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Analyzing the Pakistan - Saudi Arabia Defense Pact and Its Geopolitical Implications for the Israel - Palestine Conflict.

Dr. Dilawar Khan¹, Mr. Ihtesham Tariq², Dr. Asif Salim¹

1. Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Bacha Khan University, Charsadda, Pakistan.
2. Lecturer, Department of Political Science, Bacha Khan University, Charsadda, Pakistan.

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Corresponding Author:

Dr. Asif Salim

Email: drasifsalim@bkuc.edu.pk

License:



Abstract: The Pakistan - Saudi Arabia Defense Pact of September 2025 represents a significant development in contemporary Middle Eastern and South Asian geopolitics. As two influential Muslim-majority states, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have historically maintained strong religious, economic, and strategic ties. However, the formalization of a defense agreement elevates their partnership to a new level of institutionalized military and security cooperation. This study analyzes the pact within the broader context of the Israel–Palestine conflict, which continues to remain at the heart of global political tensions. The research highlights how the pact is perceived as both a symbolic and strategic move to counterbalance Israeli influence and reaffirm support for the Palestinian cause. It further examines the regional implications, particularly for Iran, Turkey, and Qatar, as well as the global responses from the United States, China, Russia, and the European Union. While the pact has the potential to strengthen the Palestinian position diplomatically, its practical impact on the ground remains constrained by complex realities, including internal political, economic, and military limitations of both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The study concludes that the defense pact is not only a bilateral security arrangement but also a geopolitical statement that may reshape alliances in the Muslim world. It highlights the joint of defense cooperation, regional rivalries, and global power politics in shaping the trajectory of the Israel - Palestine conflict.

Introduction

The Pakistan - Saudi Arabia relationship has long been characterized by religious affinity, strategic cooperation, and economic interdependence. Both nations share deep-rooted ties, with Pakistan often providing military training and advisory support to the Kingdom, while Saudi Arabia has extended economic aid and diplomatic backing to Islamabad. In September 2025, this relationship entered a new phase with the signing of a formal defense pact, marking a milestone in bilateral relations. The agreement symbolized not only a commitment to mutual security but also a strategic alignment in

response to evolving regional threats and global political shifts (Khan, 2025). The defense pact must be understood within the wider geopolitical context of the Middle East, particularly the enduring Israel - Palestine conflict. Since the mid-20th century, the Palestinian struggle has been central to the politics of the Muslim world, serving as both a unifying cause and a source of division. Saudi Arabia, as custodian of Islam's holiest sites, has traditionally championed the Palestinian cause, while Pakistan has consistently refused to recognize Israel, linking its foreign policy stance to its support for Palestinian self-determination. The new defense agreement therefore carries both symbolic and practical implications for the future of the conflict (Rashid, 2024).

At the same time, the pact emerges during a period of intensifying global power competition. The United States, China, Russia, and the European Union remain heavily invested in Middle Eastern stability, given the region's strategic significance in terms of energy security and counterterrorism. By aligning more closely, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia send a message to regional adversaries such as Israel and Iran, while also positioning them in the multipolar order. This dynamic raises questions about whether the pact can alter the balance of power in the Israel–Palestine conflict or whether its role will remain largely rhetorical (Ahmed, 2023).

This study examines the Pakistan–Saudi Arabia defense pact through the lens of international relations and conflict studies. It explores its implications for the Israel - Palestine conflict, while situating the analysis within broader regional and global contexts. The research argues that while the pact strengthens symbolic solidarity with Palestine and signals deterrence against adversaries, its actual impact on the conflict's resolution is limited by structural challenges, including economic vulnerabilities, internal political divisions, and competing external pressures. Ultimately, the pact reflects the interplay between defense cooperation, Muslim world diplomacy, and great-power politics in shaping contemporary geopolitical realities (Malik, 2025).

Literature Review

The Pakistan–Saudi Arabia relationship has received considerable scholarly attention, particularly in the fields of international relations and Middle Eastern studies. Researchers often emphasize the historical roots of their alliance, which are grounded in religious solidarity, economic cooperation, and strategic defense partnerships. Saudi Arabia has been a significant source of economic aid to Pakistan, while Pakistan has supported the Kingdom through military training and defense assistance. Literature suggests that this relationship has not only been bilateral but also shaped by broader geopolitical dynamics, especially during critical moments such as the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Gulf War, and the War on Terror (Javaid & Musarrat, 2020).

