

Defense Pact between KSA and Pakistan: Evolution, Challenges, and Prospects

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Abstract

On September 17, 2025, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed the Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement (SMDA), which officially created a NATO Article 5-style joint defense arrangement, following almost eight decades of the partnership of the two countries. The paper is built along the historical path of the agreement, its key stipulations, the difficulties in its effective application, and the prospects of the agreement development, which is offered on the basis of the qualitative review of the secondary sources. The results of the article point to the fact that despite the fact that SMDA is a reflection of a real strategic alignment and the development of the two institutions, its efficiency is determined by the realization of mutual defense commitments, addressing of conflicting regional alignments, and elimination of the shortage of capacities. The implications of the pact are far-reaching not only on the security of South Asia and the Middle East, but also on the new multipolar security designs emerging even in the absence of the West. Although the parties involved in the agreement are quite distant, they too have limitations in the form of resources, competing mandate, and domestic politics that do not allow them to take immediate action on the accord. To make the operation successful, a consistent political commitment, the effective institutionalization of the joint defense systems, and an integrated view of the third-party intervention, primarily China, would be able to establish the consistent trilateral frameworks that are capable of addressing the issues in the region.

Keywords: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Strategic Defense Agreement, Regional Security, Deterrence, Muslim World, South Asia, Middle East

Introduction

The relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have a long history of diplomacy and are the most common alliances in the world of Islam, and are heavily founded on shared Islamic values, strategic alignment and commitment to the peace of the region. The two nations have been waging a consistent diplomatic course since the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, which was subsequently written in the Treaty of Friendship in 1951 (Ahmad & Faisal, 2020). The relationship has evolved with time, beginning with political co-ordination, to military co-ordination in the case of regional wars, and finally, strategic and economic co-ordination. The most important step that has so far been undertaken by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in their partnership is the signing of the Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement in September 2025. The SMDA is different in nature than the past undisclosed military interventions or bilateral defense arrangements because it establishes

a binding collective security that on an essential level alters the nature of the Pakistan-Saudi relations into cooperation that entails the alliance of circumstances and commitment based on interpersonal institutionalism. The agreement is made during the period when the region is in high upheaval and is characterized by an unstable regional environment, the alteration of the power balance of great powers, and the emergence of new security challenges affecting both states (FPCCI, 2025). This accord is more vital than bilateralism. The deal has official recognition of the military capabilities and strategic significance of Pakistan as a Muslim nuclear state. As in the case of Saudi Arabia, it is the effort to diversify the security alliances and establish a viable deterrent within the environment that is increasingly becoming complex. To the international Muslim community and the rest of the world, the SMDA is a pointer that an autonomous security apparatus will be established which may not necessarily depend on the traditional Western guarantees of security. The paper will focus on three primary points that include such issues as the historical background of the defense cooperation between the two states, the substantive character of the SMDA and its strategic consequences, and the operational problems and prospects of its application. This discussion uses the realist theory of international relations as an approach of placing the conduct of the state in its context, where both countries strive to achieve rational self-interest by forming alliances and employing deterrence techniques.

Evolution of Pakistan-KSA Defense Relations

Foundational Period (1947-1970s)

The relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia started as soon as Pakistan was formed. Saudi Arabia acknowledged Pakistan just weeks after it was formed in August 1947, and diplomatic relations between the two countries were formalized in September 1947 (Khan & Khan, 2021). Nevertheless, initial contacts were friendly but limited. It was the first step which was dominated by religious and cultural affinity instead of strategic defense collaboration. The relationship started taking strategic dimensions in the 1950s especially after the visit of King Saud bin Abdul Aziz to Pakistan in 1954. This visit was a great diplomatic gesture and it formed some personal relations among the governing bodies that turned out to be costly over the years (Ahmad, 2020). At this time, Pakistan was establishing its strategic stance in South Asia after the partition of 1947 and searching regional allies that could help it to overcome the Indian hegemony. Agreements signed in 1951 under the name of Treaty of Friendship were the legal basis of bilateral cooperation, however, it was mainly also a political character. The next shift to the Western security system in the form of the Baghdad Pact (1955) and with the help of the SEATO generated a bit of tension between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, who considered these agreements suspicious mechanisms of influence by the West in the Muslim world (Ahmad and Faisal, 2020). Nevertheless, this friction was short lived as the two countries realized that they had more common grounds in the stability of the region.

