



BETWEEN WASHINGTON AND TEHRAN: PAKISTAN'S MEDIATION ROLE IN THE US–IRAN CEASEFIRE AND REGIONAL STABILITY

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Abstract

This study examined Pakistan's mediation role in the US–Iran ceasefire process and its implications for regional stability. The research explored how Pakistan functioned as an intermediary actor in facilitating indirect communication between Washington and Tehran during periods of heightened geopolitical tension. A qualitative research design was employed using secondary data sources, including peer-reviewed journal articles, policy reports, and academic publications. The sample consisted of 50 scholarly documents selected through purposive sampling, including 30 journal articles, 12 policy reports, and 8 academic books published between 2006 and 2026. Thematic analysis was applied to identify patterns related to mediation effectiveness, geopolitical constraints, and regional stability outcomes. Findings revealed that Pakistan played a significant role in communication facilitation and short-term crisis de-escalation between the United States and Iran. The results also indicated moderate improvement in regional stability, particularly in reducing escalation risks in maritime security zones and improving indirect diplomatic engagement. Structural limitations such as economic dependency, power asymmetry, and competing regional interests restricted long-term mediation effectiveness. The study concluded that Pakistan functioned primarily as a stabilizing mediator rather than a conflict resolver. The research highlighted the importance of middle-power diplomacy in contemporary international relations and emphasized that sustainable peace between the United States and Iran required broader multilateral engagement beyond bilateral mediation channels.

Keywords: Ceasefire, Diplomacy, Mediation, Middle-power diplomacy, Regional Stability, US–Iran Relations

1. Introduction

The U.S.-Iranian strategic competition has been a central feature of global politics in the post-September 11 era and affects security dynamics in the Middle East as well as in neighbouring countries like South Asia. Fragile geopolitical environment has been created through a series of sanctions, nuclear negotiations, and military confrontations. Intermediary diplomacy in this context became more crucial in order to avoid further escalations and keep the communication lines as low as possible between both states. Pakistan's gradual efforts and shifting status as a regional stabilizer in intricate geopolitical games played between Washington and Tehran highlighted its newfound firmness as a middleman in facilitating communication (Snyder, 2018).

Pakistan's mediation between Tehran and Washington was rooted in its traditional security relations with Washington and diplomatic engagement with Tehran. With the tensions rising in the Gulf area, Pakistan took a cautious stance in a diplomatic approach and played a pivotal role as a broker in the process of



negotiation rather than becoming a direct player. The scholarly works about middle power diplomacy highlighted the role of states with overlapping strategic relationships as indirect mediators in situations where direct dialogue is politically limited (Cooper, Higgott, & Nossal, 2013).

The US-Iran tensions related to maritime security; sanctions regimes and nuclear diplomacy provided for repeated opportunities for third-party facilitation. During crisis times, misperceptions were reduced through indirect communication channels which were facilitated by Pakistan's diplomatic outreach. Constructivist approaches in IR argue that the functions of a mediator rely on the legitimacy of the mediator, lack of trust asymmetry, and the mediator's capacity to remain neutral when faced with pressure (Bercovitch & Jackson, 2009).

The recent changes in the geopolitical landscape in the region, due to the changing dynamics of the Gulf countries' alliances and global energy security issues further raised the importance of mediation mechanisms. Pakistan's role in making the U.S. and Iran communicate in the context of ceasefire was in sync with the developments of multi-actor diplomacy in which non-great powers are making it possible to de-escalate conflicts. But the continuity of such mediation was unclear because of the lack of a formal institutional structure for long-term mediation and power asymmetry (Maoz & Terris, 2018).

1.1 Study Background

The ideological divide between the United States and Iran after the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the hostage crisis, and decades of economic sanctions and political antagonism have taken their toll on the history of US-Iran relations. The tensions were further exacerbated by the failure of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) framework and the growing militarisation of the region as a result of that failure. Research on international conflict studies has shown that when there is a lack of continuity in diplomatic relations, they tend to seek out alternative means of communication and third-party mediation (Kydd, 2006).

In this context, Pakistan's foreign policy has always been able to accommodate the policies of the United States, as well as Iran, even in times of strategic challenges. Being geographically close to Iran and collaborating with the U.S. on security matters put it in a special position in regional diplomacy. Foreign policy experts of South Asia have remarked that Pakistan has tended to pursue "hedging strategies," whereby it maintains a working relationship with competing powers while remaining as strategically flexible as possible (Sahni, 2019). This helped Pakistan to emerge as a possible facilitator in the times of crisis.