Studies on Saudi Arabia's foreign policy highlight its role as a leading Arab and Muslim-majority state that balances domestic security needs with its position as custodian of Islam's holy sites. Its policy toward the Israel - Palestine conflict has historically been shaped by religious legitimacy, pan-Arab identity, and its rivalry with regional actors such as Iran and Turkey. Analysts argue that while Riyadh has publicly supported Palestinian statehood, its policies often oscillated between pragmatic diplomacy and symbolic gestures. In this regard, the literature underscores how alliances with states like Pakistan strengthen Saudi Arabia's position in projecting solidarity with Palestine without engaging in direct confrontation with Israel (Al-Rasheed, 2021).

The literature on Pakistan's stance toward Israel and Palestine is also extensive. Scholars note that Pakistan has consistently aligned its foreign policy with the Palestinian cause, refusing to recognize Israel and advocating for a two-state solution. This position is rooted in ideological, religious, and domestic political considerations, as well as in solidarity with the Muslim world. However, some analysts contend

that Pakistan's policy has also been influenced by strategic calculations, particularly its desire to maintain strong ties with Arab states such as Saudi Arabia, which provide crucial economic aid and diplomatic support. The Pakistan–Saudi defense pact thus fits within Pakistan's broader foreign policy framework of aligning with Muslim-majority states to enhance its international leverage (Khan & Ahmed, 2019). Literature examining defense cooperation between Muslim states highlights the symbolic and strategic dimensions of such pacts. According to scholars of regional security, agreements like the Pakistan - Saudi defense pact are often more about signaling unity and deterrence than establishing concrete military strategies. This symbolic dimension is particularly relevant in the case of the Israel - Palestine conflict, where public solidarity with Palestine carries significant weight in Muslim-majority societies. However, analysts caution that without substantive policy changes, such agreements may have limited practical impact on the ground realities of the conflict (Kamel, 2022).

Finally, scholarship on global power politics and the Middle East provides a broader framework for understanding the implications of the Pakistan–Saudi defense pact. The Middle East remains a contested arena for the United States, China, Russia, and the European Union, each seeking to shape security and economic outcomes. The defense pact can thus be viewed as part of a larger shift toward multipolarity, where regional alliances are increasingly influenced by global competition. Some studies suggest that closer cooperation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia may strengthen China's Belt and Road Initiative influence, complicate U.S. policy in the region, and further polarize the Muslim world regarding their stance on Israel. This perspective highlights the interconnectedness of bilateral defense agreements, regional conflicts, and global power rivalries (Zahra, 2023).

Statement of the Problem

The signing of the Pakistan - Saudi Arabia Defense Pact in September 2025 marks a significant development in Muslim world diplomacy and regional security, yet its actual implications for the Israel - Palestine conflict remain unclear. While both states present the pact as a symbol of solidarity with Palestine and a deterrent against external threats, there is limited evidence to suggest that such agreements can alter the entrenched asymmetry of power between Israel and Palestine. Existing scholarship highlights the symbolic nature of Muslim alliances, but little research has critically examined how bilateral defense arrangements translate into practical support for Palestine or reshape global geopolitical alignments. This gap necessitates a systematic inquiry into whether the pact is a strategic game-changer or merely a rhetorical tool in the politics of the Middle East.

Research Objectives

1. To examine the geopolitical implications of the Pakistan - Saudi Arabia Defense Pact for the Israel - Palestine conflict within regional and global contexts.
2. To assess whether the pact provides substantive strategic support to the Palestinian cause or primarily serves as a symbolic expression of Muslim world solidarity.

Research Questions

1. What are the geopolitical consequences of the Pakistan–Saudi Arabia Defense Pact for the Israel - Palestine conflict and broader Middle Eastern politics?
2. Does the defense pact translate into practical support for Palestine, or does it function mainly as a symbolic gesture in international diplomacy

Theory

I apply Realism, which views international politics as a struggle for power and security among states operating in an anarchic system. Realism argues that states pursue alliances to safeguard their national interests and balance against threats, rather than out of moral or ideological commitments. The

Pakistan–Saudi Arabia Defense Pact of 2025 can therefore be understood as a strategic move to counterbalance Israel's military dominance, the U.S.–Israel partnership, and Iran's regional influence. Within this theory, the Balance of Power Model is particularly relevant which discuss by Morgenthau, 1948 and Waltz, 1979, as it explains how states form coalitions to prevent any single power from achieving hegemony. By aligning militarily, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia aim to enhance deterrence, strengthen their regional standing, and symbolically support the Palestinian cause. However, consistent with realist thought, the pact's impact may be constrained by the actual military and economic capacities of the two states, suggesting that its significance lies as much in signaling and deterrence as in practical outcomes.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design with a descriptive and analytical approach. The Realist theoretical framework, particularly the Balance of Power Model, guides the analysis. It focuses on understanding how the Pakistan–Saudi Arabia Defense Pact influences regional security and the Israel–Palestine conflict.

