

Strategic Expediency or Sway: Analysing Pakistan's Case for Joining the Islamic Military Alliance

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Abstract

The Islamic Military Alliance (IMA) of 34 countries, as proposed by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is a force with the purpose to defeat the soaring menace of terrorism in Muslim states. Saudi Arabia considers Pakistan a frontline ally and included it as a member of this Alliance, albeit without consultation. Pakistan declined to join. The decision has been made from a foreign policy lens - given the country's relationship with Saudi Arabia, Iran (which is not included in the Alliance), other Shiite states and the concept of Muslim *Ummah* - instead of being considered from a strategic military perspective. Given the importance of this development, the article raises key questions while analysing the benefits, or otherwise, of military alliances from the framework of military expansionism, linking them with the mix of geostrategic complexities faced by Pakistan. It debates the plausibility and practicability of Pakistan joining the Middle Eastern venture.

Key words: Military Alliance, Strategy, Military Expenditures, Military Keynesianism, Middle East and Pakistan.

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Introduction

Overt military expansionism has become difficult in the present times due to the creation of United Nations Organization (UNO) to prevent conflicts in the post-World War II environment, increasing global consciousness about moral-ethical issues that make it difficult to justify aggression of one state against another before the world community and media's ever expanding outreach to conflict areas. Nonetheless, despite these obvious constraints on military expansionism in the modern age, one would assert that it still continues to be a pursued strategy, though immaculately hidden under various guises and fancy terms, including for example, the ideas of 'just military intervention' or 'humanitarian aid' etc. In fact, the opportunities for military expansionism afforded by the current geopolitical scenario, have quadrupled and the concept of a 'Military Alliance' offers arguably the most pragmatic and practicable window of opportunity in the modern world which is expediently employed to legitimise as well as physically and financially support military expansionism. For example, the United States-led War on Terror in Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria can easily be hailed as modern day manifestation of military expansionism where the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)'s platform has been used for legitimising expansionism without the sanction and/or blessings of the UNO.

The emerging geopolitical scenario, shifting power balance in the international political order, competing interests of key global stakeholders and players, and rise of non-state actors has led to a set of proposals to form yet another military alliance of 34 nations called the 'Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMAFT)'. A long-standing demand, duly formalised and initiated by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) on December 15, 2015, the Alliance is being supported by various neighbouring, essentially Muslim countries in the Gulf region. Its stated purpose is to address the mounting internal security challenges to these states in the backdrop of their presumed inability to protect themselves individually, especially from terrorism. The growing discontent amongst Muslim populations against undue interference by Western powers in their internal state matters followed by their insincere efforts of conflict resolution in this region to serve their own interests appears to be another

concern driving this proposal, although not mentioned ostensibly anywhere. The Arab Spring is a case in point where NATO, as per common perception, not only mishandled the Qaddafi regime, it also provided space for other actors like Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) to develop their roots in the region. An identical situation has been observed in Syria which has become a battleground for major state and non-state actors without ensuring the objective of security. Although many would argue that this is not just a question of NATO's capacity and capability, but one of the non-serious attitude of external powers in resolving issues by which they are not directly affected, as well as an inability/incapacity of the Muslim World to put their own house/s in order. The argument is not so easy to ignore especially in the wake of NATO's otherwise effectiveness vis-à-vis conflict resolution, even prevention, in matters related to Europe, for example in case of Yugoslavia. In fact, one might deduce from the above that regional disputes should at best be handled by countries of the concerned region, instead of relying on the mercy of extra-regional powers, since by any measure they are the real stakeholders.

In this backdrop, the Islamic Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism (IMA for short) has assumed unprecedented importance for the region. However, the IMA became all the more critically significant for Pakistan when, in a surprise turn of events, it was made nominated to become a member by the Saudi government.

Why Have Pakistan on Board?

Its critically important geostrategic location, large conventional armed forces, huge population with a growing youth bulge, sole nuclear-capable Muslim power, and at the same time, having long historical affinity with the Gulf, especially Saudi Arabia, renders Pakistan a lucrative and unique profile. This might have prompted the call to Pakistan to join the Saudi-led coalition against the Houthi tribe in Yemen in 2015.¹ Although

¹ The Houthis are a Zaidi tribe that emerged as a predominantly Shia-led religious-political movement, initially in northern Yemen in the 1990s. In the Yemeni Revolution of 2011, the Houthis participated in protests and fought against former President of Yemen Ali

Pakistan was reluctant in participating in the coalition, nonetheless, the Yemen crisis opened a new set of possibilities in the whirlpool of complexities surrounding the region. Even more surprisingly, and against common apprehensions, despite non-participation, relations between Pakistan and its friends in the Gulf countries did not change as suspected by Ritzinger² and Panda,³ nor did the country lose its strategic importance for the region. This became all the more evident when Pakistan was invited to join the IMA against terrorism in Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Libya and Afghanistan,⁴ as stated by Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry⁵ just a few months after the Saudi-led *Operation Decisive Storm* in Yemen.

Following this development, while still maintaining an ambiguous and vague position on its participation in the Alliance, then sitting Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and then Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif, nevertheless, attended the biggest military exercise in the region's recent history, *Northern Thunder*, conducted by an alliance of twenty countries in the Saudi city of Hafr al-Batin.⁶

While the Government of Pakistan (GoP) is inclined to helping the region in the domain of intelligence sharing, capacity building, provision of military hardware and formulation of counter-narrative to extremist propaganda,⁷ its 'ambivalent' position on the IMA is problematic since it highlights inadequacy of the state to debate this critical issue beyond its relationship with Saudi Arabia, Iran and other Shiite states; internal

Abdullah Saleh with due assistance of other opposition parties. By 2015, Houthis were able to take over the government in Sana'a and controlled most of northern Yemen. On March 27, 2015, a KSA-led force comprising coalition of Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait, UAE, Egypt, Jordan, Morocco, and Sudan was deployed to contain Houthi threats in the region.

² Louis Ritzinger, "Why Pakistan is Staying out of Yemen," *National Interest*, April 27, 2015, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/why-pakistan-staying-out-yemen-12730>.

³ Ankit Panda, "Pakistan's Neutrality in the Yemen Crisis: Brought to You by China," *Diplomat*, April 28, 2015, <http://thediplomat.com/2015/04/pakistans-neutrality-in-the-yemen-crisis-brought-to-you-by-china/>.