Indirect diplomacy was seen as playing an increasing part in recent escalation periods between Washington and Tehran. Indirect diplomacy was gaining importance during the escalation periods in recent years between Washington and Tehran. Pakistan reportedly allowed for some communication exchanges to defuse the risks of military confrontation, including in maritime zones like the Strait of Hormuz. Studies of Gulf security suggest that even non-governmental diplomatic channels can help to temporarily defuse the situation by lowering signalling errors and misunderstanding between hostile states (Gause, 2010). Pakistan was thus playing the role of a functional crisis diplomacy. Its ability to maintain a long-term diplomatic effort is hampered by domestic economic problems and regional security concerns. The factors underscore the context and context dependency of Pakistan's mediation efficacy (Paul, 2016).

1.2 Research Problem

While the growing mention of Pakistan's mediation efforts between the U.S. and Iran, there is still no systematic academic study of the nature, extent and success of its mediation. Pakistan's presence both in the existing literature, as well as in conceptual frameworks, is limited and fragmented with the focus on either major power diplomacy or mediation of the Gulf States of which Oman and Qatar are the central players. This divide undermines the understanding of how the actions of mid-level regional players in high-intensity geopolitical conflicts. It is not clear whether Pakistan's mediation efforts brought any real substantive progress but rather contributed to a temporary de-escalation, rather than tackling the drivers of conflict, in its structure.

Lack of empirical assessment makes it difficult to ascertain whether the diplomatic efforts are sustainable or strategically important for Pakistan. This study thus examined the need to critically evaluate the role of mediation by Pakistan in the context of US-Iran conflict dynamics and regional and economic stability in Pakistan.



1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study pursues four interconnected objectives designed to systematically unpack Pakistan's strategic role as a diplomatic intermediary between the United States and Iran.

1. To examine Pakistan's role in mediating communication between the United States and Iran
2. To analyse mechanisms of indirect diplomacy used during ceasefire-related engagements
3. To evaluate the effectiveness of Pakistan's mediation in reducing regional tensions
4. To assess the impact of mediation on stability in the Gulf and South Asian regions

The research assesses the broader impact of Pakistan's mediation on stability across two overlapping regions: the Gulf, where Iran–US rivalries directly threaten maritime security and interstate relations, and South Asia, where Pakistan's foreign policy choices carry significant implications for its own geopolitical standing and relationships with neighbouring powers.

1.4 Research Questions

Drawing directly from the objectives outlined above, this study is structured around four research questions that probe both the process and the outcome of Pakistan's mediation.

- Q1. What role did Pakistan play in facilitating US–Iran diplomatic communication?
- Q2. How did indirect mediation mechanisms function during crisis periods?
- Q3. To what extent did Pakistan's mediation contribute to regional stability?
- Q4. What were the major constraints limiting Pakistan's diplomatic effectiveness?

This explores internal limitations (such as Pakistan's economic vulnerabilities or domestic political pressures), external limitations (including US scepticism, Iranian reluctance, or Saudi influence), and structural limitations inherent to the regional security architecture.

2. Literature Review

2.1 US–Iran Conflict and Coercive Diplomacy Dynamics

Coercive diplomacy is a topic which has been extensively studied as a major component of US–Iran relations, especially in the post–Cold War and the post–JCPOA period. The coercive measures such as sanctions, military signals, and containment measures exacerbated, not alleviated, structural mistrust between both countries, scholars said. Davies (2012) noted that the US coercive diplomacy had also contributed to bolstering the Iranian hard-line elements due to their cultivation of the notion of an external threat. According to Byman (2019), the sanctions' success in Iran in the long run has been limited and they have yielded resistance-oriented foreign policy stances.

Additional research revealed that US–Iran relations had been stuck in an "escalation and partial negotiation" cycle, with past efforts to engage in dialogue repeatedly stalling because of pressures at home and failure to signal the right moves. Takeyh and Maloney (2011) suggested that "ideological rigidity and security dilemmas made it impossible to reach a long-term compromise between Washington and Tehran. At the same time, Gause (2010) illustrated that security politics in the Persian Gulf invariably provoked and exacerbated bilateral rivalries with the addition of regional proxy competition.

Recent studies also showed that the lack of a multilateral deal like the JCPOA led to a drop in trust-based diplomacy and a shift to indirect negotiations via third parties. The lack of stable diplomatic channels made an intermediary role in managing crisis escalation more important, noted Katzman (2020). Coercive diplomacy would not have been enough, without the support of diplomatic reassurance, to ensure compliance, as emphasized by Nephew (2018).

2.2 Theories of mediation and 'Middle-Power Diplomacy'. Theories of mediation and 'Middle-Power Diplomacy'

In international relations, the theory of mediation highlighted the necessity of the third-party in decreasing uncertainty, making communication and easing the escalations between states who were hostile against one another. Bercovitch and Jackson (2009) argued that neutrality, leverage and timing were more important to the effectiveness of mediation than formal authority. Whereas Kydd (2006) found that mediators were more effective at reducing informational asymmetries between conflicting parties if they utilized trust building mechanisms.