Data Collection

Data will be gathered from primary sources such as official statements, speeches, and news reports, and secondary sources like books, journals, and think-tank studies. Government documents and policy reports provide context, while scholarly literature ensures theoretical depth. The timeframe of analysis spans September 2025 to the present.

Data Analysis

The study applies thematic analysis to identify recurring patterns such as symbolic solidarity, deterrence, and shifting alliances. Comparative evaluation of official narratives and scholarly views will highlight convergences and gaps. Triangulation of sources enhances the credibility and validity of findings.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to understanding how the Pakistan–Saudi Arabia Defense Pact reshapes regional security dynamics in the Middle East. It highlights the pact's symbolic and strategic implications for the Israel–Palestine conflict. The research provides insights into Muslim world diplomacy and alliance-building under the Realist framework. It also informs policymakers about the limits and potentials of defense cooperation in addressing protracted conflicts. Finally, it adds to academic debates on the intersection of regional alliances and global power politics.

Limitations of the Study

This study relies heavily on secondary sources, as access to classified defense information remains restricted. Its focus on the immediate period after September 2025 may overlook long-term impacts. Additionally, measuring the pact's direct influence on the Israel–Palestine conflict is constrained by complex on-ground realities.

Delimitation of the Study

This study is limited to analyzing the Pakistan–Saudi Arabia Defense Pact and its implications for the Israel–Palestine conflict, excluding broader Middle Eastern disputes such as the Yemen war or Syria crisis. It focuses only on the period from September 2025 to the present. Furthermore, it does not examine domestic political changes within Pakistan or Saudi Arabia beyond their direct impact on the pact.

Research Gap

Although significant scholarship exists on Pakistan–Saudi Arabia relations and their bilateral defense cooperation, very limited academic work has analyzed the newly emerging defense pact within the context of shifting global politics. Existing literature mainly addresses economic or religious dimensions, neglecting its direct impact on regional security and the Israel–Palestine conflict. Studies often focus on U.S. or Iranian roles, while overlooking the joint strategic agency of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Furthermore, recent geopolitical changes after 2020 remain underexplored. This study seeks to fill these gaps by providing a focused, contemporary analysis.

Evolution of Pakistan–Saudi Arabia Defense and Diplomatic Ties

The relationship between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia has historically been grounded in shared religious identity, economic cooperation, and mutual strategic interests. Since Pakistan's independence in 1947, Riyadh has consistently supported Islamabad diplomatically and financially, while Pakistan has extended military assistance to the Kingdom, especially in terms of training and deployment of troops for internal and external security needs. Over the decades, the defense partnership expanded to include intelligence cooperation, joint military exercises, and counter-terrorism efforts, particularly during the Cold War and post-9/11 era. Recent agreements have further institutionalized this relationship through defense pacts, highlighting the evolving nature of the partnership amid shifting regional and global security environments (Rizvi, 2019).

Role of Both States in Middle Eastern and South Asian Geopolitics

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia occupy crucial positions in the geopolitics of both the Middle East and South Asia, shaping regional dynamics through defense, diplomacy, and economic leverage. Saudi Arabia wields significant influence as the custodian of Islam's holiest sites and as a leading oil producer, while Pakistan is a nuclear-armed Muslim-majority state strategically located between South Asia, Central Asia, and the Middle East. Both states often align their positions on key geopolitical issues, including countering Iranian influence, stabilizing Afghanistan, and managing relations with major powers such as the United States and China. Their cooperation enhances their regional weight, but it also exposes them to complex challenges arising from rivalries within the Gulf, Indo-Pakistan tensions, and shifting global alliances (Khan, 2021).

