

# Saudi-Pak Defense Partnership: Past and Present

## Abstract

An independent academic exercise has been organized to find out the intensity of defense partnership between the *Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)* and the *Islamic Republic of Pakistan* through critically observing the discourse in the press releases of *Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) & Pakistan Air Force* and reviewing some quite relevant literature from key reports, journals and newspaper articles for just filling the gap of information. This study tries to answer the question of whether the Saudi-Pak defense partnership is sustainable or not. It explains that civil and military leadership of KSA and Pakistan are more cohesive and mostly adopt a unified stance on the issue of bilateral defense partnership. This partnership has been estimated from the historical defense related institutional relationship; recent visits of the civil-military leadership, their points of discussions and commitments; multidimensional joint ventures & defense exercises (army, navy and air force); and from significant recent developments for strengthening the defense of both countries. It concludes that the top leaderships of both countries are agreed to go to any extent at the time of security crisis either in Pakistan or in KSA.

**Key words:** KSA, Pakistan, Defense Partnership, Civil-Military Leadership, commitments.

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## Suudi Arabistan-Pakistan Savunma Ortaklığı: Geçmiş ve Günümüz

### Öz

Bilgi boşluğunu doldurmak için *Hizmetler Arası Halkla İlişkiler (ISPR) & Pakistan Hava Kuvvetleri* basın bildirimlerindeki söylemi eleştirel olarak gözlemleyerek ve kilit raporlardan, dergilerden ve gazete makalelerinden ilgili literatürü gözden geçirerek Suudi Arabistan Krallığı (SAK) ile Pakistan İslam Cumhuriyeti arasındaki savunma ortaklığının ne derece yoğun olduğunu anlamak amacıyla bağımsız bir akademik çalışma organize edilmiştir. Bu çalışma, Suudi Arabistan-Pakistan savunma ortaklığının sürdürülebilir olup olmadığı sorusunu cevaplamaya çalışmaktadır. SAK ve Pakistan'ın sivil ve askeri liderliklerinin daha tutarlı olduğunu ve ikili savunma ortaklığı konusunda çoğunlukla müşterek duruş sergilediklerini gözler önüne sermektedir. Bu ortaklık tarihi savunma ile ilgili kurumsal ilişki; sivil askeri liderliğin son ziyaretleri, tartışma ve taahhüt noktaları; çok boyutlu ortak girişimler ve savunma tatbikatları (ordu, deniz ve hava kuvvetleri); ve her iki ülkenin savunmasını güçlendirmek için önemli gelişmeler üzerinden değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışma, her iki ülkenin üst düzey liderliklerinin Pakistan veya SAK'ta ortaya çıkabilecek bir güvenlik krizi esnasında her şeye başvurmaya kararlı oldukları sonucuna varmaktadır.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** SAK, Pakistan, Savunma Ortaklığı, Sivil-Askeri Liderlik, taahhütler.

## رضاحدا وبي ضامدا : عفدا لاجم بي فقينا تسة كبلدا يدوعسدا ة كلوشدا

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### ملخص

تم تنظيم بحث أكاديمي حيادي لفهم قوة الشراكة الدفاعية بين جمهورية باكستان الإسلامية و المملكة العربية السعودية عن طريق النظر في الأدبيات المعنية الموجودة في التقارير الأساسية، المجالات و المقالات الصحفية و عن طريق مراقبة المصطلحات الموجودة في النشرات الصحفية لقوات الجو الباكستانية & العلاقات العامة بين الخدمات. و يحاول هذا البحث الرد على سؤال ما اذا كانت الشراكة السعودية الباكستانية في مجال الدفاع قابلة للاستمرار أم لا. كما يظهر لنا هذا البحث أن مواقف القيادة العسكرية و المدنية للمملكة العربية السعودية و باكستان ثابتة بشكل أكبر و انها في كثير من الأحيان يتخذون مواقفًا مشتركة في موضوع الشراكة الدفاعية الثنائية. تم تقييم هذه الشراكة حسب العلاقات المؤسسية المتعلقة بتاريخ الدفاع؛ الزيارات الأخيرة للقيادات العسكرية و المدنية، نقاط الجدل و التعهدات؛ المبادرات المشتركة المتعددة الأبعاد و التطبيقات الدفاعية (الجيش، القوات البحرية و الجوية) و التطورات و المستجدات المهمة لتقوية النظام الدفاعي لكلا البلدين. و يستنتج هذا البحث أن القيادات العليا لكلا البلدين مستعدين لفعل أي شيء حيال أي أزمة أمنية يتعرض لها أحد البلدين باكستان أو المملكة العربية السعودية. **الكلمات المفتاحية:** المملكة العربية السعودية، باكستان، الشراكة الدفاعية، القيادة العسكرية و المدنية، التعهدات.

