the pact is likely to translate into deepened Saudi financial support, beyond the routine balance-of-payments bailouts Pakistan has periodically sought, toward more structural investment commitments, oil-on-deferred-payment arrangements, and potential Saudi stakes in Pakistani infrastructure and mining projects (the Reko Diq copper-gold project has already drawn Gulf interest). For an economy that has been in and out of IMF support for most of the last few years, this is highly significant.

Strategically, the deal improves Pakistan's reputation as a security exporter at a time when domestic unrest and economic hardship have dominated the country's image abroad. Pakistan gains a form of leverage that it has not previously had by formally establishing its role as a guarantor of Saudi security, including the implicit extension of its nuclear umbrella. This enables Pakistan to assert itself as indispensable to a powerful and wealthy Gulf monarchy, giving Islamabad diplomatic cover and goodwill that it can use in other forums (OIC positions, UN votes, FATF-related lobbying).

The contract has a clear subtext in relation to India. The fact that Pakistan's conventional and nuclear forces are now officially linked to the defence of a significant Gulf power may increase the stakes of any future India-Pakistan conflict because, in theory, an attack on Pakistan could implicate Saudi interests or encourage Saudi financial and diplomatic pressure on India to defuse the situation. Pakistan successfully reasserts itself into Gulf strategic calculations at a time when India had been gaining ground as the preferred South Asian partner for Gulf capitals on trade, labour migration, and energy. It also provides Islamabad with a counterweight to India's own growing ties with Gulf states (the UAE-India and Saudi-India relationships have grown significantly over the past ten years).

Although some may wonder if formalising nuclear commitments to a foreign power limits Pakistan's own strategic autonomy or draws it into Gulf conflicts (Yemen-style entanglements) that it would otherwise avoid, the agreement offers Pakistan's military establishment a narrative victory domestically by reiterating its institutional relevance and its claim to be the guarantor not only of Pakistan's own security but also of a wider Islamic world order.

When examined collectively, the SMDA ends the period in which Gulf order could only be perceived through an Arab-American prism, but it does not replace the US role in Gulf security. The response of Iran, India, and Washington will determine how long this realignment lasts, but the formal inclusion of a nuclear South Asian state in the Gulf defence architecture is a structural indicator of a shifting Gulf order.

Security Maximization for Pakistan

This agreement is considered among the few big success for Pakistan's foreign policy in the recent times. Currently Pakistan is facing multifaceted challenges both at home and abroad. Its economy is shattered, militancy and insurgencies on the rise, and terrorism is at the highest peak. However, the signature of this pact makes Pakistan both economically and strategically important again in the eyes of regional rivals. Dodiya (2025) terms this SMDA agreement as the most reliable shield against Indian military threats. Indian threats, both at the borders and on international forums, have been the most constant challenges that Islamabad is facing for the past many decades. Fasil (2025) terms this security agreement with Saudi Arabia significant on three fronts. Firstly, it interlinks Pakistan's defense policy with Saudi Arabia for life-long. Secondly, this pact brought the two countries in some more balanced relations. Thirdly, it provided Pakistan, a big sphere of influence in the Gulf region to re-set and enhance her lost influence against India. Furthermore, this agreement grows Pakistan's strategic reputation as a reliable and potent partner. In South Asia, both

Pakistan's rivals, India and Afghanistan are assessing this pact cautiously. Yadav (2025) says this agreement will make serious re-assessment of Indian Policy in Middle East. He says that even the perception of potential nuclear collaboration between Saudi-Pakistan, create sensitivities in the regional deterrence equations, compelling Israel, Iran, and India to reassess their security postures.

Pakistan can achieve maximum security benefits from this agreement. The defense pact with Saudi Arabia enhances Pakistan's geopolitical profile while providing security reassurance amid tensions with India. The economic gains and financial guarantees will make Pakistan's foreign policy more proactive in future against India. It will also produce an opportunity for Islamabad to experience the advance western military equipment available in Saudi Arabia (as no direct Western Military Technology available to Pakistan). These opportunities for Islamabad will also create feelings of worry in India and Western Powers who were reluctant to Pakistan's approaching their technology.