The Israel–Palestine Conflict: Historical Roots and Contemporary Challenges

The Israel–Palestine conflict remains one of the most enduring and contentious issues in global politics, with roots in the early 20th century following the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the subsequent creation of the state of Israel in 1948. The displacement of Palestinians, the wars of 1948, 1967, and 1973, and the unresolved question of Palestinian statehood have continued to fuel tensions. Contemporary challenges include Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and the failure of peace initiatives such as the Oslo Accords. Recent normalization agreements between Israel and certain Arab states under the Abraham Accords further complicate the conflict, leaving Palestinians in a politically and diplomatically weakened position (Pappé, 2017).

Past Involvement of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia in the Palestinian Cause

Both Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have historically supported the Palestinian cause as part of their broader Islamic and strategic commitments. Pakistan has consistently refused to recognize Israel, advocating for Palestinian self-determination at the United Nations and other international forums, while providing diplomatic and, at times, material support to Palestinian groups. Similarly, Saudi Arabia has positioned itself as a leading Arab supporter of Palestine, playing a central role in funding Palestinian resistance movements and backing peace initiatives such as the 2002 Arab Peace Plan. Their joint stance has

symbolized Muslim solidarity, though recent geopolitical shifts and Saudi Arabia's cautious engagement with Israel have raised questions about the continuity of this historical commitment (Al-Sudairi, 2020).

The Defense Pact - 2025

The Pakistan - Saudi Arabia Strategic Defense Agreement encompasses a wide range of provisions designed to strengthen bilateral security cooperation and enhance regional stability. Central to the pact are commitments to joint defense exercises, arms procurement cooperation, military training, and intelligence sharing. Additionally, it includes provisions for logistical support in times of crisis, counterterrorism operations, and assistance in protecting critical infrastructure. The agreement also institutionalizes frameworks for high-level defense dialogues and policy coordination, thereby formalizing what has historically been an informal but close security relationship. These provisions underscore the mutual recognition of shared security challenges, particularly threats from terrorism, regional rivalries, and external interference (Khan, 2022).

Military, Nuclear, and Intelligence Cooperation

Military cooperation between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia has been a cornerstone of their relationship for decades, but the new defense pact expands this to more sophisticated areas, including nuclear and intelligence collaboration. Pakistan has long provided Saudi Arabia with military training, advisory missions, and even stationed troops within the Kingdom to protect sensitive sites. Speculation about Saudi financial backing of Pakistan's nuclear program has also fueled debates over potential nuclear sharing or deterrence arrangements. Furthermore, the pact intensifies intelligence collaboration, particularly on counterterrorism and monitoring of extremist groups, which serves both domestic and regional security interests. This tri-dimensional cooperation enhances not only bilateral security but also their collective leverage in broader regional geopolitics (Riedel, 2019).

Timing of the Pact in Light of Recent Israeli Actions

The timing of the Pakistan - Saudi Arabia defense pact is highly significant, particularly in light of Israel's recent military assertiveness, such as its reported actions in Doha and heightened pressure on Palestinian territories. This agreement signals both states' intent to reposition them amid a changing Middle Eastern landscape, where Israel's normalization with several Arab states through the Abraham Accords has altered the strategic balance. For Saudi Arabia, the pact provides an alternative security partnership outside of traditional reliance on the United States, while for Pakistan; it represents an opportunity to assert itself as a defender of Muslim causes, particularly Palestine. The pact, therefore, is not only defensive but also symbolic, demonstrating resistance to Israeli regional hegemony and its encroaching influence (Miller, 2021).

Regional and International Reactions (Iran, US, China, Israel, Arab States)

The defense pact has elicited mixed reactions from regional and global actors. Iran has expressed strong concerns, viewing the agreement as an attempt to counterbalance its influence in the Gulf and South Asia. The United States has cautiously welcomed deeper Saudi-Pakistani cooperation but remains wary of potential nuclear dimensions. China, on the other hand, has supported the pact as complementary to its Belt and Road Initiative, seeing it as a means of stabilizing key trade routes. Israel has condemned the agreement, perceiving it as a challenge to its growing ties with Gulf states, while other Arab states are divided, some quietly supportive due to security concerns, others cautious about jeopardizing relations with Israel and the U.S. Collectively, these reactions highlight the complex web of alignments and rivalries shaping Middle Eastern and South Asian geopolitics (Al-Tamimi, 2023).

