

Qatar as a Middle Power Mediator: An Exploration of its Motivations to Mediate

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Abstract

Qatar ticks all the features of a middle power with mediation as a cornerstone of its foreign policy. Over the past few years, it has gained prominence as a mediator, facilitating diplomatic negotiations between several controversial state and non-state actors and leveraging its status as a middle power. This article highlights Qatar's motivations for embodying the role of a mediator and its role in conflict resolution, substantiated by the conceptual framework of the middle power concept and mediation. The paper has focused on the underlying inspirations for the role mediation, that is, a voluntary process. The study also explores the critical drivers of Qatar's interest in mediation, which are security and stability in the region. Doha has a limited strategic depth, with the geopolitical struggle for regional dominance between Saudi Arabia and Iran. This article adopts a qualitative approach, integrating extensive and reliable secondary data to analyse the role of Qatar as a middle power mediator in the Middle East. The findings of the study suggest that Qatar's engagement as a mediator is driven by strategic reasons to pursue international prestige and altruistic objectives. Through this article, we aim to explore the motivations behind Qatari mediation, while shedding light on its evolving position in the volatile geopolitical landscape of the Middle East.

Keywords: Qatar, Middle East, Mediation, Middle Power concept, strategic interests, altruistic motivations

Introduction

The Middle Eastern region is persistently embroiled in a quagmire of interstate conflicts and civil tensions. Amidst this conundrum, middle powers have come into the spotlight for their role in conflict resolution. A middle power is a state positioned between great and small powers that generally lacks the resources of a great power but possesses enough authority and diplomatic capacity to impact the global arena. Middle powers are deemed responsible international actors proactively engaging in multilateralism, cooperation, and conflict resolution. These often project their most conspicuous role within their regions, where their immediate interests are vested. Qatar exemplifies many features of a middle power.

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With strategic coalition-building and mediatory ventures, Qatar has positioned itself as a middle power in the region. It fits the hierarchical metrics of a middle power with its economic wealth and strategic geopolitical impact in the region through mediation efforts, diplomacy, media such as Al Jazeera, and proactive foreign policy. Qatar has opted for mediation as one of its foreign policy agendas to address its vulnerabilities and security dilemma. However, its role as a middle power is not void of controversy. Qatar's conflict resolution efforts have been lauded for bringing hostile parties to the negotiating table. Still, scholars are critical of its actions, which suggest Qatar pursuing only its foreign policy.

Qatar is a small yet strategic country on the West coast of the Persian Gulf, serving as a gateway between East and West. Its geostrategic location, possession of the world's largest oil and gas reserves, and its role as a mediator in regional conflicts have uplifted Qatar's global prominence, qualifying it as a middle power. Situated in an unstable region, the role of Qatar as a middle power resolving disputes needs an extensive examination to determine whether its mediatory efforts arise from altruism or ulterior motives.

However, Qatar as a middle power embodying the role of mediator has been compelled by several reasons. The critical drivers of Qatar's interest in mediation are security and stability. It has a limited strategic depth, with the geopolitical struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the 2017 blockade, small military force, limited population, and territorial size, and constant Western media backlash for supporting Islamist groups and its sharing of North Field with Iran. After the Arab Spring, Gulf States were compelled to reformulate foreign policies with security as their priority. Therefore, conflict resolution lies in Article 7 of its constitution states.

The geopolitics of the Middle East is prone to religious, sectarian, political, and hegemonic struggles. Overcoming its frailties, it deems its diplomatic initiatives as an element of national power. Against the backdrop of such vulnerabilities, the mediatory role has popularized Qatar, as in the case of Lebanon, Chad, Darfur, and Doha accords, and a humanitarian pause between Gaza and Israel. Track records of mediatory efforts have shown different degrees of success therefore, a thorough understanding of its interests in solving disputes will help to unveil a myriad of areas that, if fine-tuned, could empower Qatar to fulfil a crucial role in conflict resolution, becoming a player in global geopolitics in the future.

Methodology

This article employs a qualitative study approach using a combination of secondary data collection and different types of research, such as descriptive, exploratory, explanatory, and analytical, in the conflict resolution domain. A systematic desk review method was adopted, involving the in-depth exploration of existing data from authentic sources and scholarly reports, books, articles, and reliable online material. Based on the research question and objective, a thorough analytical

approach has been used to investigate the data. The article draws on the concept of middle powers and mediation, and how the middle powers trait of such countries earns them credibility to act as mediators and contribute to conflict resolution.

Conceptual Framework: Middle Power Concept and Mediation

This article employs the concepts of middle power and mediation as its conceptual framework. The concept of middle power will offer a structural dimension, while mediation as a concept narrows the focus on why middle powers play their role as mediators and what interests guide their involvement. Mediation is one of the strategies of conflict resolution, following a strategic approach that emphasizes the role of a neutral facilitator, promoting dialogues and concluding agreements.

Middle powers are actors in conflict resolution with their diplomatic clout and strategic positioning rather than mere economic and military dominance. These powers tend to act as facilitators, and their commitment to diplomatic missions gives them an edge to mediate conflicts effectively, even in the convoluted regional paradigms. Middle powers stand on their unwavering commitment to multilateralism and strive towards pursuing cooperation, refraining from confrontational approaches to tackle regional and international issues. This attribute places them to foster dialogue, bring stability, and address disputes that may be out of the reach of major powers or ignored by smaller powers (Cooper & Momani, 2009).

Qatar provides strong evidence of these concepts in action in the volatile Middle Eastern region. Qatar has emerged as a middle power, mediating many high-stakes conflicts in the region. The foreign policy of Qatar is characterized by its soft power approach with mediation as its priority. It has played a prominent role in mediating the Yemen conflict, the Darfuri rebels' conflict, the Lebanon crisis, the Palestine-Israel conflict, and the Doha Accords that brought two conflicting states and facilitated dialogue (Schweller, 2017).

