

Role of mediator

Normally country or organization mediates between two disputing countries. Common disputes are territorial and water.

Berry Buzan:

“Countries share borders, share disputes too.”

Water and land. Furthermore, disputes could be geopolitical among regional and global players, like

South Asia and Indian Ocean region:

Saudi Arabia vs Iran, like India vs China

Asia Pacific: Like US and China

To resolve disputes, there are three major approaches:

1. Conflict resolution mechanism
2. Conflict Management approach
3. Conflict transformation approach

(Evolve communalities to the extent to reduce the importance of the conflict. E.g. increase trade relations or economic relations to the extent to make the dispute secondary, says John Galtung – The father of the conflict resolution mechanism)

Mediation could be done either by an organization or the country.

1. Organization

a. Regional organization

ASEAN has three steps conflict resolution mechanism to resolve disputes among the members of ASEAN
(Homework)

b. International organization

E.g. World Bank may play a role of mediator, as in case of Indus Water Treaty was mediated by WB.

2. Country

Country may play the role of mediator. Normally, global or regional power plays role.

In most of the cases, US plays the role, because it is the powerful enough to make countries agree the solution. If US does not want to play a role then the vacuum may be filled by a regional power, e.g. China's role of mediation between Iran and Saudi Arabia in 2023.

It is highly rare when small country like Qatar plays successful role of mediator, repeatedly.

E.g.

- a. Afghan Taliban and US negotiations in Doha 2020.
- b. Hadi Govt vs Houthi rebels in Yemen
- c. Hamdan (Vice President) vs Burhan (President) in Sudan
- d. Israel Hamas negotiations for the exchange of prisoners

Whenever a non-state organization is allowed to talk or settle the dispute, then it is allowed to open his office and appoint members for negotiations. E.g. Afghan Taliban opened their office in Doha with the consent of US. Similarly Hamas opened its office in Doha. But when the top Hamas leader was killed in Iran by Israel, then Qatar ordered Hamas leaders in December 2024 to leave Qatar, because Qatar was afraid of the possible attack by Israel. But US Antony Blinkin – Secretary of state- stopped Qatar from pulling out Hamas leaders and he also guaranteed that Israel would not attack Hamas leaders inside Qatar but Israel did it. Qatar gained the reputation as a mediator.

Implications of the Attack:

1. Israel had turned into a rogue state.
 - a. Attack on nuclear sites of Iran was an utter violation of international law.
 - b. Attack on Syria without any major threat to Israel in 2024, another major violation of international law.
 - c. Genocide in Gaza is the unprecedented violation of international law.
 - d. Attack on Qatar to target the Hamas leaders assigned for negotiation is an utter violation.
2. The confidence of the Middle Eastern Countries in US as a security guarantor has surely dwindled (had a setback).
 - a. US has 19 military bases across Middle East. The largest of them all is in Qatar, 10,000 soldiers stationed there.
 - b. Middle East in general Saudi Arabia, UAE and Qatar have been the largest buyers of US weapons.
 - c. Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE have the guarantors of petro-dollar agreement. (international trade got dollarized due to this agreement)
 - d. But attack on Qatar has changed the scenario. US would defend Middle East against possible attack from Iran but not from Israel.
3. Middle Eastern countries need to look for more security guarantees.
 - a. First of all, they would ask US to exert its real pressure and stop Israel from further attacks. Trump opposed the attack and also assured Qatar of no more such attacks by Israel, but such an assurance was given in Dec 2024 also, but violated by Israel. Even if US has assured again there is every possibility of such more attacks.
 - b. Therefore, Middle East has to look for other options.
 - i. Russia has been playing the role of defending its allies, but now it is stuck in war in Ukrain and unable to save the Government of Asad in Syria.
 - ii. China has the military muscles to play the role of a defender, but it still strongly follows the policy of peaceful co-existence and avoiding wars.
 - iii. Middle East countries can't afford drifting away from US to the opposite bloc of Russia and China for security, as that would

- have un-parallel consequences. For example, possibility of regime change in KSA will bring instability.
- iv. Pakistan seems to be the only viable option for Middle East in general, Saudi Arabia in particular.

Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Security Agreement or Pact

1. The agreement is not made public. Terms and conditions of the agreement are not known. Would it be a defence support in the form of weapons or training of soldiers or deployment of troops or even a nuclear security umbrella is offered by Pakistan to Saudi Arabia, no one knows.
2. Why Pakistan is trusted with the security role?
 - a. USA remained the security guarantor of the ME, but it has proven that it would not defend if the attacker is Israel.
 - b. Middle East cannot rely on Russia because it is stuck in its own war, nor can it trust China as it does not jump into war for the sake of allies, nor it would be wise enough for ME to go to the opposite bloc, that would enrage US.
 - c. Therefore, Pakistan seems the better option for numerous reasons:
 - i. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have been in an informal security arrangements since 1967, under which Pakistan has deployed its troops in Saudi Arabia to defend Harmain Sharefain i.e. Makkah and Madina, as it did in 1979.
 - ii. Pakistan heads IMCTC (Islamic Military Counter-Terrorism Coalition). It is the brain child of Muhammad Bin Salman. It is a military alliance of approximately 41 countries. Its main objective is to counter militancy or insurgency. The leadership of the alliance has been with Pakistan, as the head of the Organization is ex-military chief of Pakistan – General (retd.) Raheel Sharif. The different departments (4x) of IMCTC are also headed by Pakistan Security. Majority of the security trainers are also Pakistani. All this is because of the counter insurgency expertise of Pakistan military is top of the list across the Muslim world.
 - iii. Pakistan is the only Muslim country with nuclear bomb. Nuclear Arsenal is the best security deterrence. Saudi Arabia may need that in future. Therefore, it probably signed the Defence Pact with Pakistan.

