

1. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia – International Relations

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have signed a mutual defense agreement stating an attack on one is an attack on both, a move seen as a response to regional security concerns. India is aware of the pact and is assessing its implications for national security and regional stability.

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia Sign Mutual Defence Pact

In a major geopolitical development, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have signed a “Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement,” a move that has significant implications for regional security. Responding to the development, India has stated that it was aware of the pact and reiterated its unwavering commitment to ensuring its “comprehensive national security.”

Context and Rationale Behind the Pact

The agreement was signed in the aftermath of an emergency summit of Arab and Muslim nations hosted by Qatar, which brought together nearly 60 member countries of the Arab League and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The timing and context reveal several underlying motivations.

The Core of the Pact – The agreement establishes a mutual defence clause, stating that “any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both.” The stated aim is to enhance defence cooperation and strengthen joint deterrence.

A Message to Israel – The pact is widely seen as a direct response to Israel's recent military strikes against Hamas leaders in Qatar. It serves as a signal of collective security among key Muslim nations.

Regional Alarm over Israeli Operations – There is growing concern among Arab nations about Israel's expanding military operations across the region, including in Iran, Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and now Qatar.

Questioning US Credibility – The attack in Qatar, allegedly backed by the United States, has led Gulf states to doubt the reliability of the U.S. as a security guarantor in the region.

The Nuclear Factor – Gulf states are acutely aware that Israel is the only nuclear-armed nation in the Middle East, which increases their sense of vulnerability and the need for a stronger security architecture.

Projecting Islamic Solidarity – The Saudi-Pakistan pact is a powerful symbol of unity and a move to consolidate a security front within the broader Islamic bloc.

India's Official Reaction

India's Ministry of External Affairs has responded to the development in a measured and cautious manner.

Awareness of the Pact – India stated that it was aware that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia had been considering such an agreement, indicating that the development was not a surprise.

Assessment of Implications – The government has made it clear that it will carefully study the implications of this pact on its national security, as well as on regional and global stability.

Commitment to National Security – India firmly reiterated that the government remains committed to protecting India's national interests and ensuring its comprehensive national security in all domains.

Saudi Arabia's Ties with Pakistan and India – A Comparison

Saudi Arabia maintains distinct and historically significant relationships with both Pakistan and India, which differ fundamentally in their nature.

Ties with Pakistan (Primarily Military-Centric) **Ties with India (Primarily Strategic & Economic)**

Pakistan and Saudi Arabia share a long and deep history of military cooperation.

Historical Military Deployments – Pakistani troops were deployed to Saudi Arabia in the 1960s and assisted in retaking the Grand Mosque in 1979.

Bilateral Security Agreement (1982) – This

India and Saudi Arabia have cultivated a robust and growing Strategic Partnership based on economic and diplomatic ties.

Trade & Economy – India is Saudi Arabia's 2nd largest trade partner, while Saudi Arabia is India's 5th largest. Bilateral trade in FY 2023–24 stood at USD 42.98 billion.

Strategic Framework – The Delhi Declaration (2006)

Ties with Pakistan (Primarily Military-Centric) Ties with India (Primarily Strategic & Economic)

agreement institutionalized the deployment of Pakistani military personnel for training and advisory roles.

Arms and Training – Saudi Arabia has been a key buyer of Pakistan-made arms, while Pakistani personnel have trained the Saudi Air Force for decades.

Ongoing Cooperation – The Joint Military Cooperation Committee continues to expand joint exercises, training, and military exchanges.

and the Riyadh Declaration (2010) elevated the relationship to a Strategic Partnership.

High-Level Recognition – In 2016, PM Modi was awarded Saudi Arabia's highest civilian honour, the King Abdulaziz Sash.

Diplomatic & Security Ties – Saudi Arabia has often positioned itself as a mediator between India and Pakistan and has avoided strong criticism of India on issues like the abrogation of Article 370.

Major Geopolitical Implications of the Pact

This defence agreement is set to have far-reaching consequences for the security dynamics of South Asia and the Middle East.

Historic Move for Pakistan – This is Pakistan's most significant defence pact in decades, offering it both strategic depth in the Middle East and potential economic benefits.

Potential Impact on India-Saudi Ties – The pact could complicate India's growing strategic and economic relationship with Saudi Arabia, forcing a re-evaluation of security partnerships.

Formalizing Pakistan's Regional Role – The agreement institutionalizes Pakistan's position within West Asia's security architecture, providing it with greater strategic influence.

Arms Acquisition Concerns – A major concern for India is that the pact could enable Pakistan to access advanced US weaponry using Saudi funding, as Washington appears willing to sell arms to Riyadh.

Risk of Conflict Entanglement – A significant risk for Pakistan is that instead of providing a security shield, the pact could drag it into prolonged and complex Middle Eastern conflicts, stretching its military and economic resources.

Conclusion

While the defence agreement is a significant development, its immediate focus appears to be a posturing exercise directed more towards Israel and regional Middle Eastern dynamics than towards India. In reality, the pact may serve to bind Pakistan more closely to Saudi Arabia's regional battles and strategic objectives, rather than providing it with a guaranteed shield in the event of any future bilateral escalation on its eastern front.

Source – https://epaper.thehindu.com/ccidist-ws/th/th_international/issues/148698/OPS/GEDESPR49.1+GKQETTNI8.1.html