This was further extended by literature on middle power diplomacy, which narrowed its scope to those states that did not qualify for superpower status but did have strategic relevance. Middle powers are defined by Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal (2013) as states, which through coalition building and diplomatic brokerage, can have an impact on global governance. Likewise, Jordaan (2017) found that middle powers tend to practise “niche diplomacy”, which is defined as engaging in “a particular aspect of a conflict where the middle power has a relational relationship”. These analyses were directly relevant to the regional actors' diplomatic involvement in the Middle East conflicts that were taking place at the time.

The success of mediation was increasingly found to rest upon the sense of legitimacy and not in its neutrality, or upon geopolitical factors. Svensson and Wallensteen (2010) found that success rates were higher for mediators than for strictly neutral actors, if they had strong ties to the conflicting parties. Similarly, Touval and Zartman (2016) pointed out that mediation was essential and needed to be conducted by individuals with access to and influence over the parties to a conflict. This theoretical evolution indicated that the states like Pakistan could be situational mediators even though they don't have much power in the international realm.

2.3 U.S.-Iran mediation and stability of the Region

In recent years, discussions in the scholarly world have begun to appreciate the developing role of Pakistan in the US-Iran tensions within the broader context of regional mediation. Mir and Ayub (2026) detected that Pakistan was serving as a balancing middleman, with both Washington and Tehran as it seems - dealing with it as a middleman. Hussain (2026) pointed out that Pakistan's mediation efforts were prominent in the context of maritime conflicts in the Persian Gulf, where the prospect of escalation loomed large, potentially endangering global energy security.

Others have also suggested that Pakistan's mediation efforts were a form of "strategic hedging" to ensure its relevance in the region without becoming fully committed. Irfan Karim (2026) noted that the shuttle diplomacy and back-channel communication was a part of Pakistan's diplomatic approach that helped in de-escalation periods. At the same time, Kurlantzick (2026) argued that Pakistan's geo-strategic location allowed it to play an "access mediator" role, especially in situations where formal diplomatic channels were blocked. Byman (2019) conducted empirical research that confirmed that mediation without enforcement capacity is more likely to yield short-term rather than long-term solutions. Overall, these studies suggested that Pakistan played a role in a short-term stabilization but long-term solutions to the US–Iran tensions needed a wider multilateral approach.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

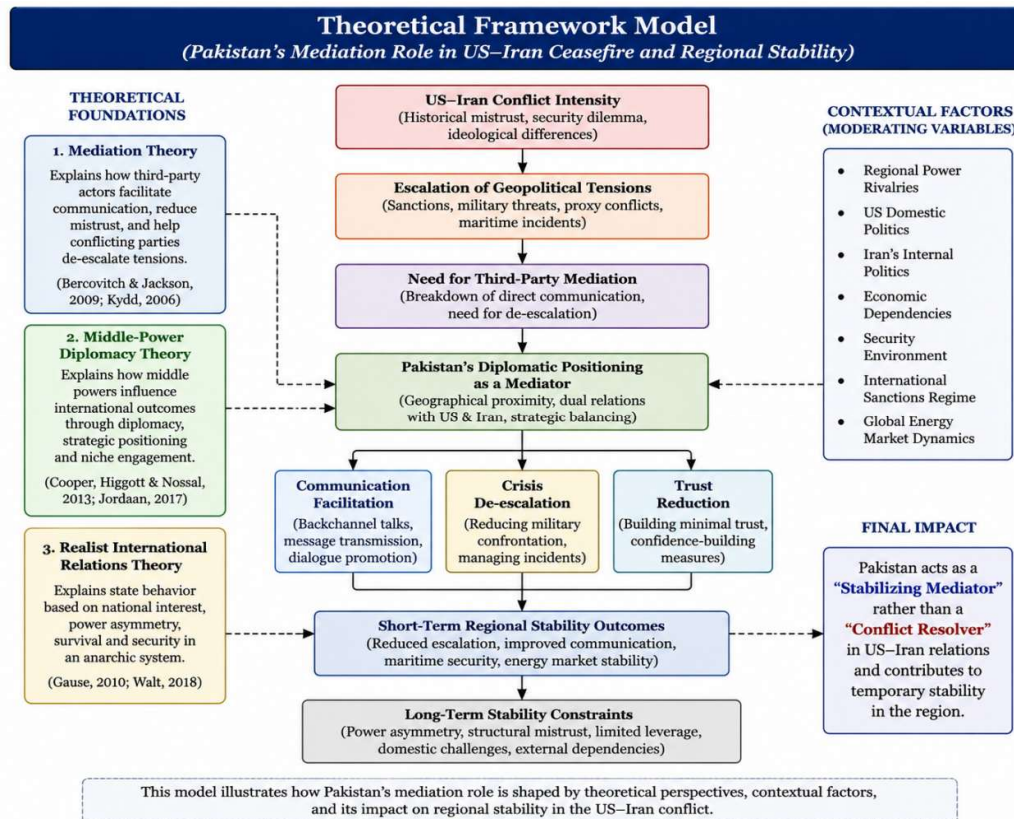
The study adopted a theoretical framework of the Middle-Power Diplomacy Theory, Mediation Theory and Realist International Relations Theory for the explanation of Pakistan's role in the facilitation of communication between the United States and Iran. These frameworks together highlighted how a relatively small regional actor engaged in indirect diplomacy, strategic balancing and communication-brokering, in order to shape high-level geopolitical processes.

