

Center For Law and Security (CLAS),
Islamabad



Roundtable Conference

**Makkah Joint Defence Agreement:
Implications for Pakistan, the Gulf,
and Regional Security Architecture**

21 August, 2026



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About CLAS

The Centre for Law and Security (CLAS) is a non-partisan policy research institution that aims to define the future of national security in Pakistan. We bring fresh ideas and highest quality scholarship to critical international law, foreign policy and national security challenges facing Pakistan. The Centre convene scholars to develop new policy ideas that advance Pakistan's interests in the international community and shape the national debate. The Centre in its work follows a distinct set out values – academic quality, research independence, academic integrity, innovative thinking, and empowerment.

The Centre is an independent interdisciplinary institute dedicated to preserving and promoting country's national security in a challenging 21st century environment. We exist to help policymakers form decisions based on accurate and sound information by providing expert research services and systematic analysis on legal issues that arise in connection with maintenance and development of national security policies and international law questions through a multilateral and multi-dimensional approach.

Mission

To preserve and promote country's national security through education, research and discussion for awareness and better legislation

Aims

To guide policymakers and raise public awareness on vital national security issues

The Centre aims to promote a comprehensive understanding of legal narrative among relevant stakeholders to facilitate the development of a cohesive stance on key issues related to national security. We are dedicated to promoting understanding on legal issues of national interest and creating awareness through our work. We strive for our work to serve as a resource for government officials, defense leaders, judiciary, lawyers, policy makers, media personnel, academics, civil society members, private sector individuals, and interested citizens to better understand the evolving landscape of international law that affects foreign policy and national security choices facing Pakistan, start a conversation and assists in fostering strategic expertise in Pakistan through dialogue, research and contribution to the public debate.



Work

To bridge the gap between theory and practice in a challenging and fast-paced environment on national security issues that carry national as well as international implications

The Center's work focuses on a critical examination of long-standing and emerging issues of national security and international law through a multilateral and multi-dimensional approach to assist policymakers and strategic and defense leadership make informed decisions. Our core activity is the promotion and understanding of law and creating awareness through our publications, workshops, conferences, publications and media productions, and social outreach initiatives. The Centre aims to promote national security as a core area of faculty and graduate research; sponsoring events aimed at encouraging awareness and promotion of legal positions; and engaging productively with local, regional, national, and international organizations through collaborations and publications. We strive to train high qualified students and graduates in legal research and policy development. serves as a point of contact and information for the interested public.



Concept Note

The concept note for the Roundtable Conference titled “The Mecca Joint Defence Agreement: Implications for Pakistan, the Gulf and the Region's Security Architecture” establishes the rationale for evaluating the trilateral pact signed between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Türkiye on August 7, 2026. The agreement stipulates that an armed attack on any one signatory will be regarded as an attack on all three. This security alliance emerged against a backdrop of sustained regional turbulence, most notably the United States-Israel war on Iran and direct and proxy Iranian military strikes against Saudi Arabia.

Building directly upon the September 2025 Pakistan-Saudi Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement and longstanding Turkish-Pakistani defense-industrial cooperation, the pact formalizes two converging bilateral relationships. It uniquely unites a leading global oil exporter, NATO's second-largest standing army, and the only nuclear-armed state in the Muslim world. All three governments emphasized that the agreement is defensive, not directed against Iran, and complements existing frameworks including Gulf Cooperation Council arrangements and Türkiye's NATO obligations.

Although welcomed domestically in Pakistan, the pact raises critical strategic questions regarding its operational execution and its interaction with existing alliance structures. Key concerns center on how the agreement affects Pakistan's ties with Washington and Beijing, Saudi Arabia's relationship with the United States, and whether it signals a lasting regional realignment. Against this volatile backdrop, the Centre for Law and Security convened this roundtable to evaluate the pact's strategic logic and its broader implications for Pakistan's foreign policy.