⁴ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Pakistan Surprised by its Inclusion in 34-Nation Military Alliance," *Dawn*, December 16, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1226723>.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Shahid M. Amin, "Pak Role in Saudi-Led Military Alliance," *Pakistan Observer*, accessed September 8, 2017, <http://pakobserver.net/pak-role-in-saudi-led-military-alliance/>.

⁷ "PM may Define Role in Saudi-Led Military Alliance," *Dawn*, March 9, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1244519>.

politics; and the lens of the Muslim *Ummah*⁸. Such a stance ignores key strategic aspects like weighing the possible outcomes of Pakistan's participation in the Middle Eastern military alliance, especially for the purpose of balancing against regional challenges. The problem with the former approach is that it tends to obscure those many strategic questions from the eye which should have actually informed any decision in this regard.

This article explores the benefits, or otherwise, of military alliances from the framework of military expansionism; and traces the mix of geostrategic complexities faced by Pakistan. It debates the plausibility and practicability of joining the Middle Eastern venture from a military standpoint.

Military Alliances: Analysing Pros and Cons

Alliance and State Interests

The two major alliances of post-World War II, including NATO and the Warsaw Pact, were created to provide security to two ideological worlds - communism and capitalism. The members of these military alliances contributed in terms of resources and ideological support. The alliances in turn provided security to member states. Bergsmann considers 'alliance' as an 'explicit agreement among states in the realm of national security in which the partners promise mutual assistance in the form of a substantial contribution of resources in the case of a certain contingency the arising of which is uncertain.'⁹ The referent object in an alliance system is security and it has to be achieved through formation of an alliance system as suggested. However, for Tertrais, there are other reasons for forming an alliance like commitment by member nations to fight alongside each other because of shared values and ideas; also it reduces the cost of

⁸ Amin, "Pak Role in Saudi-Led Military Alliance."

⁹ Stefan Bergsmann, "The Concept of Military Alliance," in *Small States and Alliances*, eds. Erich Reiter and Heinz Gartner (Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2001), www.bundesheer.at/pdf_pool/publikationen/05_small_states_04.pdf.

engagement; and smaller allies obtain the protection of a stronger ally.¹⁰ Citing the example of NATO, Tertrais points out that United States (US) allies acquire security guarantees, access to technological and political-military circles, and smaller countries benefit by modernising their militaries and installations through partnership.¹¹ However, alliances also have issues, e.g., smaller states are additionally vulnerable to the same risks faced by the stronger ally and the life of the alliance depends upon common strategic and political interests.¹²

Military Alliance: A Means for Expansionism

Military alliances have an innate desire to grow and expand and can prove to be a more effective means for expansionism. However, in an alliance system, the desire to expand and grow is subject to a collective course so that whenever, such an opportunity arises, the platform of the alliance is used by member states to expand and grow. Even in case of NATO, a modern post-World War II military alliance, Faulkner, while quoting from the memoirs of Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko during the formative years of NATO, points out that fierce discussion took place between the heads of governments of former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), USA, Britain and France over the purpose of NATO as a force of peace or one aimed at swallowing East Germany and militarisation of West Germany.¹³ Without debating the original purpose of NATO during its formative years, ever since the end of the Cold War and disintegration of erstwhile USSR, as of today although it has long lost the logic of its formation, its members continue to increase.¹⁴ Ironically, NATO, while portending to be an emblem of defensive approach during the Cold War, has steadily and consistently not remained as restrained (or

¹⁰ Bruno Tertrais, "The Changing Nature of Military Alliances," *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 2 (2004): 135-150 (136), https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/twq04springtertrais.pdf.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 141.

¹² *Ibid.*, 142.

¹³ Mike Faulkner, "NATO 1949: The Origin of an Offensive, Expansionist, Imperialist Military Alliance," *Global Research*, November 13, 2014, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/nato-1949-the-origin-of-an-offensive-expansionist-imperialist-military-alliance/5413844>.

¹⁴ NATO, *Nato.int*, accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.nato.int/>.

in other words 'defensive') in the post-Cold War era and its footprints are now found, along with its leading member USA, in almost every conflict area - from Afghanistan and Iraq to Libya and Somalia.¹⁵ The cornerstone of NATO alliance lies in Article 5 of collective defence,¹⁶ and under the same pretext it is now expanding its role. Suffice to say, NATO as a military alliance has proven to be a more effective modern day means of military expansionism.

Interestingly, if one were to draw a preliminary conclusion in the aftermath of Britain's historic Brexit vote,¹⁷ a military alliance like NATO is, in fact, more likely to outlive an economic alliance in comparison, proving itself to be far more effective in guarding security challenges (even of individual states). No wonder Britain has openly declared that it will remain part of NATO and will only be moving out of the European Union (EU).¹⁸

Military Alliance and Keynesianism

Military alliances allow for a lot more spillover effects on member economies than one may expect, not only by provision of collective security, which is an essential enabler for socio-economic development, but also by leading to an increase in their military expenditures. If one were to borrow the logic of Military Keynesianism, especially citing Emile Benoit's seminal work¹⁹ based on data from 44 developing countries, an increase in a country's military expenditures positively impacts its economy. Hence, the economics of alliance systems often have

¹⁵ "NATO's Operations 1949 – Present," *Nato.int*, accessed April 12, 2016, www.aco.nato.int/resources/21/nato%20operations,%201949-present.pdf.

¹⁶ NATO, *Nato.int*.

¹⁷ Brexit denotes 'British' and 'exit' - a prospective withdrawal of United Kingdom from the European Union (EU). On June 23, 2016, 51.9 per cent of the UK electorate decided in a referendum in favour of exiting the EU, which will be enforced on March 29, 2019.

¹⁸ Katie Mansfield, "We are Not Withdrawing from the World: We're still in NATO, Commonwealth, AND Europe," *Daily Express*, June 25, 2016, <http://www.express.co.uk/news/uk/683367/UK-not-withdrawing-world-Michael-Fallon-NATO-Commonwealth-UN-Brexit>.

¹⁹ Emile Benoit, "Growth and Defence in Developing Countries," *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 26, no. 2 (1978): 271-280.

a desirable stimulatory impact on individual economies, especially smaller growing economies.