An Overview of the Concept of Mediation

International Relations scholar Jacob Bercovitch has defined mediation in the following words:

Mediation is a process of conflict management where disputants seek the assistance of, or accept an offer of help from, an individual, group, state, or organization to settle their conflict or resolve their differences without resorting to physical force or invoking the authority of law. (Bercovitch & Gartner, International Conflict Mediation New approaches and findings, 2009)

Characteristics of Mediation

Mediation provides a constructive framework that promotes understanding and cooperation between the conflicting parties. Mediation supports the voluntary

involvement of the parties and helps the disputants to keep the results of negotiations under their control. The characteristics of mediation underscore the distinct facets that make it a practically applicable strategy for conflict resolution. The characteristics of mediation are as follows:

Table 1: *Characteristics of Mediation (Moore, 2010)*

Voluntary	Mediation is a voluntary process. The participation is also volunteered and none of the disputing parties is forced for negotiations. It is a process that assists in decision-making and bringing hostiles to negotiate.
Enhanced Negotiation	Mediation is almost the same as negotiations but with the presence of a third party, known as the mediator. Mediator is expected to be unbiased. The mediator helps the hostiles to agree on a just and collaboratively reached agreement by giving them enough space and special guidance about bridging gaps in their relationships and procedural issues.
Non-Judicial	Mediation does not depend on the proceedings of court. It helps them reconnoitre choices and cost- benefit analysis so that the parties have their sovereignty over their choices. The mediator is not a judge that passes down binding decisions. It is a facilitator.
Informal	A formal setting does not provide space for discussions and open- ended communication. Mediation is a flexible and an informal approach to conflict resolution. It allows the disputants to explore their own choices at their own pace, while the mediator facilitates them through any discrepancies. This way they are better able to identify underlying causes and their conflict of interests.
Confidential	Mediation process is conducted with utmost confidentiality and generally safeguarded by rulings such as Alternative Dispute Resolution Act (ADRA). The discussions and exploration of choices remain exclusive. This helps the disputants to look for negotiation options without the fear of being affected by legal procedures in future.
Expedited	Mediation expedites the process of reaching conclusions as it is flexible in nature. The legal proceedings take a long time to reach an agreement because of formalities needed to be fulfilled by the disputants. The sessions of mediation can be promptly scheduled, expediting the route towards violence-free outcome.

Mediation as a Strategy for Conflict Resolution

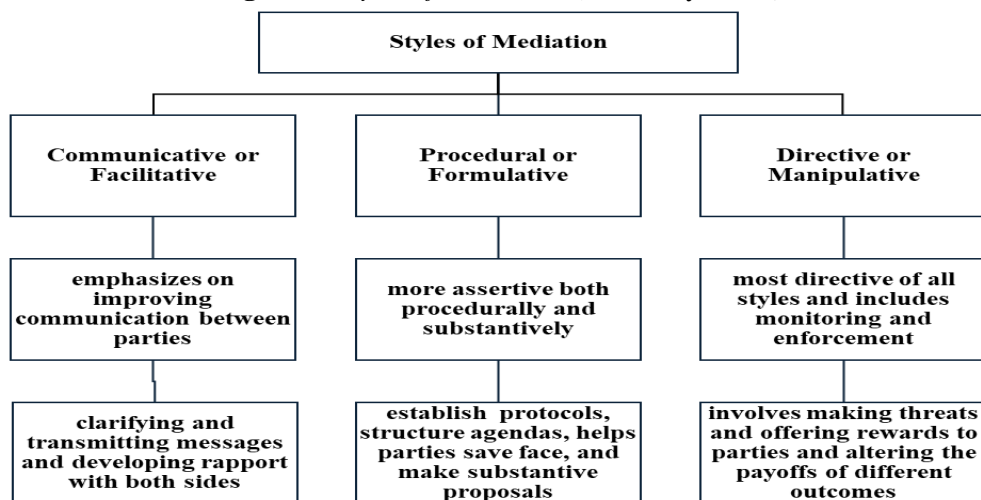
Mediation, a conflict resolution mechanism, has been practiced for centuries. When direct communication between the conflicting parties seems difficult, mediation aids in bringing them to the same table. Various actors can be described as mediators, such as countries, international organizations, individuals, the United

Nations, or any religious or political group. The process of mediation is looked after by a representative or the head of the state. UN Secretary-General, Kofi Annan's mediatory efforts in the Syrian civil conflict, as well as former Senator George Mitchell's attempts to restore peace in Northern Ireland, are two examples of mediation. A prominent way of mediating constitutes 'friends of' groups, in which several countries or international organizations establish informal groups or alliances to bolster pacific resolutions. For instance, in the case of the Guatemala peace process (1990-1996), informal alliances between the states played the role of mediation. Neutrality is highly debated because mediators are expected to be biased in the conflicts. Some experts believe that being biased reaps more effective results due to the mediators developing rapport with the conflicting parties (Bercovitch & Gartner, International Conflict Mediation New approaches and findings, 2009).

Styles of Mediation

Mediation strategy is an all-encompassing approach that is adopted by mediators to resolve conflicts. International relations scholars Jacob Bercovitch and Houston classified and developed mediation styles as communication-facilitative, procedural or formulative, and manipulative or directive strategies. The communicative or facilitative style refers to a strategy that involves limited intervention as it concentrates on merely boosting dialogue and acceptance between hostile parties. The procedural or formulative style is when the mediator participates in the mediation process, allowing disputants to have discussions by organizing meetings and plans for them to come to the same page. A directive or manipulative style denotes the highest degree of involvement. The mediator plays an influential role in impacting negotiation content by offering them incentives or intimidating them with threats. These styles are described below: (John & Ghais, 2006).

