

Question

China's proactive diplomacy has successfully achieved rapprochement between the two traditional rivals Saudi Arabia and Iran. Analyze the impact of this significant development on the geo-politics of the region?

Answer

1- Introduction:

Saudi Arabia and Iran, the two regional powers and rivals in the Middle East, have agreed to restore diplomatic ties and reopen their embassies after a seven-year rift that has worsened conflicts from Yemen to Syria. The rapprochement brokered by China, was announced on March 10, 2023, following talks in Beijing between top security officials from both countries. The deal has significant implications for the stability and security of the region.

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Background:

Relations between the two rivals of Middle East had become sever in 2016, after the execution of a Shia cleric. Nimr Al-Nimr by Saudi Arabia. Consequently, violent protests sparked in Iran. Embassies had been closed and bilateral relations had become worst. Since then, after 7-years, first formal meeting took place in Beijing on April 6, 2023.

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Joint Trilateral Statements:

Through a joint Trilateral agreement, mediated by China, embassies of the two rivals has been opened again. Besides, bilateral cooperation also held in different fields. It was a positive step towards long tensions between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

1- Significant Outcomes of the Negotiations:

a) General Agreement for Cooperation:

It was signed in 1998; and recovered again in various fields such as economy, trade, investment, technology, science, culture, sports and youth.

b) Security Cooperation Agreement

It was signed in 2001 between the two rivals and now revived again in 2023.

c) Efforts to restore Bilateral

Ties:

Since March 2023, number of contacts and exchanges have been taken place between officials from

both countries as part of their effort to fully restore bilateral ties. These include technical delegations tasked with hashing out details of the agreement.

5- Impacts on Geo-Politics of the Region:

a) Peace and Stability in Yemen

The rapprochement could reduce the tensions and violence in Yemen, where Saudi Arabia and Iran have been supporting opposing sides in a devastating civil war. The two countries could cooperate to facilitate a potential solution and humanitarian aid for the Yemeni people.

b) Ease the pressure on Lebanon

Moreover, the rapprochement brokered by China could also ease the pressure on Lebanon,

where Iran backed Hezbollah and Saudi-aligned parties have been locked in a potential deadlock that has left the country without a functioning government for months. The two countries could encourage dialogue and compromise among the Lebanese factions.

c) Move Space for Dialogue and Cooperation

Likewise, it could create more space for dialogue and cooperation on other regional issues, such as Syria, Iran, Bahrain, and the Gulf security. The two countries could work together to prevent further escalation and violence, and to support inclusive and peaceful solutions.

d) Widened International Relations

Last but not least, the international relations, especially with China, the US, and Israel could be widened. China played a key role in brokering the deal, demonstrating its growing influence and interest in the Middle East. The US welcomed the deal, hoping that it would help revive the nuclear talks with Iran. Israel expressed concern over the deal, fearing that it would embolden Iran's nuclear ambitions and regional activities.

6- Conclusion:

To conclude, the Saudi-Iran rapprochement is a historic breakthrough that could reshape the Middle East and its conflicts. However, there are some uncertainties, such as the US role, the Israel's reaction, and the domestic pressures in both countries. Therefore, it is essential that both sides maintain dialogue and cooperation, and that other regional and international actors support this process of reconciliation.