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Inked in Beijing not only restores diplomatic relations b/w Riyadh and Tehran but also impacts overall M.E politics.

Introduction

The two major oil producer states of Middle East, Saudi Arabia and Iran, have been stern rivals of each other since 2016 when Iranian protestors attacked Saudi diplomatic missions.

However, March 2023 witnessed a shift in the rivalry as both of the countries agreed to reopen their embassies seven years after the severing of the relations.

This agreement was done by the mediation of China in Beijing. The two sides agreed to not interfere in each other's internal affairs and to respect state sovereignty.

The normalization of ties was driven by China and assisted by Pakistan and Iraq. As a result, both sides agreed to open their embassies and appointed ambassadors as well. Also, the visit of foreign ministers took place.

This is a major shift in policies of Middle East.

Implications of the deal

Economic Impacts:

The deal has major economic impacts as both sides agreed to restore their economic ties specifically in the area of trade, investments, technology, science, culture and sports. As both sides agreed to restore their commitment to comply with the "General Agreement for cooperation in various fields like trade, economy, investment technology etc." which was signed in 1998 under the leadership of King Fahad of KSA and Mohammad Khatami of Iran.

The mediation of China has also been seen which will cause the economic investments in ~~China~~ Iran and KSA ~~to grow~~ as a result of its trade agreements specifically through its "string of pearls" policy. Both of these oil producing states will be a major economic beneficiary of China's investment in the Middle East.

Political Impacts

The political impact of the rapprochement could be seen as both sides agreed to respect the ~~internal~~ sovereignty of each other.

The seven year long withstanding rivalry between KSA and Iran badly impacted the politics of not only these states but the whole Middle Eastern region. Now that the ties are being restored, it will shape the regional politics. The sectarian violence and aggression between the states would be lessened. The commitment is to bring peace in the region and a shift from rivalry to cooperation in the region.

For Iran, the normalization of ties would bring a signal to pursue its nuclear program. Also Normalization of Arab world with Israel would be seen.

Impacts on Middle East

The Saudi-Iran rivalry had severe impacts on the Middle Eastern region. It has caused devastating wars in Yemen, fuel instability in Iraq and Lebanon and in

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other Gulf states as well.

The normalization of ties would bring peace and stability in the whole region. It has some positive ~~an~~ impacts on several states which are:

Iraq:

The deal will lower the tensions in Iraq. Being a border state with Iran, Iraq will provide access to Iran, to the Arab world. Iran exploited the chaos in Iraq following the US invasion of Iraq in 2003 causing the toppling down of Saddam's regime. Since then, the government that came into power was a Shiite under Nouri-al-Maliki.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps support a number of armed groups that operate outside the Iraqi states full control. These groups are considered responsible for attacks on Saudi Arabia in 2019 and 2021.

Iraq's Sunnis hold trade and religious ties with Saudi Arabia, and a Shiite government seemed

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to threatened their interests, as the Sunni political parties have been subordinate partners in power sharing governments since 2003.

As Iraq is a joint neighbor to Saudi Arabia and Iran, the more presence of Iran in Iraq was a threat to KSA.

BUT following the reapproachment, the deal has a potential to reduce the tensions escalating in Iraq. Also, under the Iraq's prime minister Shia al Sudani, Iraq has tried to cement ties with Saudi Arabia.

Lebanon

The Saudi-Iran rivalry has been a major hurdle in Lebanon's political elites to address the country's devastating crisis that has destroyed the country's economy. Lebanon's politics has been polarized. One political camp is led by Hezbollah and the other one is supported by KSA.

This has caused a political crisis in the state of Lebanon.

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So the normalization of ties between KSA and Iran could possibly reduce or eliminate the political crisis that Lebanon has been going through

Syria

The normalization of ties proved to leave a positive impact on Syrian crisis as both sides agreed for the continuation of Assad as the president and it may speed up the normalization process of relations between the Syrian regime and some Arab governments. Bashar-ul-Assad was welcomed in Arab League conference.

As there were two alliances made in Syria. In which on one hand was Gulf Cooperation Council, US and the rebels which are Al-Nusra and FSA. These rebellions are being supported by the USA and KSA. On the other hand is the alliance of Russia, Iran, Basharul Assad's government and Hezbollah.

The rebels backed by KSA went to topple down the government of Assad to contain Iran, make Syria pro-Riyadh and a Sunni dominant state.

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whereas Iran supports Assad regime due to sectarian affinity, Israel as a common enemy and supporting Hezbollah in Lebanon against Israel.

with the normalization of ties, KSA signalled support to normalize relations with Assad's regime. Also both sides agreed to not support the rebels against each other which would resultantly bring peace to the state.

Yemen

In Yemen, the government of Mansour Hadi is being supported by KSA in order to contain Iran by targetting its militia in Yemen that is Houthi Rebels. These rebels are supported by Iran due to sectarian affinity. Iran shows its cooperation to Houthi Rebels with military assistance and diplomatic support. Houthis maintain a tight grip on the northern highlands including Sanaa (the capital) where most of the population resides.

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The government of Hadi's being supported by KSA is also provided with weapons, finances and the troops against the Houthi rebels.

The major issue in Yemen's control is the control of Strait of Aden. Around 70% of KSA's oil trade occurs through this strait and the presence of Iran in Yemen in anyway is a threat to KSA oil trade.

However, the deal between KSA and Iran would bring peace to Yemen. Hadi's government would be supported by Iran as well and the rebels would not be provided with weapons to support them.

An encouraging move was seen when in April, more than 8000 prisoners were exchanged between the government and the rebels.

Also in April, Saudi Arabia invited members of the Presidential leadership council which is its main Yemeni partner to discuss the details of a roadmap that Riyadh has been negotiating with Houthi Rebels. This roadmap is divided into

~~two~~ phases including:
~~the~~ ~~first~~ ~~phase~~ the ports of the

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country will be opened and the roads will be unblocked.

This move would open the door for negotiations between the government and Huthi's.

The plan also envisions for the dialogue with Huthi's to discuss the country's political future.

Hence, the Yemen's internal situation from war to peace can be predicted through this Arab-Iran reapproachment.

China's Interest in the region

Middle East's peace is of great importance to China as China imports hydrocarbons from Caspian region, Iran and now KSA.

Also, China wants to trade in Yuan instead of dollar, so a role played by KSA would be of great importance.

China is also investing in clean energy including solarization in KSA and bullet trains.

Due to above mentioned reasons, China would definitely play a crucial role in bringing peace to the Middle Eastern region for its safe trade of hydrocarbons, for which

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the involvement of both KSA and Iran is necessary.

conclusion

As aforementioned, the normalization of ties between Iran and KSA would not only restore their own diplomatic ties, but would bring peace to the whole region including the major important states like Syria, Iraq, Yemen and Lebanon. These states have been withstanding a long situation of conflicts. Now that the deal has been done, the situation would ~~be~~ transform from war into peace, shaping the politics of the Middle Eastern region decisively.