

The Saudi-Iranian Rapprochement and Its Reflection on the Arab Region

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Abstract

The protracted geopolitical rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran has been one of the major shaping factors in Middle Eastern dynamics for decades. However, signs of a potential improvement in diplomatic and political relationships between the two powers have raised hopes that the regional situation could change. This study will provide a detailed analysis of the ongoing Saudi-Iranian rapprochement and its implications for the Yemeni crisis, the Syrian conflict, the Palestinian cause, economic trade, security cooperation, and diplomatic ties. In examining these critical aspects, the research will develop the current understanding of the impact of the new deal between Riyadh and Tehran on the Middle East. One of the longest-standing rivalries across the Middle East has finally taken a first albeit inadequate to address two main foreign policy tenets of both Saudi Arabia and Iran. The Saudi-Iranian deal acknowledges the principles of “sovereignty of states” and “non-interference in internal affairs.” Over decades, their competition had a significant footprint in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Bahrain, and Yemen. In these states, the foreign policy struggle of Riyadh and Tehran overlapped with the powerful and complex domestic counterparts. Internally, their fight took on ethnic, tribal, religious, sectarian, political, and ideological forms.

Keywords: Economic Trade, Diplomacy, Saudi-Iranian Rapprochement, Syrian Crisis, Middle East, Yemeni Crisis, Arab Region.

INTRODUCTION

The peculiarities, conditions, and objectives of Iran and Saudi Arabia, the prominent nations in the Persian Gulf region, differ in a number of aspects. The history of their pre-1979 rivalry and days passed of mutual cooperation contributed to the intensiveness of their problems after the Islamic Revolution in February 1979, and their relations have enormously fluctuated over the several last decades. The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that consistently affect their relationship and specify certain conditions and characteristics that define their imposes and policies. combination. The essence of being of both governments, their position and self-perception within the Islam Ummat community, and the mindset of their ruling elites decisively predefine the foreign policies in relation to each other.

For the “limited contest,” transitions from conflict to cooperation are possible, and they are characteristic when the interests at stake are second-order interests. For the “unlimited contest,” it is true that the transition from conflict to cooperation is not possible, and this situation applies best to controversial issues involving the critical national interests of the states and strategic foreign policy decisions. In such cases, states may even launch wars to protect their principles, positions, and interests. When analyzing the relationship between Iran and Saudi post-1979, it is important to consider the relationship features before the last date. The features of pre-1979 relations are explained by the fact that at that time, the governments of both countries were similar because both were conservative, loyal to the West, and strongly anti-Communist monarchies.

Around the early 1970s, after the British left the Persian Gulf, the Nixon Doctrine was adopted to strengthen the role of the local states in the provision of regional security. According to Diesing, the unofficial division of labor was such that Iran assumed the main burden, and Saudi Arabia was in the shadows. The two countries worked in close cooperation with each other to ensure stability, prevent the Soviets from obtaining strength in the region, and allow the oil to flow smoothly. The cooperation ended abruptly when the Islamic Revolution in Iran took place in 1979 and Iran changed radically.

The revolutionary transformation in Iran had profound implications for its relations with neighbouring states, particularly Saudi Arabia. Once close political partners, the two countries now found themselves in an

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aggressive role as ideological and regional rivals. The subtle religious-regional rivalry between the two capitals, which had existed even during their cooperative phase, became more pronounced under the revolutionary regime in Tehran, significantly affecting the dynamics of their relations.

The study asserts that two primary factors have had a substantial impact on shaping the foreign policy goals of both countries: first, the desire of both nations to lead the Muslim world, turning the Muslim world into an arena for competition, and second, their respective approaches to relations with the West, particularly the United States. While Saudi Arabia has consistently pursued a pro-West policy, Iran shifted to an independent, anti-imperialist, and pro-Third World foreign policy after the 1979 Revolution, leading to tensions with the West and pro-Western governments in the region. The enduring tension between revolutionary Shiite Iran and its Sunni-dominated, pro-Western neighbours, including Saudi Arabia, continues to influence various aspects of their bilateral relations, especially their regional power struggle.

