

Question

Critically analyze the global response to the Pakistan-Saudi Arabia defense pact. Discuss how it reshapes regional and international security dynamics.

Answer

Introduction:

The Pakistan-Saudi Arabia defense pact (2025) is a rare and significant development in the Islamic world, binding two strategic states under a mutual defense framework. Globally, this agreement has invited varied responses shaped by great power politics, energy security, and regional rivalries. While some see it as an opportunity for stability, others fear it could deepen fault lines in South Asia and the Middle East.

U.S. Response:

Positive Side:

- Washington may cautiously welcome Pakistan sharing Gulf security responsibilities, easing the U.S. burden.
- U.S. strategists have long encouraged Riyadh to diversify its defense partnership.

Negative Side:

- Concerns persist that Saudi Arabia is drifting away from Washington's security umbrella.
- Analysts at the CSIS (2025) warn the pact, combined with Pakistan's ties with China, may complicate U.S. interests if Gwadar becomes linked with Gulf energy flows.

China's Response:

Positive Side:

- Beijing benefits as the pact secures energy supplies; Saudi Arabia shipped 1.65 million barrels per day to China in July 2025, the highest since 2023 (Reuters, 11 July 2025).
- Pakistan-Saudi coordination complements China's CPEC and Belt and Road Initiative.

Negative Side:

- Closer alignment may provoke U.S. counter-moves, forcing Beijing to carefully balance between Riyadh and Tehran.

European Union's Response:

Positive Side:

- EU, a key importer of Gulf oil, appreciates stability in Saudi Arabia. EU diplomats stressed that "any mechanism reducing Gulf instability is

welcome" (EU Observer, 2025).

Negative Side:

- Skepticism remains about militarisation of Gulf politics and Pakistan's potential entanglement, recalling Yemen (2015) when Pakistan faced domestic backlash for aligning too closely with Riyadh.

Gulf States' Response:

- UAE and Qatar adopt cautious neutrality, acknowledging Pakistan's military expertise but wary of Saudi Arabia centralising Gulf defense.
- Smaller Gulf monarchies fear their strategic autonomy may shrink under Riyadh's dominance.

India's Response:

Positive Side:

- India values Gulf stability, where over 2 million Indian workers live, and Saudi Arabia remains a top oil supplier.

Negative Side:

- New Delhi officially urged Riyadh to "mind sensitivities" after the pact (Reuters, 19 Sept 2025).

The alignment reduces India's diplomatic leverage in Riyadh despite its strategic partnership in energy and investment.

Iran's Response:

Positive Side:

- Tehran may see Saudi reliance on non-U.S. partners as reducing American dominance, which could open future dialogue.

Negative Side:

- Iran views the pact as reinforcing Saudi hegemony in the Gulf. Al Jazeera (2025) reported Tehran's concern that a Saudi-Pakistan axis could embolden Saudi policy against Iranian interests.
- The Balochistan border remains a sensitive point; unrest in Iranian Sistan-Balochistan is often linked with cross-border instability.

World Energy Markets' Response:

- For oil-importing economies like China, EU, India, and Japan, the pact promises stability in Saudi oil flows through Hormuz.
- However, analysts warn that militarisation raises risks of confrontation, which historically causes price spikes. The Belfer Center (2025) argued that the pact's

political signalling could be more destabilising than its military content.

Conclusion:

The Pakistan-Saudi defense pact has elicited a mixed but globally significant response:

- China views it as strengthening energy security and CPEC.
- U.S. and India see strategic challenges in shifting alliances.
- Iran and smaller Gulf states fear Saudi dominance.
- EU and global markets cautiously welcome stability but fear escalation.

In essence, the pact is not merely bilateral - it reshapes the architecture of Gulf security and thrusts Pakistan into the heart of Middle Eastern geopolitics. Its success will depend on Islamabad's ability to balance Riyadh's expectations while managing ties with Tehran, New Delhi, and Washington.