

"Current Affairs"

Q:1 Pakistan - Saudi Arabia have signed a historic defense pact. Critically evaluate the causes and implications of the deal.

Ans:

Introduction:

On September, 2025, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed a Mutual Defense Agreement (SMDA) proving to be a big milestone in the history of both the countries. This strategic defense pact will not only strengthen both the countries but also bring the regions together. specially in the era of high geo-political tensions escalated after attack on Qatar.

This pact would result in long-term close military cooperation between Islamabad and Riyadh. This agreement is widely viewed as a milestone which has the potential to change power dynamics in the region and redefines the relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Historical ties between Pakistan and KSA:

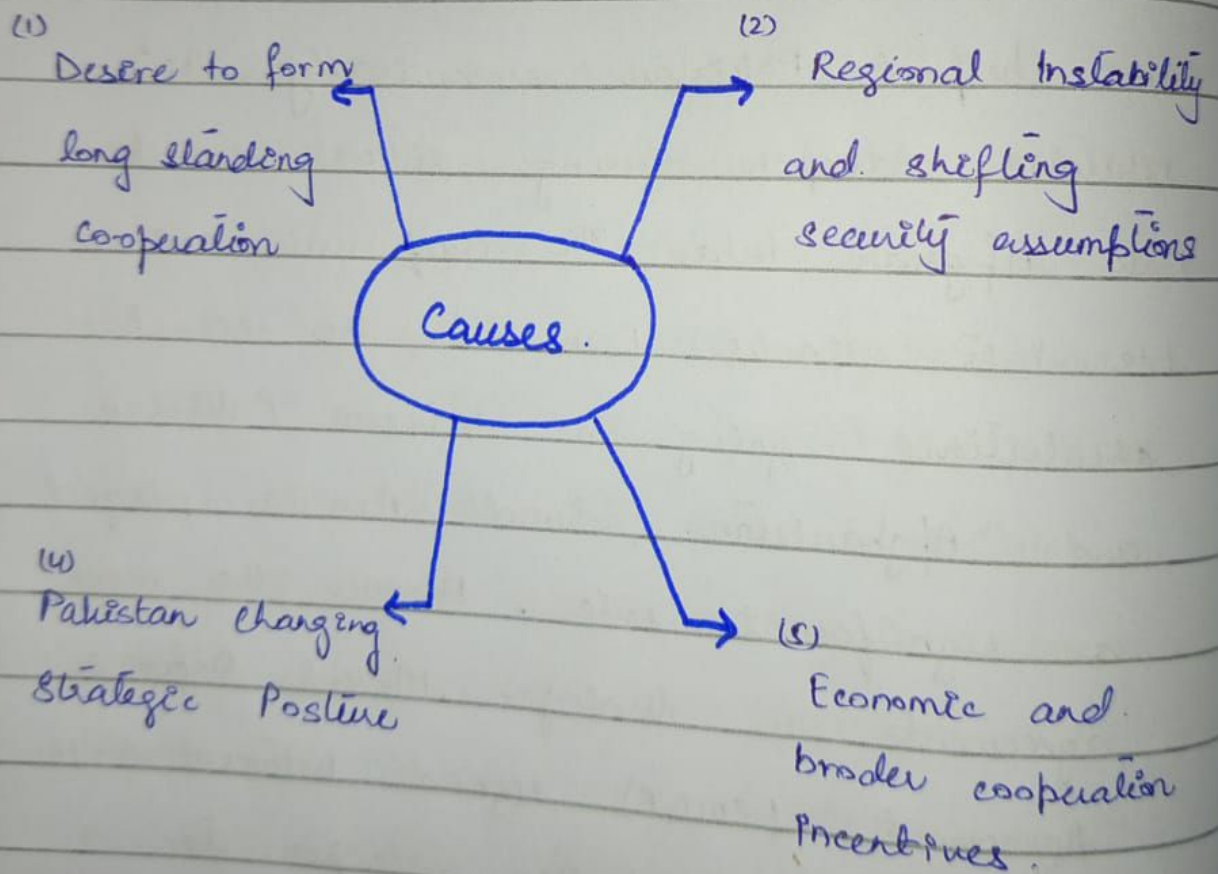
The ties between Pakistan and KSA have deep rooted in the past. Since Pakistan came into being, KSA was among the closest allies. Pakistan and KSA enjoys bi-lateral relationship in a way that Pakistan has provided military training, pilots and advisory missions to KSA and KSA in return has helped Pakistan economically. Their relations deepen during situations like Pak - Afghan war, The Gulf war and terrorist attacks. Even in the recent escalations going on between Pakistan and Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia played a significant role. However, the recent agreement is Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement (SMDA) signed between both the countries further deepen the relationship. Such type of agreement was once signed back in 1967 in which Pakistan being the defender of Haamir Sharceefain but that pact was not written. Whereas, SMDA is a legal

written agreement whose agenda resembles
the Art. 5 of the NATO forces agreement.
i.e.