Problem Statement

The longstanding rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran has been a defining feature of the Middle East's geopolitical landscape for decades. The Saudi-Iranian rapprochement is the process of improving the relations between and cooperation of Saudi Arabia and Iran, two major powers in the Middle East. At this point, the aforementioned countries are involved in a fierce rivalry based on deep-seated religious, political, and economic differences, among other divides, with their efforts to gain regional influence and lead in their expansion being particularly noteworthy. The Saudi-Iranian rapprochement is defined as the process since the history of the Saudi-Iranian conflict is long, with the first discrepancies appearing in the aftermath of the 1979 Iranian revolution and the situation only growing more complicated after that. In the recent years, however, there is constant evidence that Saudi Arabia and Iran are willing to merge their efforts on solving a range of issues.

The Saudi-Iranian rivalry has been devastating for the region in many different ways. Firstly, the confrontation between two Muslim powerhouses that also represent different branches of the Faith has aggravated already existing sectarian divisions. Second, Saudi-sponsored and Iranian-supported proxy conflicts have resulted in many human casualties and prohibited the development of many countries, including Syria, Lebanon, Yemen, and Iraq, to name just a few. As such, the possibility of rapprochement of the two emblematic enemies has become tempting in many regards as it could help to resolve numerous conflicts in the region and reduce the tension. However, such a way would not be easy to follow, and the research challenge is to persuade the reader that the task is much more challenging than it may seem at first glance. The reasons why are the old and deep-seated distrust and suspicion between the two countries as well as the contradictory purposes and goals of their foreign policies. Building solid ground for their reconciliation would be require removing such contentions as the volume of influence in the region, the scale of support for various groups of proxies, and the necessity to put an end to the competition for oil.

The most important driver of the current Saudi-Iranian rapprochement is the interest in fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria. Indeed, both Saudi Arabia and Iran have been struggling against this terrorist group, which necessarily implies that their interests coincide. In a broader sense, both countries are interested in maintaining the conventional status quo. Although a questionable argument can be advanced that both countries can also benefit from the development of regional instability, this kind of analysis is usually highly speculative. The point is that both Saudi Arabia and Iran are two most powerful states in the Gulf area, and the development of chaotic events in the region could easily spill onto their territories. In the light of this analysis, deciding whether both countries' Saudi-Iranian rapprochement can make Middle Eastern countries more prone to conflict or, on the opposite, open the way to negotiations can be a challenging task. Indeed, on the one hand, one can suggest that they might make it easier to put an end to all military activities. The cessation of hostilities would help the civilian populations of the Middle Eastern countries much suffering because of fighting. Indeed, strong political regimes might be able to take root in those Middle Eastern countries at which negotiations were pointed. However, on the other hand, as soon as the rapprochement concerns the countries that earlier supported the belligerents financially and/or via arms supplies in any Middle East conflict, their future seems highly uncertain. The point is that they will be forced to find other sources of political and/or economic support, which is unlikely to be easy.

Objectives of the Study

To identify and analyse the drivers behind the recent Saudi-Iranian rapprochement and explore the political, economic, and strategic factors contributing to the shift towards reconciliation.

To assess the implications of improved Saudi-Iranian relations on the Arab region's geopolitics and security dynamics, focusing on ongoing conflicts and regional stability.

To explore opportunities for regional cooperation and integration between Saudi Arabia and Iran and analyse potential collaboration areas and their significance for the Arab region's collective security and development.