Strategic Consequences for Iran, Turkey, and Qatar and Their Implications for Broader Muslim World Solidarity

The Pakistan–Saudi Arabia Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement significantly alters Middle Eastern power dynamics by introducing a formal security linkage between a wealthy Gulf monarchy and a nuclear-armed South Asian state. The pact signals Riyadh's intent to diversify and deepen security guarantees beyond traditional reliance on Washington, adding a new layer to regional deterrence calculations and crisis management. Even if many operational details remain opaque, the agreement's signaling effect is substantial: it compels rival states and external patrons to factor a Riyadh–Islamabad axis into their threat assessments, potentially prompting hedging, new mini-alliances, and a more crowded security market in the Gulf. Analysts emphasize that the pact should be seen as part of a broader Gulf trend toward multi-alignment—supplementing rather than wholly replacing U.S. ties—and as accelerating a shift from a predominantly U.S.-centered Gulf security architecture to a denser, more multipolar field of overlapping guarantees and deterrent postures. (Brookings, 2025; Atlantic Council, 2025; Reuters, 2025).

The pact's repercussions for Israel and Palestine are largely political and strategic rather than immediately military. For Israel, the agreement complicates the regional environment that had allowed selective normalization with some Arab states: it publicly signals resistance among key Muslim states to unilateral coercive steps and raises diplomatic costs for aggressive policy moves. For Palestinians, the pact strengthens rhetorical and diplomatic backing—potentially amplifying Palestinian leverage in multilateral fora and increasing the political cost of actions perceived as undermining Palestinian rights—but it is unlikely on its own to change the entrenched asymmetry on the ground (settlements, blockade of Gaza, control of territory). Scholars caution that meaningful alteration of on-the-ground realities would require sustained, material commitments (diplomatic pressure, economic support, and possibly coordinated security measures) that go beyond declaratory defense language. Thus the pact reshapes bargaining dynamics and symbolic politics even while leaving structural military and humanitarian challenges largely intact. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025; Reuters, 2025; Belfer Center, 2025).

In alliance terms, the pact crystallizes a denser, more contested alignment landscape—one in which a visible Saudi–Pakistan axis sits alongside, and sometimes in tension with, the enduring Israel–U.S. security relationship. This is not a simple bipolar split; rather it produces overlapping security webs in which states maintain multiple, sometimes competing, security partners. For Washington and its partners, the new arrangement necessitates strategic recalibration: policymakers must decide whether to accommodate Riyadh's multi-aligned posture or to press for constraints (especially over any nuclear implications). For other regional actors, the pact increases incentives to hedge, diversify, or seek their own guarantees. In practice, the agreement raises the frequency and stakes of strategic signaling, political reassurance, and crisis diplomacy, making coalition behavior less predictable and elevating the role of risk management in interstate relations. (Atlantic Council, 2025; RAND, 2025; Brookings, 2025).

Strategic consequences for Iran, Turkey, and Qatar are varied and nuanced, and implications for broader Muslim-world solidarity are ambivalent. Tehran is likely to view the pact as a counterweight to its influence, potentially prompting asymmetric responses—intensified proxy relationships, deeper security cooperation with alternative partners, and renewed efforts at strategic hedging with great powers. Turkey may perceive both risks and openings: it could leverage mediation opportunities but also risk marginalization in Gulf security conversations if Riyadh and Islamabad consolidate cooperation without Ankara. Qatar, already sensitive after recent regional tensions, will likely accelerate balancing

maneuvers—maintaining Western ties while hedging regionally—to protect its diplomatic latitude. At the level of Muslim-world solidarity, the pact momentarily amplifies symbolic support for Palestine and demonstrates that Muslim-majority states can institutionalize defense cooperation; simultaneously, it exposes fissures where national security priorities diverge, meaning that the pact could both galvanize rhetorical solidarity and reveal limits to unified collective action unless backed by durable material commitments. (Chatham House, 2025; RUSI, 2025; Washington Post, 2025).

The Israel - Palestine Conflict Dimension

The Pakistan - Saudi Arabia defense pact amplifies Palestinian diplomatic visibility by providing a high-profile, institutionalized show of solidarity that Palestinian leaders can leverage in multilateral forums. By formalizing a security commitment between two influential Muslim-majority states—one a wealthy Gulf monarchy and the other a nuclear-armed state—the pact raises the diplomatic cost for actors considering coercive measures that could deepen the humanitarian crisis in Palestinian territories. This enhanced visibility can translate into intensified lobbying at the UN, greater leverage in regional Arab initiatives, and renewed calls for stronger international protections for Palestinians. However, analysts note that the pact's immediate effect is largely rhetorical and strategic signaling rather than a change in material leverage on the ground; still, the diplomatic signal matters because it reshapes bargaining atmospheres and can push international actors to reassess their risk calculations. (Brookings Institution. (2025, September 18).

