

China's Growing Influence in the Middle East Politics: The Shifting Saudi-Iran Rivalry to Rapprochement

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Abstract: *This article inspects the recent Riyadh-Tehran rapprochement and investigates the intermediating part being played by China in the Reconciliation deal. The theoretical framework of Neoclassical Realism (NCR) has been employed to gauge the knotty dynamics of Riyadh-Tehran relationship. The regional and international factors are being considered in this article. The research considers the historical approach of their tense relationships triggered by geostrategic, geopolitical motivations and ever soaring proxies in the smaller Middle Eastern states. Beijing's preoccupation in brokering the Riyadh-Tehran rapprochement underscores its security and strategic benefits in the Middle East. Beijing is consolidating its soft power and use of economic leverage to safeguard and enhance its diplomatic objectives in the region. This paper also aims to explore the actions and motivations of Riyadh and Tehran in shifting their decade's long rivalry to the reconciliation route. Moreover, this research deduces that the Riyadh-Tehran reconciliation and Beijing's intermediation is a sign of impending cooperation between two regional giants. It further shows the resolution of the major conflicts in the Middle East, the associated wider stabilizing factor in the region.*

Key Words: *Reconciliation, Geo-economics, Geo-Strategic, China, Iran, Saudi-Arabia, Middle East and Superpower*

Introduction

Washington has been the principal interest holder in the Middle East, for the last several decades determining the regional geo-strategic and geo-political perspective to its own preferences. Nevertheless, Beijing has brokered reconciliation between Riyadh and Tehran recently. Washington deliberated the rapprochement between two regional heavyweights by Beijing, equal to its marginalization in the Middle East region. The enmities and coalitions that have administered diplomatic relations for decades have been toppled at the stake of instant reconciliation orchestrated by Beijing. The rapprochement has left the United States to a marginal position, rendering it a mere spectator in the periodical changes developing in the region. Although Beijing is performing comparatively minor role in the Middle East yet the Chinese administration has been judiciously formulating its policy to its leverage position so that to compete with Washington, regionally and internationally. For Beijing, as a rising great power world over and entering into the Middle East as new powerful actor, signposts its long-standing approach. Previously, the Middle East was contemplated the absolute region of American supremacy, while there is now being observed groundbreaking shift. Beijing is emerging as a key player in the Middle East expanding its strategic and trading clout in the political economy of the both regional giants.(Ackerman, 2023).

There are three main geo-strategic axes in the Middle East in geo-strategic competition: Ankara-Tehran strategic conflict, Riyadh and Tehran contending over control in the Islamic world as well as regional struggle for supremacy. Riyadh is an important Muslim state claims to be the representative of Sunni Wahhabi Muslims in the Middle East. While Tehran is a also significant Shi'ite state claiming itself the leader of the Shi'ite Muslim in the region and world over.

Turkey, Egypt and Saudi Arabia have substantial impact on Sunni Muslims but none of these states is heading the sect as Iran (Ozturk, 2022). The revolutionary underpinning of Tehran seems to be a threat to the survival of Riyadh. Saudi-Iranian antagonism is extending from foreign policy, political systems, and economy, technology and socio- cultural fundamentals. According to an Iranian-American

policy expert, Riyadh and Tehran are competing for leadership of the region and world over. Boths are meant to be political competitors (Sadjadpour, 2015). In 2015, Riyadh unleashed a war in Yemen that opened a substantial ground for the Riyadh-Tehran rivalry. In January 2016, Riyadh determined to sever its relations with Tehran, which was sign of intensifying strains between the two regional giants since the Iranian Revolution. Tehran deems that Riyadh has no abilities to defend itself without the backing of the Washington. The United State formulated policy of containment of Iran which was advocated by Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates. In 2019, Yamani Houthis conducted drone strikes on adjoining Riyadh's oil pipelines because Tehran being competitor taken up a maximum resistance approach in reaction to Donald Trump's maximum pressure drive inflicted on Tehran (Khatib, 2019).

Recently, the Riyadh-Tehran rapprochement is an extraordinary wonder in the presence of intensifying geo-strategic and geo-political competition between the two states. The Washington released a common statement proclaiming the restoration of diplomatic relations between Tehran and Riyadh as astonishing and acclaimed 'the noble initiative' of Chinese President Xi Jinping. The National Security Council spokesman, of White House, John Kirbu maintained that the de-escalation efforts for relieving anxieties in the region are in the interest of United States (Ferran, 2023). In March 2023, the representatives from both Saudi Arabia and Iran meet up in Beijing which directed to the normalization of relations. Riyadh and Tehran re-established diplomatic relations as a part of the Peace process after seven years severing of diplomatic relations. This mutual peace agreement orchestrated by Beijing is concentrated on warranting regional stability in the Middle East region.

