

Paper : Current Affairs
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Q5) Pak-KSA Defense Pact

A. INTRODUCTION:

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are historically connected in the bond of Muslim solidarity, brotherhood, and strong bilateral diplomatic relations. The bond has been fortified further as both countries decided to formalize the ~~ear~~ existing informal defense cooperation and signed Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement (SMDA) on September 17, 2025.

The defense pact marks a milestone in the bilateral relations between the two countries with far reaching geopolitical achievements for the both and economic opportunities for Pakistan as it makes the security of both countries a mutual concern.

B. Significance of SMDA:

SMDA has become a emerged as a defining development between the Pakistan and Saudi Arabia relations by declaring their

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defense and security a mutual concern. The SD-SMDA is being interpreted as a **NATO-style security arrangement** as it explicitly notes that 'attack on one country shall be an attack on both.' This security arrangement is first of its kind for Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, which are although separated by geo geography but connected through Islamic sentiments.

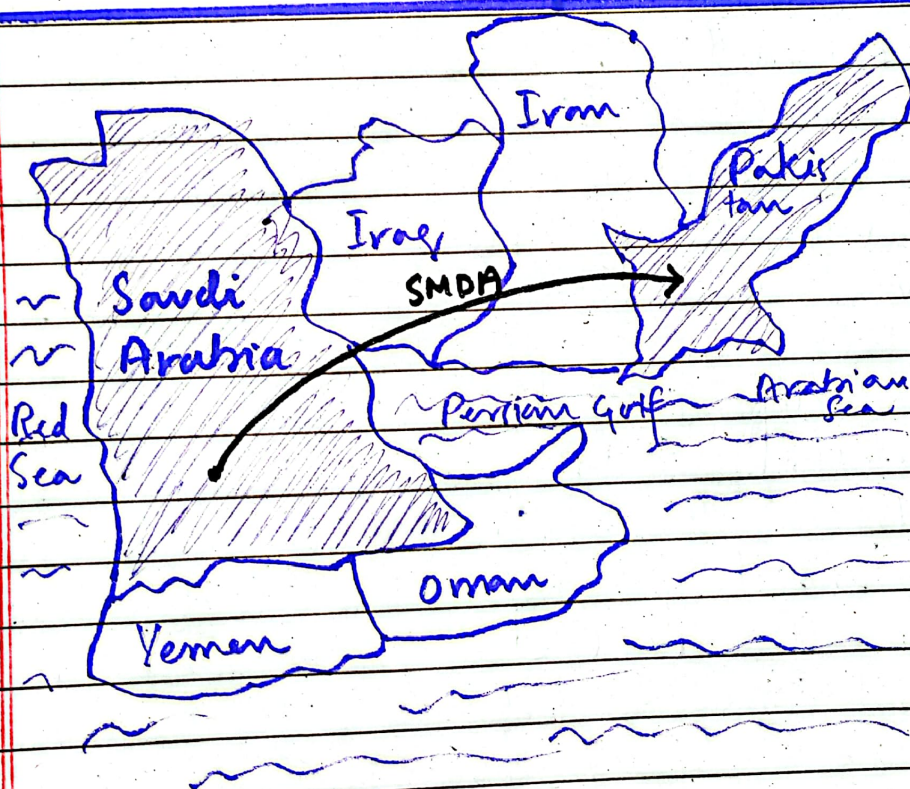


Fig: Map Representation of Pak-KSA

The fact that Pakistan is the only Muslim state having nuclear capabilities makes the defense part more consequential and would

