



bserved every year on September 18, World Bamboo Day highlights the ecological, economic, and cultural significance of bamboo. Known as the "green gold," bamboo is one of the fastest-growing plants in the world and plays a crucial role in sustainable development. In India, where bamboo is deeply woven into rural livelihoods, crafts, and construction, the day serves as a reminder of its potential in reducing carbon footprints, creating green jobs, and supporting local economies. Celebrations include awareness drives, exhibitions, and workshops to encourage greater use of bamboo as an eco-friendly alternative to plastic and wood.

#INDIRA GANDHI

"It was necessary to safeguard the country's unity and integrity"

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At midnight on 25 June 1975, India, a young democracy and the world's largest, froze. Then Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had just declared a nationwide Emergency. Civil liberties were suspended, opposition leaders jailed, the press gagged and the constitution turned into a tool of absolute executive power.

In an interview with journalist Paul Saltzman in September 1975, Gandhi defended her decision to impose the Emergency, claiming it was necessary to safeguard the "country's unity and integrity".

Indira Gandhi: I have not taken any powers whatsoever. We are functioning absolutely within the constitution. All we have done is to detain a number of people and to ban two main groups, which were non-political groups, who believed in anarchy and violence.

Paul Saltzman: But the cornerstone of democracy is that there can be a legitimate opposition. You don't have an effective opposition. You don't have criticism within the press because of press censorship. And perhaps, most disturbing to people is that somebody can be put into jail and cannot get back to the courts as an age-old right of appeal. Now, certainly that is extra power!

Indira Gandhi: Well, it is a little bit of extra power. But I said in the beginning about the situation created there. Because the question is that whether it is a democracy or any other type of government, the first duty of any government is to preserve the country's unity and its integrity. And I think that it was being threatened.

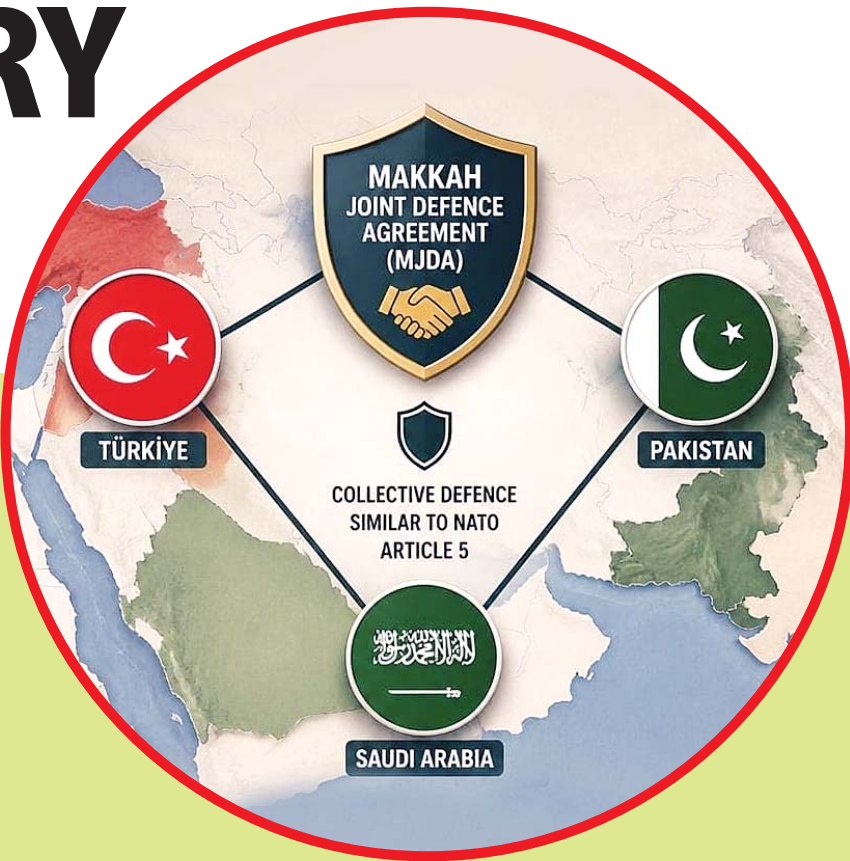
Paul Saltzman: Let's go



MAKKAH AGREEMENT GEOMETRY
RAISES CONCERNS FOR INDIA



The pact has been already put to test by the Houthis with their attack on a Saudi refinery. Iran-aligned Iraqi militias could offer another route. Either could let Iran discover how far it can go while forcing Riyadh, Ankara and Islamabad to decide when an attack on one becomes a fight for all three. Presently, that seems unlikely.



n 07 August, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif signed the Makkah Defence pact. The signing takes place at a time

when the Iran war has settled into an unusual pattern, one that swings between talks and bombings. When talks reach an impasse, missile attacks start and when those fail to achieve a breakthrough, negotiation resumes while the Strait of Hormuz remains closed.