Figure 1: Styles of Mediation (Beardsley, 2006)



Understanding the Concept of Middle Powers

The concept of middle powers is persistently examined because of its subjectivity, heterogeneity, and self-perception of the countries themselves, which makes it difficult to view the real projection of power and the power that is perceived. To have a clear understanding, middle powers need to clarify their position in a dynamic international landscape by formulating their identity and importance. Middle powers are explained by a blend of attributes such as their geostrategic position, military and economic strength, an equilibrium between capability and size, a pledge towards international harmony and cooperation, and a behavioural framework that advocates collaboration and multilateralism. These powers excessively depend on multilateral diplomacy and leverage this advantage to maintain global order and support liberal internationalism. Middle powers are known for serving as mediators, managers, bridge-builders, and catalysts. They often strive to maintain the balance of power between the major powers and aim for harmony and cooperation. Diplomatic expertise is considered more significant as compared to physical traits such as territory, location, or population (Das, 2022).

A renowned Ukrainian philosopher, Mykhailo Minakov, and a British academician, Oliver Turner, underscored the significance of middle powers in conflicts. They specifically worked on the development of conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine and how the role of middle powers as conflict mediators could resolve the issues. They argue that the role of middle powers gains the most importance when extended periods of peace come to an end and major powers begin to have violent relationships with each other. When there is peace and harmony, non-major states have nothing much in their capacity to shape or influence international or regional dynamics. However, when tensions between great powers erupt and get embroiled in it, middle powers find an opportunity to exercise their influence. Oliver Turner shares the view that middle powers embody the role of mediators, a role conventionally played by the major powers (Das, 2022).

A Comprehensive Definition of Middle Power by Scholars

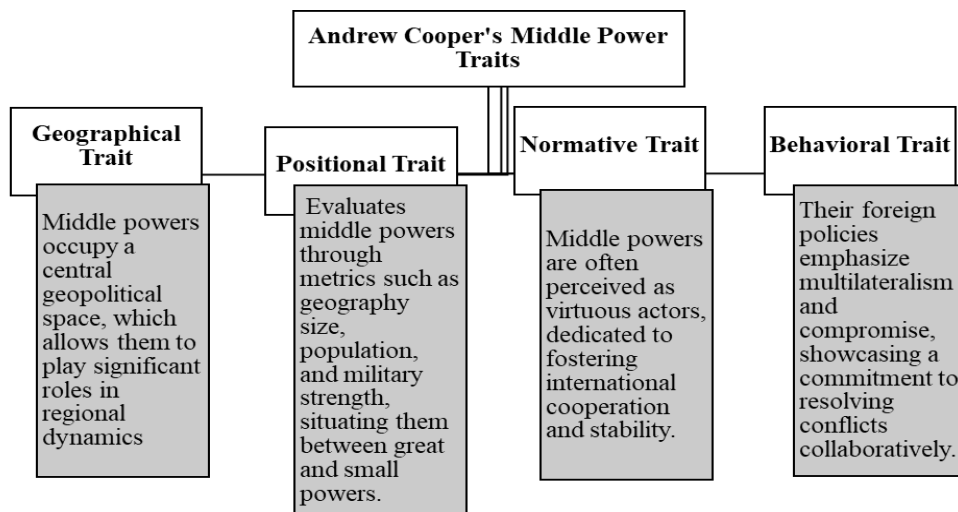
By synthesizing the definitions of middle power by renowned International Relations and political science scholars Carsten Holbraad, Robert Cox, and Andrew Cooper, an all-encompassing definition of middle power can be concluded as:

Middle powers are states characterized by moderate capabilities both material and diplomatic allowing them to play significant roles in international affairs, particularly through multilateralism and mediation. They occupy an intermediate position in the global hierarchy, leveraging their geopolitical context and fostering cooperative relationships to enhance regional stability and promote a rules-based international order. Middle powers are recognized for their ability to act as responsible stewards within the international system, employing foreign policies that reflect a commitment to cooperation, compromise, and conflict resolution without challenging

the existing power structures. This multifaceted role is shaped by their geographical positioning, normative values, and a strategic focus on balancing interests between great powers and smaller states (Erskine, *The Middle Power Dynamic in the Indo-Pacific: Unpacking How Vietnam and Indonesia Can Shape Regional Security and Economic Issues*, 2022).

The understanding of middle powers can be established by the Professor of Political Science at the University of Waterloo in Canada, Andrew F. Cooper's four significant traits. The four traits are geographical, positional, normative, and behavioural (Cha & Dumond, 2017).

Figure 2: Andrew Cooper's four traits (Erskine, *The Middle Power Dynamic in the Indo-Pacific Unpacking How Vietnam and Indonesia Can Shape Regional Security and Economic Issues*, 2022)



Role of Middle Powers in Conflict Resolution

A question that persistently lingers through the minds of scholars is: can middle powers be a catalyst for peace and resolution of conflicts? Characterized by their aptitude to influence despite lacking the resources of major powers, middle powers possess a myriad of advantages and autonomy in decision-making and the strength to stand on their own. This notion first applied when Italy occupied a center or neutral stance with France and the Ottoman Empire. According to David Cooper, an expert at the US Naval War College:

Middle power stresses on soft power diplomacy with entrepreneurial ability and technical competence, effective communication, and moral suasion (Erskine, 2022).