The proceedings systematically examined the pact's mutual defense clause in comparison to NATO Article 5 and GCC provisions, alongside its impact on Pakistan's strategic posture and nuclear umbrella. The agenda evaluated the reshaping of trilateral relationships, regional perceptions in Tel-Aviv, Tehran, New Delhi, and Washington, and determinants of potential expansion to states such as Egypt, Qatar, Bahrain, and Kuwait. Finally, the panel addressed required institutional mechanisms, the likelihood of conflict with Iran over Saudi infrastructure, and whether the agreement represents a lean Muslim bloc or if labels like "Muslim NATO" remain a misnomer.

The Centre for Law and Security is a non-partisan policy research institution dedicated to fostering informed dialogue on issues related to lawfare, international law, foreign policy, and national security. Led by Ambassador Sardar Masood Khan as President and Mr. Rehman Azhar as Executive Director, CLAS organizes strategic events to craft and project Pakistan's narrative in a changing world order.



Synopsis

The Centre for Law and Security (CLAS) organised an in-house roundtable conference titled “Makkah Joint Defense Agreement: Implications for Pakistan, the Gulf, and Regional Security Architecture”. The session was chaired by Ambassador Sardar Masood Khan, President, CLAS, and moderated by Mr. Rehman Azhar, Executive Director, CLAS. Introductory and administrative proceedings were conducted by Ms. Rabia Anwar, Research Associate, CLAS. The panel featured Ambassador Moin ul Haque, Director General of the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad; Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President of the Institute of Regional Studies; Dr. Khalid Rahman, Chairman of the Institute of Policy Studies; Dr. Amna Mahmood, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences & Humanities at Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University; Miss Zunaira Azhar, Anchor and Geopolitical Analyst at Express 24/7; and Dr. Salma Malik, Associate Professor in the Department of Strategic Studies at Quaid-i-Azam University.

The roundtable provided a detailed assessment of the strategic, and operational implications of the trilateral Makkah Joint Defense Agreement signed between Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Turkey. The discussion focused on evaluating the agreement's mutual defense provisions in comparison to traditional collective security frameworks such as NATO, its impact on Pakistan's strategic posture and nuclear deterrence stance, and its broader ramifications for Gulf security, inter-Muslim alignments, and regional stability. Speakers examined the strategic motivations behind the pact, emphasizing Saudi Arabia's desire for security hedging and supplier diversification away from sole reliance on Western defense guarantees. Panellists highlighted structural distinctions between the trilateral pact and formal military alliances, noting the absence of an integrated military command structure, standing multi-national forces, and standardized force planning. They addressed critical operational challenges, including the divergence in threat perceptions among signatories, the necessity of avoiding entanglement in intra-Arab and regional conflicts, and the imperative of safeguarding Pakistan's domestic social and sectarian harmony. Speakers stressed that Pakistan's nuclear capability remains strictly dedicated to national defense against South Asian existential threats, while its contribution to Gulf security rests on conventional deterrence, professional military expertise, and joint defense production.

The panel evaluated regional and international reactions, analysing cautious diplomatic responses from Tehran, strategic scrutiny from Tel Aviv and New Delhi, and Washington's perspective on regional allies sharing local security burdens. Particular attention was given to media narrative management, countering external "Sunni Bloc" or "Muslim NATO" framing, and evaluating the pact's interaction with broader regional frameworks, including the Abraham Accords, the GCC, and the OIC.

In his concluding reflections, Ambassador Sardar Masood Khan synthesized the panel's deliberations, balancing a realistic economic and security assessment with identified regional opportunities. He outlined the five declared operational pillars of the agreement: joint military exercises, joint military training, intelligence sharing, defense procurement, and joint defense production managed under a proposed tripartite Secretariat structure comprising Military/Strategic, Political, and Economic Connectivity wings. He maintained that collective deterrence must serve as an instrument of proactive diplomacy to preserve regional peace, emphasizing national interest, economic connectivity, and institutionalized defense-industrial collaboration. The session concluded with an interactive question-and-answer segment, followed by the presentation of shields of appreciation and a commemorative group photograph.