Furthermore, it requires reciprocal reassurance for self-confidence measures that neither Riyadh nor Tehran will impair the national concerns of each other on numerous issues of security, intelligence, political and media. This groundbreaking agreement has the ability to adapt the Middle Eastern region by superseding Saudi-Iranian conflictual relation into a complex interdependence as envisaged by Joseph Nye. The major powers are realigning their relationships with the regional powers and the region is merging with the worldwide aspirations of Beijng. The geo-political and geo-strategic conflicts between the two giants will be put to an end with this newly signed Peace deal brokered by Beijing. This Peace

deal has the capability to extend economic relations across the Persian Gulf States. Gradually, the both heavyweights will end their rival policies and this deal has the possibility to bring both the regional actors closer to each other and it will stabilize the regional states. The Saudi finance minister, Mohammed al-Jaden assured that if the deal goes as considered then Riyadh can step forward to invest in Tehran (Fantappie, 2023).

This piece of research applies Neoclassical Realism (NCR) theoretical framework to examine the current rapprochement mediated by Beijing between Riyadh and Tehran by making the peace agreement. The most concerning aspect of the reconciliation is perhaps the participation of China. In the past, Beijing has always been remained unwilling to get entangled in the Middle East politics but its burgeoning economic interests in the region required assuming mediating role between the both Riyadh and Tehran. The Middle East region is very significant for China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which is a crossroad amid the three world continents. Beijing seems to secure its future strategic objectives in the Middle East and intends to supersede the Washington from the leadership of the neo-liberal world order. Beijing desires to make sure that its investment in the energy sector of Saudi kingdom is not jeopardized by drone or missile attacks by Yemeni Houthis (Houghton, 2022).

Beijing also desires to expand its economic footsteps in Iran as well. Beijing is supporting the Moscow plan by building a transit corridor that would let Russian trade to move global markets through Tehran without utilizing the route of Suez Canal linking Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea. There is emerging new foundation of geopolitical reality by the convergence of the strategic interests of Riyadh, Tehran and Beijing in the Middle East. This geopolitical transformation by the both regional powers and emerging power has displayed a historical challenge for the Washington. This research uses the discourse analysis research technique to comprehend the connections amid social, culture, and history in terms of remodeling the geo-economic and geo-political background. By reason of that Beijing has played role in the rapprochement of Riyadh and Tehran (Wodak and Chilton, 2005). This research article intends to consider what principal motives are behind the Saudi Arabia- Iran settlement and interests of China in the Middle East region. To what degree does the rapprochement influence the geopolitical and

geo- economic environment of the region?

Theoretical Framework

In the field of International Relations, in determining a state's relations with other states and non-state actors, foreign policy performs a crucial role. Numerous IR theories have given significant attention to describing the actions of the state. After the culmination of the Cold War, there was devaluation in the popularity of neorealism owing to its attention on the bipolar order during that period. The appearance of a new international structure obliged realists to review their research directing to the growth of the neoclassical realist school of thought in international relations. Neoclassical Realism (NCR) is a theoretical frame that inspects the interaction between state-level variables and global systemic aspects to explain foreign policy conduct.

Gideon Rose, a political scientist and journalist devised the term NCR in an article for World Politics in 1998. He defined the essential concepts of NCR as a foreign policy theory employ the works of Fareed Zakaria, Michael E. Brown, Thomas J. Christensen and Randall L. Schweller. Hereinafter, NCR has developed into an important theoretical learning of International Relations. NCR, appropriate to the realist tradition in IR theory, recognizes the basic assumptions of Realism about the disorderly nature of countries, the balance of power and the distribution of comparative power, nevertheless, it discards the supposition that the exclusive aim of a state is to securitize (A.Edwards, 2013). NCR established on both classical realism and structural realism to assume a high-level approach that unites both national and international levels and reassert the state-level factors that affect the foreign policy decision-making of countries.

The academics of NCR emphasize on the connections of the international dynamics of the state and the international order. It strives to explain the striking policies of states as opposite to the recurrent patterns of international aftermaths. According to Gideon Rose, NCR is often mistaken because it confines the evaluation of foreign policy to systemic grounds. Because leaders can be constrained by both domestic and foreign politics, it is necessary to examine states' reactions to peripheral challenges at the

unit level, including internal state structure and decision-maker insights. The fundamental assertion of NCR is to clarify how, why and under what conditions the core features of states intervene between the leader's appraisal of global opportunities and threats and foreign economic, military and diplomatic policies followed by the leader. These domestic features involve the impact of interest groups and internal societal actors, the elicited and militarization capacity of political and military organizations, the level of leading or societal unity, and the degree of state independence from people. The NCR postulates limited 'transmission belt' between systemic incentives and constraints on the one hand and the genuine military, diplomatic and foreign economic policies states select on the other hand.

