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

### Introduction

The diplomatic relation between two traditional rivals, for which Pakistan was striving for a long time, China made it possible. China brought both countries, Saudi Arabia and Iran on dialogue table which remained successful. Then, Saudi Arabia and Iran took several steps towards diplomatic ties such as opening embassies and reviving the previous trade agreements. Due to geo-strategic rivalry between two countries, middle east was trapped in civil war for more than a decade. A war in a region was led by sectarian indifferences and resulted in a massive destruction in war-torn countries such as Syria and Yemen. With the rapprochement b/w Saudi Arabia and Iran, a peace in war-torn countries is being visualized. This peace in a region would also empower the middle east politically and the whole muslim world in general. Rather, this will negatively affect the Israel's foreign policy which is based on the containment of Iran. Hence, this rapprochement would fail the Israel's policy and allow the Iran to grow economically and politically. Further, this will help Pakistan to strengthen its relation with Iran and Saudi Arabia both. Wholly, this is a mega step towards the prosperity of geo-politics of the region, middle east.

① China's key role in bringing traditional rivals on dialogue table :-

China played a crucial role in the negotiations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. Before china, many other countries tried to bring these two rivals on dialogue table such as Pakistan and Qatar, but they failed. Pakistan tried multiple times in 2001, 2014 and 2016 to revive the diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran. That resulted in atleast a ceasefire between these two countries, but no any major development achieved. This time, China played a role of mediator and it remained successful in building a rapprochement between two traditional rivals.

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② Saudi Arabia and Iran took steps for reinitiation of diplomatic ties :-

The steps taken by two countries were an indication of soft diplomatic relation to grow between them. The first thing, both countries did is the ~~op~~ reopening of their respective embassies in each other's countries. Further, they decided to build economic relations again. For which, they revived the trade agreement of 2001 and many more pending agreements. ~~A person to person~~ A people to people communication will be established through ~~the~~ visa reforms such as, ease in achieving visa for pilgrimage. Thus, this socioeconomic development between Saudi Arabia and Iran will strengthen the diplomacy between two countries.

③ Rapprochement between two geo-strategic rivals : Middle East's Security :-

① Geo-political rivalry led the sectarian conflicts across the region :-

A long time rivalry between two geopolitical and geostrategic competitors brought fatal sectarian conflicts in the middle east. Saudi Arabia and Iran supported and highlighted the sectarian differences across the region for their strategic interests. Saudi Arabia stood behind the Sunni sect of muslims and Iran helped the Shia sect. Due to this sectarian crisis, most of the middle east is suffering from civil war. Two countries majorly affected by the civil war are Yemen and Syria. Hence, two rivals for their interests rioted the security situation of the middle east.

② A disastrous decade of civil war in Syria :-

Almost a decade completed ~~to~~ to the civil war in Syria which started in 2011. The cause of war remained a conflict between Bashar al Assad's government and free syrian army. Bashar al Assad is supported by Iran and Iran declared the "free syrian army" as rebellious ~~or~~ group. Consequently, Saudi Arabia supported the "free syrian army" financially and militarily and called them as freedom fighters. This way a disastrous civil war continued on the soil of Syria which caused the death of millions of people and displacement of the thousands of people. The infrastructure and public installations damaged, and almost 60% of the urban Syria is destroyed due to this war.

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### ③ Possibility of peace in war-torn countries: ~

After a prolong massive war, this rapprochement is building a hope of peace in war-torn countries. Diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, compel them to stop supporting their allies in Syria. This would ultimately end the war. Similarly happened, as both countries declared that they will facilitate the negotiations between Bashar al Assad government and 'Free Syrian Army' and other rebellious groups. On other hand, Saudi Arabia invited the Bashar al Assad at Arab conference that is first time in 11 years. A ceasefire announced from the government and then by the rebellious groups. Therefore, a peace can be estimated in a country in near future.

### ④ Ceasefire will allow political growth in the region: ~

With the peace in war-torn countries, region can be empowered in the political world. Many countries in middle east such as Lebanon, Iraq, Yemen, Bahrain and Syria remained in the trap of war situation. This interrupted them to grow their role in geo-politics such as the other Arab countries are playing. After the development of peace in these countries they could actively participate in geo-politics. That ultimately empowers the organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC). Due to Saudi Arabia and Iran rivalry, the role of OIC was severely affected, as it never appeared <sup>that</sup> much powerful in geo-politics as other organisations such as UN and EU. Hence, the peace will strengthen the region and OIC politically.

