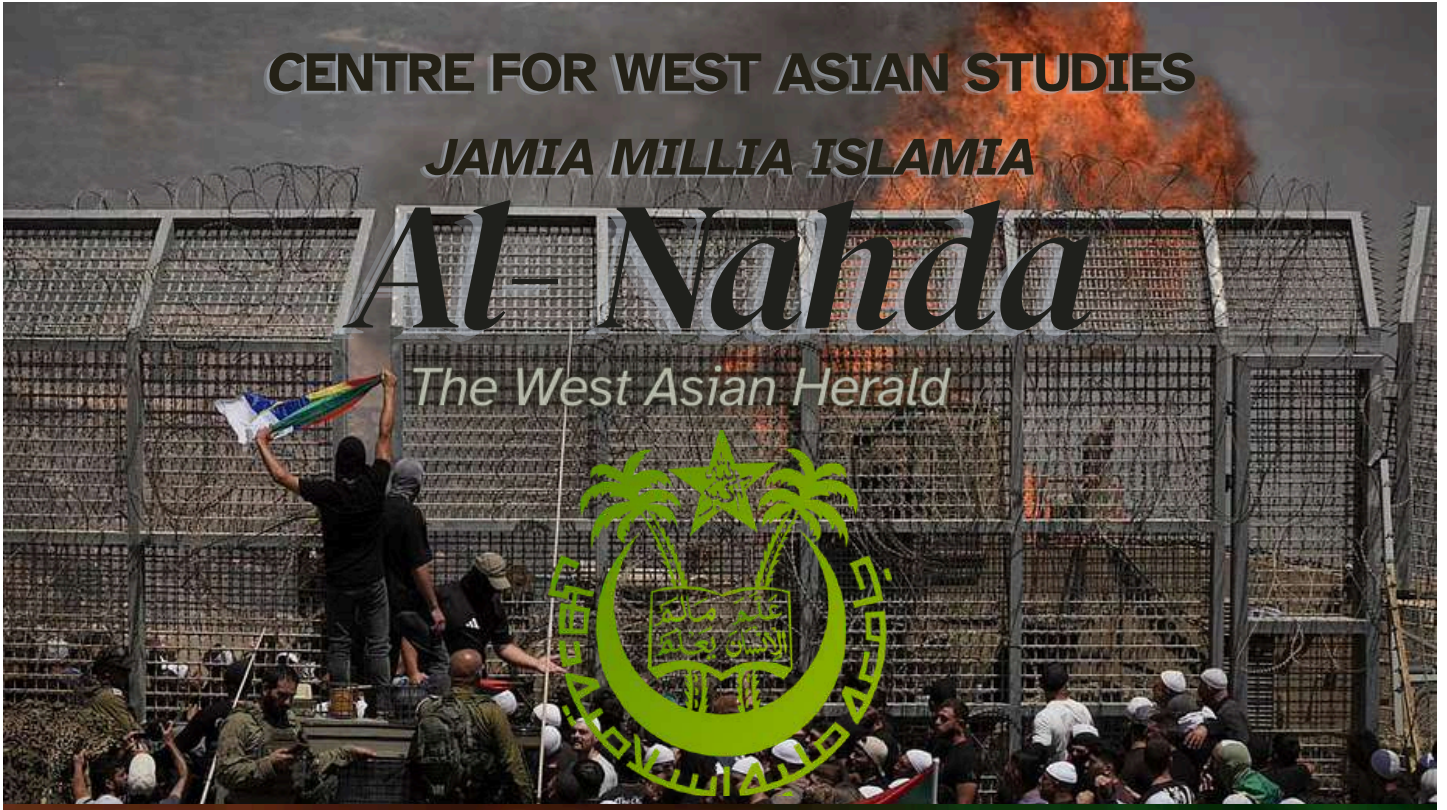


CENTRE FOR WEST ASIAN STUDIES

JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA

Al-Nahda

The West Asian Herald



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Centre for West Asian Studies, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi

The Centre for West Asian Studies is proud to present the Al-Nahda Editorial Team a vibrant ensemble of students and faculty united by creativity, passion, and a deep curiosity for the world around them. Guided by the Subject Association, this team transforms Al-Nahda into far more than a newsletter; it is a dynamic stage for fresh perspectives, thoughtful dialogue, and imaginative expression on the diverse issues shaping West Asia and beyond.

Each edition reflects their unwavering commitment to insightful analysis, cultural exploration, and the joy of learning. From in-depth articles and interviews to reflections on art, history, and society, the team brings the region's stories to life with clarity, nuance, and flair. Al-Nahda is not just a publication it is a celebration of ideas, a forum for intellectual engagement, and a space where curiosity meets creativity, inspiring readers to think, question, and explore.

