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Pakistan - Saudi Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement.

Introduction

On 17th September 2026, Saudi and Pakistan finalized their mutual defence agreement. The pact resembles Article 5 of the NATO charter which states that an attack against one will be considered an attack against all. While the pact has mutual benefits for both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, it also poses potential risks.

Background and context:

Defence ties between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan are not new. Defence agreements—such as the 1982 Protocol Agreement—have taken place before. Even before the current defence agreement, over 10,000 Pakistani soldiers were stationed in

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Saudi Arabia for mutual training and defense purposes. Pakistan also provided military assistance to the Kingdom during the Gulf war in the early 1990s.

Reason KSA Finalized the Deal Now:

KSA relies heavily on the U.S. for defense. However, on 9th September 2025, Hamas leaders were targeted by Israel inside Qatar. The subsequent reluctance of the U.S. to restrain Israel alarmed KSA and compelled it to seek defense ties with other nations. The incident demonstrated to the Kingdom that just as Qatar was not protected against Israel, so will not be Saudi.

Reason Pakistan Finalized the Deal:

Pakistan wanted to reduce

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its heavy reliance on China. Moreover, it also increased its influence in the Middle East. Religious Sentiments are also a factor.

The Nuclear Question:

There are discussions whether the defense pact also includes nuclear deterrence. However, both Pakistani and Saudi officials have given mixed signals about the question and the agreement also does not have an explicit clause on the nuclear deterrence. Nevertheless, this ambiguity itself creates deterrence.

Benefits of the Pact for Pakistan:

The mutual defense agreement has numerous potential benefits for Pakistan:

Potential
Benefits
of the Pact
for Pakistan

- Improved Global Standing
- Better Economic Cooperation
- Potential Joint Ventures
- Better Position Against India
- Labor Export

1- Improved Global Standing:

The reliance of an important country, such as Saudi Arabia, on Pakistan for defense improved the country's standing on the international stage. Pakistan is now viewed as a capable country and reliable defense partner.

2- Better Position Against India:

The agreement enhances Pakistan's position against India. Unlike the past, India will now be more cautious before

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Marketing Pakistan.

3-Potential Access to U.S Technology:

Saudi Arabia has advanced aircrafts and other defense technology imported from the U.S. The pact can possibly allow Pakistan to have direct access to the U.S technology, which will enhance the country's military capability.

4-Joint ventures:

Under Muhammad bin Salman vision 2030, it is highly likely that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan will work to establish joint ventures for defense purposes. This will create jobs and will lead to economic growth in Pakistan.

5-Labor Export:

After improved relations,

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Pakistani laborers will be more welcomed to work in KSA, leading to increased remittances.

Impact on India-Saudi Relations:

India is Saudi's 2nd biggest trade partner, and Saudi is India's 4th biggest trade partner. After the mutual defense pact, India worries that its economic relations with Saudi might suffer. Moreover, it has apprehensions that the pact might hinder its India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) project.

Potential Risks of the Pact:

1. Burden on Pakistani Military Resources:

Pakistan might get dragged into regional conflicts, such as the conflicts with Yemen.

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This can strain the country's military resources.

2-Delayed Internal Reforms:

Historically, Pakistan has relied on external aid and assistance. After decades, Pakistan has finally begun restructuring its economic system. Scholars have apprehensions that economic assistance from Saudi under the agreement might reverse this progress and make the economy reliant on external assistance again.

Conclusion:

In essence, the Mutual Defense Agreement has numerous advantages for both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. However, it is also riddled with potential risks for Pakistan.