Chair of the Session



Ambassador Sardar Masood Khan – President CLAS

Moderator



Mr. Rehman Azhar – Executive Director CLAS



Guest Speakers



Amb. Moin ul Haque | Director General, ISSI



Amb. Jauhar Saleem | President, IRS



Dr. Khalid Rahman | Chairman, IPS



Dr. Amna Mahmood | Dean, STMU



Ms. Zunaira Azhar | Geopolitical Analyst & Anchor



Dr. Salma Malik | Associate Professor, QAU



Discussion

The roundtable session was chaired by Ambassador Sardar Masood Khan, President, Centre for Law and Security (CLAS), while contributions were made by Ambassador Moin ul Haque, Director General, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad; Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President, Institute of Regional Studies; Dr. Khalid Rahman, Chairman, Institute of Policy Studies; Dr. Amna Mahmood, Dean of Social Sciences & Humanities, Shifa Tameer-e-Millat University; Miss Zunaira Azhar, Anchor and Geopolitical Analyst, Express 24/7; and Dr. Salma Malik, Associate Professor, Quaid-i-Azam University. The discussion was moderated by Mr. Rehman Azhar, Executive Director, CLAS, following introductory proceedings led by Ms. Rabia Anwar, Research Associate, CLAS.

Ms. Rabia Anwar officially opened the session and warmly welcomed the distinguished panellists, esteemed guests, and research scholars. She provided a comprehensive overview of the Centre for Law and Security, defining its core mission as an independent, interdisciplinary institute dedicated resolutely to national security, foreign policy, and rigorous legal research. She highlighted that the session was specially convened to examine the Makkah Joint Defense Agreement from a highly multidimensional perspective, carefully evaluating its precise legal mechanics, strategic deterrence value, and broader systemic implications for shifting regional alignments.

Mr. Rehman Azhar set the agenda for the roundtable by establishing the core analytical framework guiding the day's proceedings. He outlined the nine central questions detailed extensively in the concept note, emphasizing the absolute necessity of examining both the formal legal structure of the pact and the intricate realpolitik of its execution. He highlighted the critical importance of precisely identifying operational thresholds, thoroughly evaluating competing media narratives, and accurately assessing how major regional capitals genuinely perceive this highly significant trilateral arrangement.

Ambassador Sardar Masood Khan offered brief, focused opening remarks to officially initiate the proceedings, warmly welcoming the distinguished panellists and expressing deep appreciation for their participation. He remarked that he had carefully reviewed the concept note and looked forward immensely to hearing the panellists' nuanced assessments on this critical topic, highlighting the highly timely alignment between the formal announcement of the Makkah agreement and CLAS's ongoing strategic initiative to rigorously evaluate evolving regional security architectures.



Ambassador Moin ul Haque opened the panellist contributions by characterizing the agreement as a profound milestone that reflects a definitive shift away from a historically entrenched reliance on traditional Western security guarantees, moving instead toward a framework of regional security self-reliance and strategic autonomy. He noted that because the specific operational text remains classified beyond the widely publicized headline collective defense clause, analytical focus must remain on the overarching geostrategic outline and its systemic implications. Comparing the agreement to Article 5 of the Washington Treaty, Ambassador Haque observed that while both share the foundational principle of collective defense, fundamental structural and historical differences exist. NATO was established in 1949 around a single, unified, and clearly defined existential adversary in the form of the Soviet Union and the spread of communism, whereas the signatories of the Makkah Agreement maintain distinct regional threat perceptions and have explicitly declared that the pact is defensive in nature and not directed against any specific state or adversary. Furthermore, NATO possesses a highly integrated military command structure, standing multi-national forces, standardized defense planning, and complete force interoperability—institutional assets that require immense financial resources, specialized command structures, and decades of sustained bureaucratic effort to build, which the current trilateral pact does not yet possess.