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India's Strategic Challenge: The Geopolitical Impact of the Saudi Pakistan Defense Agreement

Istekhar Alam

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Saudi Arabia and Pakistan have formalized decades of informal military cooperation by signing a Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement (SMDA), a pact that could notably affect India's national interests in South Asia and the Gulf region. From an analytical viewpoint, placing the Saudi Arabia and Pakistan "defense arrangement" on the same level as NATO's "mutual defense"

agreements, where 'any aggression against either party shall be considered as an aggression against both, New Delhi is presented with a significant and intricate strategic challenge that requires immediate and careful recalibration of policy responses. This is especially true, given the current regional phase of escalated Israeli strikes in the Gulf and the US's diminished security presence, as well as India's most recent military flare-ups with Pakistan. From India's perspective, the SMDA surpasses the limits of a bilateral defense arrangement and constitutes significant regional dynamics, directly impacting the Indo-Pakistani contest. This, in turn, compels New Delhi to reassess its security within an integrated South Asia-Gulf framework. The Saudi Arabia-Pakistan defense pact has multifold impacts. It will be seeing to check Saudi Arabia's strategic risks from regional adversaries, particularly Iran and the Houthis rebels.

However, Pakistan's strategic calculations will undoubtedly openly tilt this military relationship to counter India in a future conflict scenario.

For the first time in history, a strategic relationship will provide Pakistan with the opportunity to leverage diplomacy and possibly material support in times of conflict. There is a distinct possibility that this partnership could embolden Pakistan to adopt a more assertive stance in its long-standing conflicts regarding Kashmir and cross-border terrorism.

Furthermore, Islamabad may attempt to exploit the diplomatic cover provided by its status as a defense partner to the GCC's anchor state, potentially misrepresenting India's legitimate counter-terrorism measures as unprovoked aggression in the eyes of the international community.

Saudi Arabia's deep involvement and support for diplomacy complicate India's punitive deterrence strategy. Punitive state actors and terrorism sponsored by Pakistan remain a primary concern for India. This new defense alignment potentially provides Pakistan with a diplomatic and material support anchor in any conflict involving India. Even more concerning is the unclear nuclear dimension and proliferation risks. Obscurity surrounding a possible Pakistani nuclear umbrella to Saudi Arabia fuels strategic security concerns. Any conflict involving Pakistan escalates security risks for the entire region.

India is not only militarily strengthening both forms of deterrence but also accelerating the pace of military modernization to maintain the balance of power against its adversary, which is growing stronger financially and diplomatically.

In the last decade, efforts to develop a strategic partnership with Arab states have been aimed at improving security, trade, and protecting the Indian diaspora. The trade figures are very healthy, and Saudi Arabia is one of the most important investors in India, including in the West Coast Refinery and other large projects. More importantly, in recent years, Saudi Arabia has been diplomatically neutral in the India-Pakistan context and has not condemned India's military actions of 2019, including the Balakot airstrikes or the removal of Article 370. The SMDA challenges this neutrality, which India diplomatically seeks not to have the relationship with Riyadh seen in the "Pakistani prism". In an illustrative case of multipolar hedging, Saudi Arabia is trying to maintain economic relations with India while simultaneously formalizing a strategic military partnership with Pakistan.



From Access to Empowerment: UAE's New Strategy Shines at WENA Leaders' Summit

Abu Horairah

Centre for West Asian Studies,
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In the heart of the desert and one of the most visited places in the world the United Arab Emirates (UAE) hosted a historical event in the sector of finance for the whole West Asian and North African region. In this financial summit the leaders of WANA came together at the central bank of UAE last November. It was the first time in the WANA history the leaders came together for a financial summit in the region. Under the leadership of UAE Vice-President His Highness Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan the summit drew in an impressive council of ministers, central bank governors and other financial regulatory authority from across the WANA region. The summit saw the representation across WANA region and the international organisations including World Bank and Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) took initiative to discuss the future of financial inclusion.

In the financial summit the government of UAE announced their national financial inclusion strategy for the year 2026-2030. make it exceptionally important khaled Mohamed Salem Balama Al Tameemi, Governor of Central Bank of UAE (CBUAE) emphasised on the national strategic with one of the key objective to develop National Financial Wellbeing Index. The plans and initiatives discussed during the summit were focussed on

- Universal financial inclusion involves the whole population.
- Development of products for women.
- Developing specialised products for the young generation.
- One of the main goals of all these plans is to cater or support the micro small medium

size enterprise (MSME) by offering them different types of financial support.

The summit addressed the financial issues with plans to improve financial education and skills in order to enhance the knowledge framework in financial sector. As a part of efforts to promote financial literacy among the population, UAE plans to participate in Global Money Week. In contemporary times, technology plays a major role in every aspect of life therefore, the summit also highlighted the significance of technology in financial sector with having consumer protection as one of its utmost priority. As it has been observed in the recent past how UAE adapted the technology not only in the financial industry but also other industries. They use high tech and advanced AI and data base. This progressive approach drives innovation and creation of the national financial wellbeing index.

This move has been seen as a great way in which the UAE is utilising innovation in technology and simultaneously measuring what matters to people in relation to finance.

The meeting concluded with the official launch of the Abu Dhabi Principles for Digital Financial Inclusion. The document served as a binding commitment which contained recommendations to enhance financial access for all people in the WANA area. The announcement of the Arab Regional Financial index Database results helped to establish current data on financial inclusion. The method provided a fact-based framework which enabled future decision-making processes. Governor Balama emphasised that the world recognizes the UAE as a financial center which supports the creation of a financial ecosystem that enables economic growth with social inclusivity.

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The summit resulted in demonstrating that financial inclusion has changed from being a social benefit to a fundamental target for sustainable development according to current needs. The UAE's dedication to financial inclusion efforts serves as a positive indication for regional development.



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