Neoclassical realism undertakes that the determination and choice of a country's foreign policy are primarily designed by its comparative substantial power, but it understands that the administrative process is manipulated by the incitements of political leaders and elites, rather than just material resources or military power. NCR also considers domestic structures and variables to keep a more complete understanding of foreign policy (Kaarbo, 2015). NCR contends that the international system, described by power dynamics among countries, is a principal decisive of a state's performance and foreign policy options. Nevertheless, it also acknowledges that state performance is manipulated by internal dynamics state-level factors and the attitudes as well as inclinations of decision-makers.

The advancement of Saudi-Iran relations is complicated and shaped by a diversity of internal and external elements, making it hard to ascribe to any single factor. Nevertheless, it is not essential to record every factor that could shape their relationship. NCR postulates a valuable background for probing Riyadh-Tehran relations, as it inspects how the two regional powers foreign policies are designed by both international and domestic factors.

It is significant to examine how these dynamics have furthered to the shift in the two states relationship with each other. By putting into operation the dynamics of the China-brokered peace deal between Saudi Arabia and Iran on March 10, 2023, we can evaluate the motives and actions of the concerned states, as well as the prospective consequences of the agreement (Timeline, 2023). From a

neoclassical realist viewpoint, Riyadh, Tehran and Beijing all have distinctive systemic and internal factors that impact their foreign policy. Riyadh and Tehran are both regional powers in the Middle East. The both players have a history of conflict and competition. Both have been competing for regional dominance for decades in the region. The Washington's sway declining in the region and political vacuum is being filled up by other external players, such as Beijing, to intervene and resolve conflicts (Edwards, 2013).

Regarding Chinese-brokered Riyadh-Tehran peace deal, neoclassical realism proposes that all three players had strategic motives for settling the deal. For Riyadh, the peace deal would decrease its reliance on the Washington and other Western powers for security purposes, and possibly will open new economic prospects. Saudi Arabia's management's ambition to expand its security allies and seek substitute coalitions established a change in its approach. For Tehran, rescuing of sanctions and boosted economic collaboration with Riyadh would give essential relief for its waning economy.

Tehran's strategic collaboration with Beijing and its quest of economic broadening in the presence of Washington's sanctions are the internal contemplations that have manipulated its cooperation to involve in reconciliation. For Beijing, the agreement would prove its rising sway in the Middle East and reinforce its strategic benefits in the regional states. The Chinese engagement is propelled by its economic benefits and also arranges an extra coating of security objectives. Nevertheless, neoclassical realism would also envisage that the triumph of the peace deal would hinge on the internal politics of Riyadh and Tehran. For instance, if fundamentalists in Tehran resisted the deal, or if there were groups in Riyadh that did not comprehend the usefulness in conciliation with Iran, the agreement could stumble. Furthermore, neoclassical realism would propose that any development in relations between Riyadh and Tehran could have broader regional repercussions, such as the continuing encounter in Yemen.

The Middle East Policy of Beijing

There were found mutual hostility during the Cold War period with regard relations of China and Middle Eastern states. Beijing bracketed the Gulf countries with anti-communism and Western interventionism. In the 1980, near the end Cold War, the geopolitical order was toppled as the Arab states harmony was confronted by the Iran-Iraq war. Beijing launched its diplomatic relationships with Doha, Abu-Dhabi, Manama and Riyadh between 1984 and 1990. A few decades ago, Persian Gulf was grotesque and a peripheral region in the computation of Beijing. Today China is key partner of the Middle Eastern states, while in past Gulf States only had admitted diplomatic relations with Beijing by 1990. Beijing launched widespread relations with Gulf States in 1990s, founding a position for itself as a major stakeholder, energy importer, and infrastructure builder (Calbrese, 1998). Since 2013, Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), being a huge project of China has become a substantial junction in the China and Persian-Gulf relationships. Beijing has hold the region due to insecure situation founded on sever mutual securitization and bi-regional threat perceptions. The primary cause of regional turbulence persists to be the conflict between Riyadh and Tehran, regional heavy weights in Persian Gulf. This conflict has shaped a culture of mutual fighting and distrust that penetrates in foreign relations of Middle Eastern states.