The importance of middle powers was seen after the Second World War, when globalization led to multipolarity and the birth of civil society, fostering coalition-building that stressed pluralism and equity. A Canadian Professor, John Ravenhill, pointed out that middle powers embodied analytical abilities that are key factors in achieving multilateralism. He has identified countries such as Australia, Sweden, Canada, India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Denmark, South Korea, Japan, Norway, Netherlands, Spain, and Turkey as middle powers and has acknowledged the role these nations have played in acting as mediators and balancers in both regional and international conflicts (Stefanova & Greco, 1997).

From a historical perspective, Canada as a middle power, is known for ameliorating tensions in Rwanda and Cyprus by fostering dialogue and peacekeeping efforts. Sweden played a key role in mediating disputes in the Gulf region and the Balkans, providing them with economic and humanitarian assistance. They highlight that middle powers serve as bridges between major and small powers, ultimately stabilizing regional and global order. (Baç, Middle Power , 2024)

Table 2: *Famous scholars highlighting the role of middle powers in conflict resolution* (Baç, Middle Power, 2024)

Scholars	Role of Middle Powers in Conflict Resolution
Robert Cox	Emphasizes that middle powers actively seek to mediate conflicts by Promoting common ground and fostering dialogue. Their unique position allows them to act as intermediaries, facilitating communication between conflicting parties
Carsten Holbraad	Outlines the role of middle powers as balancers and mediators within the international system. He argues that these states can bridge the gap between larger powers and smaller nations, helping to stabilize regional tensions
Bernard Wood	Adds that middle powers often take the initiative in regional or functional leadership roles, particularly within international organizations. Their ability to act as stabilizers during conflicts underscores their importance in maintaining international order and addressing disputes

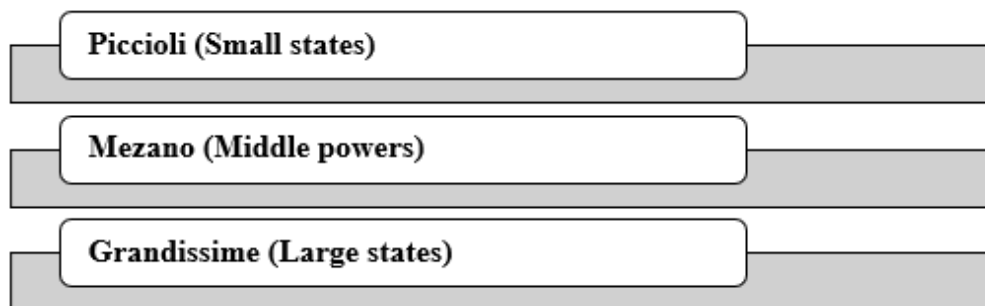
Middle powers heavily rely on diplomacy and pursue their foreign policy agendas under certain conditions, and more specifically, these follow niche diplomacy as they have limited capabilities. These states are not transformist and are content with their position in the world system. (Baç, Middle Power, 2024) In the pluralist domain of international relations, middle powers play the role of legitimate brokers. Hegemonic powers or superpowers are the pioneers of international organizations, but these institutions are maintained when the interests of different actors converge, and this is when the role of middle powers dominates. Middle powers are frequently met

with problems like non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, economic upheavals, debt, or domestic challenges, or sometimes face threats from external forces, and in the face of these problems, these powers can form coalitions, seek help through diplomatic expertise, and steer clear of hegemonic struggles. They are least likely to be perceived as threats because they have adopted the image of a peace broker and conflict resolver. (Bercovitch & Kadayifci, 2002)

The Middle Power Concept: A Historical Perspective

The term “middle power,” as we see it in contemporary times, originated from the European system of states in the fifteenth century. An Italian philosopher and diplomat, Giovanni Botero (1544-1617) played the role of a pioneer in formulating the concept of “middle power.” He crafted a hierarchy of power in his book titled “Ragion de Stato” or “The Reason of the State” in 1589. In his book, he categorized states into three divisions (Cha & Dumond, 2017).

Figure 3: *Classification of States in Power Hierarchy by Giovanni Botero in 1589* (Cha & Dumond, 2017)



Giovanni Botero was of the view that middle powers possessed enough power and influence to function independently without the support of external powers or help. He underscored the strength of the middle powers by mentioning that these powers were stable and had a smooth governance system as they were less likely to be prone to violence and threats by weakness and less jealousy from the greatness. After some time, the interest in the study of middle powers faded until Abbe de Mably’s book titled “Principes des Negociations” was published in 1757. In his book, he made a three-tier hierarchy of powers. According to him, these powers were to impact international relations. He then categorized the second tier of states into upper and lower secondary powers as they likely had the power to take up influential roles. A German scholar, Herbert, introduced the word “mittelmacht” in 1802, pointing to a central or middle power that was positioned between Austria and Prussia, differing from the other scholars who defined middle powers as a center state in the

international system. Middle powers were officially recognized as a classification of states at the Paris Conference held in 1815 (Ungerer, 2007).

Middle Power Concept at the Regional Level: A Framework for Qatar in the Middle East

According to Raymond Hinnebusch middle powers in the regional context are: *“states that have interests and capabilities sufficient to play a major role in regional governance and even to aspire to hegemony over a particular geographical region.”* The Concept of middle power in the regional context aids in the examination of state behaviour and regional hierarchies. Focusing on the Middle Eastern region, there is no one regional hegemon but many regional middle powers, with each state constantly in a struggle to balance and prevent another from attaining the status of a regional superpower. The middle power concept must be shifted to a regional hierarchical system from a global hierarchical system. In any case, they are the balancers of power. This concept provides an analytical structure that connects international relations of the Middle East and the notion of middle powers by integrating material and ideational components to study the behaviour of middle powers in this specific region. (John & Ghais, 2006)

There are five key criteria of middle powers in the regional context, and these are as mentioned:

1. A state that is geographically a part of the delineated region and is focused on playing a role within that region before embarking on a global level.
2. A state that does not attempt to shape the structure of the international system. Instead, its interaction with the international level is limited to extracting resources to influence regional dynamics.
3. A state that aims to shape the regional system through alliance formation and mediation.
4. A state that indicates its self-identity and willingness to play role in regional affairs.
5. A state that is able to affect or challenge the regional penetration by great powers.