## Introduction

KSA and Islamic Republic of Pakistan are all weather strategic partner countries. Besides having multidimensional relationships, bilateral defense cooperation remains a priority of both countries. In this regard, tri-armed services of Pakistan provide a wide range of relative training and advice to the tri-armed services of KSA. Further, training staff, military advisors, and contingents of thousands of Pakistani troops remain stationed at the soil of KSA for serving the security interest of both countries. Furthermore, KSA's recruits, military officers and engineering staff get education, training, engineering works experience and much more in the military academies, war colleges, and defense industries of Pakistan. Moreover, tri-armed services of both countries frequently conduct very impressive and useful periodic exercises in Pakistan and at KSA for exchanging their first hand field experiences, increasing their combat efficiency, and enhancing their bilateral real-time force to force coordination [1]. Religion-based ideological orientation, geo-strategic location, uncompromised and original stance on some issues (Palestine<sup>1</sup> and Kashmir<sup>2</sup>), protracted security challenges and economic necessities and national consensus of KSA and Pakistan to promote Islamic interest comprises their outlook in the comity of nations of the world in general, and in the Muslim world in particular. Historically, KSA and Pakistan signed a *Treaty of Friendship* in 1951 [2]. According to a senator of Pakistan (Ms. Seher Kamran), Gulf countries are primary and integral partners of defense and foreign policy interests of Pakistan [3]. Therefore, the vision of Islamic Republic of Pakistan for Saudi-Arabia is part of its very composed understanding of universal Muslim brotherhood and Muslim nationalism. Both countries share a significant target legacy in the Muslim world that shares various fundamental constituents of commonalities in history, culture and strategic interests, which are bound by cohesive religious harmony and integral geostrategic importance of both countries. Further, a very soft nature of equation of very dignified give & take relationship is based on dominant mutualism on economic and military axis, where Saudi-Arabia believes upon strong and credible military assistance (ammunition, training and to some extent planning) from Pakistan, which encourages it for maintaining a huge

<sup>1</sup> Pakistan considers that Palestine has been occupied by Zionist Jews of Israel, who do not further recognize the right of self-determination of Palestinians in its real sense.

<sup>2</sup> Jammu & Kashmir is a disputed territory between Pakistan and India since 1947. Besides of multiple wars, negotiations and UN resolutions, the dispute has not been resolved yet. Therefore, armed forces of both countries remain in a state of war along line of control.

baggage of remittances<sup>3</sup>, bilateral and multilateral trade<sup>4</sup> and investment<sup>5</sup> in Pakistan as a primary components of its engagements [4], [5].

During 1960s, religious, strategic, geopolitical and economic necessities of both countries attracted each other for sticky defense cooperation, when Saud-Arabia supported Pakistan in its high intensity conflict (1965) with India both at defense and diplomatic levels. Later, *King Faisal* called (1967) Pakistan as “citadel of Islam” and called that it is the responsibility of all Muslims to contribute to protect Pakistan [6], [7].<sup>6</sup> In 1954, *King Saud* wrote a letter to *Governor General of Pakistan* and wished that Pakistan should stand with his fellow Muslims to defend two Holy mosques. He further wished for stability and prosperity of Pakistan [8].

A level of intensity between defense relationships of both countries can be observed in the following examples, such as;

KSA and Pakistan started working together since 1952, but a great defense deal was signed in 1967 for training purposes of Royal armed forces of KSA, which started a non-stop flow of defense experience, planning, training and equipment from Pakistan to KSA and very little extent from KSA [6]. Now, Pakistan became partner of security of KSA’s territorial integrity through giving an effective response to Yemeni Intrusion (1969) by sending its fighting pilots (*Pakistan Air Force*) for effectively averting the target threat. Then, the incident of debacle of East Pakistan realized both countries to work together for having more credible defense against external threat. Therefore, continuation of joint ventures and provision of assistance to each other does not depend upon who is in power in the respective country. Further, Pakistan

<sup>3</sup> More than two million overseas Pakistanis live and work in Saudi Arabia, who send a huge amount (approximately \$6 Billion per year) back to Pakistan.

<sup>4</sup> According to *Economic Complexity Index 2015*, Pakistan is the 66th largest exporting economy and the 110th most complex economy in the world. In contrast to Pakistan, KSA is the 25th largest exporting economy and the 29th most complex economy in the world. Generally, balance of trade remains in favor of KSA, because Pakistan imports (\$3.01B out of \$45.5B) very heavy consignments of crude petroleum and its products (such as; plastics, fertilizers, chemicals and sulfur etc.). Further, Pakistan exports (\$551M out of \$26.2B) to KSA include textiles, garments, sports goods, handicrafts, vegetables, fruits etc. Moreover, KSA is among first fifteen export partners of Pakistan.

<sup>5</sup> KSA unilaterally invests in various sectors of Pakistan, such as; transport, energy, infrastructure, livestock etc.