Managing the Security Dilemma

This agreement helps Pakistan to manage its security dilemmas against her rivals in South Asia and beyond. It boosts Pakistan's deterrence against India which is the arch rival since her its inception who continually exploiting Pakistan's interests. Through this deal Pakistan could opted a more aggressive stance and policy against India and Afghanistan in case of any critical threat. Islamabad is fighting at three fronts simultaneously in the contemporary time. According to many scholars of International Relations, and diplomats argues that Riyadh's support would counter the security challenges that Islamabad is confronting at home and abroad. Pakistan can cope with these challenges by opting rigorous diplomatic engagement with all regional partners as Islamabad has played a vital role in the *USA-IRAN Ceasefire* in April 2026. It can also pursue India and Afghanistan that the true nature of the pact is to bring stability and peace in the region not the warfare. Both on the diplomatic and strategic forum, Pakistan has the opportunity to mitigate her security threats and elevate her diplomatic status in the region. Since this pact states: that two countries are aligned militarily, which directly reduces any chances of external threats in near future for Pakistan

Balancing Power and Regional stability

This pact bolstered Pakistan's military and diplomatic capacities. The Saudi Arabia is the biggest arms recipient of U.S.A after Ukraine (2020-2024). It is among the few richest countries of the world with high global recognition and aligned interests with western powers. However the agreement between Pakistan and Saudi could provide the opportunities to balance the paradox power against India in terms of accessing U.S.A technology, getting additional resources, and receiving Saudi's aid on international forums like The Financial Action Task Force (FATF, GCC, IMF, etc). This has already made India worried of about her position as indicated by India's ministry of External Affairs, "We will study the implications of this development for our national security as well as for regional and global stability. The Government remains committed to protecting India's national interests and ensuring comprehensive national security in all domains. (18 Sep, 2025)". The Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan though bitter and hostile in recent times, but the pact is an opportunity that can convince both parties to sit on the table for dialogue soon after. On the diplomatic front, Riyadh hosted both countries for peace as Afghanistan's Taliban administration and Pakistan hold fresh peace talks in Saudi Arabia and agreed to maintain a ceasefire, the latest attempt to dial down tensions between the South Asian neighbors (Arab news, 2025). Overall, this agreement makes Pakistan in a great position to foster her power in maintaining balance of power against her powerful rival India and hostile neighbor Afghanistan. The presence of Saudi Arabia into South Asians security framework is a positive sign for Pakistan and the region in the long run.

Impacts on USA-China influence in Middle East

The most of the critics and security analysts argue that this mutual defense agreement is the witness of USA's decreasing role in the geopolitics of changing world. In terms of strategic cooperation and security guarantees, American influence is either declining due to the evolving multipolarity of the world order or Americans are giving up on guarding the other nations. In every case, this agreement shows how other growing global powers like China is making into the security realm of Middle East. Calabrese (2025), a senior fellow at the Middle East Institute, terms this agreement a puncture in Washington's long standing monopoly in the geostrategic and security architecture of Middle East. It is silent leverage and quiet gain for big emerging power like China. Dr. Kotokey (2025) says that this pact is the result of USA's growing laps in Middle Eastern Policy because of Israel's dominance. There is doubt on the credibility of American power to stop Israel from attacking even the closest allies of USA like Qatar. The security responses of Washington and her Western allies like France and UK which have permanent military bases in Qatar, were reluctant to do anything or defend during Israel's attack. This drags new powers naturally into the security game of volatile region.