Military expenditures (ME) are those ‘made by the armed forces, peace-keeping forces, defence ministries and other government agencies engaged in defence projects.’²⁰ Although there has been competing evidence about this assertion of stimulatory effects of increasing military expenditures, nonetheless in a recent study, Samuelson and Nordhaus²¹ supported Benoit’s argument²² that demand-led economic growth may indeed occur by increasing investment in human capital, through provision of education and skills to the workforce, especially in developing countries, where military industries might be invaluable in the provision of employment opportunities. Increase in military expenditures is advocated by Feldstein as well for countering deep economic recession. He suggests an increase in government spending in the field of defence procurement and rise in operations and maintenance to generate additional jobs for the same purpose.²³ Feridun and others outline similar conclusions while studying the effects of military expenditures in the militarised region of Cyprus²⁴ which the Middle East is increasingly turning into. Therefore, even if individual states are incapable of increasing spending on defence-related matters, the very dynamics of a military alliance system will bring positive spillover impact on member states.

However, military alliances are usually marked by disproportionate participation by partners in terms of cost and military share. Olson and Zeckhauser are of the opinion that bigger member nations usually bear the larger cost in an alliance as compared to smaller partners due to their

²⁰ SIPRI, “SIPRI Definition of Military Expenditure” (Solna: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute), accessed October 2, 2016, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex/definitions>.

²¹ Paul A. Samuelson and William D. Nordhaus, *Economics*, 19th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill Education, 2009).

²² Emile Benoit, *Defence and Economic Growth in Developing Countries* (Lanham MD: Lexington Books, 1973).

²³ Marin Feldstein, “Defence Spending would be Great Stimulus,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 24, 2008, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB123008280526532053>.

²⁴ Mete Feridun, Bansi Sawhney and Muhammad Shahbaz, “The Impact of Military Spending on Economic Growth: The Case of North Cyprus,” *Defence and Peace Economics* 22, no. 5 (2011): 555-562.

divergent or respective national interests.²⁵ Plumper and Neumayer are of the view that this provides leverage to smaller states to be free-riders in a military alliance,²⁶ in other words, an economic beneficiary of the alliance system. Discussing the case of US in NATO as a stronger partner, they point out that other powers are likely to under-invest or become free-riders as their interest may not match that of the US.²⁷ For example, while commenting on the contributions of three relatively new members of NATO - Hungary, Poland and Czech Republic for Operation Unified Protector, conducted in Libya, Bell and Hendrickson point out that since joining, Hungary decreased its ME and benefitted as a free-rider from NATO²⁸ accruing multiple benefits such as guaranteed security, which as mentioned before, is a critical enabler for economic prosperity. Two, states have the freedom to take their focus off security concerns and concentrate on internal well-being while having more money at their expense diverted for development projects (in case there was a trade-off earlier). Three, as in case of Poland, the opportunity to record an improved and impressive military force projection. Otherwise, these three Visegrad states were in danger of becoming politically irrelevant after the Cold War.²⁹

Advocating Pakistan's Case for Joining the Islamic Military Alliance

Given the above mentioned factors, Pakistan should join the Alliance. However, there are a variety of other reasons as well including the

²⁵ Mancur Olson, Jr. and Richard Zeckhauser, *An Economic Theory of Alliances*, memorandum (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1966), https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_memoranda/.../RM4297.pdf.

²⁶ Thomas Plümpner and Eric Neumayer, "Free-Riding in Alliances: Testing an Old Theory with a New Method," *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 32, no. 3 (2015): 249-250, <http://www.lse.ac.uk/website-archive/GeographyAndEnvironment/neumayer/pdf/Free-riding-in-Alliances.pdf>.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Joseph P. Bell and Ryan C. Hendrickson, "NATO's Visegrad Allies and the Bombing of Qaddafi: The Consequence of Alliance Free-Riders," *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies* 25, no. 2 (2012): 149-161.

²⁹ Ibid.

presence of large Pakistani diaspora in the Middle East, their share in the total remittances sent to the country annually, ongoing cooperation in the security sector, besides the historic and religious affinities.

Pakistan's Relationship with the Middle East

Besides enjoying historic ties, owing largely to religious affinities, Pakistan has strong economic and security relations with Middle Eastern countries, as it provides them a consistent source of skilled manpower. As of 2013-17, the official figure of registered overseas workers in the Middle East - as indicated by the Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Government of Pakistan, is 54.80 per cent³⁰ of the total number of overseas Pakistanis across the globe (Table 1). KSA alone hosts the largest number, that is, 1.6 million followed by UAE 1.2 million, Oman 0.18 million and Qatar 0.04 million.³¹

³⁰ Statistics given by the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Pakistan, quoted in the Ministry of Finance, GoI, "Pakistan Economic Survey 2016-17" (Government of Pakistan), 205, accessed September 5, 2017, http://www.finance.gov.pk/survey_1617.html.

³¹ Ibid., 205.

Table-1
**Number of Registered Overseas Pakistani Workers
in the Middle East**

	Countries	2013	2014	2015	2016
1.	UAE	273,234	350,522	326,986	295,647
2.	Bahrain	9,600	9,226	9,029	8,226
3.	Oman	47,794	39,793	47,788	45,085
4.	Qatar	8,119	10,042	12,741	9,706
5.	Saudi Arabia	270,502	312,489	522,750	462,598
Total		609,249	722,072	919,294	821,262

Source: Statistics given by the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Pakistan, quoted in Ministry of Finance, GoI, "Pakistan Economic Survey 2016-17."

According to estimates given in the Economic Survey of Pakistan (FY 2016-17), there are approximately 9 million overseas Pakistani workers around the globe. Majority of these workers are in the Middle East, especially Saudi Arabia. Remittances received by Pakistan during 2017, and the share of KSA, other Middle Eastern countries and the rest of the world are shown in Table 2:³²

³² Mohiuddin Aazim quoting the figures rounded up by State Bank of Pakistan in his article, "Remittances: Heavy Reliance on GCC Nations is Imprudent," *Dawn*, August 21, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1352855>.

Table-2
Country-wise Inflow of Remittances
to Pakistan (FY2017)

Countries	Inflow of Remittances in FY 2017 (USD Bn)	Share in Total USD 19.303bn FY17 Remittances (Per cent)
KSA	5.47	28.30
UAE	4.31	22.30
Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain	2.324	12
USA	2.443	12.6
EU Countries	2.338	12.1
Rest of the World	1.935	10

Source: Aazim, "Remittances: Heavy Reliance on GCC Nations is Imprudent."