Consolidation Period (1960s-1970s)

The 1960s were the years of the emergence of substantive defense cooperation. Saudi Arabia was interested in having Pakistan as a security partner since the country had a respectable military force that proved itself during the Indo-Pakistani War of 1965. On the other hand, Saudi Arabia was becoming wealthier in petroleum and as such, created resources with which to forge foreign security alliances. In 1967, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia signed the initial formal military cooperation deal, which defined the model of military training, technological transfer and exchange of personnel (FPCCI, 2025). The Pakistan Arab-Israeli War in 1967 and the diplomatic and material assistance given to Arab nations proved that Pakistan was loyal to the larger Muslim cause. Special combat operations that Pakistani military members, such as pilots, were reportedly engaged in

defending Arab forces were one of the key symbolic moves that highlighted the priority that Pakistan gave to the unity of Islam (Ahmad & Faisal, 2020). These measures uplifted the status of Pakistan in the Saudi rank and the rest of the Arab world. The reign of the Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto (1973-1977) was a critical point in the bilateral relationship. Bhutto strategically re-focused the foreign policy of Pakistan on the Muslim world and the Gulf region in general, considering it a re-focusing necessary to the strategic future of Pakistan due to the traumatic events of the 1971 East Pakistan secession (Nasim et al., 2023). In the Arab-Israeli War of 1973, Pakistan defended its association with Arabist beliefs by giving material and symbolic assistance to Arab fighters. The third Islamic summit held in 1974 in Lahore, the joint hosting of which was done by Bhutto and Saudi Arabia, was a peak of the bilateral cooperation in the diplomatic sphere and placed Pakistan among the key actors in the Islamic life. The summit was able to provide the international acknowledgment of Bangladesh, which was a manifestation that Saudi Arabia and Pakistan could act as effective partners in addressing multilateral Muslim matters (Ahmad and Faisal, 2020).

Strategic Deepening (1980s-1990s)

The aftermath of the 9/11 era had generated fresh security needs by the two countries. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were facing the global terrorism, regional insurgent and changed security threats, which demanded a better military cooperation. In 2004, the bilateral military exercises between Al-Samsam and bilateral military exercises introduced a routine of joint training and coordination when conducting operation (Khan and Khan, 2021). These were accompanied by exercises that were held in every two years with the aim of training in counter-terrorism operations and modern asymmetric warfare- threats to the two countries back home and in the region. Under the Musharraf regime (2000-2008), the Pak-Saudi military relations became more sophisticated. The two countries also signed a broad-based Military Cooperation Accord in 2005, which institutionalized military relations (Ahmad and Faisal, 2020). More and more Pakistani military training centers were filled with Saudi military members who wanted to obtain professional military training, and the Saudi funds aided modernization of Pakistani defense. The North Thunder military drill of 2016, which took place in Northern Saudi Arabia was one of the largest multinational military exercises in the history of the region. The prominent role of Pakistan was an indication of the trust the Kingdom had in the Pakistani military professionalism and performance in battlefield (Khan and Khan, 2021). The drill involved large Pakistani troops and interoperability of Pakistani and Saudi forces. During the 2000s, the relationship went further and military exchanges and joint training programs were frequent. The military forces of Pakistan remained in advisory positions in Saudi defence organizations, and Saudi financial aid had been supporting the Pakistani economy (Umair Jamal, 2025). These advancements formed the basis of an official alliance. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia formalized their long-standing relationship with the signing of the SMDA on September 17, 2025 with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman signing the agreement at Riyadh (Dawn, 2025). The accord marked a shift toward legal cooperation as opposed to informal cooperation.

The Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement (SMDA)

The Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement (SMDA), signed on September 17, 2025, is a serious improvement over the earlier agreements, which were more about military collaboration, training, and acquisition, by providing an official collective security mandate. It has both symbolic and strategic meanings to Riyadh and Islamabad. Although the details of the agreement are a secret, it is well known that it includes a clause that states that any aggression made towards one nation is an aggression to both and thus the agreement will constitute a defense guarantee that