<sup>6</sup> A kind of dignified similar respect for Pakistan also can be observed in the ideological thoughts of founder and father of the nation of *Bosnia Herzegovina* named *Alija Izetbegovic*, who declared in his famous *Islamic Declaration*, as; Despite of a lot of failures, Pakistan is the outcome of collective efforts of Muslims for establishing an Islamic order. Its existence gives us confidence and hope to the Muslims of world that the revival of this order is possible even today. He further mentioned Pakistan in the following words; “*We still believe in Pakistan and its mission in the service of International Islam. There is no Muslim heart which will not bound at the mention of something as dear to us as Pakistan, even if this love, like any other knows fear and trembling. Pakistan is our great hope.*”

helped Saudi special forces during besiege of Mecca in 1979 and sent more troops (approximately 15,000 troops) to KSA for reinforcing the security of holy places right after the besiege. Then, Iran-Iraq war and the First Gulf War increased the Saudi defense needs. Therefore, a large number of troops and an armored brigade of the Pakistan Army continuously remained stationed at KSA [4]. *Associated Pakistan Press (APP)* further reported that 13,000 troops and 6,000 military advisors were deployed in KSA during the First Gulf war [3].

This is an independent academic exercise, which has been organized to find out the intensity of defense partnership between *Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)* and *Islamic Republic of Pakistan* through critically observing the discourse given in the press releases of *Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR)*<sup>7</sup> and *Pakistan Air Force* (2008-2018) and reviewing some very relevant literature from key reports, journals and newspapers for just fulfilling the gap of information.

### **Agreed Saudi-Pak Defense Partnership**

Pakistan and KSA signed various security deals with each other. Some of those not disclosed ever, but some of those are prominent. At the end of 1960s, a Beirutian newspaper named *Al-Safir* reported for airlifting of Pakistani troops to be deployed along Southern border of KSA with Yemen. It also reported that besides deploying a fighting force, a large number of training staff of the *Pakistan Army* had also been incorporated in the military training centers at KSA. This training staff had been specifically called for training of the *Royal Saudi Guards* and KSA's contingent as an Arab peace keeping force for Beirut. Then, the number of these troops in the contingents of Pakistan at KSA reached to 5,000. Later, it crossed 10,000 in a very short period of time, where military engineers and planners were made integral part of such contingents. The rumors of deputation of a senior military technician named *General Shams-ul-Rahman Kallu* was significant for international observers to feel a potential credible defense understanding between the two countries in throughout 1970s and 1980s. It was a rumor that the *Pakistan Army* had been agreed and assigned for formation of equal to three brigade armed force for protection of Royal family at KSA [9], [6]<sup>8</sup>. Besides of earlier defense relationships between two countries, an agreement titled *Mutual Cooperation*

<sup>7</sup> ISPR is responsible to issue official press release about developments and news of Pakistan Army and Pakistan Navy.

<sup>8</sup> In response to Pakistan, KSA delivered a comprehensive package of financial return, aid and loan for Pakistan, which spent this amount for modernization and up gradation of competence of its armed forces, establishment of four heavy industries for advanced small, medium and larger weapons for defense production at Pakistan. This financial resources made Pakistan capable for buying modern defense machines and sign deals for joint ventures of defense production with friendly countries.

*Program* (1967) was signed for training of armed forces of KSA by armed forces of Pakistan. Further, a *Protocol Agreement* (1979) was signed for stationing the contingent of armed forces of Pakistan at KSA.

Furthermore, *Saudi-Pakistan Armed Forces Organization Agreement* (1982) was signed to institutionalize the process of stationing the Pakistani troops at KSA [4]. Then, an agreement on *Security Cooperation* was signed between armed forces for extension of defense cooperation, intelligence sharing on security and intelligence matters, and for combating the crimes [2]. The old agreement titled *Mutual Cooperation Program* (1967) was revised recently, where the scope of articles for provision of training to armed forces of KSA has been extended. Similarly, another previously signed agreement titled *Protocol Agreement* (1979) also has been revised for comprehensive cooperation in the field of defense related science and technology for production and supply of arms to KSA [3]. Moreover, *Pakistan Ordnance Factories* [10]<sup>9</sup>, *Heavy Industries Taxila*, *Pakistan Aeronautical Complex*, *National Radio & Telecommunication Corporation*, *Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works*, and *Institute of Industrial Control System* are also serving the better interests of two countries through provision of arms supply and technical assistance to the armed forces of KSA [3].

It is important to note that the intelligence sharing is one of the important and frequent components of effective defense engagements of the two countries, but their information and operations mostly remain secret [4]. For testing the intensity of defense cooperation, the mutual interest of KSA and Pakistan can be seen in the conclusive statements of *Chief of Army Staff* of Pakistan (COAS) (on January 20, 2017) to the Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan that “*Pakistan Army holds the defense of KSA at par with its own*” [11].

## Official Visits and Defense Engagements

This part of the piece has been organized in accordance with the discourse of cooperation between Army to Army, Navy to Navy, Air Force to Air Force and civil-military relationships of both countries. It must be noted that civilian leadership of Pakistan, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee<sup>10</sup> and

<sup>9</sup> In May 2017, DAWN newspaper reported that *Chairman Pakistan Ordnance Factories (POF)* disclosed that despite having a lot of limitations, Pakistan is exporting a number of defense equipment consignments frequently, where Saudi Arabia stands first of being the largest importer of small and medium conventional arms made up of ordinance factories of Pakistan.