Interpretive Theories of Iran-Saudi Rapprochement

Realism and Neorealism

Realism and neorealism, as prominent theories in international relations, emphasise state-centric interests, power dynamics, and security considerations. Realism posits that states act primarily to pursue their national interests, often involving power maximisation and security enhancement (Morgenthau, 1978). Both Saudi Arabia and Iran share concerns about regional instability, terrorism, and the spread of extremism. The rise of non-state actors, such as ISIS, has threatened the security of both nations. Realist logic suggests that common security threats can prompt cooperation between states (Mearsheimer, 2001). Therefore, the desire to address mutual security concerns has driven Saudi Arabia and Iran toward rapprochement. Realism also involves considering the balance of power in the international system (Waltz, 1979). The Saudi-Iranian rapprochement can be seen as an attempt to recalibrate power dynamics in the Middle East. As both nations seek to assert their influence, engaging in diplomatic dialogue can help avoid costly conflicts and prevent further destabilisation.

Neorealism (Structural Realism): Neorealism, also known as structural realism, considers the effect of the system's structure within the international system upon the behaviour of states. Neorealism discusses how changes in the international system, such as the transition from bipolarity to multipartivity, affect the behaviour of states. The withdrawal of the United States from the nuclear deal with Iran due to a contradiction in the course of wanting autonomy in the region may lead to a real rapping between Saudi Arabia and Iran. In other words, in order to secure their interests in the new, multipolar Middle East, Saudi Arabia and Iran decided to compete for driving Israel and the United States out of the region and replacing them. The security dilemma, as one of the neorealism concepts, also assumes that one state's efforts in the field of security are felt by others as a threat. The Saudi-Iranian race that began as a result of the US resume of sanctions on historical resonance, also had the impact of increasing the regional security dilemma. Nonetheless, due to the fact that Saudi Arabia and Iran understand this common, this the parties made diplomatic efforts against the resurrection of the Qatari diplomatic boycott for Mitigating the security dilemma in the region.

Constructivism

Constructivism is a theory, which makes particular stress on ideas, identities and social factors in formation of international relations. It suggests that changes in how states see each other can be a basis of changes in patterns of state behaviour. As far as Saudi Arabia and Iran are concerned, it is possible to presuppose that both nations have gone through leadership and domestic politics changes, which have affected their perception. In particular, leadership changes, for instance, the appointment Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Saudi Arabia probably led to reconsideration of foreign policy issues. At any rate, constructivist theory stresses the role of norms and identity in tempt to shape state behaviour. In the case of the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement it is possible to presuppose that it is some kind of reflection of the process of the formation of new norms of conflict resolution and professional diplomacy exercised by both countries, which have reached the understanding of the significance of the role of the two regional powers in providing stability.

Balance of Power Theory

According to the balance of power theory, states tend to balance or counterbalance the power of other states to maintain their security. Saudi Arabia and Iran have been suspicious of external forces, such as the US and Russia seeking to dominate the Middle East. The theoretical perspective seems to suggest that the urge to

counterbalance the several external actors that may influence Saudi Arabia and Iran was a complex factor that may have encouraged them to opt for rapprochement. Notions advanced in the balance of power concept appear to demonstrate the remaining competitive nature of international relations. Saudi Arabia and Iran were the two regional powerhouses, and most probably, they were competing to outmanoeuvre one another. By getting closer, rapprochement is an ideal strategy used to ensure that each of the two states succeed regionally.

Broadening the Concept of Iran-Saudi Rapprochement under Constructivism Theory

Constructivism's unique insight on the Iran-Saudi reconciliation is that it focuses on so-called social constructs, identities and mutual perception which all should be taken under consideration to provide a complex analysis of state's behavior. Unlike realism and liberalism where material might or institutional framework is seen as key factors in the IR, constructivism takes states' interactions for granted to create a sort of system which re-forms all states' interests and identities.

According to the constructivist school of international relations, in the cases of Iran and Saudi Arabia, rapprochement can be viewed through the prism of the process of identity reframing and consequent norm changes. The competition between the two nations of the region traditionally was in the context of a critic sectarian Sunni-Shia opposition, which shaped the countries' regional aspirations and policy choices. However, the diplomat reasons between the neighbors, demonstrates the trend towards retreating the length of the rivalry and seek the ground for developing a partnership. According to the constructivist perspective, it is due to existing changes in the identities and following the recognition of identities needs and priorities concept. Under these conditions, the friendly shift of Iran and Saudi Arabia reflects the reframing of 'self' and 'others' binary-terms on a principle of a security and the prospering regional economy of both.