institutionalizes the long held strategic understanding between Islamabad and Riyadh (Ajmalias Academy, 2025). This change would make the relationship more than a list of bilateral military agreements but a complete-fledged defense coalition which is supposed to work as a powerful deterrent against external or regional aggression. The SMDA has a number of strategic goals of both signatories that are critical. In the case of KSA, the agreement will ensure the experience and possible mobilization of the highly professional and nuclear-equipped military force of Pakistan-the force which has long been a key element in the security of the Arabian Peninsula (Nasim et al., 2023). It serves particularly when the security calculus in the Gulf is already changing as the traditional American security guarantees are no longer as unconditional, and so, Riyadh needs to find other ways of offering self-help in regional defense (Ardemagni, J., 2025). The contract is perceived to be a level of deterrence and is mainly concerned with ensuring the security of crucial energy plants and critical installations against foreign attack. In the case of Islamabad, the strategic advantages are also very high. It provides the SMDA with a strong presence as a central stabilizer in the Muslim world which provides it with significant bargaining and diplomatic cover in various international conferences. The economic area is planned to boost economic activities on a large scale Riyadh investment where Pakistani economic gains can be integrated in the massive economic investment opportunities associated with Saudi Vision 2030 (FPCCI, 2025). Moreover, where Saudi Arabia is concerned, one can employ the SMDA to improve its security portfolio amidst the waning involvement of the U.S. and the growing level of the volatility in the area. Symbolically, the accord brings the largest monarchy of the Gulf and the only nuclearized Muslim state together, establishing a balance of power in the region (Dahan, M. E., & Shah, S, 2025). This nexus of defense and prosperity is the key to the long-term economic recovery of Pakistan, which will provide the possibility of technological transfer, defense industrial cooperation, and greater access to energy markets with high profit. The formalized agreement therefore serves as a strategic bottleneck, a place of life-saving economic lifelines, and a means of active military modernization.

Operational and Strategic Challenges

Limitations of Capacity and Capability

Though the SMDA has binding mutual defense obligations, there are major operation-related challenges that jeopardize successful execution. Although the military is large and professionally skilled, the resources of the Pakistani military cannot ensure its ability to protect the national territory on several threats at the same time and meet the defensive duties to Saudi Arabia (Ahmad and Faisal, 2020). Budgetary limitations that are represented by the domestic economic pressures and competing developmental needs are manifested in the larger expenditure by Pakistan on its defense which has been about 2.3-2.8 percent of its GDP in recent years. As long as it has nuclear and conventional forces adequate enough to deter regional aggression, a promise of massive forces in Saudi Arabia will put the stability of Pakistan-Afghanistan, Iran, and India borders at risk (Khan and Khan, 2021). Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, is a country with significant financial resources who have been using technology and professional military knowledge of the Pakistani and other sources in the past. Modernizing the Kingdom military forces with the use of the latest equipment, acquired in different sources, it takes time to integrate and professionalize. SMDA presupposes the rapid military responsiveness and coordination potentially beyond the existing operational capabilities (Nasim et al., 2023).

Geographic and Logistical Constraints

The geographical distance between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia poses logistic hurdles when ready to deploy forces quickly and coordinate them. Although Pakistan has been traditionally having military staffing in Saudi Arabia, the introduction of a large number of soldiers in the occasion of

emergencies would need advanced airlift, supply chains, and communications. The poor strategic airlift capability of Pakistan limits the speed of the projection of the force outside South Asia (Ahmad and Faisal, 2020). The geographical location of Saudi Arabia on the Arabian Peninsula has specific weaknesses. The speed of military threats, e.g. threat of Iranian missiles or air attacks would demand urgent reaction, which logistical aid provided by Pakistan is unable to offer. This geographical fact suggests that the SMDA is more valuable in terms of strategic deterrence and the development of security cooperation than in the direct response to the military crisis in the short term (Khan and Khan, 2021).

Strategic Obligations of Competing Strategies

Pakistan has a high defense liability and association which would conflict with its overall obligation to Saudi Arabia. The relationship between the two countries, Pakistan and China, is of long-standing relationship complexities. Although Chinese interests mostly coincide with the Pakistani stability and security, it is not clear to what extent, China would uphold the Pakistani military engagements in the Middle East (Nasim et al., 2023). Pakistan also enjoys diplomatic ties with Iran, and it does not want to be sucked in Saudi-Iranian regional rivalry. The historic policy of neutrality of Pakistan in Arab-Persian disputes provides the country with the potential tensions with the Saudi Arabia that perceives Iran as a main strategic threat. In case of deployment of military forces by Pakistan to Saudi Arabia against Iran-supported forces or retaliation of Iranian aggression, Pakistan would lose its well-balanced relationships between the Gulf powers (Ahmad and Faisal, 2020). The Afghanistan case is even more problematic. The major security issue facing Pakistan is the cross border terrorism and the instability that has its origin in Afghanistan. The presence of significant military forces in Saudi Arabia would jeopardize the capacity of Pakistan to control its western frontier security, which may result in a re-established capacity of terrorist organizations (Khan & Khan, 2021).