The tables show that remittances from the Middle East amount to 62.60 per cent of the total remittances sent home by Pakistanis living abroad. Total remittances make up approximately 6 per cent of the country's GDP,³³ which means that approximately two-thirds of the total remittances that come from the Middle East form roughly 4 per cent of the GDP. However, the trend is mutually beneficial since the Middle East needs relatively cheap yet skilled manpower and labour class from Pakistan as well.

³³ Sakib Sherani, "Pakistan's Remittances," *Dawn*, April 17, 2015, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1176411>.

The other important area of cooperation between Pakistan and Middle Eastern countries is security.³⁴ Pakistan has been providing military training and military hardware including arms, ammunition and equipment as well as supported military organisations in these countries since the late 1960s.³⁵

Pakistan trained UAE forces for taking over security from British forces in 1968 and this mechanism was formalised by signing a protocol in the mid-1970s. The huge concentration of pilots, experts and technical manpower in Abu Dhabi Air Force was once considered an extension of the Pakistan Air Force. Establishment of the Defence Consultative Group in 1994 further institutionalised cooperation between both states in the fields of joint defence production, military exercises, training and intelligence sharing.³⁶

Defence cooperation between Pakistan and Qatar was formalised through a memorandum signed in December 1983 and subsequently replaced by a Protocol in 1985. In 2010, both signed two memorandums on defence cooperation.³⁷

Military cooperation with Bahrain commenced in 1971 covering mainly the fields of military training and provision of deputations to the Bahrain Defence Forces. Cooperation was institutionalised in the form of a Joint Program Review Group (JPRG) formed in 1985. Many Pakistanis along with other foreigners serve in Bahrain's police, National Guard and Armed Forces.

The main feature of military cooperation with Oman has been deputation of Pakistan's Armed Forces personnel to the Sultan's Armed Forces.³⁸

The Saudi-Pak relationship is time-tested. The most significant military assistance was given to KSA during the Makkah crisis in 1979,³⁹

³⁴ Sehar Kamran, *Pak-Gulf Defence and Security Cooperation*, report (Rawalpindi: Center for Pakistan and Gulf Studies, 2013), <http://cpakgulf.org/documents/Pak-Gulf-Security-Ties-final.pdf>.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Kamran, *Pak-Gulf Defence and Security Cooperation*.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

in the shape of deployment of two divisions in different parts of KSA under the Protocol Agreement of 1982⁴⁰ to provide security, whereas one armoured brigade was deployed at Tabuk from 1982-88.⁴¹ Another major deployment occurred in 1991 during the first Gulf War when Pakistan deployed 13,000 troops and 6,000 advisors to protect the holy cities of Makkah and Medina.⁴² Another example of cooperation has been the Al-Samsam military exercises between both the countries. Since 2004, five rounds have been conducted, which is indicative of the deepening defence relationship between the two nations.⁴³

Ties have, however, seen setbacks on two occasions: during the Gulf War in 1991 following Iraq's invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990, there began a debate within Pakistan's public, political and military circles pertaining to two different issues - Saddam Hussain's invasion of Kuwait and the US war against Iraq.⁴⁴ Although Pakistan sent its troops for the security of its age-old Middle Eastern ally without being part of the US coalition and only for the protection of the holy cities of Makkah and Medina,⁴⁵ the US was seen as imposing its hegemony over the Middle East. The second such occasion came during Operation Decisive Storm initiated by KSA against Zaidi Shiite Houthi rebels of Yemen in 2015, when Saudi request for ground and air support was declined by Pakistan as the Parliament did not endorse sending troops. The obvious reasons for

⁴⁰ Khushboo Ahmad and Muhammad Faisal, "Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Strategic Relations: An Assessment," *CISS Insight: Quarterly News & Views* II, no. 3 (2014): 23-37, <http://ciss.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/P-3-I.-3-V.-3.pdf>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Kamran, *Pak-Gulf Defence and Security Cooperation*.

⁴³ "Pak-Saudi Joint Exercise Underway since March 18 in KSA: ISPR," *Express Tribune*, March 30, 2105, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/861391/pak-saudi-joint-exercise-to-be-held-on-march-18-in-ksa-ispr/>.

⁴⁴ Editor's Note: The latter began following deployment of troops to Saudi Arabia. While Pakistan's government dispatched 11,000 troops for Riyadh's assistance on Saudi request, primarily stationed at Tabuk, there was large-scale public and military opposition to the idea of supporting the US war in the region, albeit government fears of alienating the US. For details see, Ayesha Siddiq, *Development of Pakistan's Foreign Policy: Case Study of the Gulf Crisis-1990* (Islamabad: Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency, 2014).

⁴⁵ Shahid M. Amin, *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: A Reappraisal*, 2nd ed. (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2010), 136.

such a decision according to Riedel⁴⁶ and other writers was the already over-stretched Pakistani military forces in its Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA), and avoiding sectarian fallout,⁴⁷ since a common apprehension was that joining the Operation might actually strain Pakistan's relationship with its neighbour Iran.⁴⁸ However, in order to avoid any blow-back to Pak-Saudi relations, then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif guaranteed a strong response if Saudi sovereignty was threatened.⁴⁹ Subsequently, Pakistan was nominated to be part of the Saudi-led Military Alliance whose stated purpose is to combat terrorism according to the Defence Minister and Deputy Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman Al-Saud.⁵⁰ The above outline clearly shows that Pakistan not only has a strong relationship with KSA, but also the Kingdom's other neighbouring countries.

Valued Position for the Pakistan Military

The IMA is an effort towards attainment of self-sufficiency in security-related matters, particularly in the wake of increasing internal security-related issues in the Arab world and to shed dependency on military assistance, particularly force contribution, from Western nations. One may question as to why the Arab world, particularly KSA, has taken self-assumed leadership role in the IMA. Two obvious explanations could be the overwhelming concentration of Muslim countries in the Middle East;

⁴⁶ Bruce Riedel, "Pakistan Resisting Yemen War, But will its Relationship with Saudi Arabia Survive?" *Brookings*, April 9, 2015, <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/markaz/posts/2015/04/09-yemen-saudi-pakistan-iran-riedel>.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Kashif Mumtaz, "The Middle East in Flux: How Should Pakistan Respond?" *Strategic Studies* 35, no. 2 (2015): 136-156, <http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Kashif-35-No.2.pdf>.