Implications of the Deal

1. Pakistan Saudi Arabia defence pact, how would US react?

US has been the security guarantor of Saudi Arabia and ME as a whole. It has established 19 bases..... US has a military base in Saudi Arabia, Saudi Arabia is the largest defence buyer and one of the largest investor of USA and the guarantor of petro-dollar agreement. In return US ensured the security guarantee but the attack on Qatar has shaken the belief of ME in general and Saudi Arabia in particular. As US would not defend ME if attacker is Israel. Saudi Arabia could not opt for Russia or China as defenders, rather opted for Pakistan, due to numerous reasons already discussed.

Saudi Arabia is still the strategic partner of US, and US would dominate the security paradigm of the Saudi Arabia in years to come. It has just formalized its informal security arrangement with Pakistan. On the other hand US is re-making relations with Pakistan, IS-K and TTP are common threats, US is interested in the minerals and energy reservoirs of Pakistan, US doesn't want Pakistan to have overwhelming tilt towards China, for that it has to make healthy relations with Pakistan. There are lesser probabilities of US getting antagonized from the deal, but if nuclear security umbrella is offered by Pakistan to Saudi Arabia, then there is a strong possibility of US opposition to the deal.

2. Pakistan Saudi Arabi agreement and impacts on India

Since 1967 Saudi Arabia-Pakistan relations remained driven by the security arrangement. Secondly, Saudi Arabia always supported Pakistan in the case of Kashmir against India. In the meanwhile, India established socio-economic relations with Saudi Arabia by becoming one of the largest energy importer from KSA. Saudi Arabia becoming a major market for Indian work force who send remittances. But in 2015, equation drastically changed. Pakistan refused to send troops into the war in Yemen on the request of Saudi Arabia. It antagonized not only Saudi Arabia but also other Middle Eastern countries. Resultantly, they all expanded relations with India e.g. Saudi Arabia became one of the largest investor in India, India the second largest buyer of Saudi Arabian energy, KSA toned down support for Pakistan against India on Kashmir Issue. This new defence agreement could re-energise Pak-Saudi Arabia relations giving setback to India. If the agreement is "an attack against one could be an attack against both" means collective security, then

Possibility #1: Saudi Arabia may not directly jump into war but would provide funds to Pakistan to fight against India.

Possibility #2: Saudi Arabia would condemn any attack by Modi Government against Pakistan in strong possible words.

One thing is for sure, Saudi Arabia would like to keep strong economic relations with India on one hand and make defence relations with Pakistan on the other hand.

3. Pakistan Saudi Arabi agreement and impacts on Iran

Pakistan's foreign policy has faced with a serious challenge: Saudi Arabia and Iran geo-political rivalry in the Middle East remained driven by sectarian factors and Pakistan remained one of the major effectee of it due to numerous reasons:

- a. One (Iran) versus many (Middle East)
- b. Saudi Arabia immense socio-economic importance, approximately 2.4 million Pakistani labor in Saudi Arabia, sending more than \$8bn to Pakistan every year. Such an advantage not being offered by Iran.
- c. Iran is one of the key neighbors of Pakistan. It is always important for a country to have stable relations with neighbors. Pakistan has been having persistent tension with India and Afghanistan. It can't afford to have strained relations with Iran.

- d. Pakistan's persistent tilt towards Saudi Arabia and Middle East resulted in Iran's tilt towards India. When Pakistan refused to join the war in Yemen, in 2015, Saudi Arabia and the whole Middle East was enraged. Pakistan created a vacuum filled by India.
- e. Pakistan joining IMCTC enraged Tehran, as Iran called it a Sunni-military alliance instead of Muslim military alliance.
- f. Pakistan relations with two countries greatly influenced by the sectarian divide within the country. Pro Iran policies were not liked by Sunnis, pro-Saudi Arabia policies were not liked by Shias. Pakistan's sectarian violence was directly or indirectly linked with Saudi-Iran rivalry.
- g. But in the last few months, the regional geo-politics has drastically changed. Israel has attacked not only Iran but also Qatar, which means Israel would be a threat for the security of Iran and the Arab world. The common security threat ease down the tension of the past and bring Middle East and Iran on one page i.e. Israel is a potential threat.
- h. Saudi Arabia and Iran started normalizing relations in 2023 with the help of China. They not only resume diplomatic relations, but also lifted a ban on visa and announced resumption of bilateral trade too.
- i. Due to all these reasons there are lesser chances of Iran objecting Pak-Saudi Arabia defence agreement. It may even demand for the establishment of comprehensive alliance of the Muslim world.

Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Agreement - Security Would Complement Economy

1. Saudi Arabia is in dire need of security capacity building. It is the largest buyer of weapons and the security ally of USA. But the attack on Qatar must have alarmed Riyadh not to overwhelmingly rely on US. Therefore, it has decided to establish strong defence relations with its trusted friend Pakistan. If Saudi-Arabia needs Pakistan's security, Pakistan needs financial support.
 - a. Saudi Arabia has repeatedly provided bailout packages. In 2024, it rolled over \$3bn package given to Pakistan. Such roll overs and more packages may come in the future.
 - b. Saudi Arabia has history of providing oil on subsidized rates to Pakistan like in 1998 after Atomic explosion. There is every possibility of resumption of such favors in the days to come.
 - c. Saudi Arabia signed MoUs with Pakistan amounting more than \$20bn but they never got materialized. After the defence agreement, there are greater chances of KSA investment in petro-chemical complex (oil refinery) in Gawadar, investment in agriculture and minerals of Pakistan. These investments will help in reviving the economy of Pakistan.

Additional Arguments:

Possibility of such agreements with other countries.