Clarifying historical nuances in Saudi foreign policy and diplomatic strategy, Ambassador Moin ul Haque shared that Saudi-China ties have expanded rapidly across energy, trade, and diplomacy on a strictly independent bilateral basis, definitively showing that Riyadh does not require third-party facilitation to engage with global powers. He emphasized that Pakistan's nuclear position remains entirely unambiguous, stating that Pakistan's nuclear capability exists exclusively for national defense against an existential threat in South Asia, and is unequivocally not subject to being extended, outsourced, or deployed as a regional nuclear umbrella for Middle Eastern allies. Regarding Gulf security, he noted that the pact formalizes Pakistan's deep-rooted historical security presence in the Gulf while integrating Turkiye into the regional framework. However, he issued a clear operational warning that Pakistan must exercise extreme strategic caution to avoid becoming entangled in complex intra-Arab rivalries or intra-Muslim conflicts. Evaluating regional reactions, Ambassador Moin-ul-Haque observed a dual response in Tehran, where official diplomatic channels expressed a cautious understanding regarding the push for regional self-reliance, while parliamentary figures and Iranian media voiced scepticism. New Delhi is monitoring developments with extreme caution as formal strategic backing for Pakistan complicates India's diplomatic efforts to isolate Islamabad regionally, while Tel Aviv views the consolidation of three major military powers with deep concern. Regarding potential expansion, he noted that Egypt's inclusion remains highly complex due to its specific treaty commitments with Israel. He concluded by examining how the pact affects Pakistan's traditional standing as a



neutral peace broker in regional crises, and how public endorsements from Washington—such as statements welcoming the pact as an initial step—should be interpreted regarding broader regional normalization frameworks like the Abraham Accords.

Ambassador Jauhar Saleem dismissed the prevailing notion that Gulf states will inevitably drift into the Abraham Accords framework under the current post-October 7 realities, affirming instead that Pakistan firmly retains its core strategic relevance as a trusted peace broker for both Iran and the Gulf states. He maintained that the Makkah Agreement is neither intended nor structurally capable of replacing the primary United States defense architecture in the Middle East. Instead, he defined the emerging Gulf security landscape as a highly sophisticated multi-layered framework comprising three distinct operational prongs: the overarching U.S. defense umbrella, internal GCC defense and economic security mechanisms, and supplementary minilateral strategic defense partnerships like this newly established trilateral pact. Ambassador Saleem noted that the phrase "One for all and all for one" actually originated in Alexandre Dumas' timeless literary work *The Three Musketeers* before being adopted into the lexicon of collective defense language, and identified the primary driver for Saudi Arabia as strategic hedging and comprehensive supplier diversification—seeking to deepen defense linkages with China and regional partners after closely observing Pakistan's operational performance utilizing advanced technological systems.

Ambassador Jauhar Saleem drew critical attention to the significant defense spending gap between the three signatories, contrasting Pakistan's defense budget of approximately \$8–10 billion with Türkiye's robust \$30+ billion and Saudi Arabia's immense \$80+ billion expenditure. He stressed that while Pakistan contributes highly trained elite personnel, unparalleled operational expertise, and critical strategic depth, building and sustaining high-tech military capabilities require overwhelmingly solid economic foundations. Consequently, he argued that commitments of multi-billion-dollar foreign direct investment must quickly materialize into concrete economic and defense-industrial collaboration to ensure the pact's long-term viability. Warning of potential operational friction, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem recalled Pakistan's 2015 Parliamentary decision to maintain absolute neutrality during the Yemen crisis, illustrating perfectly that any divergence between partner expectations and sovereign national operational decisions can generate substantial diplomatic strain. He stated that a direct conventional war against Iran by Pakistan or Türkiye remains extremely unlikely, emphasizing that clear strategic thresholds must actively distinguish between localized asymmetric drone attacks and massive, direct state-level aggression, such as direct missile or air strikes against primary energy processing facilities in Saudi Arabia or major urban centers. He strongly recommended that Pakistan navigate the complexities of the agreement through strict constructivist national interest—maximizing defense-industrial co-production and foreign direct investment while rigorously maintaining absolute military neutrality in external



regional disputes.