On the one hand, identity and perception does not deviate much from constructivist insights; it, however, looks deeper at states' self-conceptions and perceptions of the others. As for the case of Iran and Saudi Arabia, both have long seen one another as a threat, hence that will continue drawing them apart. Still, several things have changed, including both regional and international developments. Thus, the US distinction between Cold War policy and that needed in the 21st century, as well as the financial and security pressures connected to the Yemen crises and other regional problems, have forced both states to reconsider their identities and perceptions.

The reassessment of the notions on international relations has promoted the switch to a more pragmatic view of the situation in the bilateral context. In other words, instead of severe rivalry, both countries are likely to consider the advantages of forming partnerships that will facilitate the development of both states and communities. To a considerable extent, the shift to a new form of communication and the establishment of more amicable relationships are promoted by a series of dialogues, the exchange of cultural values, including music, and shared investment into the countries' economies. The formation of a new discourse seems to be appropriate, focusing on peace and prosperity.

Constructivist Dynamics in Rapprochement

Identity and perception play a key constructivist dynamic in the Iran-Saudi rapprochement. Over time, both states increasingly see each other not as an existential threat but as a potential partner in regional and economic stability (Al-Saud, 2016). Internally, their respective new security and economic priorities due to leadership changes gradually alter how they construct their national interests and their place in the region (Gause, 2014). Moreover, external factors, such as the changing policies of global powers like the United States, have also influenced this rapprochement. The U.S.'s fluctuating commitment to the Middle East has prompted regional actors to reconsider their security arrangements and explore new avenues for diplomacy and cooperation (Pollack, 2020). Constructivism emphasises the importance of social interaction in constructing state behavior (Katzman, 2020). In the case of Iran and Saudi Arabia, increased diplomatic engagement, whether directly or through intermediaries, has been crucial in facilitating rapprochement. High-profile meetings, such as those facilitated by Iraq and Oman, have provided platforms for dialogue, reducing misunderstandings and building trust between the two countries (Arab News, 2021).

Effect of Rapprochement in Arab Region

The Middle East region is witnessing a struggle for regional influence between Iran and Saudi Arabia, as the two countries compete for hegemony and influence in the Arab and Islamic countries. This competition revolves around political, economic and religious issues, such as the struggle over oil, gas, land, and religious and security interests.

By supporting armed movements and allied regimes in the region, such as the Syrian regime and the Houthis in Yemen, Iran is trying to achieve its political and strategic goals. Saudi Arabia considers Iran a security deterrent in the region and seeks to support official Arab governments to face Iranian challenges. However, the two countries' influence differs from one country to another and is influenced by several factors, such as religion, sect, history and culture.

The changing U.S. policy in the Middle East, especially under the Trump and Biden administrations, has created uncertainty regarding American commitment to regional security. This uncertainty has pushed regional powers to reconsider their strategies and explore avenues for de-escalation and dialogue to ensure stability (Pollack, 2020). The Trump administration (2017-2021) marked a significant shift in U.S. Middle East policy, characterised by a "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran, the withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018, and a series of bilateral agreements known as the Abraham Accords. The withdrawal from the JCPOA was a pivotal move that reversed a vital element of the previous administration's efforts to limit Iran's nuclear capabilities through diplomacy (Katzman, 2020). This decision, coupled with the imposition of stringent sanctions on Iran, aimed to curb Iranian influence in the region but also increased tensions and concerns over potential conflict.

The Abraham Accords, brokered by the Trump administration in 2020, normalised relations between Israel and several Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. While these agreements were hailed as a significant diplomatic achievement, they also signalled a shift in U.S. priorities towards promoting inter-state relations within the region over resolving the Palestinian issue, further complicating the U.S.'s role as a mediator in Middle Eastern conflicts (Owen, 2020).