The security agreement between Islamabad and Riyadh is a significant gain for Beijing in multiple ways and loss for Washington simultaneously. Firstly, most of the military equipment and military hardware like fighter jets, missile technology, and cyber operation tactics that Pakistan is using are the Chinese manufactured. About 80% of Pakistan's recent defense imports come from Chinese arms industries. This inclusion into Saudi Arabia's defense mechanism means more and more influence of China will flow there. Secondly, with Pakistan's inclusion into Saudi Arabia's security architecture, this is evident that all major regional and global powers like USA's security data and policy formation from Israel to all Gulf States, and from Turkey to Iran will be travelling back into Chinese security circles for future planning. Thirdly, this SMDA in many ways brings Riyadh economically as well into the orbit of Chinese influence. Saudi Arabia already has announced and endorsed Chinese led CPEC (China Pakistan economic corridor). By joining with Pakistan in a mutual defense pact, Saudi Arabia takes a step toward this system, formally linking itself with the China that is already considered as indispensable for its western frontier security strategy.

Through this pact, Beijing has positioned itself as a major player into the geopolitical and strategic domain of Middle East. The sole dominant role of USA have been put into the serious question. With Pakistan's position, Chinese military and civilian technology, maritime and space cooperation between Saudi Arabia and China is not far from being materialized. It has brought the rationality of emerging multipolarity in the Eurasia with new alliance. As Calabrese (2025) stated that Great powers do not necessarily announce their presence with loud declarations; sometimes they accrue influence through calibrated silence, quiet positioning, and structured ambiguity.

Conclusion

This Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement brings stability and instability equally around the Middle East and South Asian regions. Some scholars and security policy analyst argue that it is a gain for both countries as Pakistan needs a strong economic muscular ally who can bail and save her from complete bankruptcy and Saudi Arabia needs a tested military guarantor with both conventional and unconventional (nuclear) power like of Pakistan. For Saudi Arabia's Middle Eastern rivals like Iran-Israel-Yemen, this is strategic upheaval that demands a careful military and diplomatic manoeuvre in future dealings with the Riyadh. For Islamabad, certainly this agreement has uplifted her geostrategic importance and raised her status as a strong military power. Moreover, it has disturbed India's geopolitical calculations and interests in the Gulf and South Asia simultaneously.

Thus, the pact can significantly increase Chinese influence in the Middle East while declining the role of USA as a sole security guarantor in the region.

Recommendations

Saudi Arabia and Pakistan need to move toward institutionalising the SMDA with clear command, consultation and crisis-response mechanisms so that the agreement becomes a credible deterrent instead of a symbolic gesture open to different perspectives. Both sides would benefit from maintaining deliberate ambiguity on the more sensitive dimensions of the pact, especially any implied nuclear umbrella, while at the same period offering enough clarity to reassure regional partners and avoid destabilising miscalculation. Riyadh should present the deal as an addition, not a substitute, to its long-standing security relationship with Washington and as part of a broader hedging strategy rather than a wholesale pivot away from traditional partners. Other GCC states should take the SMDA as a cue to re-examine the adequacy of existing collective security frameworks, and may want to explore similar bilateral or minilateral arrangements that diversify their own security guarantees without disrupting the wider Gulf security order. Regional and extra-regional powers, including Iran and the United States, should be encouraged to pursue confidence-building measures and transparent diplomatic channels to ensure the agreement is not read as a provocation that accelerates regional arms competition or alliance divisiveness.

Directions for future research

The present study was constrained by the recency of the agreement and the limited body of scholarship surrounding it, and future research should return to this case as more primary material becomes publicly available. Future studies would benefit from elite interviews with Saudi, Pakistani and other regional officials to elicit strategic rationales not readily available through public records alone. An examination of the SMDA in juxtaposition with other recent Gulf bilateral security accords would help determine if this agreement constitutes an isolated bilateral development or is part of a broader regional trend of diversification in equities. As the agreement matures, scholars may also consider mixed-methods or quantitative approaches to monitor concrete indicators of implementation, such as joint military exercises, arms transfers, and defence-industrial cooperation, which could substantiate or qualify the qualitative findings presented here. Finally, longitudinal studies following the evolution of the agreement over the coming years will be needed to assess whether the SMDA represents a lasting structural shift in Gulf order, or a more transitory response to a particular moment of regional insecurity.

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