"An attack against one,
is an attack against other".

Key Causes Behind the Pact:

Some of the major causes behind the
Pact are:



1) Desire to form long-standing cooperation:
Bi-lateral relations between both the countries have a long history but most of the agreement were informal and verbal. By signing this pact, legal and formal acceptance could be possible and both will tie into long-standing cooperation.

2) Regional Instability and Shifting Security Assumptions.

Due to the recent regional instability in the Middle East and shifting security assumptions, this pact would give KSA a nuclear shield as Pakistan is the only Muslim Nuclear State in the world. The desire got intensified when Israeli strikes hit most of the Middle Eastern countries and the USA ^{further} tilt towards Israel giving it a back support. The attack on Qatar added fuel to the tension of Middle East. By signing this agreement, specially by Gulf countries leader, KSA, would result in other countries addition.

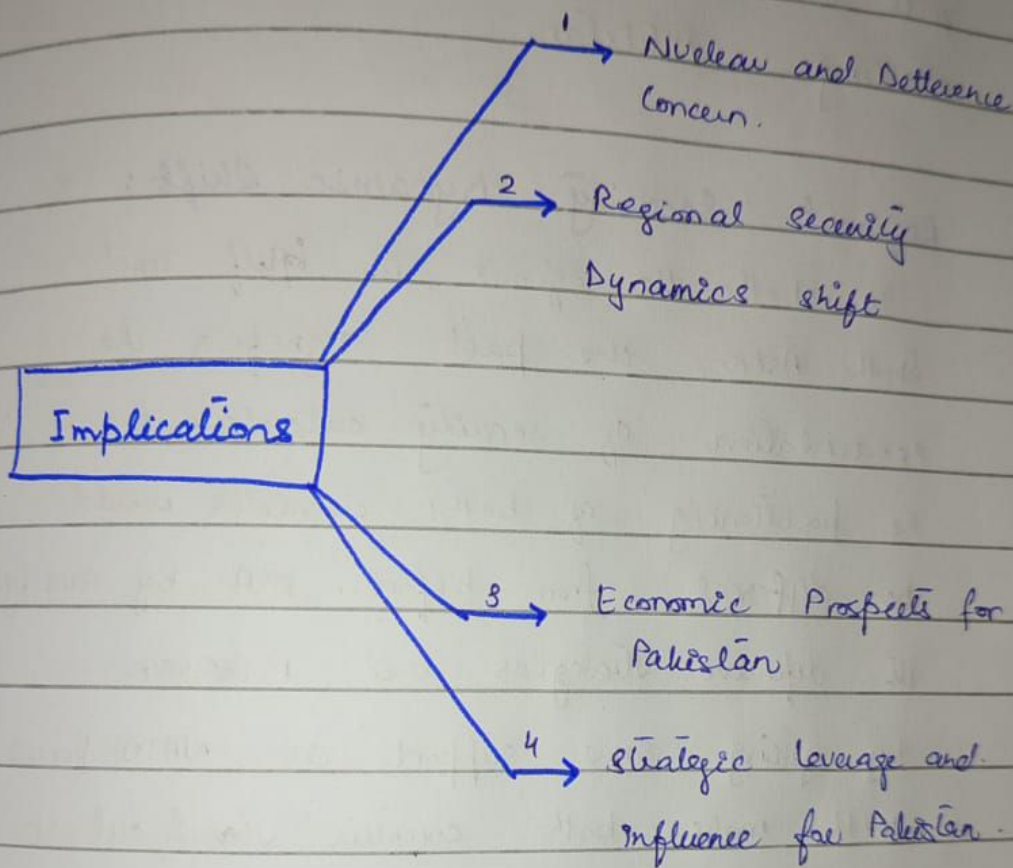
3) Pakistan's changing strategic Posture:
In 7 May, 2025, India struck a war against Pakistan, creating tensions for Pakistani defense credentials. Although Pakistan won the war but still, this could be taken as a sign of alert and more preparedness of Pakistani forces. Signing this pact with the notion of attack on one would be an attack on both countries, will give Pakistan also a defensive shield and a new position in the region.

4) Economic and Broader Cooperation Incentives.

This pact would give both the countries chance of beyond border trade agreement not just the defense support. A high-level committee has already been formed with a motive to increase trade, energy, investment and extending economic cooperation. Since both the countries desires this.