<sup>10</sup> CJCSC is the chief of tri-armed forces of Pakistan.

chiefs of tri-services of Pakistan visited KSA for having discussions with the top civil and military leadership of KSA. Similarly, their counterparts also come to Pakistan frequently for strengthening and extending their terms of engagements between armed forces of two countries. Therefore, this part is especially conversant of high profile recent (2008-2018) visits of defense related dignitaries from civil government and armed forces of two countries and a glimpse of recently conducted joint exercises by the armed forces of two countries.

### **Cooperation between Pakistan Army and Royal Saudi Land Forces**

This portion is conversant of the discourse of defense cooperation between the *Pakistan Army* and the *Royal Saudi Land Forces*. A glimpse of land forces related recent visits, points of discussions and commitments of representatives of both countries can be observed as;

- Chief of Army Staff (COAS) called on Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, and Assistant Minister of Defense for Military Affairs of KSA, where he discussed key matters of professional affairs and reaffirmed more cooperation between armed forces of two countries. He was awarded with a highest military medal of KSA titled "*King Abdul Aziz Medal of Excellence*" for recognizing his services and efforts for armed forces of both countries [12]. Next day, he was called on Prince and Minister of Interior, and Chief of General Staff of KSA, who appreciated a unique friendship of Pakistan Army with armed forces of KSA. Later, COAS visited the Staff College of KSA's armed forces, where he was briefed upon training affairs of Royal Saudi Land Forces [13];
- Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC)<sup>11</sup> of Pakistan went on (4 days long) official visit to KSA, where he was called on Chief of General Staff and discussed the security situation of Middle East and South Asia. CJCSC and his counterpart realized for taking more initiatives through establishing a regular institutional mechanism between armed forces of two countries. Later, he was called on Prince and Commander Royal Saudi Naval Force; Prince and Commander Royal Saudi Air Force, where CJCSC reaffirmed more cohesive and multidimensional bilateral cooperation between the armed forces of two countries. He was awarded with a highest military medal of KSA titled "*King Abdul Aziz Al-Saud*" excellence

<sup>11</sup> He is the head of Chiefs of tri-armed services and the head of strategic nuclear forces of Pakistan.

medal for recognizing the services and efforts of CJCSC for armed forces of both countries [14]. Later, he was called on Prince and Saudi Minister for Foreign Affairs and discussed the security situation of Middle East (particularly security situation in Palestine and Iraq); security situation at South Asia (particularly a possible misadventure of Indian forces on the basis of false flag operation, inside attack or terrorist activity at Taj Hotel in Mumbai; diminishing security situation at Afghanistan and ongoing military operations against terrorists at Tribal areas of Pakistan); and put a light upon the Revised US strategy for security in Afghanistan. Both dignitaries realized the importance of shifting the just bilateral cooperation to strategic partnership and institutional mechanism for dialogue on security and defense affairs of two countries on frequent basis. Later, CJCSC was called on Prince and Minister of Interior of KSA, where he discussed matters for intelligence sharing and diffusion of experience for De-indoctrination and Rehabilitation Program organized for captured terrorists and extremists for their mainstreaming into society. Then, the Minister of Interior of KSA appreciated the professionalism and standards of training of deputed trainers from Pakistan for training the armed forces of KSA. Target officials of KSA assured to CJCSC for every potential help to meet the “*security and economic challenges*” and in “*all required areas*” of Pakistan [15]. Earlier from his arrival at KSA, he held meetings with Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan [16], Defense Attaché of KSA and senior officers from Tri-Services of Pakistan [17];

- Chief of Army Staff (COAS) of Pakistan Army was called on King of Saudi Arabia, where both dignitaries discussed mutual affairs of partnership. Saudi King, committed that Saudi Arabia will maintain its “*grand strategic relationship*” with Pakistan. Reciprocally, COAS pleased the leadership and people of KSA for having a time-tested and credible relationship with Pakistan. Then, Saudi King concluded the long meeting with COAS by pleasing the people and Armed Forces of Pakistan through saying “*Pakistan Zindabad (Long Live Pakistan)*” [18].
- Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (CJCSC) of Pakistan called on a four days long visit to KSA. Prince and Assistant Minister of Defense awarded him “*King Abdul Aziz*” medal of excellence [19]. On next day, CJCSC was called on Crown Prince and Defense Minister of KSA, where he wished him and to the *Custodian of Two Holy Mosques* as good health and speedy recovery. They thanked to the wishes of CJCSC and va-

lued their relationship with Pakistan. Later, CJCSC held a meeting with Assistant Minister of Defense of KSA for enhancing more defense cooperation between two states. Then, CJCSC held a meeting with Chief of General Staff and chiefs of tri-services of KSA for more focused discussion upon avenues for expanding the defense cooperation between tri-armed forces of KSA and Pakistan [20];