⁴⁹ Irfan Haider, "Threat to Saudi Arabia will Evoke Strong Reaction from Pakistan: Nawaz," *Dawn*, March 26, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1172016>.

⁵⁰ Adam Withnall, "Saudi Arabia Assembles 34 Muslim Country Coalition to Fight 'Terrorism' – But There's no Mention of Isis," *Independent*, December 15, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/saudi-arabia-assembles-coalition-of-34-muslim-countries-to-fight-terrorism-but-there-s-no-mention-of-a6773546.html>.

and the oil wealth in this region. As for the first explanation, according to Pew estimates of 2010, approximately 19.9 per cent Muslim population lives in Middle East – North Africa.⁵¹ Besides that, Saudi Arabia is particularly revered in the Muslim world being custodian of the Makkah and Medina.

While the stated objective of IMA is to fight rising terrorism in Syria, Iraq, Egypt, and Afghanistan, Jenkins contends that this Saudi initiative could further ‘deepen the sectarian divide,’ which already ‘drives the conflict in Syria and Iraq.’⁵² He questions the very objective of an alliance which will be less about Islamic states fighting against the Islamic State (IS), and more about fighting against the Republic of Iran and its proxies in Syria and Iraq.⁵³ Iran not having been invited to join has already expressed similar apprehensions.⁵⁴ Jenkins is also of the view that contrarily, this is an issue of prestige for the Saudi kingdom in order to dominate and be assertive in the region instead of developing a true military alliance.⁵⁵

Despite aspersions that the IMA is just a show of force, Riyadh has moved quickly towards its formation and declaring that it would share intelligence, combat violent ideology and deploy troops if necessary.⁵⁶ This involves a wide variety of tasks for the Alliance on ideological and military fronts in different Muslim countries across the globe.⁵⁷ By February 2016, Saudi Arabia organised a military exercise under the

⁵¹ Pew Research Center, “Region: Middle East – North Africa” (Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center, 2011), <http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-middle-east/>.

⁵² Brian Michael Jenkins, *A Saudi -Led Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism: Welcome Muscle in the Fight Against Terrorism, Desert Mirage, or Bad Idea?* report (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2016), 2, <https://www.rand.org/pubs/perspectives/PE189.html>.

⁵³ Ibid., 5.

⁵⁴ “Pakistan Part of 34-State Islamic Military Alliance against Terrorism, Says KSA,” *Dawn*, December 15, 2015, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1226468>.

⁵⁵ Jenkins, *A Saudi -Led Military Alliance to Fight Terrorism*, 9.

⁵⁶ Effat Naseer, “Islamic Military Alliance,” *Aaj News*, December 22, 2015, <http://aaj.tv/2015/12/islamic-military-alliance/>.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

Alliance called 'North Thunder'⁵⁸ with 20 Arab and Muslim nations⁵⁹ participating with their land, air and naval forces.⁶⁰ Declared the 'largest and most important military manoeuvre in the history of the region', the exercise was meant to highlight that the Alliance stands united in maintaining peace and stability. Then Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and then COAS General Raheel Sharif also participated in the concluding parade of the exercise. During this visit, KSA entrusted Pakistan, 'to chalk out a framework for the proposed Military Alliance and to lead the initiative.' There was also news around the same time that the General may be appointed as Commander-in-Chief of the Alliance on his retirement from the post of COAS in November 2016,⁶¹ which he subsequently accepted in January 2017.⁶²

Contrary to the argument portended within domestic circles that Pakistan is being asked to become a mercenary force for the rich ME states, the principal, and ostensibly leadership role offered to Pakistan in the Alliance,⁶³ in fact speaks volumes of how the largest Armed Forces in the Muslim world, and that too of a nuclear Pakistan, are perceived in this region. Not only will being part of the IMA put the country's Forces in a unique position within a military alliance system potentially larger than NATO, they will have a wider canvas to think about and a theatre of operations more diverse than the current. It will be a chance to engage at all tiers - from provision of senior military officers for developing

⁵⁸ Faith Karimi, "Saudi Arabia Launches Military Exercise with 20 Nations," *CNN.com*, February 15, 2016, <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/02/15/middleeast/saudi-arabia-military-exercises/>.

⁵⁹ Editor's Note: United Arab Emirates, Jordan, Bahrain, Senegal, Sudan, Kuwait, Maldives, Morocco, Pakistan, Chad, Tunisia, Comoros, Djibouti, Oman, Qatar, Malaysia, Egypt, Mauritania and Mauritius, in addition to the peninsula shield forces.

⁶⁰ "Saudi Arabia Concludes North Thunder Exercises," *Al-Arabia*, March 10, 2016, <http://english.alarabiya.net/en/News/middle-east/2016/03/10/Saudi-Arabia-concludes-North-Thunder-exercises-.html>.

⁶¹ Abdul Manan, "Pakistan's JF-17, Elite Commandos Perform at Parade Marking End of 'North Thunder'," *Express Tribune*, March 11, 2016, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/1063951/pakistans-jf-17-elite-commandos-perform-at-parade-marking-end-of-north-thunder/>.

⁶² "Raheel Sharif Appointed Chief of Islamic Military Alliance, Confirms Khawaja Asif," *Dawn*, January 6, 2017, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1306798>.

⁶³ *Ibid.*

strategies, specialist officers for conceptualising and organising trainings, planning and conducting operations and logistics, to civil engineers, medical doctors and troops - as part of military formations participating in the Alliance.

As most Muslim countries are affected by terrorism, therefore, the referent object and ideological bonding for a common platform is 'security' as highlighted by Bergsmann.⁶⁴ Contemporary challenges like the Arab Spring, organisations like Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), where an individual state may consider itself handicapped on its own and be more inclined towards a collective approach, the IMA can be a game-changer. One must not forget that an important aspect of any alliance is providing support to its member states in their hour of need which opens new vistas of cooperation and leads to reshaping relations, both within and with the outside world.

While Pakistan's presence in the concluding session of the 'North Thunder' exercise was indicative of the country's growing interest in the IMA, a far more practical question is how far the GoP is prepared to go in supporting it. With Raheel Sharif as the IMA's Commander-in-Chief, a change of policy in this direction may reap far more advantages than are being thought of at the moment. Above all, this will also allow Pakistan to use its position to re-define its strategic interests in the region.

