

Q No 1

Critically review Strategic mutual defense Agreement (SMDA) with Saudi Arabia and evolving Pakistan-Iran alliance. Analyze the potential impacts of these development on balancing Pakistan's relations with the both Middle-Eastern powers.

Introduction Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are Islamic brother states with historically strong mutual relations. On the other hand, Pakistan is having a good relationship with Iran, who is its direct neighbour, as well. On 17 September 2025, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed historical Strategic Mutual defense pact due to Compounding Saudi Arabian Skepticism towards the security guarantees of The United States and fragile regional security of Middle East. It is debated that Pakistan is at the crossroads of difficult condition of balancing act between Saudi-Arabia and Iran. Pakistan has to adopt multi-vector foreign policy to smartly balance both brother Islamic states. Pakistan is relevant strategically for both in evolving world order and strengthened diplomatic and defense clout of Pakistan.

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Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement (SMDA) with Saudi Arabia and evolving Pakistan-Iran alliance.

Strategic mutual defense agreement between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia is having impacts on regional security apparatus and also mutual bi-lateral agreement relations of Saudi Arab and Iran.

Rationale behind the defense agreement.

Israeli attack on Qatar at the end of Iran-Israel war 2025.

Pakistan's strength-ened diplomatic clout after operation Buryan-ul-Marsboos.

Saudi Arabia and Iran ~~rep~~ rapprochement and resumption of the diplomatic relations

In March 2023, China mediated between Saudi Arabia and Iran and both countries established diplomatic relations again after seven years of regional tensions and rivalry particularly on the issue of Yemen.

This resumption of diplomatic missions and confidence building measure can enable Pakistan to play role in strengthening of their relations and easy hedging policy between both.

Evolving Pakistan-Iran relations in 2025

During the imposed war on Iran by Israel and the US, Pakistan played a bold and active role. Pakistanian condemned Israeli and later US attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities. Iran was having a strong relationship with India but Indian neutrality in 2025 towards Iranian strike, the Indo-Iranian relations wobbled. Pakistan has strengthened its relations which were acknowledged at the Iranian parliament. Pakistan has yet played smartly and balanced both Iran and Saudi-Arabia.

Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement and Iranian reaction

Iranian president Masoud Pajeshkian welcomed the Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement and desired to be added in it as third country. He remarked towards the SDMA as the need of the hour.

This shows that, Pakistan would not face any serious balancing issues. Pakistan can play the role of bridge between both states in remaining issues of issues. The nature of SDIDA is not direct confrontation with adversaries of both. It is more than a war guarantee and is primarily sign of strategic cooperation and political solidarity.

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Belfer Center of Science and International Affairs analysed it as:

- i) More than a unconditional security guarantee agreement
- ii) As a political solidarity and strategic cooperation by keeping in view the historical, political, economic and diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Key Features of the Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement.

Article 5 of NATO
Style clause

Defense industrial
cooperation

Extended Ambiguous
deterrence

Joint military
exercises

Intelligence Sharing
Framework

Security economic
linkage.

Risks associated with SDMA for Pakistan towards Iran and Saudi-Arabia.

While the SDMA offers potential financial benefits to Pakistan and military capabilities, it can tacitly draw Pakistan into regional struggles with catastrophic consequences both at external and internal level. Saudi-Arabia and Iran have normalized relations but this normalization is not institutionalized yet. It has the potential to be ignited. SDMA offers more risk to Pakistan at that condition which include:

1) Forced commitment in Conflicts

2) Iranian retaliation and internal Sectarianism

3) Economic Vulnerability for Pakistan

4) Strain on diplomatic relations

5) Over-extension of geo-strategy

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1) Foxed commitment to conflicts

As discussed above, Iran-Saudi Arabia still have a potential of ignition. That scenario will unintentionally drag Pakistan into the regional rivalry and taking side. Pak-Iran relations would be at stake due to this

2) Iranian relation and sectarian challenge inside Pakistan.

Potential Iranian relation would compel Pakistan to condemn it and it will ignite the sectarian tensions inside Pakistan. As we know, the Shia community is more political integrated. This will create chaos in the internal security of Pakistan

3) Economic vulnerability for Pakistan

Along with diplomatic and economic defense related vulnerabilities, the economy of Pakistan will also suffer due to being import-oriented. Energy supplies of Pakistan ^{are} heavily dependent on Saudi Arabia

4) Strain on diplomatic relations

Agreement clearly describes the tilt of Pakistan towards Saudi Arabia. India has already good bi-lateral relations with Iran and Saudi Arabia including mutual investments. India would regain the space of Pakistan as it considered Pakistan's relations as zero-sum game.