Beijing has taken dis-involvement rhetoric and assumed a vigilant approach in accordance with the rule of non-interference in other states internal affairs. It advocated the raise of peace talks as stipulations for the Middle East's peace and prosperity. Furthermore, it encouraged peace talks to repel differences and has tried to bring the both Riyadh and Tehran together. The principle of non-interference has maintained a meaningful policy of China's diplomatic designs and ideas. Beijing's affiliation with the Middle Eastern states has been advanced by virtue of maintaining this model. Beijing has acquired tremendous respect and appreciation from Middle Eastern states (C.Zheng, 2016). Moreover, Beijing has assumed positive conduct to cast a different and mature image. Beijing has assisted the regional situation move to the direction of peace and stability. China has performed a role in facilitating talks and sustaining tranquility in the political shifts in Egypt, Libya, Yemen, and Tunisia. China maintained the conciliation endeavors of the troubled states to solve misunderstandings in

discussion and discourse. China has represented responsibly as one of the major states and made an effort to guard the vital principles of international relations. As soon as the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) passed resolution to establish a 'no-fly zone in Libya, China abstained from the voting instituted on the rule of non-interference in the affairs of other states and regard for state's sovereignty.

The condition deteriorated when the United States and other Western states agreed to the utilization of a major airstrike on Libya. Beijing resisted aggressive acts, the use of force, and other measures that infringe the UN Charter's basic principles. Beijing has put out a six-point proposal of potential political options to address the Syrian conflict. Beijing has been urging all parties to fully support the Arab League's efforts at mediating the Syrian conflict. With a total of 30 million Yuan offered, China has focused to provide philanthropic assistance to Egyptians, Tunisians, and Syrian people (Sahar, 2021). Beijing has maintained strong mutual ties with the Middle Eastern states. The instability in the Middle East has lasting for decades but it has not shaken the relations of both states. By virtue of the high-level officials often visits in each other's states has produced steady momentum.

Beijing has gradually extended its influence in the Middle Eastern states for more than a decade. It has become the major trading partner in the region through huge investments through Belt and Road Initiative. Beijing has kept away from interweaving itself in the religious enmities and complex politics of the region. These measures seem to mirror the new approach of China which is considered by a more insistent foreign policy that enhances its own benefits and also affords a superior role on the worldwide level. This new Chinese policy has presented two queries: what is forcing the evolving interest of Beijing in the Middle East area? And does Beijing plan to displace the Washington role as the political titan in the region?

Beijing's pursuit in the Middle East region is changing. The state's connections with the Arab states involve trade and economics. Nevertheless, the change has been made in terms of geo-strategic and geo-political concerns. Beijing remains to perform a basically unique role in the Middle East juxtapose to the Washington. Beijing has revealed no determination to deal the military supplies provided by the

US administration to the Persian Gulf States nor can it guarantee of the main security patron in the region. Furthermore, Beijing's arms business to the Persian Gulf region is in a small scale as measured with the Washington arms deals to the regional states.

To link with Europe and Africa, for Beijing, the Middle East region is the essential geographic viaduct in China's official plan to enact a 'New Silk Road' from its northwest in Central Asia." As part of China's economic, political, and cultural connection with the Middle East, there is a unique religious aspect. Islam poses another channel for dealings between Beijing and the Middle East. Beijing has a substantial Muslim people who are loyal to the rites of Islam. Beijing has commenced transmitting a large number of its Muslim scholars to the Middle East to serve religious people and activities as well as to develop Arabic language abilities. Religious products are produced in China and exported to Muslim states. In holy cities in Tehran, Qom, Baghdad, Karbala, Najaf, and Riyadh's Mecca and Medina, which invite large numbers of Muslims for religious ceremonies. Chinese products with religious meanings and tradition are being sold and consist of the digital Quran, prayer items, and covers and headscarves for women. The bulk of these religious goods are produced by Muslims residing in Ningxia province of northwestern China (Muhamad, 2012).

This aspect of the present Beijing -Middle East association is not surprising given the wide network of economic and cultural connections that have subsisted historically along the primordial Silk Road. For Beijing to link with Europe and Africa, the Middle East region is the mandatory geographic channel in China's official plan to pass a 'New Silk Road' from its northwest in Central Asia. Lastly, the early Silk Road functions as a modern political lens for how the Middle East and China perceive each other's progress. As Beijing and the Middle East have become more linked, they are also seeing where these strong relations may take them on their particular tracks of growth. Overall, the Middle East is a leading world territory to observe to expand a sense of China's next shifts worldwide (Chen, 2014).