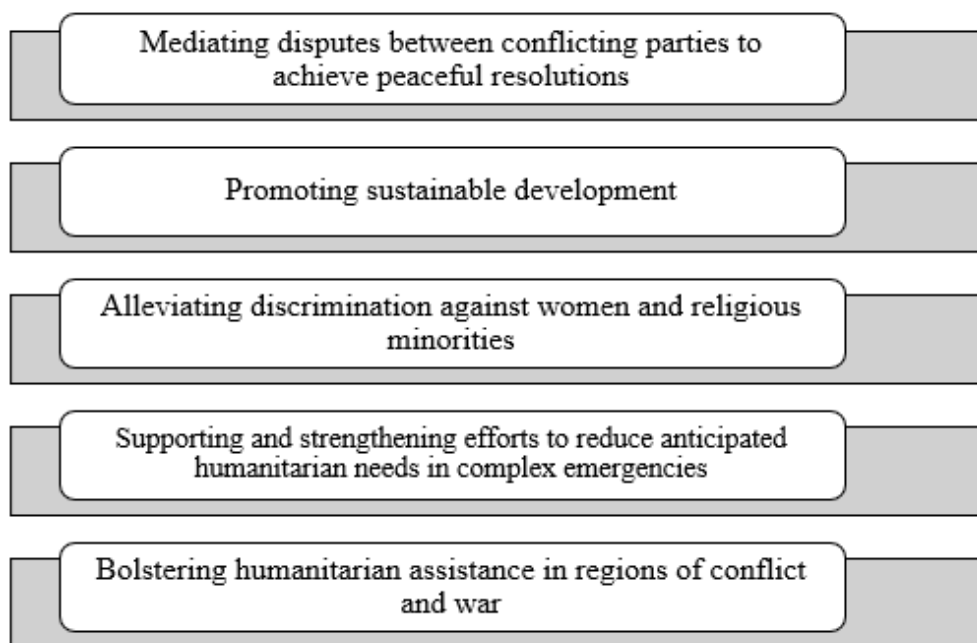
It is important to note that middle powers cannot only be defined in terms of the military because there are many countries, like Israel, Turkey, and Iran, that may be strong materially, but they do not possess enough ideational strength to assume a position of a leader. The case study of Qatar and its role in conflict resolution, being a middle power and considering its motivations for acting as a mediator, can be analysed through the distinct characteristics of middle powers that align well with the foreign policy of Qatar (Saouli, 2020).

Pivotal Points in Qatar’s Foreign Policy

Foreign policy is a country's overall plan that it uses as a guiding principle for dealing with the world. It promotes and safeguards the interests of the states in the

global arena. The interests of a state stem from its history, economics, geography, and international power distribution. It functions on the belief that ‘there are no permanent enemies or friends, only interests.’ Foreign policy comprises three important elements: the end, the ways, and the means. The end refers to objectives or preferred outcomes that a state seeks when interacting with another state. The ways are the methods or strategies employed to achieve those means. The means are the available resources or abilities at the disposal of the state. (Baniya, 2021) Qatar’s foreign policy tick marks all the pivotal postulates of middle powers. Qatari foreign policy holds international peace and conventions with immense respect and devotion. The key priorities in its foreign policy which are as follows:

Figure 4: *Priorities in Qatari foreign policy* (Office)



Motivations behind Qatar’s Mediation Strategy as a Middle Power

The following are the details of motivational reinforcements of Qatar’s Mediation initiatives as a middle power:

Regional Security and Stability: Overcoming Spill-over Effects

Being situated in a turbulent region, Qatar fears the spill over effects of conflicts, jeopardizing its sovereignty and national security. Since the Middle Eastern region is characterized as housing most of the Arab population, Qatar’s motivation to mediate often arises from its desire to uphold the regional dynamics and promote positive notions regarding the Arab world. Qatar is a small country with certain

strategic and geographical vulnerabilities, such as not having much population and a lack of military power. Therefore, mediation is one step it has taken in its capacity to keep the region safeguarded and prevent conflicts from escalating into wars. Qatar's motivation for mediating the Lebanese conflict in 2008 stemmed from the desire to not have the problems in Lebanon aggravate into a civil war. (Sulaiti H. E., 2024) Moreover, Qatar's aim for regional stability will help it to attract investors and provide foreign investors with a conducive environment to continue their businesses in Qatar, helping the state's economy to prosper. In addition to this, Qatar wants to alleviate threats like corruption, terrorism, and forced displacement of people, which tend to act as catalysts of conflict. Qatar's oil and gas export passes through the Strait of Hormuz, and to ensure the smooth passage of its exports, Qatar must stabilize the region. Thus, the stabilization of the region is connected to a myriad of aspects that are important for Qatar's survival and prominence (Barakat, Qatar's Mediation: Motivations, Acceptance, and Modalities , 2024).