Over-extension of geo-strategy

The disturbed balancing act, if disturbs, Pakistan's focus would be again on geopolitics and geo-strategy. Geo-economics (policy) will be suffering during that and debt dependency will prevail. Geo-strategy will be extended due to this.

Conclusion

Pakistan and Saudi-Arab's Strategic Mutual defense agreement is very significant for both. It can test Pakistan's hedging policy towards the middle Eastern powers: Iran and Saudi-Arabia. It can deter India and Israel to attack Pakistan and Saudi-Arabia respectively. In near future, Saudi Arabia and Iran will not have a face off and the hedging policy of Pakistan can be replaced with bridging policy. Iran axis of resistance is serious weekend that can automatically secure Saudi-Arabia. So, Pakistan's defense agreement will strengthen its ties with Saudi-Arabia because it is welcomed by Iran.

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Q NO 2

Critically review the changing contours of the Indo-US Strategic partnership following the Indo-Pak escalation of May 2025. Evaluate the future impacts of this shift considering Trump's tariff policies and Modi's refusal to accept Trump's mediation role. Based on these developments outline a comprehensive policy framework for Pakistan.

Introduction Indo-US Strategic partnership is based on strong mutual trust with decades long mutual strategic connections. QUAD is the cornerstone of Indo-US strategic partnership in the containment of Chinese influence particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. Indian miscalculation in attacking Pakistan on 7 May 2025 after a false flag operation in Indian held Kashmir on 22 April 2025. This miscalculation of India not only made her unenviable towards Pakistan and China but also make irritants in the strategic partnership with the US. India did not acknowledge the Trump's role in ceasefire and also choose a diplomatic stand off on the issue of tariff floated by the US administration. 1 June 2025, US imposed 25%

tariffs on US imports due to fragile trade imbalance in the favor of India

Changing contours of the Indo-US Strategic Partnership in the wake of Indo-Pakistan escalation of May 2025.

India became vulnerable and the contours of the US-India strategic partnership after the May 2025 4 day war because, Pakistan became relevant in Washington and overall world due to its diplomatic and defense capabilities. The changing contours of the India-US strategic partnership include.