Beijing's Balancing Strategy

Beijing's shift from a spectator of foreign policy to an effective member should not emanate as a

wonder. The World order is changing as new dynamics are shaping the Persian Gulf States and the two superpowers. Beijing is expanding its links with the Middle Eastern states, as the Washington is usually seeming to be withdrawing from the region and his focus shifted to the Indo-Pacific region. Beijing's mutual trade with Riyadh has raised three times from \$418 million in 1990 to \$65.2 billion in 2020 (Houghton, 2022). China's increasing economic relations are reinforced by strategic obligations. China's economy relies deeply on oil imports and the Persian Gulf region is perceived as hydro-carbon rich region and an important supplier when oil demands improved after three years of COVID-related constraints.

The Middle East has turn out to be for Beijing more and more vital, since now Beijing identifies the region as an extension of its boundary. There are predominately four objects for which the territory is significant to Beijing: first, the Middle East is regarded as a ground of great power struggle (Nader, 2016). As the area has always been a playfield for world great powers competition since the ending of World War Two. Even though Moscow and Washington exercised their wrangling in the region through proxy combats, Beijing was mainly overlooked and had no fundamental relations with the Middle Eastern states. The region gained immediate significance to Beijing following the 1989 Tiananmen Mass slaughter, when the most of Western states criticized and sanctioned Beijing for its bad handling of the protest march. For those months, Beijing turned to Middle Eastern states to work against the disdain expressed by Western republics. This entente happen together with China's mounting need for imported oil and supplies, owing to Beijing's successful reform and open door policy (Scobell, 2019). In the present day, most Middle Eastern states have severed their relations with Taiwan and created ambassadorial relations with China instead, acknowledging the state as the sole genuine People Republic of China. Currently, the PRC is an important financial actor in the Middle East region: it has founded discreet military relations. It finances profoundly in the Middle East region through the Belt and Road Initiative project. It has declared an interest in dealing with the Israeli-Palestinian subject. It has helped out to make possible the nuclear deal between Tehran and the five perpetual members of the United Nations Security Council plus the European Union (Shehu, 2021).

Further, the Middle East region is an important source of energy and Beijing demands a lot of it. In 2019, Beijing imported \$204B in crude petrol, turn into the first and largest importer of oil in the world. During that year, crude petrol was the most imported product in Beijing (OEC, 2019). Besides, it is also striking that about half forty eight percent of the imported crude oil arrives from nine Middle Eastern states (OEC, 2019). Third, Beijing is strategically commencing to think of the Middle East as an addition of its own boundary (Scobell, 2019). Though less than ten percent of Beijing's population is racially non-Chinese, namely non-Han, the marginal groups, mostly Tibetans and Uyghur Muslims, reside in strategically significant peripheral regions: Tibet, Xinjiang and Mongolia (Scobell & Nader, 2016). Particularly Xinjiang, where the greater part of Uyghurs lives, is an essential area for Xi's foreign policy plan and the triumph of the BRI (Zhexin, 2018).

In the meantime, President Xi proclaimed the BRI in 2013, Middle Eastern states, particularly the Gulf states, have considered it as a solid opportunity to develop mutual cooperation (Fulton, 2017). This initiative has been the largest and biggest plans of soft power carried out by Beijing (Xu, 2020). When Xi Jinping's management cracked the news of this colossal infrastructure plan, the declaration was welcomed with zest by Persian Gulf countries, which did not slip the opportunity to show their willingness to initiate support (Qian & Fulton, 2017). The Middle East is a center of many nations, financially attractive, with a youthful and brilliant people, and a growing upper middle class (Juan et al., 2018). The BRI, with the funds and employments beginnings it brings, assurances to provide economic growth in the Middle East. It lead to a wide diversity of things, namely wealth increase, better condition of life, and high levels of work. Above all, in a region this unstable, economic development would mean also political firmness and desist from armed clashes, also with the support to aggression and extremism (Küçükcan, 2017). Thus, in the interest of higher assistance in the Middle East region, China has agreed to dedicated relationship, extending from a pleasant mutual business at the bottommost to an all-embracing strategic partnership at the climax, grasping each category a specific importance (Fulton, 2019).