The Biden administration has sought to recalibrate U.S. involvement in the Middle East, emphasising diplomacy and a return to multilateral agreements. One of its early foreign policy moves was the attempt to re-enter negotiations with Iran to revive the JCPOA, signalling a departure from the confrontational stance of the previous administration (Gordon & Barnes, 2021). The Biden administration's decision to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan in August 2021, ending America's longest war, has had broader implications for U.S. credibility and commitment to regional security in the Middle East. The withdrawal was criticised for its execution and raised questions about the U.S.'s willingness to maintain a military presence in the region to support its allies and interests (Mazarr, 2021).

Economic Challenges

The economic challenges and the need for diversification away from oil have prompted both nations to seek a more stable regional environment conducive to economic development and foreign investment. Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 and Iran's plans to reintegrate into global markets post-sanctions underscore this shift towards prioritising economic stability over regional rivalry (Al-Saud, 2016). Iran and Saudi Arabia, despite their vast oil reserves, encountered significant economic challenges that underscore the urgency of diversification. For Iran, international sanctions, particularly those reinstated after the U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018, have severely hampered its oil exports, highlighting the vulnerabilities of an oil-dependent economy (Katzman, 2020). The sanctions have limited Iran's access to global markets and restricted its ability to attract foreign investments, crucial for economic growth and diversification.

While not facing the same level of international isolation as Iran, Saudi Arabia has also recognised the pitfalls of oil dependency. Significant negative impacts on the Kingdom's economy were posed in the 2014-2016 reduction of oil prices, during which the prices fell from above 100 to below \$30 per barrel (Rasheed & Carey, 2016). The described price volatility was one of the relevant signs of the vulnerability of an oil-reliant economic

model. However, the volatility became the impetus for introducing the Vision 2030, which is considered an ambitious plan of the Saudi government to diversify (Vision 2030, 2016).

Iran's approach has bolstered non-oil sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and technology. The government has tried to diversify these sectors through domestic investments and trying to introduce foreign technology and skilled human capital despite sanctions. The countries' rich cultural heritage and skilled human capital can be significant to promoting tourism and the knowledge-based industries (Esfandiari & Tabatabai, 2020). A more popular and ambitious approach has been the Saudi Arabia Vision 2030. Led by the 'aggressive' Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the country is working towards the growth of new sectors, including renewable energy, tourism, entertainment and technology development. The \$500 billion mega city project, NEOM, has also indicated the extent of the Kingdom's commitment to innovation and sustainability. According to Saudia Arabia Vision 2030, forward foreign investments helps the country in achieving these goals. The country also indicates various measures that are aimed at improving the business environment, the legal framework for increased business and the inflow of foreign investors into the country (Al-Rasheed, 2019).

Humanitarian Effect

Both Russia and Iran increasingly realise that the humanitarian and economic cost of proxy wars, notably the war in Yemen, has become unsustainable for both counties. Hunaninatiran considerations of course matter a lot, but the realisation that the continuation of conflicts that serve neither's strategic interests has prompted both countries to reconsider their foreign policy in terms of conflict resolution and cooperation (Juneau, 2020). Tangible expressions of this shift is that neither Russia nor Iran now seek an outright military victory for their respective clients in Syria or Yemen. Support for proxies in these countries has ensured both the civil war in Syria and the civil war in Yemen. Cooling of their relations would help diminish these conflicts and advance other questions, like the nuclear programme of Iran (Gause, 2020).

Both states play a significant role in supporting a number of proxy groups, and their collaboration may imply negotiations and peace agreements. For instance, in Yemen, the ongoing conflict has resulted in one of the most severe humanitarian crises in the world, with both Iran and Saudi Arabia backing different sides. The restored relationship can bring about negotiations and access of humanitarian help, which will help overcome the problem and reduce the sufferings by the Yemenis (Nadimi, 2021).