It also comes at a time when the American defence umbrella has proved of little help in protecting Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf Arab states which are caught in a mess of the US making. The presence of US military assets in their countries has instead pulled them into the war.

But the Iran war is only one context in which this agreement needs to be seen. While the pact aims at strengthening collective deterrence, there are many questions that surround it. At the heart of the agreement is a single clause that any armed attack on Saudi Arabia, Pakistan or Turkey is to be treated as an attack on all three.

While the commonality between the three countries is that they are all Sunni Muslim countries, yet each brings to the table distinct assets; Saudi Arabia being the richest country brimming with oil revenues and custodian of the Holy shrines, Turkey is the only Muslim NATO member, trying to resurrect the position it held when the Ottoman Empire reigned, and with its advanced military-industrial base, is emerging as a leader in military drones. Pakistan, on the other hand, is the only Muslim nuclear

power. Indira Gandhi: Do you know what Lincoln said? He said, "Do you want the union or habeas corpus?" at one point in American history. And there was a point. Do you want India to continue as a united entity or do you want anarchy? And if you had had the sort of anarchy which we thought would come about, there would be no question of democracy anyway. It certainly wasn't democracy when members of legislatures were intimidated and forced to resign. That is no description of democracy. And this was the planned program of some of these opposition parties. They were going to do the same with parliament.

Paul Saltzman: You seem to have, in effect at this point, eliminated those threats.

Indira Gandhi: Not yet. No.



state and has close relations with China. It also has a large, and experienced military with a history of defence ties with both Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan has compared the principle behind the agreement to NATO's Article 5. The three states would decide through consultations what form and degree of assistance is required, while a ministerial committee and a permanent secretariat based in Saudi Arabia are expected to develop the alliance's institutional and operational framework.

But the fact is that each of these countries faces diverse security challenges. For Saudi Arabia, it is presently Iran, while for Turkey, their issues are with Israel and Syria, and for Pakistan, their focus is India. Hence, bringing these nations together is not the same as aligning their interests.

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Saudi Arabia

For Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states, the Iran War has shown that partnership with the US, however deep, is not an automatic guarantee of protection. The question is not the magnitude of American power, but the predictability of its use. Iranian attacks exposed the vulnerability of its cities, energy infrastructure and ambitious economic transformation agenda.

The fact is that in spite of purchasing billions worth of US weapons, hosting its bases and troops, selling it oil and cultivating deep ties, the US decision to act in a crisis remains determined by American domestic politics and geopolitical calculations and not threats to the Gulf region. Hence, while the alliance with the US needs to be preserved, they perceive the need to build options beyond it. If the US role recedes, then, the rules in the region could be dictated by Iran and Israel. Iran has spent decades building regional influence beyond its borders in the form of its proxies and has also developed a formidable missile and drone arsenal by which it has targeted several Gulf countries. While Israel has demonstrated military and intelligence superiority that has seen it involved in Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Iran in recent years. The Saudi Defence Minister Prince Khalid bin Salman has described the agreement as establishing a long-term partnership that strengthens "deterrence, coordination and integration." Dr. Rayed Krimly, undersecretary at the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has made clear that it does not establish a military or sectarian bloc, is unrelated to nuclear ambitions or an arms race, and does not come at the expense of Saudi Arabia's strong Gulf, Arab and international relationships.

Turkey

Turkey has insisted that Iran or any other country is not identified as an adversary, saying the pact applies only when a member comes under attack. To quote Fidan, "There is no common threat that we have put in writing." His remarks were a response to media reports which claimed that the pact would prompt joint action against Iran.

He said that the agreement was "the most important step towards bringing lasting stability to this region" and suggested the alliance could expand further, hinting that Egypt might join the trio in the near future. Fidan said that increasing regional ownership of security

#STRATEGY



issues is central to "Turkey's approach." "External hegemony coming into the region do not solve the problems; they make them more acute, and the cost becomes very high," he said, arguing that regional countries should develop more institutional mechanisms through which they can ensure their own security, economic stability, development and prosperity.

Turkey, undoubtedly, has been benefitted by a larger role in Gulf security and new markets for drones and missiles.