At the bottommost of this monolith we find Friendly Cooperative Partnerships, predominately

driven on mutual issues like commerce; then we find Cooperative Partnerships, considered by mutual issues hinge on reciprocal respect and benefit .Moreover, we find Comprehensive Cooperative Partnerships, described by high-level contacts and collaboration on issues of mutual interests; fourthly we perceive Strategic Partnerships, designed at harmonizing with the allies in regional and international matters, with the military area. Lastly, above all, we find Comprehensive Strategic Partnerships; concentrate on the full accomplishment of support and progress on regional and international matters.(Gentry, 2008). Furthermore, as the end of the Cold War, Middle Eastern states begun to concern about the US influenced geopolitical view and the constant Washington's pressure, following the 9/11 strikes, for Persian Gulf states to observe to political democratic behavior and regard of human rights values, changing Arab dictators left the US to non-interventional China (Zambelis & Gentry, 2008).

Notwithstanding from oil import, development and infrastructure projects, the Middle East is a strategic region for China also because of routing maritime security. In reality, most of Beijing's ships carrying goods to Europe must cut across the Bab El-Mandeb Strait, in the Gulf of Aden, between Djibouti and Yemen, notorious for robbery at sea, regional pressures and long-standing conflicts (Watanabe, 2019). In addition, across the Middle Corridor and over the Sea Route, the new Silk Road will route through the Suez Canal connecting many states in the region under the BRI framework of development (Küçükcan, 2017). Beijing realizes that the Middle East region has the ability to invest in the energy and power area, infrastructure as well as export more of its machines. The Middle East region has an attractive business market for the technology companies exclusive of the political and regulatory rules which to such corporations face in the Washington and Europe countries. At the same time, Beijing has been maintaining its political relationships with the regional countries. The Atlantic Council Report 2019 expresses that China has increased comprehensive strategic friendship with the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iran and Algeria (Faulton, 2019).

Such kind of regional relationship reserves the full pursuit of development and cooperation in regional level and international level. In addition, Beijing carries on such partnerships with eight other

Middle Eastern countries. For now, the US policies are strained under Biden's administration, with its traditional partners namely Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE. When the Washington imposed sanctions on Moscow for the attack of Ukraine, not single of these Persian Gulf allies countries agreed to support it. Beijing's substantial economic growth interests overseas, it has manipulated its economic power to increase its diplomatic goals. President Xi's new policy is not so much an extreme change in the international power dynamics as it is a shift in Beijing's discernment of its global position (Xu, 2020).

Riyadh - Tehran Conflictual Ties

The mutual relations between Riyadh and Tehran have been tensed over some geopolitical disputes from oil export procedure, ambition for regional leadership and relationships with the Washington or other Western states. Both states are major exporters of gas and oil and have disagreed over the energy policy. Riyadh has a greater concern on the long-term view of the worldwide oil market on rational prices with its huge oil reserves and small populace. In contrast, Tehran is forced to a short-term aim of higher prices owing to low income standards following the decade-old war with Baghdad.

From the last three decades, Riyadh and Tehran have been regional competitors. The Saudi-Iran strains date back to the Iranian Revolution of 1979. The relations between both players get worse as Tehran blamed Riyadh of being an agent of Washington in the Persian Gulf. After the Iranian Revolution, Tehran frightened the supremacy of the Saudi monarchy which established its legitimacy on Islam. The relations between the two regional heavyweights remained tensed in 1980s as Riyadh calmly aided Baghdad in the Iran-Iraq war. Riyadh-Tehran relations were improved and tensions relaxed during the period from 1997 to 2005. But the conciliation drive stymied in 2005 when President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad assumed power and took a firm stance on foreign policy.

The Arab Spring in 2011 further aggravated the anxiety, mainly in Bahrain where Shiites conducted demonstrations against the Sunni monarch family. Riyadh dispatched armed troops to suppress the rising against the royal family of Bahrain and Tehran was held responsible for inflaming the disorder. Tehran struggled to expand its relations with Riyadh, following President Hassan

Rouhani's elections in 2013, but the both regional giants fought over regional encounters predominately in San'aa and Damascus. During the occasion of Hajj 2015, hundreds of Iranians were put down in a stampede. Riyadh was blamed by Tehran of mishandling and Tehran was accused for engaging in politics in the repercussion of the event. In Iran in January 2016, demonstrators hit the Saudi embassy after the execution of Shiite cleric Nimr-al-Nimr by Saudi government. Consequently, conflicts further intensified after the ambassadorial ties disconnected between Riyadh and Tehran. Iran's nuclear deal and ballistic missile developments were resisted by Saudi Arabia. In September 2019, Riyadh blamed Tehran for striking on two major Saudi oil fields. In 2021, Riyadh and Tehran commenced a dialogue facilitated with the involvement of Masqat to expedite diplomacy but the both regional players failed to make settlement in the five series of talks between April 2021 to April 2022 (Timeline, 2023).