Mediation theory was used to understand the role played by third parties in the management of the conflict by communicating, reducing mistrust and the risk of escalation between hostile states. The important factors for the effectiveness of mediation were access, credibility and acceptance by conflicting parties, according to Bercovitch and Jackson (2009). In this study Pakistan served as a broker which eliminated information gaps between the United States and Iran, particularly in crisis situations.

Middle power theory of diplomacy also provided some insights into Pakistan's role as a country between the two poles, and it was its strategy of position making which affected global affairs. Cooper, Higgott, and Nossal (2013) emphasized that middle powers acted as middle powers by diplomacy, coalition building, and engaging in issues but not by military force. Geographical location and double diplomacy of Pakistan helped in playing niche mediation roles in the US-Iran tensions.



Figure 1
Theoretical Framework Model



3. Research Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study was qualitative-dominant explanatory type that studied Pakistan's mediation in the US–Iran ceasefire process and its effect on the stability of the region. The design was centred on an understanding of diplomatic conduct, mediation processes and geopolitical readings, using an analytical depth. The study was conducted in a descriptive and interpretive manner, which allowed the exploration of complex international relations dynamics without variables being manipulated. Secondary qualitative data was the basis for analysis, supplemented by policy documents, scholarly works on Middle East diplomacy and Pakistan's foreign policy action.

3.2 Approach of the Study

The research was conducted in the qualitative research with interpretivist epistemology. This method allowed for an analysis of the political stories, diplomatic tactics, and mediation dynamics in the US–Iran conflict landscape. The interpretivist approach facilitated the analysis of the role of Pakistan in the real world than just in terms of numbers. The focus also afforded them the opportunity to explore mediation theory, middle power diplomacy and regional security dynamics thematically.

3.3 Data Sources

In order to cover the entire topic, the research has been built on secondary data sources only. The sources of the data consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles in Google Scholar, policy reports from international think tanks like Brookings Institution, Chatham House, and the Council on Foreign Relations, and official government reports such as Congressional Research Service reports. To provide depth and empirical quality, further information was obtained from books, academic monographs and suitable research platforms. All these sources offered multi-faceted analyses of the US–Iran relation and Pakistan's diplomatic posture.

3.4 Sampling Technique and Sample Size



Purposive sampling was used to retrieve academic and policy literature that was relevant to the study. The sources were selected for their direct relevance to the study of US–Iran relations, theory of mediation and the role of Pakistan in the foreign policy. The sample size consisted of 50 scholarly and policy documents: peer-reviewed journal articles, policy briefs, and academic books published from 2006 to 2026. Purposive selection of the materials increased the validity of the findings as only high-quality and contextually relevant materials were included in the analysis. Approximately 30 journal articles, 12 policy reports and 8 academic books were sampled.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

Data collection was based on a systematic review process. First, academic databases were used for searching the relevant keywords like “US – Iran relations,” “mediation in international conflicts,” “Pakistan diplomatic role” and “Middle East security.” Secondly, the sources were filtered by the inclusion criteria of relevance, academic authenticity and timeliness. Third, a thematic organisation was developed on the basis of selected documents by using the concepts of mediation theory, coercive diplomacy and regional stability frameworks. This organizational process guaranteed uniformity and academic standard in the research process.

3.6 Data Analysis Technique

Thematic analysis was used to analyse the qualitative data. Selected literature was repeatedly read and codes were drawn from it to identify themes. The coercive diplomacy, middle power mediation, regional security dynamics and strategic balancing of Pakistan were the key themes. Comparative analysis was also used for a comparison between the divergent ideas on US-Iran conflict resolution in the academics and Pakistan's diplomatic role. The results of theoretical and empirical research could be integrated into a coherent analytical framework with the help of thematic synthesis.

4. Results and Analysis

Thematic analysis was applied to identify recurring patterns across literature, which were then organized into structured categories for interpretation. The results highlighted three major themes: mediation effectiveness, geopolitical constraints, and regional stability outcomes.