Pakistan

Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar said in a post on X that "the Makkah Accord is purely defensive in nature." Pakistan shares a long border with Iran and is unlikely to open a permanent front by attacking Iran in case of an Iran-Saudi Arabia conflict. Pakistan's interests lie in maintaining a balance in relations with both Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Similarly both Saudi Arabia and Turkey are unlikely to declare war on Afghanistan under the provisions of this pact, in case tensions increase between Pakistan and Afghanistan in the form of terror attacks and regarding the disputed Durand Line.

Pakistan's military ties with China add another dimension as its contribution brings to the table Chinese weapons, technology and infrastructure.

There are many questions to be asked. Will Turkish technology now complement Chinese-origin systems in Pakistan's drone, missile and air-defence capabilities? Will intelligence or maritime cooperation connect the pact more closely to China and will Pakistan now provide a nuclear umbrella to Saudi Arabia and Turkey? Presently, Pakistan's deterrent remains solely oriented towards India. Pakistan's focus has always been on India, and as hap-

pened prior to the 1965 conflict, when it was part of both the CENTO and SEATO, the pact will embolden Pakistan as it feels it has the security backing of both Saudi Arabia and Turkey. This may lead Pakistan to internationalise the bilateral Kashmir dispute or to carry out certain actions against India in the guise of plausible deniability against which India needs to be vigilant. The fact is that Pakistan always likes to enlarge the bilateral equation as far as its relation with India is concerned.

Implications For India

India has reasons to be concerned about any enhanced military coordination, technology sharing and money for increasing Pakistan's defence industry and capabilities from Turkey and Saudi Arabia. But at the same time, it has been prepared for this development due to the evolution of Pakistan's military ties with both these countries.

Pakistan is now part of an unequal formal security framework with two nations that possess financial resources, technology and diplomatic influence. This sits alongside Pakistan's deeper strategic and defence relationship with China and transforms a bilateral rivalry into a wider network of alignments.

Saudi Arabia has so far been balanced in its stance towards India due to its economic ties and the presence of a large Indian diaspora. During Operation Sindoor, they focused on de-escalating tensions, ending military confrontations, and promoting the resolution of all dis-

putes through dialogue and diplomatic channels. It is expected that Saudi Arabia will respect mutual interests and sensitivities.

However, Turkey has consistently taken a pro-Pakistan position on Kashmir at the UN and has also helped Pakistan militarily, the most recent being Operation Sindoor when they not only supplied drones to Pakistan but also sent advisors. Turkey is Pakistan's second-largest arms supplier after China since the signing of joint arms production pact in 2021. Marked by collaborative military projects, joint exercises, and strategic dialogues, Turkey and Pakistan have significantly strengthened their defence ties in recent years. A tighter trilateral alignment may risk Saudi Arabia leaning towards Turkey's aggressive stance towards India. The maritime domain also needs consideration as there now exists an arc on India's

region's largest militaries. The three will benefit from intelligence sharing, joint exercises, interoperability, and the psychological effect of collective deterrence.

The three countries offer a combination of financial resources, manpower, military technology and strategic geography. The pact's value will remain more symbolic than substantive unless it is strengthened by integration: joint air defence, early warning, intelligence, munitions, cyber defence, and a joint command able to function during conflict. Just as important will be defence cooperation to include co-production and co-development of weapon systems. The maritime dimension will also be crucial. For Turkey and Pakistan, Saudi investment could help to finance new programmes while providing access to one of the world's largest defence markets. The result could eventually be a defence-industrial triangle capable of jointly producing equipment, particularly drones, missiles, air-defence systems, electronic warfare platforms and naval capabilities.

But the pact has been already put to test by the Houthis with their attack on a Saudi refinery. Iran-aligned Iraqi militias could offer another route. Either could let Iran discover how far it can go while forcing Riyadh, Ankara and Islamabad to decide when an attack on one becomes a fight for all three. Presently, that seems unlikely.

Unfortunately, the emergence of overlapping security arrangements in a volatile region, where traditional guarantees by the US has been questioned, is unlikely to provide stability. The emerging geometry has widened geography by reducing the strategic distance between the Gulf, Eastern Mediterranean and South Asia and has only added to the existing fissures.

But the fact is that collective defence is only as effective as the operational readiness of forces and the political will behind them. Presently, the agreement is more of a signal of intent hedging against an uncertain regional order. Activating it is quite another.



ust outside Jaipur, Rajasthan, lies the small town of Bagru, around 30 minutes from the city. At first glance, Bagru may seem like an ordinary

Rajasthani town, but it is one of India's important centres of traditional textile printing. For generations, artisans here have transformed plain cotton fabric into richly patterned textiles using wooden blocks, natural dyes, mud resists, pigments, and traditional printing techniques. Bagru is particularly known for techniques such as Bagru printing, Dabu printing, rapid or pigment printing, and discharge printing. Each method creates a distinct visual character, from earthy natural tones to brighter contemporary colours.