Political Constraints in the Domestic Situations

The two countries experience domestic political limitations to defense cooperation. Civil-military relationships and the issues of military actions, used abroad, have to be controlled in Pakistan. The Parliament of Pakistan has to sanction the use of military forces beyond the national territory, and such sanctions have domestic political implications (Ahmad and Faisal, 2020). Traditionally, however, Pakistan has been very conscious of its domestic and geopolitical limitations, the most notable being its 2015 parliamentary vote not to deploy its troops to the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen (Saadia, H., 2025). Such precedent points to one of the major challenges: the SMDA provides a formal guarantee of security, yet the practical application of the Pakistani forces to a conflict zone in the Gulf would involve overcoming major domestic political obstacles and going around the resistance of the population essentially, the guarantee would be no more than a paper promise in some situations (Saadia, H., 2025). Making domestic opposition to the military engagements abroad can arise especially when it distracts resources on border security, or appears to engage Pakistan in regional conflicts that are considered as peripheral to national interests. Saudi Arabia experiences conflicting local and regional interests. The modernization scheme of the Kingdom under the Vision 2030 plan needs a lot of domestic resources. Although defense expenditure is large in the absolute terms, it has to compete with investments in economic diversification, infrastructure, and social programs (Khan & Khan, 2021).

External Strategic Uncertainties

The success of the SMDA is partly determined by the forces that are outside the control of each country. There is also the concern of proliferation raised by western powers because of the nuclear

status of Pakistan (Henderson, S., 2025). The SMDA does not reduce the significance of the US contribution to the security of the Gulf. The uncertainty of American reaction to a possible conflict in the region poses a problem of uncertainty to both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia about how well the mutual defense commitment can be operationalized (Nasim et al., 2023). A defense treaty signed between two key Islamic countries one of which has access to nuclear arms is a fundamental change in the security situation in South Asia (Raimeedhi, A., & Abbas, B. A., 2025). India feels that the deal is biased towards the Gulf, with Islamabad, whereas Iran sees it as an encircling strategy (Ardemagni, E. & Missaglia, N., 2025). These perceptions might fuel the already existing rivalries. Because of its nuclear status, western powers have also expressed their concerns over proliferation as a result of Pakistan (Henderson, S., 2025).

Regional Security Strategic Implications

Security Implications on South Asia

The SMDA has important implications on the South Asian security politics especially in the relations between India and Pakistan. India is looking at the deal with strategic interests as it realizes that the formal alliances of Pakistan with a leading power in the Muslim world and a rich economy in the Gulf region may boost the strategic standing of the Pakistani state (FPCCI, 2025). This treaty unspoken provides that any form of aggression against Pakistan would be an issue to Saudi Arabia. Although the agreement does not mention India as the targeted deterrent goal, Indian strategic analysis must see the pact as being, at least in part, deterrent against Indian military intervention against Pakistan. Such interpretation can have an impact on Indian calculations of possible military operations, adding extra costs and risks that India will have to take into its strategic planning (Khan and Khan, 2021). But the effect on the India-Pakistan military balance on the ground is still minimal. The geographic and logistical factors limit the ability of the Saudi Arabia to project military power in South Asia. Saudi Arabia has no historical track record of military participation in South Asian warfare and has minimal intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance facilities which are aimed at South Asia. In this way, its symbolic and political role in the regional position of India is much greater, but its practical use in conflicts in South Asia is limited (Ahmad and Faisal, 2020).

Implications on the Middle Eastern Security

The security implication of the SMDA on Middle Eastern security is more immediate and deterministic. The accord defines an official security alliance between two largest Muslim states at a time when the region is in high levels of instability. Both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia consider Iran as a country that is pursuing destabilizing policies, and Iran may view the agreement as a way of containing Iranian influence (Nasim et al., 2023). The deal will affect the Iranian calculations on possible confrontations with Saudi Arabia. The historical policy of Iran has been to use proxies and non-state actors to limit Saudi Arabia without engaging in a military conflict. The collective defense clause of the SMDA has the potential to increase the expenses of Iranian proxy action by suggesting that Pakistan will defend the Saudis militarily in case of an external threat (Khan and Khan, 2021). There are also implications of the agreement for Israeli-Arab security dynamics. Although the SMDA makes no specific reference to Israeli threats, the words and time frame used to make the agreement indicate that both countries are becoming alarmed by the increasing Israeli military aggression in the area. The commitments of defense formally not only initiate a plan of counter to the fact that Israel's military superiority is in the area but also means that unilateral Israeli military action can be addressed through a highly synchronized reaction between Pakistan and KSA (FPCCI, 2025).