The both old rivals rapidly agreed on March 10, 2023, to close the 7-year-long disagreement with the peace deal orchestrated by China. Accordingly, the peace deal became the focus of headlines in the United States and the Middle East. In Middle East, it appeared to sign of a end to disastrous and long- standing proxy battles. Whereas the United States was less concerned in the substance than the place as the deal was brokered in China which up till now had performed no significant role in the bitter diplomacy of the Middle East (Wintour, 2023).

Riyadh-Tehran Rapprochement

The Saudi-Iran relations that were severed in 2016 were reinstated after three years of private diplomacy. Both regional giants have decided on reviving embassies and resume diplomatic relations. Riyadh and Tehran were two dominant powers in the region fixed on opposite sides on a number of matters and combating proxy campaigns predominately in Sanaa, Damascus and Beirut. Riyadh and Tehran have passed years for appeasement but it failed. Washington was not engaged in the deal in a region where it would perceive itself as the leading superpower. Beijing mediated the covert Riyadh-Tehran talks with the declaration of a successful result made in Beijing. During the previous decade, Saudi Arabia has remained unsuccessful in their foreign policy maneuver, whether toppling the Bashar al

Assad government in Syria or defeating the Houthis. Saudi Arabia has selected to separate itself from the war begun in 2015 in Yemen. After eight years, hundreds and thousands of deaths are narrated whereas the Houthis still dominate much of the Yemen and are nearer to Iran. Iran signed a 25-year 'strategic partnership' with China in 2021. It has outlined several mega economic projects with the leading Chinese companies in the future. Notwithstanding, sanctions imposed by the United States on Iran, China remained persistent to import huge quantities of Iranian oil. Ebrahim Raisi Iranian President is of the view to enhance better economic relations with the Middle Eastern states as an alternate for the West (Nasr, 2023).

JCPOA's Role

Iran has boosted the enrichment of uranium up to around 83 percent, which is contemplated about cut across the nuclear level which has sparked much closer military partnership between Israel and the United States and the prospect of hitting Iran (Gambrell, 2023). So Iran required counteracting some capable actors in the area like Saudi Arabia and being ready for a plan in order to react to a nuclear advancement or likely potential attack. The Iranian agent at the deal, Ali Shamkhani, declared that China has offered encouraging stipulations for accomplishing the settlement and this is a brilliant proof of the fundamental policies of China's mediations which includes the key advantages of building a society with a common future for world. Thus, from Iran's perspective, this developed a vital step to come to a peace agreement with Saudi Arabia.

Saudi Arabia's Aspiration to diversify its Security Allies

During the past two years, under President Biden administration, Saudi Arabia has presented a pattern of frustration and it desires to broaden its security allies and work with other actors. It can be understood at the UN voting on the Ukraine war against the will of the Washington.

Chinese Economic and Trade Interests in the Persian Gulf Region

Beijing moved out its conventional role by conducting a mediatory role between the two

competing regional powers because it was in a difficult position to select between Riyadh and Tehran. Beijing diagnosed that the only resolution is to bring both regional giants together in order to retain its economic interests in the Persian Gulf region. Beijing has signed 25 years strategic partnership with Tehran and has become an importer of Iran oil in spite of Washington restrictions. Beijing is the major trading partner and principal purchaser of oil exports for Riyadh (Scobell, 2017). In return for Chinese conciliation in the Riyadh-Tehran Peace deal, Beijing pursues both economic and status advantages to claim a robust diplomatic success in the Global South.

Implications on the Geopolitical and Geo- Economic Landscape of the Middle East between the Two Regional Rivals

The current reconciliation between Riyadh and Tehran has created substantial attention in scholastic and policy spheres alike. Numerous Western experts and administrators were startled by the peace deal between Riyadh and Tehran. The West especially the Washington was shocked by the function of Beijing and the restoration of Tehran's relationships with Riyadh which will circumvent increasing strain by the West related to its backing for Russia in Ukraine and its nuclear plan. Nevertheless, it is crucial to admit that the rapprochement process is yet in its initial phase, and its maximum impact on the geopolitical and geo-economic background of the Middle East remains ambiguous. Yet, it is important to discover and assess the prospective repercussions of this reconciliation on the Middle Eastern states political and economic spheres.