Bagru Printing

The traditional Bagru printing technique is one of the most straightforward forms of hand-block printing.

A plain piece of fabric is first prepared and then printed directly with coloured dyes or pigments using carved wooden blocks. The artisan carefully places the block on the fabric, applies colour, and presses it firmly to create the design. The process is repeated across the fabric, often requiring remarkable precision to keep the patterns aligned.

Traditional Bagru printing has an important limitation: the number of colours that can be used is relatively restricted. Each colour generally requires its own block, and printing stage, making highly complicated multicoloured designs more time-consuming. But this limitation is also part of its beauty. Traditional Bagru textiles are often recognised for their restrained colour combinations

As textile production evolved, newer approaches were introduced alongside traditional Bagru and Dabu techniques. Pigment printing, sometimes referred to locally as

rapid printing, allows artisans and manufacturers to work with a much wider range of colours. Unlike traditional natural-dye processes, pigment colours can provide bright and varied shades, making them suitable for designs that require a larger colour palette. The process can also be faster because the pigments are applied to the surface of the fabric and can be fixed or dried comparatively quickly.

Another celebrated technique of the region is Dabu, a traditional form of resist printing. In Dabu printing, artisans create a resist paste using materials such as mud and natural gums, along with other ingredients depending on the particular process. The paste is applied to selected areas of the fabric using wooden blocks. The fabric is then dyed. The areas covered by the resist do not absorb the dye in the same way as the exposed portions. After washing and processing, the resisted areas reveal the original or underlying colour, creating intricate patterns. The result is often characterised by beautiful earthy tones, deep indigos, browns, blacks, reds and natural shades that give Dabu textiles their distinctive appearance.

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Another interesting technique associated with the region is discharge printing. In this process, the fabric is first dyed, often in a strong base colour. Instead of adding another colour on top, selected areas of the existing dye are chemically removed, creating a lighter or contrasting pattern.

This is known as discharge printing. The technique can produce effects that are difficult to achieve through ordinary direct printing. An artisan can begin with an already dyed fabric and then create the design by selectively removing the colour. Some textile traditions in the Bagru region also incorporate techniques and influences associated with Ajrak-style printing, where complex combinations of dyeing, resist work and printing are used to create layered patterns.

From Tradition to Modern Fashion Today, Bagru printing is no longer limited to traditional clothing or local markets. Its distinctive patterns have found their way into contemporary fashion, home furnishings, scarves, dresses, shirts, bed linen and other products. Designers increasingly combine traditional blocks and motifs with modern silhouettes and colour palettes. Yet, the essence remains the same: a plain piece of fabric transformed through human hands.