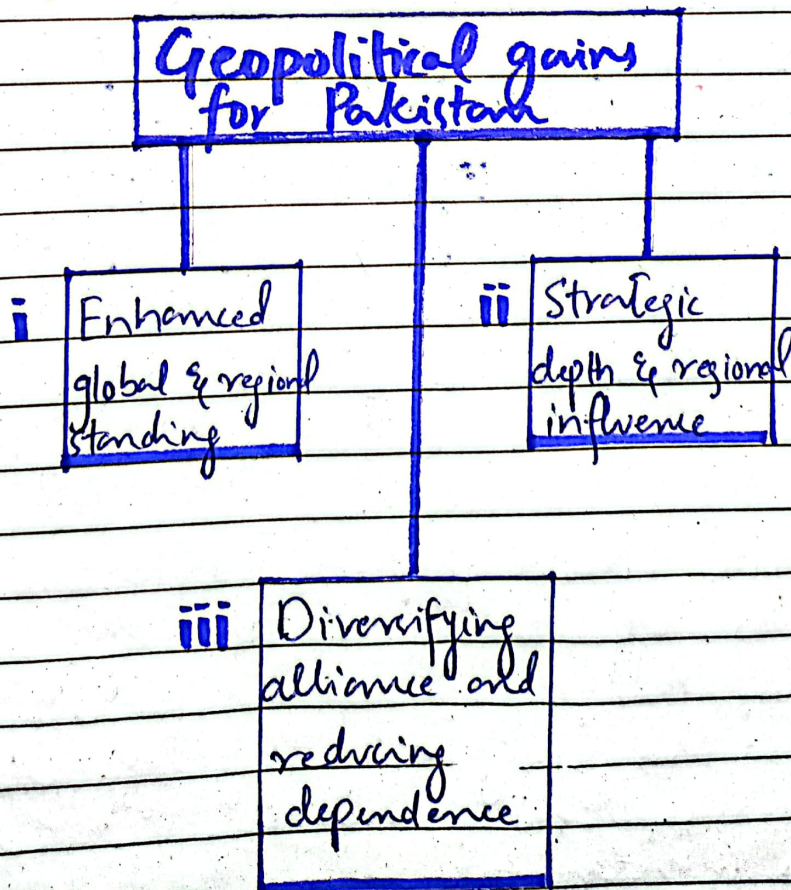
indeed have far reaching geopolitical impact on for both countries.

C. GSMDA and Geopolitical Ripples:

The surprise announcement of a the landmark mutual defense agreement sent a strong message regionally and internationally regarding the nature of Pak-Saudi ties and the changing geopolitical situation in the Middle East and South Asian regions.

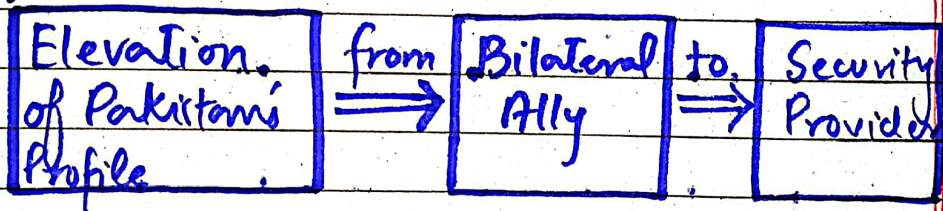
Joint deterrence against aggression:

I. Geopolitical Achievements for Pakistan:



i) Enhanced regional and global standing

The SMDA provides Pakistan with a long-term opportunity to elevate its status as a key player, not only in South Asia, but also in Middle East and beyond. The signing of the pact with Saudi Arabia restores and regional further strengthens trust in Pakistan as a reliable partner, not only diplomatically, but in the critical domain of defense also. It underlines that Pakistan's defense capabilities are not only sufficient for itself but can also provide strong backing to regional friendly states in the times of crisis.



ii) Strategic depth and regional influence:

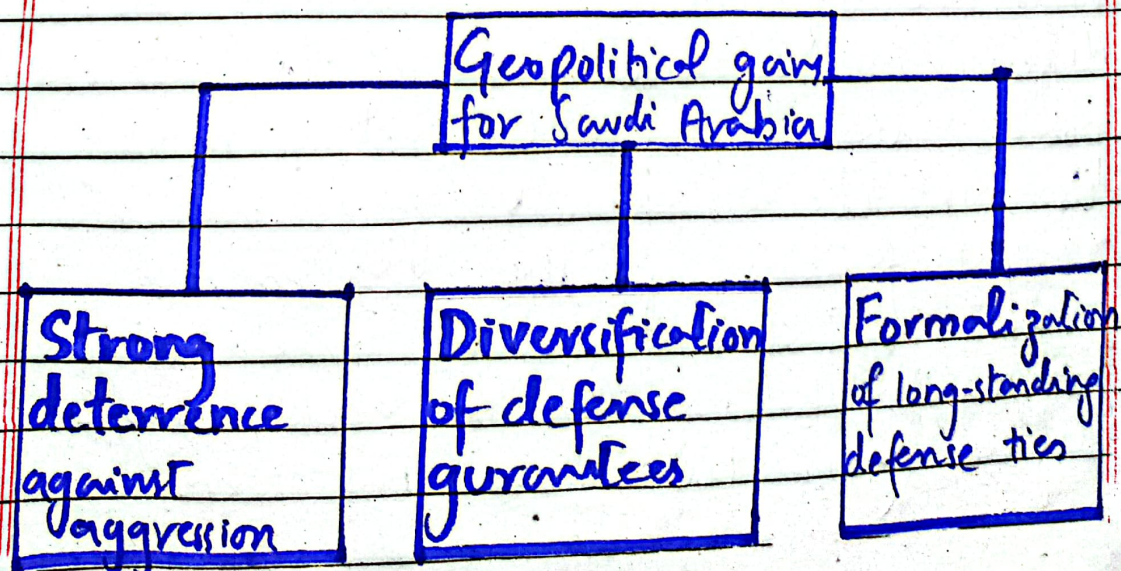
The SMDA provides Pakistan with an opportunity to formally get foothold in Gulf security, beyond South Asia, giving it a strategic depth in Middle East geopolitics. It also enables Pakistan to balance between

regional powers. The pact provides Pakistan leverage in + multilateral Muslim-majority grouping like OIC to exercise more influence as a stakeholder in regional security.

iii) Diversifying alliance and reducing dependence

The SMDA provides Pakistan with a strong opportunity to diversify its alliances in the Middle East and beyond reducing its dependence on traditional partners for defense collaboration. With Saudi Arabia, an oil rich nation, Pakistan can leverage the pact to enhance partnership in defense production in order to further modernize the technologies for mutual defense goals.

II. Geopolitical achievements for Saudi Arabia:



i) Strong deterrence against aggression:

SDMA provides Saudi Arabia with the backing of a reliable defense partner at all times during the times of external aggression against its sovereignty. Although the Pact was being deliberated by both sides for many years, it signed after within a week after **Israel's attack on Doha** reveals that Saudi Arabia also felt threatened from Israeli hegemonistic ambitions. Moreover, KSA faces threats from regional rivals and nonstate actors, including **Houthis in Yemen**. Pact with Pakistan, a nuclear armed state, allows Saudi Arabia to maintain strong deterrent posture.