Key Implications of the Agreement:

Possible Implications for both Islamabad and Riyadh are:



1) Nuclear and Deterrence Concern:

This SDMA proved to be a new-security architecture specially during the time of increasing tension in Middle East, Israeli attacks, and the shifting of allies. However, this could raise the concern for other countries in both the regions. In Middle East, other countries are still at the mercy of US defense and armaments that also wanted

to have ^{Nuclear} security ~~allies~~. Whereas in South Asia, the concerns for the neighbouring states would rise especially India will think rationally multiple times before attacking Pakistan.

2) Regional Security Dynamic Shift:

In both the regions, in Gulf and South Asia, the pact signifies the reorientation of security calculations.

The positioning of both countries would be different from before. KSA, by diversifying its defensive strategies and Pakistan

by getting same support as NATO forces, will make both countries stand out in the region.

3) Economic Prospects for Pakistan:

The pact may unlock many economic benefits for both the countries. Pakistan can fend and extend its exports (textile, agriculture, IT, leather goods, etc) to Saudi Market and KSA can increase its investment diversification strategies in Pakistani energy, infrastructure market.

Moreover, it may be possible for Pakistan to acquire visa easily and on less cost than before.

4) Strategic leverage and Influence for Pakistan
This pact gives Pakistan a strategic leverage not just in South Asian region but also in the Middle East. Pakistan got a chance to extend its economic activities on easy grounds based on the factor of strategic leverage.

Conclusion

The defense agreement sign between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, is considered to be a milestone in the bilateral relations turning old informal and verbal ties into legal and formal pact. Also this will give Pakistan economic and strategic leverage and KSA a defensive Nuclear shield. However, this may raise concerns for other countries in terms of nuclear deterrence and security measures.

Q:2 The formation of new provinces is a recurring discourse in Pakistan. Critically evaluate the hurdles and give recommendations:

Ans:

Introduction:

"Nigeria has divided its states from 4 to 36 independent state. Due to which resources have been allocated properly."

said one of the proponent of new provinces in national assembly.

The formation of new provinces in Pakistan is a very hot and recurring topic in recent years. Different groups and parties are in favour of this notion. They are demanding for the reorganisation of federal structure, dividing Punjab in two parts - North and south (the Sirahi belt). On media, many voices have been raised for the creation of 12 provinces from 4. The reason behind this division is the inappropriate allocation of resources. Most of the funds given to

capitals of the provinces. mostly on capital own are utilised. the rest can be attributed to reformation and while no funds left for the side areas. particularly rural areas. Increasing the grievances and tensions of the vulnerable people.

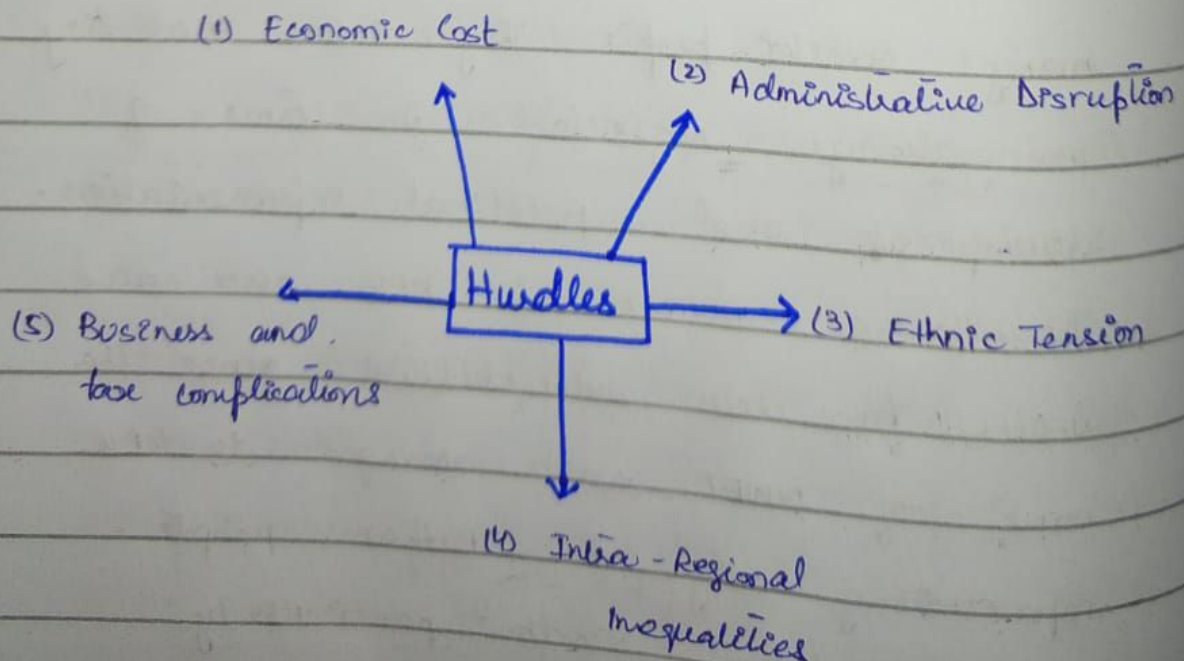
Sudden Re-emergence of Debate:

In the recent years, this debate has gained speed in Pakistan. Many protests were carried out throughout the country and social media was used for mass communication. This debate has some grass-root level issues. The Siraiki belt in South-Punjab is a livelihood of many Siraiki people. They claim that they are always neglected in terms of development and political representation. The Hazara Division in KPK also raise voices for their vulnerabilities since the name of NWFP was changed to KPK representing only the Pathan people. Moreover, Urban Sindh particularly Karachi, enjoys the administrative

autonomy leaving behind the sparse areas unattended. The rural area natives demand for separating rural from urban areas so that they may get equal resources and representation.

Hurdles in the way of creating New Provinces.

Looking at the case studies of India, Nigeria and UK, one can say that the creation of Provinces is ^{one of} the good governance strategy. However in the context of Pakistan, this may face certain barriers. Some of them are below.



1) Economic Costs:

Creating new provinces would cost billions of dollars to Pakistan. The country which is already under financial deficit, of almost 7 trillion, according to Economic Survey of Pakistan, 2023-24, much higher than before. And creating new provinces would definitely require establishment of new courts, secretariats, assemblies and ministries. This action will cause nothing but high financial instability.

2) Administrative Disruption:

Pakistan is already dealing with administrative and poor governance policies. Creating new provinces would demand division of assets and resources, civil servant allocation and to name a few. This will further bring political and administrative disruption in the country.

3) Ethnic Tension:

Creation of new provinces would further the tensions and conflicts in the country. Already the country is facing the terrorism attacks, according to Global Terrorism Index, 2025, Pakistan is at 2nd number. And if creation of provinces was made, this could provoke high ethnic tensions leading towards state of anomie and civil war.

4) Intra-regional inequalities:

The intra-regional inequalities will be increased by creating new provinces in a way that the elite and dominant ethnic groups will rule the province according to their own will. and the minorities living in those areas would be exploited. Their rights would be at stake, they may face bullying, harassment, nepotism and much more.

5) Business and Tax Complications :

With the creation of new provinces, the decentralisation of powers will also take place. Each province would be autonomous in making and governing this province on arbitrary grounds.

And in the matter of trade, the other province have to follow the other province rules, thus making business difficult in one's own country.

Also this would raise the tax complications in the country.

Recommendations :

The opponents of this demand re "creation of new provinces" are against it as it will further sour the tensions in the country and would distract the government from other important matters like terrorism, economy and security. Where as, on the other hand, the proponents of this demand are highly in favour of it as according to them, this will foster good governance and rural representation.

Both the sides of picture are true and rational at their side. However, some recommendations could be suggested in this regard.

Recommendations:

- 1 → Strengthen local government
- 2 → Fiscal Decentralisation
- 3 → Phased Approach.
- 4 → Stake holders Dialogue
- 5 → Avoid Hasty Reforms.

1) Strengthen Local Government:

Instead of creating new provinces, it would be rational to make the local governments and give them the authority to manage the affairs of their areas. This would require an amendment of Art. 140(A) of the constitution. This will not only save financial resources of the country but also could address the grievances of the vulnerable people.

2) Fiscal Decentralisation:

Fiscal decentralisation should be done from the provinces to the local governments. At least 30-40%, which would help them to bring reforms.

3) Phased Approach.

The government should evaluate the alternatives also before creating the new provinces. This could open new doors of solutions to this problem.

4) Stakeholder Dialogue:

The government should establish dialogue with local government, councils, academia, parliament and civil society to address their issues and design a way forward.

5) Avoid Hasty Reforms:

The government should give priority to pinching issues, keeping in first the country interest and should take measures that enhances solidarity in the country instead of division.

Conclusion :

New Provinces is a genuine concern. To address the grievances, government should make rational decision instead of making hastily decision. By looking at the hurdles one could say that the creation of provinces could only bring political instability and financial tension than the local representation. Since the challenges out weighs the benefits, government should prioritise the country interest first and act accordingly.