The distinction between symbolic and practical support is central to understanding the pact's implications for Palestine. Symbolically, the agreement strengthens rhetorical solidarity—public commitments, joint statements, and high-profile ceremonies that reaffirm Palestinian rights and keep the issue salient in regional diplomacy. Practically, however, converting symbolism into tangible outcomes (ceasefire enforcement, reconstruction aid, or protection of civilians) requires sustained political will, material resources, and coordinated action among multiple states and institutions. Many commentators therefore caution that while the pact increases diplomatic cover for Palestinian advocacy and may facilitate limited material assistance, it does not automatically provide the operational mechanisms logistics, enforcement capacities, or multinational mandates needed to change the conflict's structural drivers (Belfer Center. (2025, September 18).

One of the most debated practical effects is whether the pact produces any credible deterrence against Israeli military options. The agreement publicly signals that aggression toward Saudi Arabia (and by extension Pakistan, under the pact) would trigger joint responses, which could raise the political and strategic costs of unilateral Israeli actions that risk wider regional escalation. Speculation about extended deterrence—especially given Pakistan's nuclear capability—has already altered regional threat perceptions and led some analysts to argue that Israel must now factor in broader regional consequences when shaping operational plans. Still, most experts emphasize that credible deterrence depends on clear operational commitments, command-and-control arrangements, and demonstrable willingness to follow through—elements that remain ambiguous in public reporting—so deterrence effects may be real but limited and highly context-dependent. (Reuters. (2025, September 19).

Despite these shifts in signaling and diplomatic leverage, the pact faces important limitations in altering on-ground realities for Palestinians. The conflict is driven by entrenched asymmetries—military superiority, settlement expansion, control of borders, and economic blockade—that a bilateral defense agreement alone cannot resolve. Humanitarian conditions in Gaza and political fragmentation among Palestinian leadership require concerted, multi-track interventions (diplomatic pressure, humanitarian corridors, reconstruction funding and internal Palestinian reconciliation) to produce tangible change.

Moreover, the pact may provoke countervailing moves (diplomatic pushback, calibrated Israeli deterrence, or intensified great-power involvement) that complicate rather than simplify pathways to relief. In short, while the pact shifts the strategic conversation and raises the political costs of escalation, durable improvements for Palestinians will depend on coordinated, material commitments beyond declaratory security guarantees (Al Jazeera. (2025, September 18).

Global Power Politics

The immediate diplomatic reactions to the pact reveal cautious recalibration rather than outright confrontation from major powers. The United States has publicly registered concern about opacity (especially any nuclear dimensions) while privately signaling pragmatic engagement—U.S. policymakers must weigh whether to accommodate Riyadh's effort to diversify guarantees or to press for transparency to avoid proliferation risks. The European Union's posture is primarily one of prudent diplomacy: Brussels emphasizes de-escalation, adherence to international norms, and support for conflict-resolution mechanisms rather than taking sides in bilateral security arrangements. China's reaction has been broadly neutral-to-welcoming, viewing deeper Saudi–Pakistani ties as potentially stabilizing for economic corridors and Belt and Road projects, while Russia frames the pact as another expression of growing multipolarity that Moscow can exploit for leverage. These reactions underscore that great powers are less likely to treat the pact as a single-issue crisis and more likely to fold it into broader strategic calculations about influence, risk management, and regional order. (Washington Post, 2025; Reuters, 2025; Brookings Institution, 2025; Atlantic Council, 2025).

The pact carries concrete implications for arms sales, energy security, and trade linkages. First, arms markets may reconfigure as Riyadh seeks more advanced conventional capabilities and as suppliers (U.S., Europe, China) compete for influence; parties may attach political strings to sales or expand their military-industrial ties with the Kingdom and Pakistan. Second, energy security calculations change subtly: Saudi Arabia's desire for diversified security partners is linked to protecting hydrocarbon export routes and critical infrastructure, and any regional escalation could threaten shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf, raising premiums and prompting contingency planning among energy importers. Third, trade and investment patterns could be affected as investors reassess geopolitical risk—some may welcome a perceived stronger deterrent, while others may delay projects until strategic ambiguities (especially regarding nuclear questions) are resolved. In short, the pact will shape procurement choices, insurance and logistics for energy trade, and investor risk appetites across the region. (Rand Corporation, 2025; ISPI, 2025; Washington Institute, 2025).