Global Security Architecture Ramifications

The SMDA assists in bringing about more change in the international security structure. The agreement is the expression of the efforts of the non-Western powers to establish independent security structures not based on Western institutional approaches. The NATO Article 5 model that the SMDA is similar to is a noteworthy symbol of the countries of the Muslim majorities which establish their own collective security mechanism similar like Western ones (Khan and Khan, 2021). The politics of the Islamic world in general has a potential impact on the deal. The effective collective security never existed in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation which has 57 Muslim states. The Pakistan-Saudi accord can be the first one to establish regional security cooperation that other Muslim nations can emulate and this will lead to a more united world of Islamic security arrangements (Nasim et al., 2023). The deal also indicates the emerging role of China in the third world security. The all-encompassing nature of the relationship between Pakistan and China implies that Pakistani military obligations are bound to affect the Chinese interests. SMDA indirectly indicates the realization that Pakistani defense commitments to Saudi Arabia do not conflict, but rather supplement, Pakistani strategic orientation towards China (Ahmad and Faisal, 2020).

Prospects and Future Prognosis

Though the challenges are relevant, the Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement holds considerable opportunities to both KSA and Pakistan, which are mainly related to economic renewal, defense modernization, and the improvement of geopolitical positions. The deep economic synergy that can be achieved by matching the pact with Saudi Vision 2030 has become one of the most promising opportunities. This is a diversification project of great economic importance as it gives Pakistan a much needed chance to stop being a low value labor supplier, and rather bring its industrial and technological foundation to meet the needs of the KSA in terms of high professional workers and specialized services (FPCCI, 2025). The SMDA offers the security package required to provide huge Saudi investments in energy, infrastructure, and mining in Pakistan, which will essentially establish a self-sustainable economic corridor. One of the suggestions in this respect is the active exploration of bilateral industrial projects to replace Indian exports to KSA with competitive Pakistani goods, and thus gain the much-needed trade surplus (FPCCI, 2025). On the defense side, the SMDA will provide Pakistan with access to important funds and collaboration for its own military modernization programs, as well as pledging a superior market for its defense industry exports. In the case of KSA, the agreement not only guarantees manpower but a dependable, multi-year strategic depth, which is gaining more and more importance with the Gulf States claiming a more significant level of independence in their security issues (Ardemagni, J., 2025). This change also belongs to a larger movement of a non-aligned regional security order which attempts to balance the position of old Western allies with new Eastern forces. One such opportunity that may be particularly applicable is that of extrinsic partners, i.e. China. The SMDA also offers a stable western front to Pakistan, which is in direct service to the security of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is also one of the highlight projects of the Belt and Road Initiative (Calabrese, J., 2025). China is an implicit beneficiary of the security and stability offered by the pact being a friendly nation to both Riyadh and Islamabad. It will give an opportunity to convert the alliance to a trilateral security cooperation format involving all three states that may be essential in the management of cross-border security challenges instigated by Afghanistan and the creation of primary access corridors to the Central Asian markets (FPCCI, 2025). This Chinese silent leverage provides a stabilizing factor that will ensure the region does not spiral out of control, which will further make the deal more realistic in the long term and have a greater impact on a new regional balance (Calabrese, J., 2025). Pakistan-KSA partnership is later

to become an important node within the new Eurasian geo-economic and security system due to the SMDA strategic interaction with CPEC and Vision 2030.

Strategic Recommendations

Defense Mechanisms Operationalization

Permanent joint defense committees should also be established by the two governments that will consist of the representatives of the defense ministries and military services and intelligence agencies. These committees are expected to prepare operational plans in detail, establish procedures of communication and requirements of resources to facilitate mutual defense obligations. Regular visits to the military command level should ensure that personal relationships are established between the military commanders that would be used to coordinate the work during emergencies. It is the requirement to communicate threats with ease and activate the response mechanisms through an implemented process of communication with adequate encryption systems and protocols to deliver a timely response (FPCCI, 2025).