Primarily, the softening in Saudi-Iranian relations could decrease rivalry and anxieties in the Middle East which may impact to better safety and stability. This could have constructive repercussions for regional economic growth as the investors will be more inclined to put in the market with cut down political threats. The Middle East has experienced subverting impacts due to the Saudi-Iranian conflict which shaped toxic results in Syria and Yemen. The strikes allegedly conducted with Iranian backing against Emirati oil freighters in 2019 and Saudi energy structure in 2020 weakened the world's energy security and safety of marine routes which is important for worldwide association (Ehteshami, 2023).

Moreover, the enhanced relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran influence the current clashes in the region as in the case of Yemen. Saudi Arabia and other Arab states have long insisted that Iran recognize the sovereignty of Arab monarchies and not meddle in their domestic affairs. After agreeing with Iran, Saudi Arabia has highlighted the matter of Yemen. Saudi Arabia has urged to Iran to take de-escalation steps in Yemen and also put an end to strikes across the region. The Riyadh-Tehran cooperation brokered by Beijing pursues to give up antagonism and increase relationships with Riyadh. The peace deal could emphasis on the reconstruction and progress of concerned states and diminishing human agonize.

However, both Riyadh and Tehran have been major actors in the energy markets and important producers of oil in the Middle East. The peace deal can help to increase harmonization and support in handling oil prices and production, aiding the economies of both states and stabling the international energy markets. The civil combat in Yemen has divided into adjoining states, where the Houthis strikes drone attacks against the energy set-ups of Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf countries. The oil import from Middle East has become considerably important for China as its internal energy demands increased. The major economic concern of Iran is to find new manufacturing approaches and advanced technology to improve its oil development. After brokering the peace deal, the region is at less threat of getting striked on the energy capabilities of Saudi Arabia and other Persian Gulf states.

Finally, China's mediating role in the Riyadh-Tehran peace deal would increase the Chinese impact in the Middle East. The mounting economic presence of China will be more stable as it would be observed as an important actor in settling long-standing disagreements in the region. Beijing has displayed an amount of suppleness in the non-intervention policy in domestic affairs, by traditionally its attitude of taking away from conflicts to a conflict resolution manager. By brokering the Riyadh-Tehran peace deal, Beijing garnered more self-confidence in its arbitration abilities. The Middle East and North African states may realize Chinese attempt to be more positive in following its interest with diplomatic, economic, military and international arrangement. As the United States has been attempting to turn its focus to the Asia-Pacific region, the Middle Eastern states will be observing to fill the mediation space

left behind by the United States (Marks, 2022).

Conclusion

The latest reconciliation between Riyadh and Tehran, brokered by Beijing, indicate a significant watershed in the knotty dynamics of the Middle East. Neoclassical Realism theoretical framework has been used in the article to examine the motives and repercussions of this important step in the right direction. Neoclassical realism asserts that the influence of power abilities on foreign policy is complicated and implicit because the unit-level variable interferes such as state structure, state-level components and perceptions of decision-makers. This clarification of NCR throws light on the motives and actions of Beijing, Riyadh and Tehran to bargain a peace deal. Conflict and rivalry have a regular feature of Saudi-Iranian relations in the Middle East, where two regional powers competing for leadership and supremacy. Beijing's role in conducting the peace deal reveals its growing interest in this region. Beijing's commitment is maneuvered by strategic priorities with economic prospects and energy security. As China has shunned to catch up itself in the religious conflicts and problematic politics of the regional states of the Middle East region. Beijing has progressively extended its impact by exploiting its economic power to expand its diplomatic goals. The Americans understand the United States as a vital power in the Middle East and on the world theater. The settlement between Riyadh and Tehran mediated by Beijing demonstrates that China has turn out to be the new very important great power in the Middle East. Chinese expanding stress on erecting economic links with the Persian Gulf states has shaped it as a robust substitute to the United States and as a neutral mediator.

The China-orchestrated deal restored relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran at the time when the United States condemned China for not criticizing the Russian attack of Ukraine. Furthermore, the Persian Gulf countries have also refused to support the US rhetoric in this fight. The Riyadh-Tehran entente resolved by Beijing has deep geo-economic and geo-political repercussions for the Middle East region. After many years of proxy battles by the Riyadh and Tehran, this remarkable peace deal has the ability to remodel the political environment of the region. It indicates a power move dynamic with the

Washington being lowered to a marginal role and Beijing evolving as a main actor in the Middle East. The merging of the strategic interests of Beijing, Riyadh and Tehran paved the way for a new geopolitical experience in the Middle East region. Nevertheless, the track to longstanding stability and peace is beset with issues that need sustained diplomatic ties and careful routing. The progressing geopolitical experience of the Middle East demands a re-examination of established policies and associations as new developments and players are coming in the geopolitical arena of Middle East.

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