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### ④ Peace in middle east: A dent to Israel's foreign policy: ~

Peace in middle east will make the muslim world more sound politically, which ~~is~~ <sup>will be</sup> a dent to Israel's foreign policy. The major focus of Israel's foreign & policy always remained on the chaos in the region. Israel portrays ~~such~~ that such instability in the region is due to Iran's involvement in the countries' internal matters, because Iran remains an existential threat to Israel. It is stated that Iran persistently supports the Bashar al Assad government in Syria and Iraqi government. Further, it supports the rebellious groups such as Houthis rebels in Yemen, Hezbollah

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in Lebanon and Bahrain uprisings. The way, Israel portrays Iran as a major threat to a peace in middle east.

Through this policy of Israel that is the containment of Iran, Arab countries specially Saudi Arabia and UAE were getting closer to Israel. Arab countries started diplomatic relations with Israel for their strategic interests which is to eliminate Iran's influence from the region. In that context, Abraham Accord was a breakthrough, through which initially UAE then later on five Arab countries recognised the Israel. Now, with this rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, the foreign policy of Israel is disrupted. ~~Israel~~ Thus, Israel no more attracts the Arab countries for its interests in the name of containment of Iran.

⑤ End of proxy will allow two powers of muslim world to prosper economically: ~

The two major powers of muslim world ~~will~~ <sup>would</sup> focus more on their economies rather than on proxy wars. Saudi Arabia is a ~~an~~ statisco power and on other hand Iran is revivalist power. Both countries are oil enriched countries and collectively can revolutionize their economies. They have capabilities to become the world's leading economies and Saudi Arabia is heading towards that as it has launched a mega project 'Neom'. Iran lacked good relations with the west due to sanctions and with the muslim world because of proxy wars in middle east. Due to such reasons, Iran's economy drastically declined. In near future, Iran through partnership with Saudi Arabia and participation in BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) of China will revive its economy. This way, the two powerful countries of muslim world will glorify the muslim world economically.

⑥ Impacts of rapprochement on the Pakistan: ~

Ⓐ Probability of decline in Sectarianism: -

Due to Iran-Saudi Arabia rivalry, sectarian crisis increased in Pakistan. In Pakistan, there is Sunni majority and a certain proportion of Shia population. Conflicts between the two sects usually seems in the major cities of Pakistan such as Karachi, Peshawar and Rawalpindi. Iran-Saudi Arabia bad relations further exaggerated the sectarian sentiments in Pakistan. Now, this

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diplomatic approach between Saudi Arabia and Iran will increase ~~the~~ acceptability of each other's sect in the muslims. Therefore, there is a probability of decline in sectarian differences in the Pakistan with this rapprochement.

(b) Longtime Confusion in Pakistan's FP would resolve:~

Pakistan's foreign policy towards Saudi Arabia and Iran has been affected <sup>with</sup> by the confusion. Pakistan never clearly tilted towards any country because one is key ally of Pakistan and another ~~one~~ is immediate neighbour of Pakistan. Pakistan did not openly support the Saudi-Arabia in proxy wars in Yemen and Syria. Saudi Arabia asked Pakistan for military support in Yemen but at that time Pakistan humbly denied, due to which relation of Pakistan with Saudi Arabia disturbed. Later on, Pakistan sent troops with clarification that these troops are only for territorial protection of Saudi Arabia. Pakistan could not afford tensions with Iran, when its western and eastern borders are already tensed. Hence, this longtime confusion would end with rapprochement between two countries and Pakistan's relation with both countries would improve.

### Conclusion

Diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran would bring in middle east. This peace will allow the gulf region to strengthen politically and economically. The way, an empowered gulf region would increase the impact of muslim world as whole on the geo-politics. Moreover, a ~~say~~ safe gulf region is also important for the whole world because gulf region is a major exporter of hydrocarbons to the world. So, the stability in the region would benefit both region as well as whole world. For the stability in the gulf region, good neighbouring relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia are essential.

“ This is a win-win for everyone and will benefit regional and global security. We hope, in the longer term, there is also potential for increasing benefits for all”, quoted by Oman's foreign minister, Badr Albusaidi.