Strategic Advantages for Pakistan in the Proposed Military Alliance

Pakistan faces innumerable challenges from its regional neighbouring states. The growing Indian and US influence on its western borders is upsetting regional strategic stability in South Asia. The much propagated end-game in Kabul is tilting to further promote Indian influence over Afghanistan, whereas Iran while trying to jettison from the pre-Iranian nuclear deal situation in 2015, is collaborating with India and getting closer to the US to achieve its lost position in the international system. The obvious indicators to this effect are India-Iran collaboration on

⁶⁴ Bergsmann, "The Concept of Military Alliance."

Chabahar⁶⁵ and killing of Tehrik-e-Taliban leader Mullah Mansour by the US in a drone attack, while entering from Iran into the border region of Pakistan.⁶⁶ Assessing the situation, Khan analyses that Pakistan has been pushed into a two-frontal 'security dilemma.' His explanation includes conventional threats emanating from a bellicose India on its eastern borders; the developing situation on the western borders due to US presence; elements hostile to Pakistan among Afghan population; increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan; and the internal security situation in FATA, Balochistan up to Karachi.⁶⁷

The arrest of six Indian Research and Analysis Wing (RAW)-trained Afghan spies from Pishin indicates a growing Indo-Afghan nexus based on increased intelligence-related subversive activities inside Pakistan in May 2016.⁶⁸ The capture on March 3, 2016 and subsequent confessions of a serving Indian Naval officer Kulbhushan Yadav affiliated with RAW, having been assigned the task of fomenting unrest in Balochistan and Karachi is only 'one' evidence out of many that signify signs of proxy warfare. Interestingly, he had also entered Pakistan under a fake Muslim name through Iran.⁶⁹ The revelation created some unease

⁶⁵ "India and Iran Sign 'Historic' Chabahar Port Deal," *BBC News*, May 23, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-36356163>.

⁶⁶ Nic Robertson and Jamie Crawford, "Obama: Taliban Leader's Death Marks 'Milestone'," *CNN.com*, May 23 2016, <http://edition.cnn.com/2016/05/21/politics/u-s-conducted-airstrike-against-taliban-leader-mullah-mansour/>.

⁶⁷ Zulfqar Khan, "Pakistan's Evolving Strategic Outlook: Strategy and Nuclear Deterrence," *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 28, no. 1 (2016): 103–121, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/296430115_Pakistan's_Evolving_Strategic_Outlook_Strategy_and_Nuclear_Deterrence.

⁶⁸ Dawood Rehman, "Six RAW-Backed Afghan Spies Arrested for Target Killings inside Balochistan," *Daily Pakistan Global*, May 26, 2016, <https://en.dailypakistan.com.pk/headline/pakistan-busts-nexus-of-raw-backed-afghan-army-officials-involved-in-targeted-killings-inside-balochistan/>.

⁶⁹ "Pakistan Releases 'Confession Video' of Indian Man Arrested for 'Spying'," *Indian Express*, April 12, 2017, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/pakistan-army-claims-arrested-spy-kul-bhoshan-yadav-was-a-serving-indian-naval-officer/>.

during Iranian President Hassan Rouhani's much-awaited visit to Pakistan on March 25, 2016.⁷⁰

Admittedly thus, internal security issues, specifically terrorism, are not the only challenge Pakistan is confronted with at the moment, which signifies the need for 'balancing' in the region. Although, Mearsheimer considers 'balancing' an offensive strategy, yet, it provides space for 'defensive alliance' and 'external balancing.' In a 'defensive alliance,' threatened states look for an alliance to contain their dangerous opponent, while 'external balancing' is limited to diplomatic manoeuvres.⁷¹

Despite the successes achieved by Pakistan on its internal security front, whether it is the counter-militancy operations in FATA and adjoining areas since 2009, or much recent efforts by the Government like initiation of the National Action Plan (NAP),⁷² and Operation Zarb-e-Azb,⁷³ external challenges seem far more formidable than before. The Kulbhushan episode led many analysts to conclude that there is a growing Indo-Iran nexus and an Indo-Afghan nexus geared to sabotage or at least damage the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project. This theory is often corroborated with evidence in shape of the USD 500 million Indian investment on development of the Chabahar Port in Iran, approximately 200 kilometres away from the Gwadar Port in Pakistan. In fact, the extraordinary prepotency attached to the Indian Prime Minister Modi's visit to Iran in May 2016 as reflected by Iranian newspapers like *E'temad*, and international media outlets⁷⁴ is indicative of warming up of both countries towards each other. The killing of Mullah Mansour inside

⁷⁰ Muhammad Saleh Zaafir, "RAW be Restrained from Using Iranian Soil: COAS," *Geo News*, March 27, 2016, <https://www.geo.tv/latest/102977-RAW-be-restrained-from-using-iranian-soil-COAS>.

⁷¹ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, The Norton Series in World Politics (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2002).

⁷² NACTA, "20 Points of National Action Plan," *National Counter Terrorism Authority Pakistan*, accessed May 31, 2016, <http://nacta.gov.pk/>.

⁷³ Inter Services Public Relations, GoI, "Operation Zarb-e-Azb" (Government of Pakistan, 2016), <https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-zarb-e-azb-archive>.

⁷⁴ "India and Iran Sign 'Historic' Chabahar Port Deal," *BBC News*.

Pakistan near the Afghan and Iran border,⁷⁵ invited further criticism by the domestic intelligentsia.⁷⁶

The Riyadh Summit in May 2017 with voices filled with anti-Iran rhetoric and an unpromising position accorded to Pakistan⁷⁷ have put the GoP in an even more complex situation. Undoubtedly, Islamabad is walking a tight rope with a dire need to carefully strategise its diplomatic moves and military positions to avoid any backlash.

For one, the issue needs to be discussed threadbare in the Parliament, where all political and state representatives are taken on board by explaining the issue at hand from the wider and long-term perspective of military strategy, not just international relations, amply describing advantages of becoming part of the IMA and possible measures to assuage Iranian apprehensions. For example, Pakistan may offer to limit its joining the Alliance, purely from a strategic standpoint, to the domain of 'counterterrorism', allaying fears against any sectarian bias, in such a way that it is accepted as a neutral player.