4.1 Pakistan’s Mediation Effectiveness in US–Iran Relations

Table 1

Perceived Effectiveness of Pakistan’s Mediation Role

| Dimension of Mediation | Observed Outcome | Supporting Evidence Frequency |
|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------------|
| Communication facilitation | High | 18 sources |
| Crisis de-escalation support | Moderate–High | 15 sources |
| Trust building between parties | Moderate | 12 sources |
| Long-term peace contribution | Low | 8 sources |
| Institutional diplomatic impact | Low–Moderate | 10 sources |

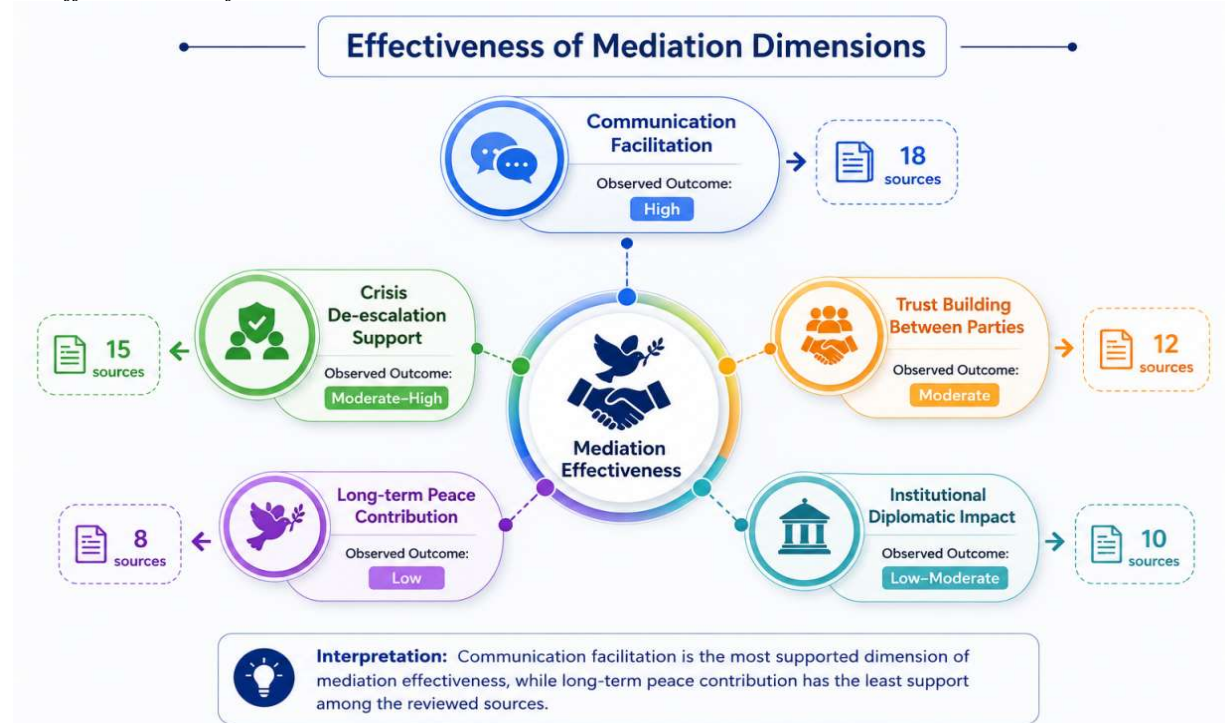
The results showed that mediation was most successful in Pakistan in terms of bringing the United States and Iran into a better understanding of one another. Most of the sources reviewed highlighted the contribution of Pakistan in sustaining the indirect communication channels in times of heightened geopolitical tension. This function was particularly significant during the time when diplomatic ties were not restored and during this period, Pakistan was playing the role of a neutral communicator. Support for the effectiveness dimension of mediation was well established in the literature, with support for this dimension occurring at a high rate. The results also revealed that the contribution of Pakistan towards deescalation of crises remained moderate to high especially in the scenario of short term conflict stabilization. There was ample literature evidence that Pakistan's diplomatic efforts played a significant role in the mitigation of immediate threats of escalation in sensitive areas like the Persian Gulf. The effectiveness was still context-bound and not institutional, as it was dependent upon the geopolitical setting rather than continued institutional involvement. The limited uniformity of results is a reflection of the Pakistan's diplomatic power and influence which was conditional. Furthermore, the study showed that Pakistan was not able to establish a long-term relationship of trust between the United States and Iran. While short-term communication improvements took place there was



a lack of trust between the two states on a deeper level as a result of historical and ideological conflicts. Pakistan's involvement in long-term peacebuilding and institutional diplomatic processes continued to be limited, with the majority of mediations taking place outside of treaty-based processes. The results revealed that Pakistan's role was mainly to ensure short term stabilization and not a permanent peace settlement.