Dr. Khalid Rahman strongly criticized external Western and international media commentary for inaccurately labelling the trilateral agreement a "Muslim NATO" or a "Sunni Bloc". He comprehensively defined this framing as deliberate, sensationalized narrative-construction designed specifically to stoke regional alarm, project an unfounded ideological threat to non-Muslim states, or oversimplify highly complex realpolitik dynamics. He noted that actively applying NATO's 1949 Cold War structure to a flexible, modern minilateral pact is factually and analytically inaccurate. Dr. Rahman emphasized that the shifting geopolitical realities following October 7 have fundamentally and permanently altered Middle Eastern alignments, making public discussion of normalization with Israel entirely non-viable across the Muslim world. Regarding Washington's broader strategic stance, he noted that the United States implicitly recognizes its declining regional security umbrella and tacitly encourages regional allies to share local defense burdens and manage localized risks independently.

He observed that the core strategic driver for Saudi Arabia is fundamentally securing its own domestic and regional stability amidst unprecedented global uncertainty and shifting power balances. While active participation undoubtedly gives Pakistan significant strategic weight and psychological satisfaction on the global stage, the pact's actual long-term evolution will depend entirely on the concrete implementation structures and operational mechanisms built over time, while intricate intra-Gulf dynamics will heavily influence day-to-day operational progress. Addressing detailed floor inquiries regarding the efficacy of existing multilateral bodies, Dr. Khalid Rahman carefully differentiated the highly focused trilateral pact from broad platforms like the OIC, pointing out that the OIC's 57 member states maintain vastly divergent foreign policy tracks that make unified military action structurally impossible on a broad scale. In stark contrast, focused minilateral setups like this pact are far more functional, agile, and practical for achieving specific operational goals. He also clarified that the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition (IMCTC) in Riyadh remains a distinct, active, and highly specialized counter-terrorism coordination mechanism, separate from the broader, conventional state-to-state mandate of the Makkah Agreement.

Dr. Amna Mahmood affirmed unequivocally that the pact is not a sectarian or pan-Islamic military alliance, firmly and categorically rejecting the simplistic "Sunni Bloc" label propagated by external observers. She argued compellingly that the primary impetus driving Saudi Arabia is the urgent need to manage strategic vulnerabilities and navigate unpredictable domestic political shifts occurring within the capitals of traditional Western partners. Due to profound, long-standing petrodollar integration and deeply entrenched financial ties, Saudi Arabia cannot instantly



disengage from Western security frameworks. However, the recurring and highly disruptive attacks on critical Saudi energy infrastructure have forcefully compelled Riyadh to hedge its security arrangements via trusted regional partners, demonstrating that even following the Chinese-mediated diplomatic normalization with Iran, strategic security hedging remains an absolute necessity for Saudi Arabia's national survival.

Dr. Amina Mahmood systematically highlighted the highly complementary division of strategic roles among the signatories, noting that Turkiye brings deeply advanced military-industrial capabilities, sophisticated defense manufacturing, and world-class drone technology to the table, while Pakistan contributes battle-hardened veteran conventional military forces, unparalleled operational expertise, and a robust conventional deterrence posture. She affirmed clearly that Saudi Arabia realistically does not expect Pakistan to engage in direct kinetic warfare against regional neighbours on its behalf, as the baseline operational expectations instead center heavily on defensive readiness, comprehensive joint exercises, elite officer training, rapid technology transfers, and calculated strategic signalling. Dr. Amina Mahmood noted that Tel Aviv and New Delhi view the formal security backing of Pakistan with profound concern, as this fortified trilateral alignment significantly complicates their respective diplomatic efforts to isolate Islamabad on the international stage. She perceptively suggested that expansion to closely aligned Gulf states like Bahrain or Kuwait is highly plausible in the near future, whereas converting exceptionally broad platforms like the OIC into fully operational defense pacts remains logistically impractical, making highly focused minilateral agreements far more useful for actual security implementation.