- Commander of Royal Saudi Land Forces called on CJCSC and COAS of Pakistan separately, where he discussed the regional and geo-strategic challenges to both countries and realized the need of potential defense cooperation to check those challenges. Later, he was briefed upon operational preparedness of armed forces of Pakistan for operationalizing those commitments [21], [22];
- *Director General Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)* routinely visited his counterparts and vice versa for strengthening intelligence cooperation between Pakistan and KSA. It is significant that such kinds of information and developments are mostly kept in secret [23];
- Commander of Royal Saudi Land Forces was awarded with *Hilal-i-Imtiaz (Military)* of Pakistan by CJCSC of Pakistan for recognizing his excellent services at KSA and his efforts for more cohesion between armed forces of two countries [24];
- Director General of Saudi Armed Forces arrived in Pakistan with his delegation called on CJCSC, where the discussed mutual interest and professional matters of armed forces of two countries [25];
- Prince and Deputy Minister of Defense of KSA called on CJCSC and COAS of Pakistan separately, where he discussed the contemporary security challenges, professional matters and programs for training of armed forces of KSA. Further, he expressed his desire for enhancing more defense cooperation between armed forces of two countries. He highly appreciated the combat efficiency of Pakistan Army in operations against terrorists. He greatly acknowledged the sacrifices of Pakistan in the war on terror [26];
- CJCSC of Pakistan called on Crown Prince, where he condoled with the King of KSA for demise of King Abdullah. Later, he held separate meetings with Prince Minister of Defense; Commander of Saudi Arabian National Guards; Deputy Interior Minister; and Chief of General Staff of KSA. CJCSC discussed matters of defense production, training, exchange

programs and other relevant matters of mutual interest between the armed forces of two countries. Target dignitaries took a greater interest in progress and implementation on *National Action Plan, Operation Zarab-e-Azab*, relationships with Afghan Government and new emerging regional challenges in the South Asia and Middle East. CJCSC held a much focused discussion for more mutual understanding on relevant issues. Then, he went for a visit of King Abdul Aziz Military Academy (Riyadh), where he observed and appreciated the institution for applying necessary standards of training and education there [27];

- COAS of Pakistan held a meeting with Chief of General Staff of KSA and discussed defense matters and reviewed security situation in the region [28]. In the second day of his visit, he held meetings with the King, Crown Prince and Minister of Defense of KSA. They discussed upon defense cooperation between two countries and reiterated that KSA and Pakistan need to play their role to squeeze the influence of terrorism in Muslim world. COAS mentioned the commitment of Pakistan for "*safety, protection of Harain Ul Sharifain and territorial integrity of Kingdom*". Similarly, the King and Crown Prince of KSA committed that "*any threat to Pakistan's integrity is unacceptable*". They appreciated the efforts of Pakistan armed forces in *Operation Zarb-e-Azab* and its growing defense cooperation with KSA including intelligence sharing and checking the financial channels of terrorists [29];
- Assistant to Minister of Defense for Military Affairs of KSA called on COAS and discussed about defense collaboration, regional security and training (exchange) program for two armed forces [30];
- Minister for Foreign Affairs of KSA called on COAS and discussed regional security challenges. He was impressed from the phenomenal impact of military operations of Pakistan Army against terrorists [31];
- Deputy Crown Prince and Minister of Defense of KSA called on COAS and discussed regional security and defense cooperation of KSA with Pakistan. COAS stated that security of Gulf Cooperation Council countries is vital for Pakistan in general, but its relationships with KSA are more valued. He reiterated that any threat to KSA will evoke an unimaginable response from Pakistan. The visiting dignitary also stated that KSA will continue to support Pakistan in its all challenges. He also appreciated the phenomenal success of Pak Army against in its operations against terro-

rists [32];

- Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan called on COAS, where he discussed matters of mutual defense cooperation and training of armed forces of KSA. “COAS reassured the Ambassador that Pakistan Army holds the defense of KSA at par with its own” [11], [33].

- Besides of provision of training to the *Royal Saudi Land Forces*, both armies frequently conduct joint exercises for diffusion of their field experiences and modern skills for maneuvering in the respective battle fields or theaters of operation. A glimpse of those recent exercises is listed here, such as;

A contingent of Pak Army (PA) left (on October 09, 2009) for a three week long joint military exercise titled *Al-SAMSAAM-3 (Sharp Sword-3)* with the Royal Saudi Land Forces (RSLF). This exercise is part of a series of joint ventures of PA & RSLF military exercises comprised of artillery, mechanized infantry and armor for enhancing “*combat efficiency, mutual cooperation and understanding*” between forces of both countries [34]. Before this exercise, Pakistan had hosted and participated in *Al-SAMSAAM-I & II* in 2004 and 2006 respectively. Then, Pak Army (PA) hosted and participated in a three week long joint military exercise titled *Al-SAMSAAM-IV-2011 (Sharp Sword-4-11)* with RSLF at Jhelum. The latest exercise is significant that troops are trained, deployed and operationalized at unit and brigade level for experiencing real time war experience for low intensity conflicts and execution of anti-terrorism operations through harnessing experiences of best drills and combat efficiencies of armed forces of two countries [35]. Inspector General Training & Evaluation also observed the opening ceremony and addressed the participating troops of both countries to take benefit from each other’s experience [36]. Then, *Al-SAMSAAM-V (2015)* and *Al-SAMSAAM-VI (2017)* held in KSA and in Pakistan respectively. These exercises mostly focused upon exchanging various modern and unconventional war fighting concepts [37], [38].