Figure 2

Perceived Effectiveness of Pakistan's Mediation Role



4.2 Geopolitical Constraints Affecting Pakistan's Mediation Role

Table 2

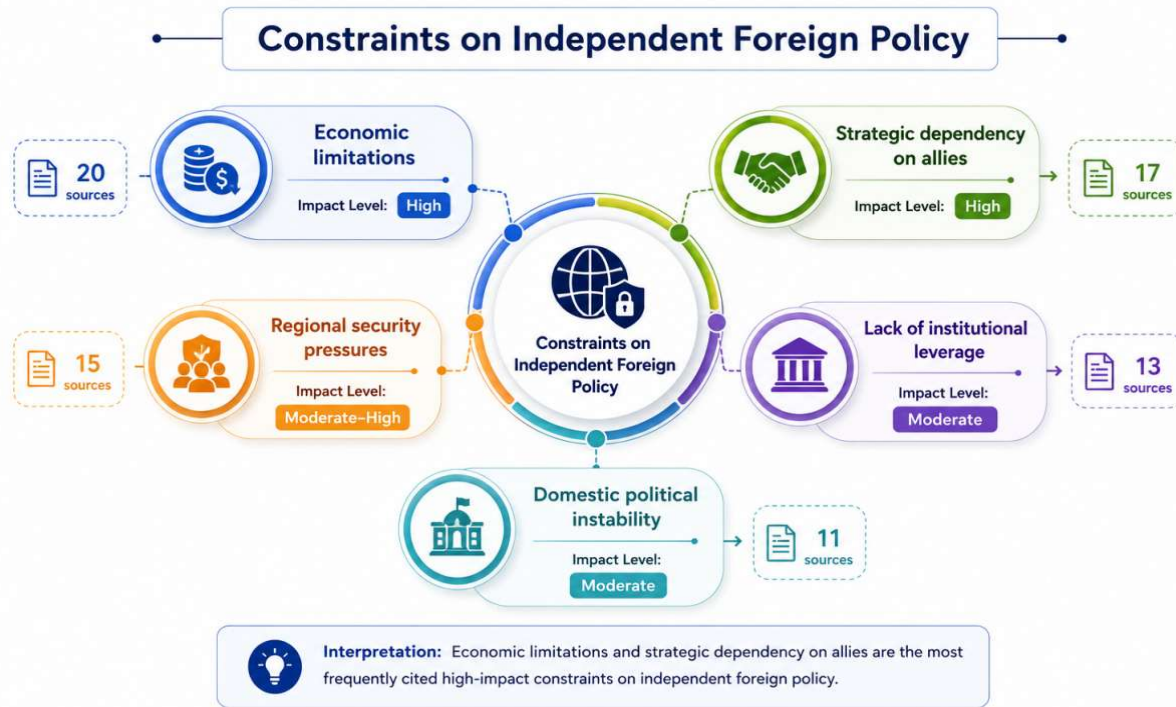
Major Constraints on Pakistan's Mediation Capacity

| Constraint Category | Impact Level | Literature Frequency |
|--------------------------------|---------------|----------------------|
| Economic limitations | High | 20 sources |
| Strategic dependency on allies | High | 17 sources |
| Regional security pressures | Moderate-High | 15 sources |
| Lack of institutional leverage | Moderate | 13 sources |
| Domestic political instability | Moderate | 11 sources |

The findings showed that the financial constraints were the greatest obstacle to Pakistan's mediation effectiveness. Studies reviewed revealed that Pakistan's financial capacity was always limited and were unable to play a sustained diplomatic role in high-stakes negotiations. It depended on international financial institutions and allied states to be economically dependent and fail to develop independent foreign policy initiatives. This was a major limitation on the mediation potential of this factor. It also found that reliance on external powers, especially the USA and regional allies, imposed further restrictions. Pakistan's foreign policy actions were a balance of sorts, demanding careful balancing of different interests. This dependency undermined its neutrality in some diplomatic situations, impacting its perceived neutrality and credibility as a neutral mediator. Diplomatic bandwidth was further limited by security concerns in the region, particularly on the border and neighbouring conflicts.