Economic and Energy Cooperation

The alliance should implement an economic prioritized strategy that will focus on the achievement of real integration targets in Saudi Vision 2030. This necessitates a turnover of raw labor exports to high-skilled human capital export such as engineers, information technology, and specialised technicians in accordance with the finer-grained and diversified economic demands of KSA which will see an explosion in the value of remittances and transfer of technology (FPCCI, 2025). Moreover, a special Joint Industrial Commission ought to be created to finance and initiate joint ventures in such areas as clean energy, food processing, and defense production in Pakistan and the clear aim of stealing market share that is now controlled by Indian and other Asian exports in the Saudi market.

Intelligence and Information Sharing

The two countries need to put in place institutional structures for exchanging military intelligence, threat evaluations and security data on how to carry out the mutual defense pledge. The emergence of threats that have to be dealt with through a coordinated effort can be made easier by joint intelligence analysis centers. Sharing of information on terrorism, cyber threats and other security challenges in the region should be done in the normal channels but with reasonable compartmentalization that safeguards sensitive sources and means.

Training and Professional Development

Increased training cooperation with the military must enable officer exchange programs, mid-career and senior officer professional military education, and joint operations, command coordination, and crisis management-specific training. Forming combined training centers or increasing the current ones to allow more representatives of both countries would help create conditions in which the relationship and common military culture can be formed that would allow effective coordination in case of a crisis.

Parliamentary and Civil Society Engagement

To maintain the SMDA, it would need to have other agencies involved, including the military and executive. It is the role of parliamentary delegations to create awareness of bilateral defense requirements and responsibilities among elected government representatives in both countries. The National Assembly of Pakistan and the Consultative Council of Saudi Arabia must learn about the contents of the defense pact and the strategic logic behind the formation of the agreement. The

civil society activity, such as scholarly relations, think tank collaboration, and media reach, ought to create awareness of the public on the strategic importance of the agreement and provide encouragement to prolong bilateral cooperation.

Trilateral Cooperation Platform

A Trilateral Security and Economic Forum between Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and China should be formalized with the help of the SMDA. This forum would be in a position to share resources and intelligence to tackle ineffective cross-border security threats that emanate as a result of Afghanistan, especially those that would impact the stability of CPEC. A trilateral construct like this would enable Pakistan to stabilize its western borders, save on military expenditure on counter terrorism operations and use the ensuing stability to expand profitable avenues of trade and passage into the Central Asian markets (FPCCI, 2025). KSA influence and China buying capacity would provide unparalleled seriousness to Pakistan in ensuring that the region was stable.

Conclusion

Institutionalizing of partnership in the form of collective defense commitment that replaces the previous ad-hoc military associations is called the Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement between Pakistan and the KSA entities. The transaction is a sign of the overall movement in geopolitics where the non-Western establish their security mechanisms and contribute a more multi-polar world. The strategic implications of the SMDA are immense: to Pakistan it gives a means of proving military capability as well as a means of enhancing the diplomatic position; to Saudi Arabia, a diversified security system less reliant on the more traditional Western guarantees; and to the rest of the Islamic world, it is a pointer of potential success in achieving some degree of collective security between the Muslim majority states. However, it has significant barriers that restrict implementation. Geographic distance, Pakistan's resource capacity and other security demands, logistical bottlenecks and internal political bottlenecks (as illustrated by the example of 2015 decision of Parliament not to deploy forces to Yemen) pose barriers to immediate response to operations. Long-term deterrence and integration of security, as opposed to responding to a crisis, is the main value of the agreement. The future of the SMDA lies in institutionalization of the defense systems by having permanent joint committees, operational planning, and frequent military consultations. In addition to defense, the alignment of the pact with Saudi Vision 2030 defines the conditions of the permanent economic integration, especially in the energy, infrastructure, and technological areas. Imperatively, the trilateral aspect of China-connection between SMDA and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor opens a stabilizing platform to the cross-border security issues in Afghanistan and the market access to Central Asia. The agreement shows a non-Western ability to form their own collective security systems, and this helps in creating a multipolar security order. The only thing that will lead to success is a long-standing political will, institutionalization of joint mechanisms and management of conflicting strategic interests. The SMDA has been able to develop a sustainable platform to the two major Islamic states to solve their security issues and their stability in the region even though the challenges are still significant.

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