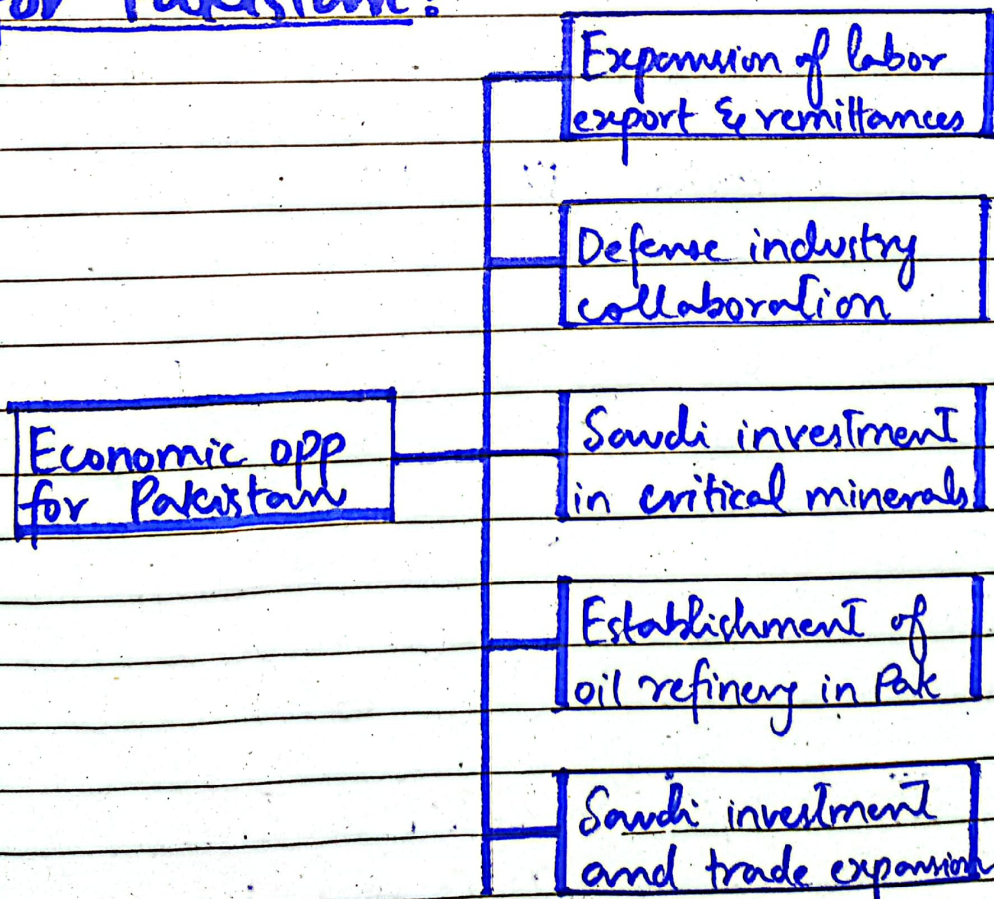
ii) Diversification of defense guarantees:

The SDMA provides Saudi Arabia with a opportunity to diversify its defense guarantees. The Middle Eastern power has historically relied on the **US** for its strategic defense but the recent failure of the latter to protect Qatar against Israeli attacks necessitated Riyadh to seek reliable defense guarantees from Pakistan.

iii) Formalization of long-standing defense ties and enhanced collaboration:

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia ~~are~~ enjoy historical defense ties, which largely remained informal understandings or limited to some symbolic MOUs. The signing of SMDA ~~provid~~ allows KSA to formalize its defense ties with Pakistan, and modernize its security apparatus through joint training, exercises, and collaboration in defense production and technology transfer.

D. SMDA and Economic Opportunities for Pakistan:



i) Expansion of labor exports and remittances:

The formalization of SMDA allows Pakistan to deepen its economic ties with Saudi Arabia. A large number of Pakistan's labor force is employed in Saudi Arabia, for and sends back huge remittances to Pakistan, which help Islamabad in managing its foreign exchange reserves. According to The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), in 2025 January, Pakistan received \$728.3 million remittances from Saudi Arabia alone. This can be further increased by leveraging the SMDA.

ii) Defense industry collaboration:

Pakistan possesses great expertise in the field of defense production and produces tanks, JF-17 Thunder warplanes, missiles, arms, and other equipments indigenously. On the other side, Saudi Arabia is blessed with large oil reserves and wealth, allowing it to channel investments in defense. Collaboration between the two in defense production can allow the both to modernize their militaries.

iii) Saudi investment in critical minerals:

Saudi Arabia is making huge

international investments in critical fields including rare earth metals. In early 2025, KSA expressed desire to acquire 15% stakes in Reko Diq gold mine in Balochistan with approximate investment of \$6 bn. SMOA can encourage Saudi investors to make investments in this critical sector in Pakistan, which would help the latter in earning foreign revenues.

iv) Establishment of oil refinery:

In economic terms, Pakistan can seek Saudi investments in setting up new oil refineries in Pakistan. In 2024, Pakistan imported refined oil worth \$17 bn to meet its domestic needs while existing refineries lack capacity for refining imported crude oil. Establishing refineries with Saudi investments would help reduce import bill burden on already weak foreign reserves.

E. Conclusion:

The formalization of defense agreement between Saudi Arabia and Pakistan benefits the both in achieving geopolitical and economic goals. The SMOA has elevated strong bilateral ties between the two partners to new heights of trust and cooperation, obligating them

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to face common threats under the
mutual vision of common defense.