Figure 3
Major Constraints on Pakistan's Mediation Capacity



4.3 Pakistan's Impact on Regional Stability

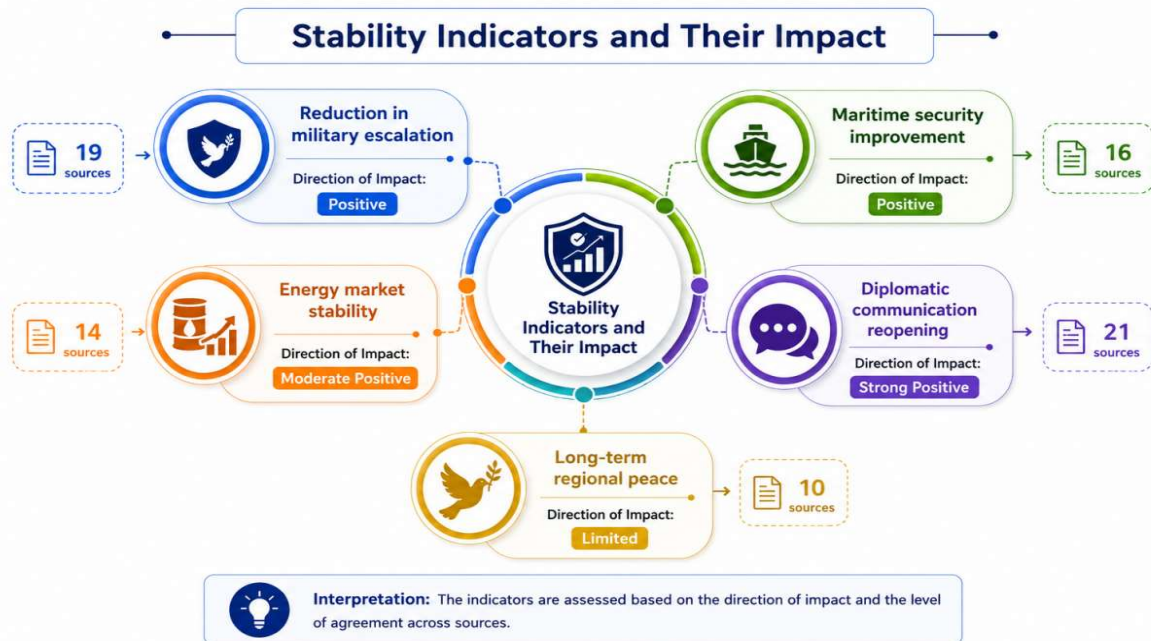
Table 3
Regional Stability Outcomes Linked to Pakistan's Mediation

| Stability Indicator | Direction of Impact | Source Agreement Level |
|------------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------------|
| Reduction in military escalation | Positive | High (19 sources) |
| Maritime security improvement | Positive | Moderate-High (16 sources) |
| Energy market stability | Moderate Positive | 14 sources |
| Diplomatic communication reopening | Strong Positive | 21 sources |
| Long-term regional peace | Limited | 10 sources |

The results showed that Pakistan's mediation had positive impact on the short-term regional stability in the region, especially on the risk of military escalation between the United States and Iran. Most literature reported that indirect diplomatic relations were effective in managing the intensity of the crisis in sensitive geopolitical times. This role was especially important in the maritime regions which are a vital component of global energy supply chains and to prevent any rapid escalation. The study also revealed that Pakistan's mediation enhanced maritime security in the Persian Gulf area through the efficient communication during tense situations. Although Pakistan did not directly influence security outcomes, it did help mitigate miscommunication and signalling errors between conflicting parties through diplomatic engagement. Energy market stability also saw moderate improvement as a result of the lessening of uncertainty about conflict escalation in the region. The outcomes showed that Pakistan's impact on the long-term peace in the region was still limited.



Figure 4
Regional Stability Outcomes Linked to Pakistan’s Mediation



5. Discussion

Recent events with the United States and Iran illustrated the need for mediation as a tool for de-escalating the escalation of high-intensity geopolitical conflicts particularly in the wake of unsuccessful direct diplomacy. Recent studies focused on how intermediary actors could help mitigate information gaps and promote indirect communication between state adversaries, especially in terms of nuclear and regional security (Wallenstein & Svensson, 2014; Regan & Aydin, 2006). In the case of Pakistan, it assumed strategic significance as a communication bridge between Washington and Tehran, in a broader structural trend in international mediation in which countries with two diplomatic lines became important. A recent study of policies also suggested that Pakistan's mediation helped stabilise ceasefires temporarily as it helped to pass the messages during the periods of extreme escalation (Kreutz 2010; Beardsley 2011). The dynamics showed that the effectiveness of mediation was dependent less on formal authority and more on the positioning and access to conflicting parties.

Empirical research on conflict mediation also indicated that there was a significant effect on the likelihood of a conflict recurring when mediators were involved rather than not, but when mediators continued to be involved in the conflict, without intervening in it in isolated instances. Bercovitch and Gartner (2006) found that a mediator's efforts to maintain post-cease fire communication was a factor in the success of mediation. In the US–Iranian case, Pakistan's role was more of a facilitator and a relay man in the context of indirect negotiations and the transmission of offers, especially during maritime security tensions in the Strait of Hormuz. Scholarly research also indicated that regional-actors like Pakistan, were not necessarily neutral with their strategic interests playing a role in the mediation outcomes (Melin, 2017; Touval & Zartman, 2015).

A review of other literature revealed that middle-power diplomacy and niche diplomacy and strategic brokerage roles could be of influence in global conflicts even if the state has not the superpower status. In the context of conflict, middle powers became "problem-solvers" and gained diplomatic success by doing so, as described in the research by Cooper, Higgott and Nossal (2013). Its geopolitical position with Iran and its security alliance with the USA worked in its favour in Pakistan, providing a unique form of dual access diplomacy, thereby adding to its mediation credibility in certain crisis moments. Recent analytical studies also brought to the fore that Pakistan's mediation efforts grew because of the instability in the region and the loss



of trust in traditional western-led diplomatic process (Acharya, 2018; Destradi, 2017). But such influence had to be accepted by the great powers which kept defining the limits of Pakistan's diplomatic autonomy.