Special Forces of Pak Army (PA) hosted and participated in a two week long joint military training exercise with Special Forces of KSA titled *Al-Shihab-I* at *National Counter Terrorism Center (NCTC)*, Pabbi (Jhelum). This exercise held for execution of joint anti-terrorism training and real-time operations for enhancing cooperation and diffusion of war fighting skills and professionalism in Special Forces of both countries [39]. This training exercise was held for multipurpose including testing the multirole of Special Forces

to operate against terrorists (cordon, searching hideouts, airdropping etc.) COAS witnessed the exercise and appreciated the professionalism, dedication and motivation of participating troops. He expressed a time tested commitment of Pakistan that “*any threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia will evoke a strong response from Pakistan*”. This ceremony was also attended by the Commander of Special Forces of KSA and his six member delegation [40]. Similarly, *Al-Shahab-II* (2017) held in KSA, which focused upon counterterrorism skills and execution of military operations at open, hilly and mountainous areas. This joint exercise is composed of a series of small training sessions for enhancing the quick response capability of two forces [41], [42], [43].

### **Cooperation between Pakistan Air Force and Royal Saudi Air Force**

*Pakistan Air Force (PAF)* has significance for KSA<sup>12</sup>, which laid foundation and added a significant value in the relevant institutions at KSA. Even, Pakistan was one of the pioneers and primary partners of KSA for transferring skills and strengthening the target installations there. Later, both countries extended this cooperation for training and maintenance of defense forces to civil aviation of KSA too [44]. At a very minimum time, this collaboration sought its peak when approximately 3,000 instructors and technicians were observed as advisor to the *Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF)* at KSA. They were capable enough to train the pilots and other relevant staff of RSAF with modern aircrafts for defense and civil aviation sectors. Moreover, Saudi recruits were/ are being trained at PAF’s advanced air force academies, schools, war colleges and air force industries at Pakistan too [6], [45]. The level of primitive trust of Saudis on Pakistan Air Forces was tested practically at KSA, when Pakistani pilots repelled the Yemeni intrusion (1969) on its Southern borders. Currently, Pakistan sells its indigenously made fighting and training aircrafts to RSAF such as; *Karakoram-8* and *Super Mashaq* (made in *Pakistan Aeronautical Complex*). Similarly, a number of deputed trainers of Pakistan Air Force are providing training to KSA forces at home [44].

A glimpse of air force related recent visits, points of discussions and commitments of representatives of both countries can be observed as;

<sup>12</sup>Earlier than Pakistan, KSA had agreement with Britain titled *Magic Carpet*, but KSA refused to renew it because of military and diplomatic gimmicks of Britain with KSA in the region. Therefore, KSA approached to Pakistan for target cooperation.

- Chief of Air Staff (CAS) of Pakistan Air Force (PAF) was called on Prince and Assistant Defense Minister of KSA, where he was awarded with a highest award of KSA titled “*King Abdullah Bin Abdul Aziz*” for recognizing the services and efforts of CAS of PAF for air forces of both countries [46];
- Saudi Ambassador to Pakistan called on Chief of Air Staff (PAF). They discussed matters of professional and mutual interest about defense of both countries [47];
- Chief of Air Staff (PAF) was invited by Commander Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF). Chief of PAF shared the experience and performance of PAF in an ongoing *Operation Zarb-e-Azab* for precise air strikes for destroying the hideouts, training camps and other heinous activities of terrorists along Afghanistan-Pakistan border. Commander RSAF appreciated the achievements of PAF and shared his desire and interest to diffuse this experience, skills, higher standards and professionalism of PAF to RSAF through mutual defense cooperation and potential engagements. Later, CAS visited the King Faisal Air Academy and advised to the deputed contingent of PAF to maintain their professionalism and standards while working and training their Saudi brothers as ambassadors of Pakistan [10]. Later, CAS met with Deputy Crown Prince & Minister of Defense and Chief of General Staff. He greatly expressed his satisfaction upon the effective performance of PAF both in Pakistan and at KSA. Chief of General Staff of KSA thanked to the visit of CAS of PAF and for agreed further potential engagements regarding training of Saudi cadets/airmen, joint ventures and futuristic projects with KSA [48].

Besides of provision of training to the *Royal Saudi Air Forces*, both forces frequently conduct joint exercises for diffusing their field experiences and modern skills for enhancing their air combat efficiencies. Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) conducted two weeks long (January 06-19, 2011) joint exercise titled “*Al-Saqoor-II*” in Saudi air space. The participants were engaged into nearly real-time experiences of air operations for diffusion of experience, skills and professional matters. Chief of Air Staff (CAS) of Pakistan Air Force (PAF) also displayed his experience in the exercise through flying F-16 aircraft. Later, he met with his counterpart Commander Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) and dignitaries discussed professional matters for enhancing potential cooperation between air forces of two countries [49]. During October 2017, Pakistan Air Force invited air forces

from about one dozen countries including KSA's Royal Saudi Air Force at its newly established Pakistan Air Power Center for Excellence. The two week long air exercise focused upon using air power during counterterrorism operations as Pakistan had to experience of doing precision air strikes at terrorist camps, hideouts and active positions during military operations against terrorists [50], [51].