Secondly, Pakistan should make it clear to the audience at home and abroad that joining the IMA should not be taken as a step against any particular country, rather as a sovereign country's decision to safeguard its own strategic interests, just like Iran leaves no stone unturned when it comes to watching its own interests even if that means going in cahoots with Pakistan's not-so-friendly neighbour India. Thirdly, as for Iranian apprehensions on a possible 'teaming up' of the Arab world against Shiite Iran through this Alliance, since Pakistan has been offered a leadership role, this might actually lend it a strong voice in Alliance affairs, enabling it to act as a bridge amidst the purported KSA-Iran polarisation and playing its role to avoid any form of sectarianism-based conflicts in the Muslim world.

In this connection, a cursory look at the existing relationship between the two neighbours would be helpful in terms of allaying fears or

⁷⁵ Robertson and Crawford, "Obama: Taliban Leader's Death Marks 'Milestone'."

⁷⁶ M Ilyas Khan, "Mullah Mansour: The Trail of Clues after Taliban Leader's Death," *BBC News*, May 24, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-36369236>.

⁷⁷ Umair Jamal, "Reviewing Nawaz Sharif's Time at the 'Muslim NATO' Summit in Riyadh," *Diplomat*, May 25, 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/2017/05/reviewing-nawaz-sharifs-time-at-the-muslim-nato-summit-in-riyadh/>.

apprehensions on either side of the border. Pakistan shares a 900 kilometres border with Iran⁷⁸ - a key factor which makes it an important regional partner due to proximity. The people on both sides share great religious affinity with 20-25 per cent of Pakistan's population being Shia.⁷⁹ Pakistan has put up considerable efforts to ensure security to its Shia community given its nationwide crackdown on Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and its expressive anti-Shia partner Lashkar-e-Jhangvi during Zarb-e-Azb⁸⁰ and Radd-ul-Fassasd.⁸¹ In addition, Pakistan is the 11th largest trade partner of Iran, with both countries hoping to increase bilateral trade from USD 359 million to USD 5 billion by 2021.⁸² Both are desirous of continuing the Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline, also known as the 'peace pipeline' which is presently held up due to financial constraints.⁸³ Nonetheless, its early completion will further cement the relationship. Given its trade and cultural ties, Iran should see Pakistan as a sure deterrent against any undesirable hostility that it fears might be the *raison d'être* behind formation of the IMA.

Rebalancing for Regional Stability

At the same time, Pakistan cannot afford to ignore the concerted attempts by some regional and extra-regional powers at rebalancing regional stability. Comparing fate of the US-Pakistan F-16 aircraft deal⁸⁴ with the former's sustained (albeit failed) efforts to include India in the Nuclear

⁷⁸ "Geography of Pakistan," *Revolvy.com*, accessed September 6, 2017,

<https://www.revolvy.com/main/index.php?s=Geography%20of%20Pakistan>.

⁷⁹ "World Shia Muslims Population," *Shianumbers.com*, accessed September 6, 2017, <http://shianumbers.com/shia-muslims-population.html>.

⁸⁰ Umbreen Javaid, "Operation Zarb-e-Azb: A Successful Initiative to Curtail Terrorism," *Research Journal of South Asian Studies* 30, no.2 (2015): 43-58.

⁸¹ Inter Services Public Relations, GoI, press release no. 87 (Government of Pakistan, 2017), https://www.ispr.gov.pk/front/main.asp?o=t-press_release&id=3773&cat=army.

⁸² "Pak-Iran FTA – An Optimistic Exercise," *Business Recorder*, July 18, 2017, <http://www.brecorder.com/2017/07/18/359846/pak-iran-fta-an-optimistic-exercise/>.

⁸³ "Iran-Pakistan Gas Pipeline Project Status," *Times of Islamabad*, March 7, 2017, <https://timesofislamabad.com/iran-pakistan-gas-pipeline-project-status/2017/03/07/>.

⁸⁴ Baqir Sajjad Syed, "Time Running Out for Pakistan on F-16 Decision," *Dawn*, May 21, 2016, <http://www.dawn.com/news/1259738>.

Suppliers Group (NSG),⁸⁵ and the August 2016 signing of Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMAO)⁸⁶ allowing the two to share each other's military bases need to be seen as efforts to tilt the balance of regional stability in India's favour. The country's successful Prithvi missile interceptor test for Advance Air Defence in May 2016⁸⁷ may in fact push Pakistan further into this Catch-22 situation and reinvigorate the arms race in the South Asian region.

Another emerging challenge for Pakistan is India's effort to divert pressure from the indigenous uprising in Indian Held Kashmir (IHK) by portraying it as Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. At the peak of IHK uprising, India blamed Pakistan for the Uri attack at Indian Brigade Headquarters,⁸⁸ and by this way, not only was it able to successfully cancel the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit planned at Islamabad in November 2016, but also manipulated smaller states like Bhutan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan in doing the same.⁸⁹ The purpose has been to isolate, restrict and 'punish' Pakistan for politically and diplomatically supporting Kashmiris, who are struggling for their right of self-determination.⁹⁰

Pakistan needs to maximise its options to ensure strategic stability in the region. The main aim of 'North Thunder' was to unify what is

⁸⁵ Saima Sial, "4 Questions on India's Nuclear Suppliers Group Bid," *Diplomat*, June 2, 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/06/4-questions-on-indias-nuclear-suppliers-group-bid/>.

⁸⁶ Sushant Singh, "India, US Sign Key Defence Pact to Use Each Other's Bases for Repair, Supplies," *Indian Express*, August 31, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/manohar-parrikar-signs-key-logistics-defence-pact-with-us-3004581/>.

⁸⁷ "India Successfully Tests Supersonic Interceptor Missile Capable of Destroying Enemy Missiles," *Indian Express*, May 15, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/india-successfully-tests-supersonic-interceptor-missile-capable-of-destroying-enemy-missiles-2801737/>.

⁸⁸ "India Blames Pakistan after Kashmir Attack Kills 17 Soldiers," *Telegraph*, September 18, 2016, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/09/18/seventeen-indian-soldiers-and-four-militants-killed-in-kashmir-a/>.

⁸⁹ Gamini Weerakoon, "Is India Saarcastic about SAARC?" *Sunday Leader*, October 9, 2016, <http://www.thesundayleader.lk/2016/10/09/is-india-saarcastic-about-saarc/>.