Pakistan integration into Favorite state's status in US

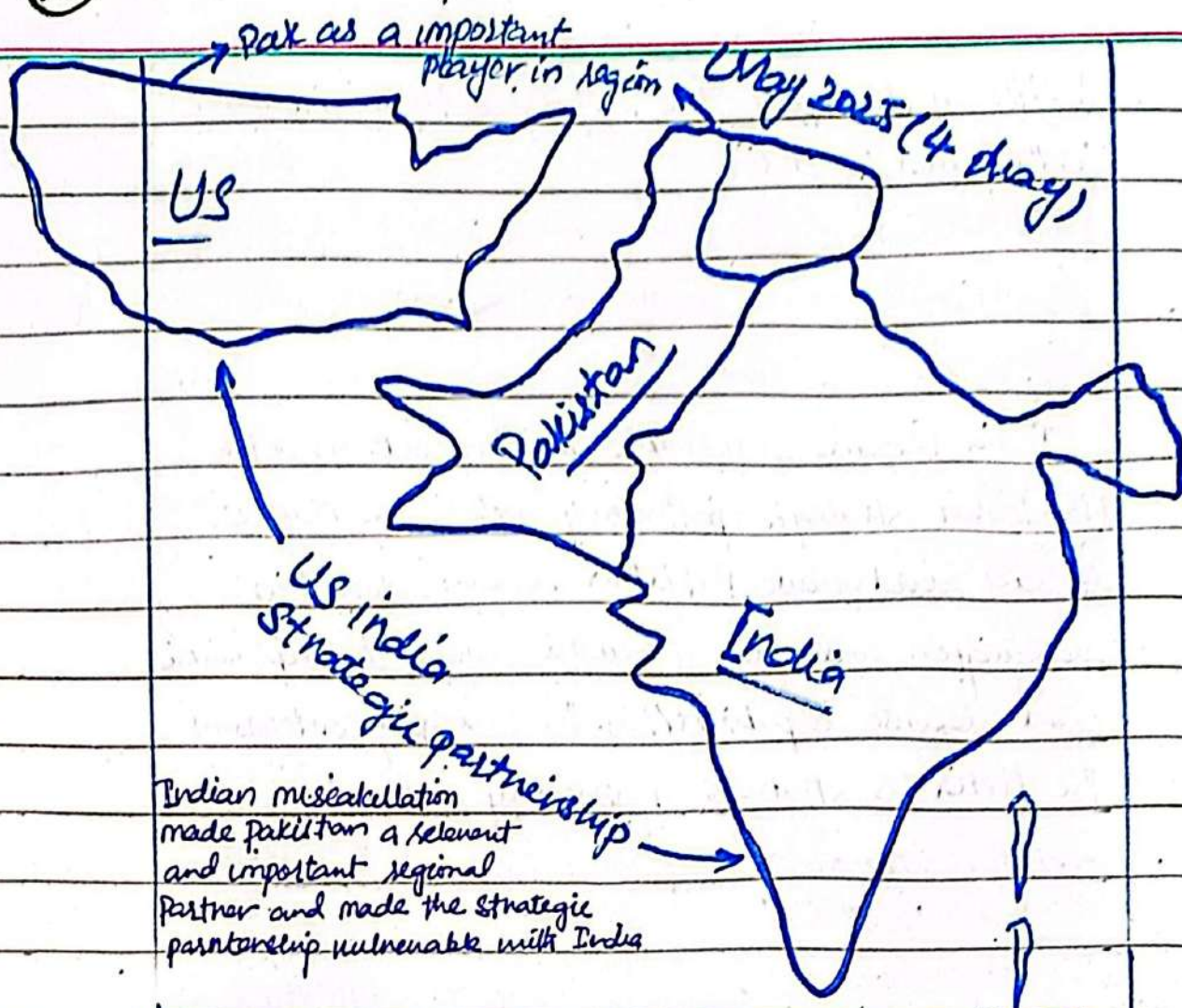
Tacit India-Pakistan rehyphenation

Transactionalism towards India by The US

Trump's economic pressure and diplomatic strains

Indo-US Strategic partnership has become vulnerable and Pakistan became a relevant and important partner in South Asia for the US. US also engaged with the ~~US India~~ ^{Pakistan} due to gain a strategic pressure on India.

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Future impacts of this shift on India and Pakistan.

Impacts on India.

1) Diplomatic Strain towards US

Due to unacknowledged role of President Trump and trade negotiation failure will make relations strained.

2) US-China engagement will make strategic partnership more vulnerable

President Trump see China as competitor not an adversary of US. So in 2029, Indian strategic partner status will remain deferred and Indian miscalculation towards Pakistan in May 2025 has strengthened it.

3) Indian policy of isolating Pakistan will fail and India would rehyphenate with Pakistan.

Indian long lasting policy of isolating Pakistan in international arena and in US has failed due to failed attempt of attacking Pakistan. India has rehyphenated it with Pakistan though countries have not declared it but a tacit rehyphenation is there.

Impacts on Pakistan

1) Emerged as regional stabilizer

Pakistan became a regional stabilizer by reestablishing nuclear deterrence towards India.

2) Trump's alignment towards Pakistan

Trump aligned Pakistan due to a mean of pressure towards India. Pakistan became a relevant player for the US. PM and field marshal's meeting are evidence of this.

3) Military and diplomatic clout of Pakistan strengthened

Indian miscalculation elevated Pakistan's military and diplomatic clout. Trump's inclusion of Pakistan in Gaza peace plan and Saudi-Pakistan Strategic mutual defense deal is the concrete evidence of this.

Comprehensive policy framework for Pakistan in the context of India-Pakistan relations post 2025.

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1) Pakistan has to use the thaw with US in economic opportunity

2) Strategic partnership with China would not be at stake

3) Institutionalizing Bi-lateral relations with US

4) Pakistan should attract US investments in Pakistan

5) Counter terrorism cooperation with US

6) Smart multi-vector and hedging foreign policy

7) Bridging between US and China to avoid the test of balancing act

Conclusion. May 2025, 4 day war made Pakistan a reliable partner for Pakistan and Indian miscalculations in May 2025 war and Indian-US tariff issues, its Strategic partnership vulnerable with the US. Pakistan become relevant player and the US-Pak diplomatic relations become strengthened. Till 2029, Indian character of strategic partner for US will remain defuse and give opportunities to Pakistan.