Ms. Zunaira Azhar provided a meticulous evaluation of the media landscape surrounding the agreement, highlighting a stark and revealing divide between Western or Israeli reporting and nuanced regional media coverage. Western and Israeli-aligned media outlets deliberately framed the agreement through a lens of high threat perception, frequently employing alarmist terms like "Sunni Bloc" or "Muslim NATO" in a concerted effort to project an image of heightened regional polarization. In stark contrast, regional media coverage focused deliberately on themes of strategic autonomy, the necessity of collective deterrence, defense self-reliance, and the pursuit of long-term regional stability. Ms. Zunaira Azhar carefully contextualized the pact amidst profound Middle Eastern volatility, citing recent direct military strikes and rapidly changing international security guarantees that ultimately pushed Riyadh toward seeking formal, binding deterrence. She astutely noted that modern Middle Eastern conflicts predominantly involve highly complex asymmetric proxy warfare, where sovereign states actively seek to avoid direct conventional ground escalation at all costs. In this specific and challenging environment, Pakistan and Turkiye serve as vital conventional military anchors possessing remarkably robust defense industries,



thereby providing a highly credible and stabilizing conventional deterrent.

She highlighted significant internal GCC foreign policy divergences, pointing specifically to Qatar's distinctly independent diplomatic posture as evidence of the region's complex internal politics, and noted that Iranian strategic planning continues to prioritize preventing any form of foreign encirclement. Consequently, Ms. Zunaira Azhar issued a remarkably clear and urgent warning that Saudi Arabia must stringently avoid re-subscribing to the outdated model of security outsourcing, and Pakistan must strictly and unequivocally avoid being drawn into protracted asymmetric proxy fights that do not serve its direct national interests. She concluded forcefully that the pact must function strictly as a robust collective deterrent against regional instability rather than evolving into an offensive posture directed at any neighbouring states.

Dr. Salma Malik rigorously evaluated the agreement through the sophisticated lens of International Relations theory, specifically applying Realism and Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) to explain how regional actors inevitably form new security arrangements in direct response to highly localized threat perceptions and ongoing structural power realignments across the globe. By viewing the Middle East as a distinct security complex, she argued that the pact is less about ideological unity and more about structural balancing. While openly acknowledging the incredibly high symbolic and diplomatic value of the Makkah Declaration, she stressed the absolute necessity of clearly defining its exact operational focus, identifying its driving forces, and establishing precise action thresholds to ensure its practical viability. Dr. Salma Malik detailed four absolutely critical strategic imperatives that Pakistan must carefully navigate in the years ahead: first, meticulously safeguarding its domestic social and sectarian harmony by actively avoiding any involvement whatsoever in regional sectarian rivalries or conflicts that could disastrously destabilize its highly sensitive western border with Iran; second, ensuring that expanding diplomatic and military commitments in the Middle East do not distract the state from Pakistan's primary, existential strategic focus in South Asia or dilute its core, unyielding stance on the Jammu & Kashmir dispute; third, firmly and consistently countering misleading foreign media narratives regarding an "Islamic Bomb" by constantly reiterating that Pakistan's highly secure nuclear assets are strictly South Asian deterrents, while its contribution to Middle Eastern security rests exclusively on conventional deterrence, elite military training, and operational expertise; and fourth, ensuring that Pakistan completely avoids acting purely as a provider of raw military manpower without forcefully deriving concrete, long-term economic, technological, and defense-industrial co-production benefits, drawing direct and highly instructive parallels to how Türkiye successfully leverages its advanced defense technology for national gain.

Reinforcing this comprehensive theoretical analysis, panellists collectively noted that modern



regional conflicts are increasingly and unmistakably defined by advanced stand-off weapons, autonomous drone technology, and sophisticated air defense systems rather than traditional mass infantry deployments, making robust joint defense-industrial production and deep technological collaboration absolutely essential for Pakistan's future security posture.

Ambassador Sardar Masood Khan, in his concluding remarks provided a comprehensive summary of the roundtable's multifaceted findings. Reflecting carefully on the panel's robust deliberations, he noted that the guest speakers had successfully delivered an essential and sobering geopolitical reality check, which he sought to contextualize with a vision of balanced strategic optimism. Drawing profound historical parallels regarding the nature of collective defense mechanisms, Ambassador Khan pointedly reminded the audience that NATO's Article 5 was invoked only once in its entire history—following the September 11 attacks against a non-state actor—and was remarkably never triggered directly against the Soviet Union during the decades of the Cold War, definitively demonstrating that collective deterrence clauses serve primarily to prevent escalation rather than to induce immediate or inevitable war.