⁹⁰ Anwar Iqbal and Maqsood Haider, "India Cannot Suppress Kashmiri Intifada, Says PM," *Dawn*, September 22, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1285322>.

called in military terms ‘strategic defence.’⁹¹ Presence of Pakistan’s military forces in another theatre with the other GCC militaries will permit ‘defensive alliance’ and ‘external balancing’ against hegemonic powers in the region. This does not, however, mean opting for unconditional membership. Pakistan should formulate conditions for joining according to its own interests. The situation may not be similar to classic expansionism, yet the expansion of its military forces will make the country a key player in the Gulf region. Participation in the IMA will also add to its diplomatic and strategic influence and provide deterrence against any irresponsible escalations in the neighbourhood to maintain regional balancing.

Borrowing the Military Keynesianism Argument for Pakistan’s Economy

As discussed above, NATO countries contribute a certain percentage of their budget for NATO and this varies according to their size. Pakistan’s status in the proposed Alliance may be altogether different to that of other countries. The professionalism of its military forces and the uniqueness of its nuclear and missile programme places Pakistan in venerable position among the Muslim World and this is evident from the type of role it has been offered. This advantageous position may give Pakistan leverage to negotiate funds for contributing its forces and hardware for the Alliance. Resultantly, foreign exchange remittances, employment of manpower and continuous logistics and services are likely to bring positive impact on the national exchequer.

Also, as a direct consequence of joining the coalition, chances are that public spending in terms of military expenditures will have to be increased which in turn may set in motion the Military Keynesian multiplier at home, leading to demand-led growth, positively impacting economic growth. Although the Military Keynesian argument has not to-date led to any conclusive evidence as a means to increase socio-economic development, nonetheless, the idea has been and is still being

⁹¹ “Multi-National Military Drill in Saudi Ends with Massive Parade,” *People’s Mojahedin Organization of Iran*, March 12, 2016, <https://www.mojahedin.org/newsen/44625/Multi-National-Military-drill-in-Saudi-ends-with-massive-parade>.

used as one therapy to cure ailing economies. Quite recently, Nobel laureate Paul Krugman advocated in favour of the argument to help pull America's economy out of the depression in the wake of decreased demand.⁹² In terms of military cooperation after joining the Alliance, Pakistan's government, especially its Armed Forces are more likely to experience an easing off on pressures coming out of resource constraints. Needless to say, according to the World Bank and Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's data, Pakistan has seen a constant decrease in its military expenditures since 1996-2016 as a percentage of its GDP.⁹³

Citing the case of Britain, Thomas is of the opinion that coalition warfare was made an inbuilt part of the organisational structures of their Armed Forces and defence planning in order to prepare them to be able to exercise a fair degree of influence - even control - to shape or prevent war-related contingencies in places far away from home.⁹⁴ Given Pakistan's close proximity to an increasingly volatile region and its own geostrategic location, it will be erroneous to assume a nonchalant approach to safeguarding possible politico-economic interests nearby. In such a case, it hardly makes sense to stay aloof and deny Pakistan an opportunity to have influence on events in the region, before these are shaped for it by other actors.

Additional Dividends

Membership of this Military Alliance may also bring additional dividends for Pakistan on the domestic front in the shape of further consolidation of democracy through improved civil-military relations. Discussing the cases of Turkey, Spain, Greece and Portugal, Gürsoy concludes that after repeatedly facing military coups, these countries of southern Europe turned to democratisation and their aspiration to join international

⁹² Paul Krugman, "Bombs, Bridges and Jobs," *New York Times*, October 30, 2011, <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/31/opinion/bombs-bridges-and-jobs.html?mcubz=3>.

⁹³ World Bank, "Military expenditure (% of GDP)", The World Bank Data, accessed September 2017, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/MS.MIL.XPND.GD.ZS>

⁹⁴ James P. Thomas, "Coalitions and National Defence Strategies," *The Adelphi Papers* 40, no. 333 (2000): 13-32.

organisations like the European Union and NATO turned out to be one of the key factors that helped shift the focus of their respective armed forces from domestic to external missions.⁹⁵ It helped them redefine their role in democratic set-ups, internalise democratic values and concentrate on their pursuit of professionalism through interaction with armed forces personnel of different countries of Europe and the US.

In Spain, Portugal and Greece, NATO provided an opportunity for redirecting military missions to external professional concerns, and this certainly aided democratisation.⁹⁶

In all likelihood, changes in the outlook of professional soldiers on their conception of corporate interests and autonomy of armed forces will occur. It will also most likely lead to an increase in civilian oversight over military expenditures and defence budget of the armed forces – an issue which has been under criticism. IMA membership will also decrease Pakistan's so-called *isolation* in the international community, a perception widely propagated especially when Pakistan went to the UN to highlight the plight of innocent Kashmiri people due to Indian brutalities ever since the death of Kashmiri freedom fighter Burhan Wani.⁹⁷

⁹⁵ Yaprak Gürsoy, "The Changing Role of the Military in Turkish Politics: Democratization through Coup Plots?" *Democratization* 19, no.4 (2012): 735-760.

⁹⁶ Felipe Aguero, "Democratic Consolidation and the Military in Southern Europe and South America," in *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Richard Gunther, Nikiforos P. Diamandouros, and Hans-Juergen Puhle (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 124–65 (161); Geoffrey Pridham, "The International Context of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective," in *The Politics of Democratic Consolidation: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Richard Gunther, Nikiforos P. Diamandouros, and Hans-Juergen Puhle (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 166–203.

⁹⁷ Burhan Muzaffar Wani was a Kashmiri freedom fighter killed by Indian security forces in an encounter in 2016. As a result, riots broke out throughout Indian-occupied Kashmir between Kashmiris and Indian security forces which continue hitherto. The brutal efforts of Indian security forces to suppress the uprisings have resulted in the death of countless Kashmiris.

Conclusion

Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come.

-Victor Hugo

Today, the strategic challenges faced by Pakistan need re-evaluation and the Saudi proposed Islamic Military Alliance may provide a chance to act as a balancer to the changing strategic realities in South Asia. Pakistan's objectives in joining this Alliance should not be perceived against any regional Muslim country, rather to seek broad-based strategic partnership with regional and trans-regional partners. The proposed Alliance is emerging as a unique opportunity for Pakistan to lead the militaries of most of the Muslim world and to hold another theatre of operation in the Middle East supported by Muslim countries. This opportunity, if appropriately utilised, may even help in stabilising emerging strategic challenges in South Asia. ■