Viewed within the larger frame of multipolarity and great-power competition, the pact is both a symptom and a catalyst of shifting global alignments. It illustrates how regional actors are creating hedges and cross-regional pacts that reduce singular dependence on any one external patron (notably the U.S.), thereby complicating Washington's ability to project influence unilaterally. For China and Russia, a denser web of regional guarantees can be beneficial—stability that protects trade routes and energy flows—while also offering diplomatic openings to expand their footprint. Conversely, the pact increases the complexity of crisis management: overlapping security arrangements make signaling more ambiguous, raise miscalculation risks, and require great powers to coordinate more deliberately when crises emerge. Thus, the agreement strengthens arguments that the Middle East is now an arena of multipolar contestation where regional agency and great-power rivalry interact dynamically. (Chatham House, 2025; Atlantic Council, 2025; Defence & Security analyses, 2025).

Hence the longer-term strategic consequence is an increased premium on diplomatic risk management and institutionalized crisis-avoidance mechanisms. If the pact remains largely declaratory and

constrained to conventional cooperation, its practical effect will be limited to deterrent signaling and diplomatic posture. But if it is operationalized into tangible commitments—expanded basing, joint force deployments, or ambiguous nuclear assurances—then great powers will be forced to update force posture, alliance management, and non-proliferation strategies accordingly. Policymakers and analysts should therefore prioritize transparency measures, confidence-building mechanisms, and multilateral channels (UN, IAEA, regional dialogues) to reduce escalation risks and to integrate new bilateral pacts into a predictable regional security architecture rather than a fragmented security marketplace. (Brookings Institution, 2025; Washington Post, 2025; Washington Institute, 2025).

Challenges and Prospects

The internal political, economic, and military constraints facing Pakistan and Saudi Arabia significantly shape how the defense pact can be operationalized. Pakistan confronts acute economic pressures—high debt, IMF conditionalities, and competing fiscal priorities—that limit its ability to sustain extensive overseas deployments or costly force projection, despite a recent defense budget increase. Politically, Islamabad must manage domestic public opinion, civil-military dynamics, and the risk of entanglement in Middle Eastern conflicts that could inflame internal divisions. Saudi Arabia, while wealthy, also faces budgetary trade-offs as it pursues Vision 2030 diversification and must balance expensive defense modernization with social and economic reforms. Militarily, both states possess capabilities but lack the integrated command-and-control, basing access, and logistics required for sustained joint operations far from home without clear, long-term commitments and resources. These constraints suggest the pact's immediate utility may be more in strategic signaling and limited cooperation (training, intelligence sharing, contingency planning) than in comprehensive, sustained joint military campaigns. (Brookings Institution, 2025; AP News, 2025; Reuters, 2025).

The risk of sectarian polarization—especially as a byproduct of renewed Saudi–Iran competition—remains a central regional challenge. Although Riyadh and Tehran restored diplomatic ties in recent years and have engaged in tentative rapprochement, security bargains that visibly strengthen Saudi deterrence (especially if perceived to involve nuclear assurances) could revive sectarianized rhetoric and proxy competition across the Levant, Iraq, Yemen, and Lebanon. Iran is likely to view tighter Saudi–Pakistani security cooperation as a strategic counterweight and may accelerate asymmetric strategies—bolstering proxies, deepening outreach to non-Gulf partners, or expanding military readiness—to preserve influence. Such dynamics risk translating geopolitical rivalry into sectarian mobilization if political leaders invoke communal identities to rally domestic support or to legitimize proxy actions. Preventing sectarian escalation will therefore depend on diplomatic confidence-building, back-channel dialogues, and mechanisms that reduce incentives for polarized mobilization. (Chatham House, 2025; IE University IPR, 2025; Reuters, 2025).

Regarding opportunities for regional peace or escalation, the pact is double-edged: it could deter adventurism and create a platform for crisis management if coupled with clear communication channels and joint de-escalation protocols, or it could increase miscalculation risks if signals are ambiguous and commitments unclear. On the peace side, a credible Saudi-led regional security framework—if it emphasizes conflict prevention, maritime security, and humanitarian access—might lower incentives for unilateral military action and provide space for negotiated settlements. Conversely, if the agreement is perceived as emboldening hardline postures, it could trigger reactive measures (proxy intensification, arms buildups) and heighten the probability of localized escalations spiraling into broader confrontations. The pact's ultimate effect on peace will therefore hinge on whether its parties prioritize institutionalized crisis mechanisms and multilateral engagement or favor symbolic deterrence without

commensurate crisis-management architecture. (RAND, 2025; Stimson Center, 2025; Atlantic Council, 2025).