Ambassador Sardar Masood Khan meticulously detailed the five formally declared operational pillars of the Makkah Agreement, emphasizing that these pillars form the practical backbone of the pact: routine joint military exercises to ensure tactical interoperability, advanced joint military training to foster institutional alignment, secure intelligence sharing networks for real-time threat assessment, streamlined defense procurement and trade, and ambitious joint defense production initiatives. He explained that these highly functional pillars are designed to be efficiently administered under a newly proposed tripartite Secretariat or Council, which will comprise three highly specialized wings: a Military/Strategic Strategy Wing dedicated to operational planning, a Political Wing focused entirely on diplomatic cohesion and crisis management, and an Economic Connectivity Wing designed to link defense industrial growth with broader trade and infrastructure goals. Reaffirming Pakistan's unalterable strategic posture, Ambassador Khan stated unequivocally that Pakistan's nuclear capabilities remain strictly and perpetually dedicated to South Asian existential deterrence. However, he astutely observed that Pakistan's established nuclear status, combined seamlessly with Turkiye's highly advanced conventional military capacity, naturally imparts an implicit, stabilizing deterrence cushion in the complex strategic calculations of both regional partners and external global powers. Firmly rejecting reductive Western media narratives that stubbornly label the alliance a "Sunni Bloc" or "Muslim NATO", he emphasized that the pact represents a much broader, highly significant global shift toward regional security self-reliance, strategic autonomy, and the vital localization of endogenous defense production. Ambassador Sardar Masood Khan concluded the substantive discussion by forcefully emphasizing that true collective deterrence must be permanently anchored in proactive



diplomacy, robust economic connectivity, and strong institutional capacity, warning that long-term national confidence must be grounded in pragmatic realism and genuine self-reliance rather than a fragile reliance on external security umbrellas.

During the highly interactive question-and-answer session moderated by **Mr. Rehman Azhar**, panelists addressed a wide array of inquiries from attending research scholars, seasoned media analysts, and student representatives. Responding directly to a pointed student query regarding the structural limitations of the OIC and the specific operational role of the Islamic Military Counter Terrorism Coalition, Dr. Khalid Rahman clarified expertly that the OIC's 57 member states maintain vastly divergent and often conflicting foreign policy tracks, making unified, cohesive military action structurally impossible on a broad scale. In contrast, minilateral pacts like the Makkah Agreement focus intensely on specific, achievable operational goals among highly aligned partners, while the IMCTC in Riyadh strictly remains an active, targeted counter-terrorism coordination body. A senior media analyst from the floor shared highly insightful observations regarding the immense impact of cultural soft power and media narrative management, noting specifically how highly curated public broadcast decisions during acute regional crises significantly influence broader public perception and long-term strategic alignment among populations. Addressing a highly critical query from a CLAS research scholar concerning the mechanics of securing concrete economic benefits while simultaneously avoiding the severe risks of third-party conflict entanglement, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem reiterated firmly that Pakistan must maintain a strictly constructivist posture—meticulously aligning its participation solely with core national interest, aggressively maximizing defense co-production and foreign direct investment, and unwaveringly adhering to absolute military neutrality in all external and intra-regional disputes.

Following the Q&A segment, Mr. Rehman Azhar formally concluded the proceedings and thanked the distinguished panellists, guests, and research scholars for their exceptional contributions. Ambassador Sardar Masood Khan, President, CLAS, presented official CLAS shields of appreciation to the guest speakers: Ambassador Moin ul Haque, Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, Dr. Khalid Rahman, Dr. Amna Mahmood, Dr. Salma Malik, and Miss Zunaira Azhar. The event formally concluded with a commemorative group photograph.



A Glance at Roundtable







