

QNO # 02

Rapprochement between KSA and Iran: its socio-political implications in the ME, and measures for Islamabad:

Two rivals of Muslim world - KSA and Iran - agreed to restore ip ties and reopened diplomatic missions in a surprise. The Chinese-brokered deal has far-reaching implications on the socio-political, economic and security of Middle East. Pakistan, being neighbour of Iran and close friend of KSA needs to take some pragmatic and practical measures to get benefits from this rapprochement.

Reasons behind stalled Relations: following are main causes behind stalled talks:

- i- Execution of Shia clergy by KSA: Saudi Arabia executed prominent shia cleric Sheikh Bagh Al-Nimeh in 2016. Thereafter, Iranian protesters attacked Saudi missions in Tehran and Meshhad, which led

to reapture diplomatic ties.

ii- Power Politics in region in general and ME in particular:

During and before this period, both powers have competed for influence in Lebanon, Bahrain, Iran, and most notably Yemen, where devastating civil war has pitted the pro-Iranian Houthis against the Saudi-led government.

~~iii-~~ Mission behind Resuming Diplomatic Ties:

The following are main reasons behind resuming ties:

i- Saudi Diversifying foreign policy:

The leadership of KSA wants to diversify its foreign policy and focus on economic opportunities which needs stability in the region. Thus, KSA focuses on diversifying its foreign policy.

ii. Political Solutions to conflicts:
Saudi Arabia prefers to political solutions and dialogue to resolve the regional conflicts like war in Yemen, Syria, Iran and Lebanon.

iii. Regional Stability:
Both regional powers have realised the consequences of civil wars, proxies and conflicts. Thus, they reach at a conclusion that to stable region is only solution for socio-economic development.

iv. Influence of China:
Growing influence of China is another major factor behind resuming diplomatic ties as china has brokered the deal between Iran and KSA.

v-

Implications of KSA-Iran patch-up on Middle East:

Iran and Saudi Arabia are key players in the regional power politics. However, their patch-up will bring far-reaching implications in the MIE region.

i- End of Proxy Wars:

Proxy wars may be end with patch-up of both regional players as Iran supported an opponent camps in the region, while Saudi supported another camp. For example Iran supported Bashar Al-Assad government in Syria while Saudi backed militias in Syria. But, this rapprochement will defuse the proxy wars.

ii- Durable Peace in Yemen:

A conflict sparked in 2014 has widely been seen as a proxy war between them. Now, probably, Yemen will move towards durable peace.

iii. Reduction in Sectarianism and extremism:

Patch-up of KSA and Iran will end extremism and sectarianism in the region as both supported opponent sects. For example KSA supported Sunni Sect of Muslims, while Iran supported Shia sect.

iv. Prosperity in ME:

With the patch-up of Iran and Saudi, a new era of peace and prosperity will rise.

v. Unity of Muslim Ummah:

Better intra-Muslim relations will build in the region as both regional powers are now on same page.

Recommendations for Pakistan to follow:

Pakistan should capitalise on the current situation of relations between Iran and KSA as Pakistan must develop and revitalise its relation with them. The following options must be undertaken:

- i- Seek crucial investment from both countries:

Pakistan should seek economic investment from them. It also forces them to join CPEC and invest in its projects.

- ii- Massive Opportunities of Trade and Energy:

Both countries have high potential in energy resources. Pakistan should capitalise on by reinvesting its gas-pipeline project with Iran. Pakistan must complete this project to secure its energy ~~and~~ needs.

III- Resolved Sectarianism and Extremism Issues:

Pakistan has been plagued by sectarian violence for decades. The normalisation of ties between Iran and Saudi could help to defuse sectarian tensions and reduce influence of extremist groups.

IV- Neutral Foreign Policy:

Normalisation of relations between KSA and Iran could help to pursue a neutral foreign policy. It could help to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties with both countries.

Conclusion:

Good relations between Iran and KSA has far-reaching implications for region in general and ME in particular. The path to peace for Saudi and Iran will not be easy. But for the sake of their people and region both countries need to make it work.

QNO # 06

Floods and water Scarcity in Pakistan: Responsible factors, and recommendations

Pakistan faces the twin challenge of water scarcity and floods. Country which faces extreme water shortage in one month will face floods in next month. This situation has brought many challenges for Pakistan. Both situations have their own responsible factors which must be dealt with making a broad strategy and far-sighted policy.

Status of Floods damages in Pakistan:

The flood 2020 affected ~~33~~ 33 million people in 94 districts of Pakistan. It took almost 1700 lives of people and displaced around 7.6 million people. In addition to it, about 4.4 million acres of crops were damaged and around about 1 million

animals lost, according to FAO. Similarly, total damages and losses amounted to 30.14 bn USD of which agriculture suffered USD 12.94 bn, according to Pakistan Economic Survey 2022-23.

Status of Water Scarcity in Pakistan:

Pakistan has become a water scarce country since 2020 as per capita has reached 885m^3 in 2020, according to WAPD.

A country becomes a water scarce when per capita below 1000m^3 in accordance to Swedish hydrologist Falkenmark indicator. Thus, it is a matter of grave concern for Pakistan in order to improve its water level and per capita availability of water.

Responsible Factors for Floods and water scarcity:

Twin issue of flood and water scarcity has almost same responsible factors which include:

i- Climate Change:

Climate change is a key reason behind floods and water shortage in country as climate is unprecedentedly changed which creates these problems in different times.

ii- Global Warming:

The rise of temperature of earth surface is caused melting of glaciers rapidly. Thus, it creates the flood situation.

iii- Deforestation

The chopping of trees at large scale is so common in our country which has created deforestation.

iv- Melting of glaciers:

Melting of glaciers is the major reason behind creating

floods and water issues.

v- Improper planning:

Our country is also lacking in creating proper planning. Narrow and short-sighted planning is also causing floods and water shortage in the country.

vi- Dearth of visionary leadership:

Leadership plays a key role in handling various crisis. But absence of visionary leader is also another cause for water issue.

vii- Political instability:

Political stability is necessary for implementation of policies.

viii- Inefficient use of water Resources

Our society is using water resources inefficiently, which caused water shortage, too.

ix- Inavailability of water reservoirs:

Absence of water reservoirs also contribute in floods and water inavailability.

Recommendations to handle twin issue of floods and water scarcity:
Following measures have to be taken for resolving and handling these issues:

i- Construct water reservoirs:

Construction of water reservoirs are necessary for handling large scale floods and water scarcity as they help in both cases.

ii- Efficient use of Water Resources

Efficient use of water resources is necessary to face water shortage. Therefore, conservative measures must be adopted.

iii- Enhanced Reforestation:

Forestation must be enhanced so that large number of trees will help in creating a better environment.

iv- Ensure Political stability:

Political stability is sine qua non for implementing devising and legislating any policy.

- ✓ Without political stability, it is unlikely possible to face the crisis. Thus, political stability will ensure to face twin challenge of flood and water.
- ✓ Modernised Agriculture Sector:

It will help in efficient utilisation of water resources. Modernisation of agriculture is mostly include the new farming methods, watering of crops and seeding and harvesting of crops on their proper time.

Conclusion:

All in all, water scarcity can be overcome by implementing all recommendations in letter and spirit. In the same context floods which is mostly natural phenomenon can be minimised by avoiding its aggregating factors.