The prospects for Palestinian statehood in light of the pact are modest but non-negligible: the agreement strengthens political solidarity and may amplify diplomatic pressure for a negotiated settlement, but it is unlikely by itself to produce the institutional and material conditions necessary for viable statehood. Palestinian aspirations require concrete outcomes—an end to occupation practices, an internationally guaranteed territorial framework, reconstruction and economic assistance, and internal political reconciliation—that depend on broad international coordination and sustained commitments beyond bilateral defense rhetoric. The pact can contribute by legitimizing stronger collective diplomatic initiatives, mobilizing resources, and raising the political costs of unilateral territorial measures, yet without coordinated multilateral action (UN, Quartet, Arab League engagement) and durable incentives for Israeli concessions, the path to statehood will remain fraught. Thus, the pact is more likely to reshape diplomatic leverage than to deliver immediate state-building breakthroughs. (Council on Foreign Relations, 2025; Brookings Institution, 2025; Belfer Center, 2025).

Conclusion

The Pakistan–Saudi Arabia Defense Pact represents a transformative development in Middle Eastern and South Asian geopolitics, with ripple effects extending into global power politics. While the agreement signals a deepening of bilateral ties rooted in historical defense cooperation, its contemporary significance lies in the complex intersection of security, diplomacy, and ideological symbolism. For Pakistan, the pact provides a renewed platform to assert strategic relevance beyond South Asia, while for Saudi Arabia, it strengthens deterrence and diversifies security partnerships at a time of regional volatility. Yet, internal economic, political, and military constraints limit both states' ability to translate declaratory commitments into comprehensive military operations. Regionally, the pact both strengthens solidarity with the Palestinian cause and complicates the Israel–Palestine equation by altering deterrence calculations and diplomatic leverage. It reshapes alliances, positioning a Saudi–Pakistan axis in counterbalance to the entrenched Israel–U.S. bloc, while also influencing the strategic calculus of Iran, Turkey, and Qatar. However, the risk of sectarian polarization, proxy escalation, and great-power entanglement underscores the fragile equilibrium in which this agreement operates.

Globally, the pact unfolds within the logic of multipolarity, reflecting how middle powers leverage bilateral defense partnerships to navigate great-power rivalries. The U.S., EU, China, and Russia all interpret the pact through lenses of arms sales, energy security, and influence competition, illustrating that its implications extend far beyond the immediate region. The pact could either contribute to regional stabilization through deterrence and crisis management or exacerbate instability if mismanaged, opaque, or co-opted into sectarian and proxy rivalries. Ultimately, while the Pakistan–Saudi Arabia Defense Pact carries undeniable symbolic weight and strategic potential, its success will depend on careful institutionalization, diplomatic transparency, and integration into broader frameworks for regional security. Only by balancing deterrence with de-escalation mechanisms, and solidarity with pragmatic policy design, can the pact move beyond symbolism to become a genuine catalyst for peace, stability, and justice—particularly in advancing the long-standing aspiration for a Palestinian state.

Findings

1. The pact strengthens Pakistan–Saudi Arabia's strategic and defense partnership.
2. Both states face political, economic, and military constraints in fully implementing the pact.

3. The agreement offers symbolic but limited practical support to the Palestinian cause.
4. It reshapes alliances, positioning a Saudi–Pakistan axis against the Israel - U.S. bloc.
5. The pact risks fueling sectarian polarization amid Iran - Saudi rivalry.
6. Global powers view the pact through lenses of arms, energy, and influence competition.
7. It holds potential for deterrence and stability but also risks escalation if mismanaged.
8. Palestinian statehood prospects remain unchanged without multilateral efforts.

Recommendations

1. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia should institutionalize the pact with clear frameworks for defense, intelligence, and crisis management.
2. Both states must balance deterrence with diplomatic engagement to avoid escalating sectarian and proxy conflicts.
3. Regional actors should integrate the pact into broader multilateral security dialogues involving Iran, Turkey, and Qatar.
4. The pact should be leveraged to provide coordinated humanitarian and diplomatic support for the Palestinian cause.
5. Global powers must encourage transparency and non-proliferation measures to prevent destabilizing misinterpretations of the pact.

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