Limited Strategic Depth

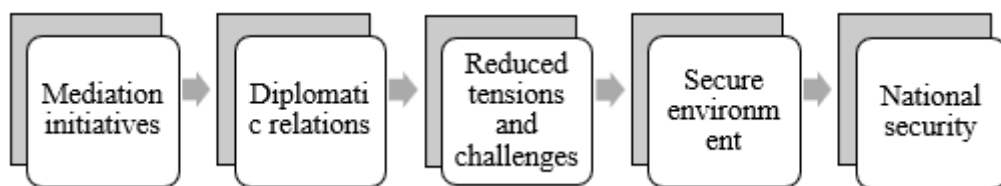
One of the main problems faced by Qatar is the limited strategic depth with a hegemonic struggle between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Strategic depth is a military concept referring to the distance between a state's front lines or areas of dispute and its important centres like major cities, military bases, or industrial areas. This concept is based on the fact that when there is more distance between these important areas and potential battle zones, it allows the state more time to respond to threats, protect itself, and safeguard its resources, ensuring the national security of a country. When a country has limited strategic depth, it means that in case of any threat or attack, it is extremely vulnerable with nowhere to mobilize. With a limited strategic depth, conflicts or invasions can transcend its borders and reach its important spots in no time. Geographically, Qatar has a small size, and being close to dominant regional states, it has a limited strategic depth. This is a challenge that Qatar tries to overcome using various strategies such as diplomacy and mediation to keep it secure and stable, maintaining friendly relations with every actor. Qatar has Saudi on one side and Iran on the other, and both of these states share hostile relations, while Qatar adopts a diplomatic approach to deal with both states. Mediation is thus adopted as a part of defending mechanisms that can help consolidate Qatar's international relations (Alqashouti, Qatar Mediation: From Soft Diplomacy to Foreign Policy, 2021).

National Security Concerns

The mediatory role adopted by Qatar as a middle power is also driven by its national security apprehensions. Having a middle power status does enhance Qatar's diplomatic clout but does not guarantee national security because of Qatar's location in a volatile region, engulfed by Saudi Arabia, Iran, and UAE, its dependence on external actors for security, and the states' diplomatic relations with both the West and the regional countries, and linkages with Islamists have the potential of exposing the state to competing pressures and conditions, jeopardizing its national security.

Thus, mediation may not merely be opted for the sake of vanity, prestige, or outward appearance; rather, this motivation is a cornerstone of its strategy for national security and a part of its foreign policy agenda. Boosting its image as a neutral and reliable mediator can lead to a decline in the intensity and number of regional or international enemies and conflicts that Qatar would otherwise face. Mediation provides Qatar an avenue for influencing the regional and global stage and, at the same time, keeping its national security concerns in the backseat. Qatar is motivated to mediate because of its national security as it lacks military power and depends on other countries like the USA and Turkey for military protection, and often, state actors shift their loyalties when their interests are not being served well. Especially in today's time, when Israel, backed by the USA, is in a direct war with Hamas, a major geopolitical shift is being witnessed, and every Gulf state must devise a balancing approach to keep it safe from the war. (Baabood, How Gulf States Are Reinterpreting National Security Beyond Their Land Borders , 2024). With mediation, Qatar can promote dialogue, build alliances, and engage in networking, thereby consolidating its security and sovereignty. Since national security also comes from economic and political stability and social cohesion, mediatory activities are pursued to address terrorism, ethnic strife, and refugee issues, manage alliances such as GCC in times of conflict, and fear of civil wars. For instance, Qatar's mediation in Lebanon and Sudan prevented the escalation of the conflict. (Kamrava, Mediation and Qatari Foreign policy, 2011)

Figure 5: *Mediation initiatives leading to Qatar's national security* (Kamrava, Mediation and Qatari Foreign policy, 2011).



Addressing Security Dilemmas and Enhancing Soft Power

From a historical perspective, Qatari foreign policy has evolved, considering the security issues stemming from regional power transitions, specifically after the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in the 1990s and the burgeoning influence of Saudi Arabia. Such regional shifts in the balance of power led to Qatar witnessing an unprecedented security dilemma. This was the time when Qatar realized the importance of ensuring its security and sovereignty against external perils from neighbours such as Saudi Arabia and Iran. Qatar began to sign defence and military alliances with the USA, France, and, in recent times, with Türkiye to guarantee its traditional paradigm of security. At the same time, it embodied soft power as an essential instrument for countering its security issues. Mediation was then pursued to balance 'regional hegemonic pressures' and promote its reputation as a peace promoter in the Middle East. This strategy was used during the 2017 Blockade, in which soft power proved

to be beneficial as it alleviated potential threats such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, and Bahrain waging a war against Qatar (Kawakibi, Qatar's Role in the Geopolitical Scenarios of the Middle East and North Africa, 2022).

Mediation supports Qatar's soft power, which it deploys to enhance its security strategy. Soft power is reliant on political values, foreign policy, and culture. As proposed by Joseph Nye, it is the ability to influence others using persuasion and presenting a state's image as attractive, ultimately proving to change the perceptions of others. Mediation is an aspect of soft power and Qatar embodying a soft reputation, allows it to receive goodwill on the regional and international platform, keeping it secure from security dilemmas. This advantage helps the state from isolation, making it a part of political arenas at regional and global forums.

Qatar is investing heavily in soft power, such as in sports, tourism, the economic sector, humanitarian activities, mediatory efforts, and culture, it is less likely to be prone to security dilemmas in the first place but Qatar may be perceived as a threat for employing an independent foreign policy and hosting Islamist groups which are bluntly labelled as terrorist organizations. Mediation allows its soft power image to get publicized because when it mediates, it showcases its positive attributes, such as being accommodating to hostile parties to conduct talks on its land, housing the belligerents, providing them an environment conducive to dialogue, and reaching an agreement (Freer, Qatar and UAE in Peacemaking and Peacekeeping, 2022).