### **Cooperation between Pakistan Navy and Royal Saudi Naval Force**

It must be recognized as a limitation of naval force of Pakistan that it did not expand this force in the past rather to have a conventional credible minimum deterrence for its national security in maritime domain only. In spite of all limitations, its profile was recognized higher than many times greater navy of India, when Pakistan Navy scored well in Indo-Pak war in 1965. Then, Saudis found a credible naval force of Pakistan for having defense engagements. They offered their cadets for getting training at Pakistani naval academies, naval war colleges and engineering schools. Later, similar services were provided to KSA at home institutions too [6], [52]. It started contributing in building of Saudi naval defense at all possible levels [6]. Now, mutual cooperation, presence of Pakistan naval staff, and maritime build up at KSA significantly guarantees relative naval power balance, peace and stability in the *Indian Ocean* in general and in *Arabian Sea* in particular. Therefore, Ambassador of Pakistan to Saudi Arabia said that KSA defines its relationship with Pakistan beyond the limits of paper based agreements. Similarly, Commander Royal Saudi Naval Force expressed this relationship that Pakistan and KSA consider national security of each other as their own [44]. Therefore, today Saudi Arab is among key naval partners of Pakistan<sup>13</sup> [53], [54], [55], [56].

A glimpse of naval force related recent visits, points of discussions and commitments of representatives of both countries can be observed as;

- Leader of Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) of KSA called on Director General (DG) Foreign Military Cooperation of Pakistan and discussed matters of training of both navies [57];

<sup>13</sup>Chief of Naval Staff addressed the audience and announced the Saudi Midshipmen among 60 foreign trainees in the Pakistan Naval Academy. He further highlighted the ongoing training programs for sailors and officers of Pakistan Navy and friendly countries including Saudi Arabia. Similarly, Officers of Saudi armed forces graduated from the 45th Pakistan Navy Staff Course offered by Pakistan Navy War College.

- Commander Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) called on his counterparts in Pakistan. They discussed and committed upon several aspects of mutual naval cooperation;
- Chief of Naval Staff of Pakistan (CNSP) called on Minister of Defense of KSA. They reviewed the existing cooperation between two navies and committed for more cohesion and enhancement in certain fields of naval powers of two countries. The Minister reiterated that relationship with Pakistan is priority of KSA. Further, Chief of Naval Staff of Pakistan was awarded by the Minister for medal “*King Abdul Aziz Medal for Excellence*” upon the services and efforts for collaboration between two navies of brother countries [44];
- Commander of Royal Saudi Air Force (RSAF) called on Chief of Naval Staff of Pakistan, where he appreciated the key role of Pakistan Navy for maritime security and peace at Arabian Sea. Both dignitaries discussed matters of mutual interest and professional affairs. Further, Naval Chief highlighted the role of Pakistan Navy in *Counter Piracy Operations* and *Coalition Maritime Campaign Plan* [58];
- A delegation from KSA visited *IDEAS 2016* (international arms exhibition in Pakistan) and called on Chief of Naval Staff of Pakistan, where both dignitaries discussed professional matters of interest [59];
- Commander of Royal Saudi Naval Forces (RSNF) was called as a chief guest of passing out parade of officers and cadets at *Pakistan Naval Academy*. He appreciated the close partnership of Pakistan with RSNF [10];
- Pakistan Navy hosted and participated in its 5th international naval exercise titled “*AMAN-2017*”. Among 37 navies, Saudi navy also participated in the exercise, which was composed of ships, special forces and military observers [60];
- Very recently, a front line destroyer naval ship visited Saudi naval base as an initiative for cooperating the naval forces at the Gulf of Aden and Southern Red Sea areas. The crew and the officers of the ship interacted with the civil and naval staff of KSA and shared well wishes with them. Further, they visited the training facilities of KSA’s naval forces too [61].

Besides of provision of training to the *Royal Saudi Naval Forces* (RSNF), both forces frequently conduct joint exercises for diffusion of their field experiences and modern skills for enhancing their naval combat efficiency, maritime security and counter piracy operations. As, Pakistan Navy and Royal

Saudi Naval Force has a legacy of conducting a series of joint naval exercise titled *Naseem-Al-Bahar*. It was started in early 1990s, which carries a mixture of conventional operations and modern (and to some extent unconventional) naval warfare techniques for preparing the naval forces for meeting future maritime security challenges [10]. Further, continuation of this exercise is a big sign of naval cooperation of two countries [44]. Furthermore, *Aff'aa Al-Sahil* is a series of annual maritime exercise. It was started in 2011, which focuses to increase synergy of both navies for interoperability, antiterrorism & antipiracy operations in the maritime domain. Further, it checks to human trafficking and asymmetrical threats to the naval interests of both countries. Similarly, *Dera Al-Sahil* is another maritime exercise which engages marines of both navies for sharing their field experience about “*costal defense, military operations in urban terrain (MOUT), joint beach landings and sniper training*” [1].