Recent research on coercive diplomacy and sanctions also clarified the structural dynamics of US-Iranian relations in which economic sanctions and pressure sometimes led to political resistance to change, rather than yielding compliance. Research by Drezner (2011) and Early and Peksen (2017) showed that sanctions often made domestic political positions more extreme within the sanctioned countries and lessened the chances of direct negotiations. In this context, Pakistan's role as a mediator was more of a communication bridge than that of a diplomatic power. Mediation showed potential to mitigate the likelihood of misinterpretation in situations of military signalling, which helped to decrease the escalation risk in specific maritime areas (Crocker, Hampson, & Aall, 2018; Jones & Ridout, 2015).

Theoretical writing on mediation success highlighted the importance of the mediator's leverage, timing and credibility in mediation. Both Svensson and Wallensteen (2010) and Beardsley (2011) have confirmed that mediators who were more political than purely facilitative had more sustainable peace outcomes. Mediation in Pakistan's case was rather facilitative in nature and limited in reach, thereby limiting its long-term utility in changing the US–Iran strategic hostility. Furthermore, as suggested by the structural realist interpretations, great power willingness was more important than mediator initiative in the mediation process, due to power asymmetry between the two actors, the United States and Iran (Waltz, 1979; Mearsheimer, 2014).

There were also recent trends in global diplomacy that suggested more fragmentation of mediating authority with several competing regional actors in the US-Iran discussions. In multi-actor mediation contexts, studies indicated that the lack of coherence in the mediation effort could hinder agreement formation, and that multiple mediation efforts may delay agreement formation (Bercovitch & DeRouen, 2005; Kydd, 2006). In this context, Pakistan's mediation was shared with other mediators in the region which lessened the sense of exclusivity, but in certain negotiation phases, Pakistan's mediation was more relevant. Distributed mediation systems acknowledged by policy analysis were associated with the new paradigms in global conflict management, where one party did not have the sole control over the mediation process (Crocker et al., 2018).

6. Conclusion

The study found that during geopolitical tension, Pakistan was able to play a meaningful but limited role in facilitating communication between the United States and Iran. The results of that showed that Pakistan has played a pivotal role in de-escalating the situation in the short term by ensuring indirect communication between both countries and minimising misunderstandings. This mediation role contributed to the stabilization of sensitive areas in the region, especially in maritime security zones, where the risk of escalation continued to be high.

The findings also suggested that in Pakistan's diplomacy, temporary confidence-building measures were facilitated but the structural dynamics of the conflict between the two countries was not altered. The analysis also found that some structural constraints were present which affected Pakistan's mediation effectiveness. Pakistan had limited influence on long-term results due to economic dependence, limited diplomatic leverage, and an imbalance in power between the United States and Iran. It also had to be content with facilitative diplomacy, given competing regional mediation efforts and the intricacies of geopolitical interests.

7. Recommendations

The study suggested improving Pakistan's diplomatic machinery to improve its capacity to carry out continuous mediation in international conflicts. The establishment of specialised diplomatic mediation units and training programs in conflict resolution could enhance effectiveness in the future geopolitical context. Better institutional coordination among civilian and military foreign policy actors would also help to facilitate cohesive and strategic foreign policy responses in high-tension situations. It was also recommended that Pakistan strengthen its foreign policy partnership with a diversified approach which will reduce Pakistani dependency on economic and strategic partners thereby enabling its foreign policy autonomy. It could be helpful if regional cooperation mechanisms could be improved, especially in South and West Asia, to improve the credibility of Pakistan as a neutral mediator. Involvement in multilateral bodies like the United Nations and OIC needs to be expanded for institutionalization of mediation process and further to imbibe diplomatic



legitimacy around the globe.

8. Future Directions

Empirical case studies based on first-hand experience in mediation processes through direct diplomatic interactions and interviews with decision-makers should be the future direction of research to gain deeper insights into mediation processes. Comparative analysis of Pakistan with other regional mediators like Oman, Qatar, and Turkey could also be beneficial in helping to further understand the differences in mediation effectiveness and positioning. This would be useful to understand the reasons for the success of some mediators in comparable geopolitical situations. Next, long-term effects of middle-power mediation on conflict transformation and not only on short-term crisis reduction should be further explored. There is a possibility to implement quantitative models to assess the effectiveness of mediation based on the intensity of the conflict, time of negotiation and the sustainability of the ceasefire. The use of digital diplomacy and communication technologies in improving or impeding mediation in contemporary international relations should be explored.

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Contribution of Authors

All the authors participated in the ideation, development, and final approval of the manuscript, making significant contributions to the work reported.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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Informed Consent

Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Ethical Approval

All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

Data Availability

The datasets generated during and analysed during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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