Desire for International Prestige

One of the obvious reasons for Qatar to pursue mediation as a strategy for conflict resolution is its desire for international prestige and honour. The belief that the 'greater the international prestige, the greater will be the authority' drives Qatar's motivation to mediate. Qatar seeks international prestige for various strategic reasons, such as enhancing its standing and being a flagbearer of conflict resolution using peaceful diplomatic means. Qatar resorts to mediation to enhance its standing. The quest for international prestige is also tied to Qatar's underlying economic and political benefits, such as securing regional and foreign investments and being respected while maintaining its identity and security in a troubled region (Wani, 2020). When Qatar mediates, releasing its soft power, it adds to the legitimacy of the state of Qatar in the international sphere. It enhances its status, which can expand its influence and boost its security (Minich, Conflict Mediation: The Qatari Experience, 2015).

Qatar has been labelled a major non-NATO ally by US President Joe Biden for giving unwavering support to Americans and assisting them throughout their process of withdrawing from Afghanistan. Qatar's mediation efforts have been recognized by international actors as in the case of Chad, Lebanon, and the 2025 Ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. This motivates Qatar to mediate to an extent that earns it international repute (Katzman, 2022).

In addition to this, Qatar's international role was seen when it assumed a two-year seat in the United Nations Security Council in 2006 till 2007, voicing its opinion on the world stage. During this time, it left no stone unturned in taking advantage of its position and boldly condemned Israel for attacking Hezbollah in 2006 and in the 2008 war. It used this platform to rectify its relations with the Arab public and took this as an opportunity to improve its ties with the axis of resistance, which are Syria and Iraq. Qatar has been able to reach this stage due to its mediatory efforts and continues to do so, as evidenced by the initiation of a humanitarian pause and the recent ceasefire between Hamas and Israel, trying to pave a path for resolving one of the world's protracted and deadliest conflicts of the 21st century. (Barakat, Qatari Mediation: Between Ambition and Achievement, 2014)

Ensuring Economic Diversification, Political Goals, and Global Integration

Qatar's motivation for adopting the role of a mediator often arises from its need to ensure that its economic and political goals are not jeopardized since there is an underlying fear of being attacked for hosting Islamists and its causing it to suffer both politically and economically. If there is no stability and Qatar takes an offensive stance, it will suffer because the passages for exporting oil and gas will be blocked, foreign investors may not invest anymore, Iran might drive Qatar away from the gas fields they share, and Qatar might be subjected to terrorist activities, arising from hosting Islamists and USA and other Western countries on the same land. Qatar does take into account all these possible threats and challenges and keeps abreast of all the happenings in the region that could potentially impact it. According to Qatari officials, mediation is deemed a "strategic priority that fosters a business environment conducive for Qatari investments," implying economic objectives. (Barakat, Qatari Mediation: Between Ambition and Achievement, 2014)

Mediation provides Qatar with an opportunity to address the challenges and project itself as a harmless state that wishes only good. Qatar is well aware that in case of any conflict, its economy and political environment will suffer at large, therefore, it has opted for mediation to safeguard itself from the regional and international geopolitical shifts while maintaining its identity and presence. Therefore, it mediates and attempts to have a friendly relationship with every state. It promises financial and political support to the disputants of the countries it is mediating. (Usef, Qatar's Role as a Mediator in the Middle East, 2022).

In recent years, Qatar has signed some of the following investments to enhance communication networks, transportation ease, renewable energy, education, offshore security and diversify its economic avenues across the globe:

Table 6: *Some of the Qatari investments globally are facilitated by mediation-achieved soft power image (Al-Tamimi, 2024)*

Country	Investment	Motives	Value / Stakes
Lebanon	Consortium for oil and gas exploration in Lebanese Waters	Replace Russian energy company and political influence in Levant	30 % stakes in projects
Sudan	Development of Suakin Port or Red Sea Port	Trade, transportation and gateway to Africa	\$ 4 billion
Pakistan	LNG fired power plants, security outsourcing, Islamabad Airport management to Qatar	Expand geopolitical reach, increase energy relations, increase soft power in South Asia	As of 2022, \$3 billion
China	Technology, E-Commerce, Green energy, Medical. Examples: Ali Baba, Tencent (tech and cultural enterprise), Cainiao (logistical arm of Ali Baba)	Geopolitical expansion, enhance soft power and secure investments and diversify means of income	\$805 million
India	Fintech, educational technology, food, renewable energy. Examples: Zomatos, Byju's, Paytm, Adani Green Energy, Reliance	Enhance soft power, state branding, using its image to secure investments	\$3.073 billion
South Korea	Energy batteries for cars, devices	Technologically advance, reach beyond the region	\$500 million

State Branding: Desire for Branding Itself as a Neutral and Peace-Promoting Middle Power

According to the pioneer of the concept of nation branding and British independent foreign policy advisor, Simon Anolt, nation branding is:

The sum of people's perceptions of a country across the six areas of national competence: The cultural, political, commercial, and human assets, investment potential, and tourist appeal (Al-Tamimi, Amin, & Zarrinabadi, Qatar's Nation Branding and Soft Power , 2023).

Nation branding refers to a concept according to which countries create a distinctive identity for themselves and often involves tangible and non-tangible aspects of a country that could earn them recognition and promote them in the world. It is about formulating a unique image for a state and conveying this image to other

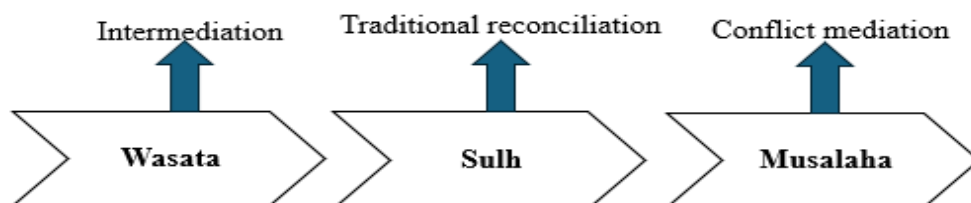
states and the public. For creating this image, various instruments may be used, such as media, tourism, public relations, public diplomacy, humanitarian efforts, and trade to project the national identity of the state as powerful and attractive to others. (Al-Tamimi, Amin, & Zarrinabadi, Qatar's Nation Branding and Soft Power , 2023)