Further, Pakistan participated in a month long tri-armed services including Special Forces of 24 countries military exercise (Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition) in KSA. On the concluding ceremony, the Prime Minister, COAS and Defense Minister of Pakistan also present there [62]. Very recently, Saudi-Pak Naseem ul Bahar-11 joint naval exercise and Deraa Al-Sahil were kicked off in KSA in February 2018. These exercises include marines of two naval forces which specially focus upon “*Mine Counter Measures*” on naval fronts. Further, maritime surveillance are also part of these exercises which will increase the synergy and interoperability of brotherly naval forces [63]. At the same time, special naval forces of two countries conducted periodic joint naval exercise titled *Aff'aa Al-Sahil-4* in Pakistan. Besides of focusing upon traditional concepts of naval warfare, these exercises aimed for enhancing their skills and capabilities for countering terrorism, piracy, and human trafficking through conducting special maritime operations [64].

## **Sustainability in Saudi-Pak Defense Partnership**

It is a propaganda that historical Saudi intensity of cooperation or defence partnership with armed forces of Pakistan is degenerating with the passage of time. In this regard, three historical events are mostly presented as indicators for highlighting it. First, Saudi Arabia had to face a difference of opinion from Pakistan during signing *Baghdad Pact* (1955). Second, Pakistan hesitated to provide artillery and armoured vehicles to KSA at the time of first Gulf War [8]. Third, Pakistan refused to send its troops to KSA for resisting Yemeni threat in 2015 through passing a resolution in its National Assembly [9]. Very logically, the above mentioned construct of reality and institutional discourse

is highlighting that KSA had increased its engagements with Pakistan rather to decrease, because they realize the significance of *Baghdad Pact* for Pakistan for balancing the protracted threat to its national security from USSR and its Warsaw Pact ally India which has a longer eastern border with Pakistan [8]. Later in 1990s, they realized the American trap behind the hesitation of Pakistan for provision of hard core war machines to KSA. Therefore, Pakistan sooner sent more contingents of its troops to KSA as an alternative strategy [9]. Further, the recognition of Government of *Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan* (Government of *Taliban*) was one of the great examples of cohesion of mutual interest of both countries during 1990s [8].

In the present situation, the Pakistani refusal for sending its troops to KSA (in 2015) also has been normalized through building the capacity of Saudi armed forces at home by sending 1200 Pakistani trainer troops for training the Saudi forces for border security and border warfare. It means, Saudis are more comfortable while being benefited a lot through equipping and training their own armed forces rather than stationing Pakistani troops at KSA [65], [9], [65]. Finally, Pakistan made the decision for sending a contingent of its troops to KSA in February 2018. Although, the strength of the soldiers has not been declared, but it has been specifically mentioned that these troops will never be deployed outside the border of KSA including Saudi mission for Yemen. Further, these soldiers will train and advise the Saudi armed forces at KSA, as earlier Pakistani contingents are performing same duties there [1].

Further, the statement of Chief of Army Staff (COAS) is enough to refute the significance of disinformation, and propaganda of unfriendly countries and misguided analysts about any degeneration of defense ties between KSA and Pakistan. COAS expressed that Saudi-Pak relations are time tested and “*any threat to the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Saudi Arabia will evoke a strong response from Pakistan*” [40]. Moreover, Saudi defense and political establishment has made similar commitments with Pakistan. Even, Saudi establishment picked the retired ex-Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif as the commander and key advisor of Saudi-led military alliance named *Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition* (IMCTC). Therefore, he has left Pakistan (on April 21, 2017) in a special Saudi airplane with the consent of Government of Pakistan and *No Objection Certificate* (NOC) issued by the *General Head Quarter* (GHQ) of Pakistan Army [65], [66]. Furthermore, KSA is one of the biggest arms importer clients of Pakistan. Therefore, Pakistan does not hesitate while maintaining and continuing its defense partnership with KSA [8].

## Conclusion

Target independent and academic exercise concludes that bonds of defense cooperation and coordination between the armed forces of KSA and Pakistan are strategically time tested and cohesive. Since the inception of understanding between these countries, every head of the Government, head of the state, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staffs Committee (CJCSC), Chiefs of tri-services, Minister of Defense, and Minister for Foreign Affairs (including ambassadors) had invited and visited their counterparts very frequently for having more understanding, agreement and discussion upon defense and foreign affairs of both countries. Further, tri-armed forces of both countries conduct very impressive, effective and periodic joint exercises for increasing synergy, maximizing force to force coordination, diffusion of field experience, translating modern war fighting concepts, and preparing for multidimensional counter terrorism operations. Furthermore, bilateral procedures for intelligence sharing and crime control exercises contribute trust in this relationship. There is no doubt that each country has benefitted from each other in defense, diplomatic, economic and in other relevant fields, but it is significant that defense relationships are at priority of civil and armed leadership of both countries. They not only had managed the past crises, but also made progress and found new avenues for serving the interests of both countries. Therefore, this relationship is stronger, time tested and sustainable than the past. In short, security of *Two Holy Mosques* and stability of territorial integrity of KSA and Pakistan are committed priorities of armed forces of two countries.

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