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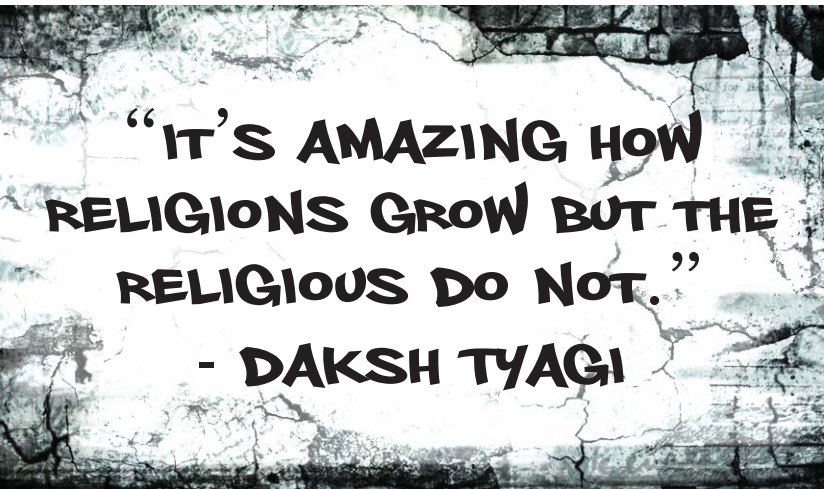
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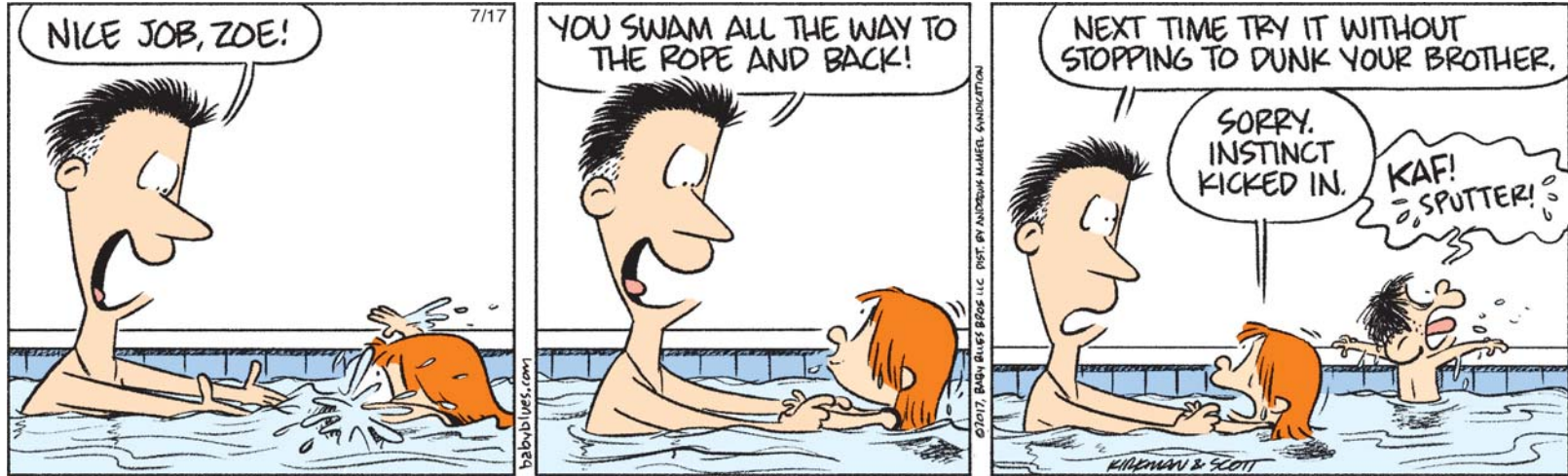


By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

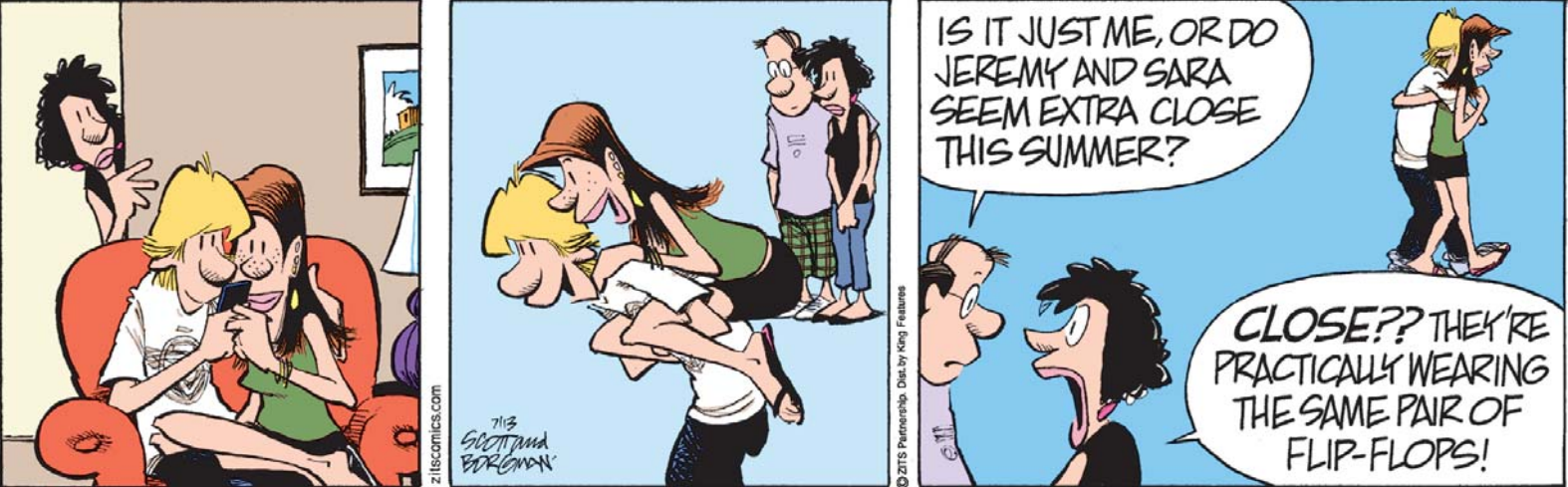
THE WALL



BABY BLUES



ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