In the case of Qatar, it has heavily invested in the above-mentioned tools. Qatar mediates, considering its goal of enhancing its nation branding strategy and public relations. Considering Qatar's geopolitical positioning and sharing the same region as dominant giants like Saudi Arabia, Iran, and UAE, it wants to be different from these regional powers and establish itself as a credible and trustworthy neutral peace promoter, and adopting mediation helps it to pursue this objective. Using mediation, it also wants to appear as a forward-thinking country. It strives to brand itself while simultaneously achieving political and economic stability, forming the backbone of mediation initiatives. (Barakat, Qatar's mediation – motivations, acceptance and modalities, 2024)

Religious, Cultural, Moral Duty, and Humanitarian Ethos

One of the motivations behind Qatar's pursuit of mediation is the religious, moral, and cultural responsibility. They believe that this responsibility is owed to its nationals and citizens to bring about peace and reconcile disparities among people. Religious, cultural, and moral motivations of Qatar are also highlighted in its constitution, stressing the non-coercive means to resolve disputes, which is an important aspect of the religion. Although Qatar dons the middle power attribute, it has opted to mediate more in conflicts that are geographically close to it, such as in Yemen, Lebanon, Sudan, Djibouti, and Chad, as it believed that it could have more influence on the outcomes that could help it to foster stability at international level. Qatari leadership emphasizes humanitarian, moral, religious, and cultural elements as one of the major driving forces behind their mediation initiatives and important decisions. They identify well with the tenets of the Holy Quran that encourage parties to utilize intermediation, traditional reconciliation, or conflict mediation to settle conflicts. The government established its stance by using these references from the Holy Quran (Al-Tamimi, Amin, & Zarrinabadi, 2023).

Figure 6: *Encouragement of mediation in Islam* (Barakat, Qatari Mediation: Between Ambition and Achievement, 2014)



The Qatari leadership places importance on these concepts as noted in the Holy Quran and the sayings of the Prophet (P.B.U.H) to the extent that they deny any other motivation, such as personal, political, or economic interest in pursuing mediation. (Barakat, *Qatari Mediation: Between Ambition and Achievement*, 2014) Qatar is also driven by the humanitarian ethos it holds to mediate in cases that suffer from increasing violence, forced displacement of victims, deprivation of basic human rights, and humanitarian crises ranging from food insecurity to outbreaks of diseases to educational disruption in conflict zones. It has mediated in many cases, keeping in view humanitarian purposes and alleviating the agony of the victims, such as in the case of Afghanistan. It is mediating in the ongoing Gaza genocide based on its intent to provide humanitarian assistance, facilitate hostage returns, respect human rights, and prevent violence from worsening. The humanitarian ethos of Qatar has been a key factor in its strategy to position and adopt the role of a mediator as a middle power, seeking to use mediation for fulfilling its altruistic motives, such as building trust and promoting diplomatic credibility in the resolution of conflicts. The mother of Emir Tamim, Sheikha Moza, is a prominent figure in ensuring the humanitarian ethos as she is committed to peace and relief initiatives, which also boosts Qatar's soft power image (Himpel & Ayad, 2022).

Managing Iran's Rising Influence: Maintaining Balance of Power

Qatar maintains diplomatic ties with every country even with those that may have a problem with its foreign policy and tries to achieve a balance of power among the major powers in the regional and international context. By acting as a mediator in conflicts, it can raise its status in the geopolitical landscape and achieve leverage over significant political decisions. Apart from the above-mentioned motivations, Qatar engages in mediation to manage the influence of Iran. It does so because it shares the North Field natural gas field with Iran, and it is not affordable for Qatar to damage its relations with Iran. Mediation helps Qatar to broaden its sphere of influence in the Middle East opposite to Saudi Arabia. Iran and Saudi Arabia have hostile relations as both states vie for hegemony in the region. They also fight over sectarian issues which put the entire region in a state of turmoil. Thus, Qatar mediates to keep its source of wealth secure and through the tool of mediation, it attempts to stabilize the relations and balances with the neighbours, so its economic benefits are not jeopardized. Moreover, Qatar tries to achieve a balance of power between its relations with the USA and the Western countries and Iran which is generally seen as a rogue state (Karatas, *Qatar's Return to Mediation Diplomacy: What Changed?*, 2022).

Conclusion

Qatar's prominence as a mediator is an outcome of its distinct geopolitical veracities, strategic agendas, and long-standing traditions in the diplomatic realm. The mediatory efforts of Qatar are compelled by the state's humanitarian, economic, religious, moral, and security interests. All of these motivations align with its foreign policy goals. Qatar deems mediation as a strategy for stabilizing the regional

uncertainties, marred with conflicts that may have spill over effects and also economically by safeguarding its vital energy export routes passing from the Strait of Hormuz. Moreover, mediation allows Qatar to navigate through dangerous fault lines and establish its influence amidst major regional countries like Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Iran. Qatar maintains diplomatic relations with both controversial actors like the Taliban, Hamas, and the Muslim Brotherhood and state actors, and this balancing act is assisted through its embodiment of mediation. By an exploration of Qatar's interests to mediate, it has become evident that its role is not just altruistic; it also helps Qatar to pursue strategic objectives such as global reputation, a means to carving out an image for itself, and using soft power in the face of lacking military power. By analysing the motivations of Qatari mediation, this article underscores how middle powers with structural limitations can establish a diplomatic role in a geopolitically vulnerable situation.

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