More than 65 million people around the world are affected by internal displacement and forced migration from their native countries. These people are deprived of their normal lives and basic needs and face immense challenges to survive. People in countries such as Syria, Iraq, and Lebanon are the more affected people, and both Iran and Saudi Arabia can provide inclusive humanitarian aid because, by doing so, the chance of overcoming the biggest challenges is high (Rasanayagam, 2021). The cooperation between Iran and Saudi Arabia is the effective solution to the existing problem because both countries have enough resources for delivering and distributing the most needed services. The appropriate advantages in solving conflicts would result in a rehabilitation policy that both countries would agree with. The control of the refugee issue involves a better process of admission and clearance so that more refugees will be able to travel in the future (Barnes, 2020). It means the reduction of pressure on the host country and improvement of the quality of life of the guests and hosts in the area. The improvement in relations will make it possible to encourage such countries to take part in humanitarian aid for the benefit of the most disadvantaged populations (Bahgat, 2019).

There are several critical security benefits of Iran-Saudi irreconcilability. First, it is linked to the resolution of proxy conflicts in the region. Indeed, many times these two nations have supported opposite sites in their disputes, for instance, Syrian Civil War and Yemeni Civil War (Fahim, 2020). However, in the case of a reconciliation, both could negotiate peace and gradually withdraw support, which would mean lower levels of violence within these countries. Besides that, Iran and Saudi Arabia both face the risk of terrorism, namely, ISIS and Al-Qaeda and they would be able to share intelligence and collaborate more effectively in that sphere (Al-Rasheed, 2019). Maritime security is another dimension, linked to the drop of tension. Piracy, smuggling, and other maritime violations, as well as the increase of security threats related to international cargo transportation should be considered. Both nations are concerned about this issue, as they can keep each other's marine forces under control (Katzman, 2020).

Technical Economic Trade Cooperation

The Middle East is the world's leading oil and natural gas supplier. Moreover, it is also the region where two major energy producers, Iran and Saudi Arabia, are located. Special attention is placed on the fact that amelioration of economic relations implies favorable cooperation in the sphere of energy, including joint works, development of infrastructure, and coordinated measures (Zamani, 2021). This union can lead to stable energy markets and better opportunities for implementing energy strategies. From the economic point of view, both countries can enjoy predictable energy outcomes and receive sufficient damage compensation. Moreover, this fact can contribute to other improvements in economic relations leading to opportunities for expanding bilateral trade. Iran and Saudi Arabia have large markets and versatile economies (Al-Montashari, 2019). Lower barriers and better investment climate can facilitate access to other markets and increase economic diversification. Another possibility that can be suggested is jointly developing infrastructure projects such as transportation and telecommunications. Due to the construction of new highways and railroads as well as information exchange networks, both states can enjoy the benefits of reduced transportation costs and increased transportation networks. Moreover, investment in infrastructure can also lead to economic growth and the development of the region (Khaleghian & Al-Nasser, 2021).

The Palestinian Cause

Though both Iran and Saudi Arabia have gone to lengths to support the Palestinian cause, the two has often assumed a contradictory position with regard to Palestinians. Iran, whose population largely consists of Shiites, has supported or otherwise funded the Hamas and Islamic Jihads factions as the two battle Israeli troops during conflicts in the region, including the 2009, 2012, 2014, and 2021 wars in Gaza. Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, backs the regional Palestinian Authority led by ethnic Fatah, whose head is Mahmoud Abbas. As such, the ancient rivalry that exists between Iran and Saudi Arabia and which is often fought as proxy wars is a major cause of discord between the two countries and this often extends to the Palestinian question. The division between favors has further complicated the fight against Israelis or territorial disputes in the region. Internal divisions within the Palestinian leadership have hindered progress in peace negotiations and state-building efforts. Improved relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia could encourage a more unified Palestinian front, enhancing their bargaining power and diplomatic efforts (Khatib, 2021).

The rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia may lead to increased pressure on both nations to engage constructively in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. A unified stance from regional powers could encourage negotiations and diplomacy, potentially advancing the two-state solution and addressing longstanding grievances. The roles of Saudi Arabia as a crucial Arab state and Iran as an important regional power might lead to a more cordial nature for the peace talks. Moreover, the improved relations may result in greater financial and humanitarian assistance to be provided to the Palestinian territories (Haddad, 2020). Both Iran and Saudi Arabia are capable of helping in the scope of development projects, infrastructure, and humanitarian aid. Greater collaboration between the two countries could. As a result, economic burdens, faced by Palestinians, could be alleviated, and some of their living conditions could be ameliorated (Abdulrazak, 2020).

The Palestinian cause has always been geopolitically corollated, and the ways regional and international actors make it grow. The rapprochement of Iran and Saudi Arabia can be considered as the initiative influencing the geopolitical landscape of the Middle East and the positions of all parties concerned. Particularly, Israel is interested in the relations development of these two countries because they are two most severe critics of the Israeli policy on the Palestinian territories. The normalisation of the relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia could result in a more inclined confrontation against Israel. This may create challenges for Israel regarding regional diplomacy and security (Klein, 2019).

The United States has historically supported Israel and played a significant role in Middle East diplomacy. A united stance on the Palestinian cause by Iran and Saudi Arabia could influence U.S. policies in the region. The U.S. might seek to engage more actively in facilitating peace negotiations or adjusting its approach to accommodate changing regional dynamics (Makari, 2021). The Middle East remains fraught with conflicts and tensions in countries such as Syria, Yemen, and Iraq. These conflicts may divert the attention and resources of

both Iran and Saudi Arabia away from the Palestinian cause, making it challenging to prioritize Palestinian issues (Alkadiri, 2021). Internal divisions among Palestinian factions, including Fatah and Hamas, have persisted for years. Achieving unity among these factions and coordinating their efforts remains a formidable challenge, even with the support of Iran and Saudi Arabia (Giacaman et al., 2018).

The Saudi war and the Houthis

Yemeni conflict was outbreaked in 2015 that was caused the military intervention of the Saudi-led coalition in the interests of the Yemeni government that was aimed against the Houthi forces and military of the former president of the country Ali Abdullah Saleh. Houthi movement belongs to the Zaidi Shiite branch of Islam, and it is widely perceived that it is sponsored by Iran. However, the degree and type of the support is a key subject of the ongoing debate. Nowadays, this conflict has turned into an ongoing war, which is causing a great extent of damage. At the start, Saudi Arabia had stated that Iran was providing the Houthi forces with sophisticate weapons, and have even been suggested that the Houthi fighters are being trained on the Iranian territory. The representatives of the Iranian government denied the fact that they are providing military assistance to the Houthis, but they have acknowledged their political and ideological support of the Houthi movement. It is one of the reasons why the relations between these two countries are so problematic, as unknowledgeable undiscerning. Saudi Arabia says that Iran's interference in the regional matters is posing a serious threat to the national security of Riyadh and the dominance of the Saudi Arabia.

The Saudi war with the Houthis led to a severe humanitarian crisis in Yemen. A large mass of civilian people has died and millions more were displaced in other countries. Besides, people there face starvation and a lack of medicines and food among other things. The blockade of the country hindered the transportation of humanitarian aid. The result was the internationally recognized catastrophe and condemnation of the Saudi authorities' actions. Generally, the Yemeni paper tiger is called a proxy war where two enemy countries support opposite sides (Al-Mandhari et al., 2019). For Aramco, the Houthi movement, which is currently Iran's main ally, is only an Iranian puppet. It is threatening with destabilization and disturbance in the region as well as Saudi and allies' security. However and in reality, Iran is not considering this as its own war. It is a part of the ongoing more global confrontation or proxy war and the least that can be expected from it is no immediate peace resolution of the conflict (Gause, 2020).

Rapprochement between Iran and Saudi Arabia can open diplomatic doors for the resolution of the Yemeni conflict. A constructive relationship will foster more dialogue, negotiations and subsequent peaceful settlements (Haddad, 2020). The role of peace talks in the peace process is quite significant given that the two rivals can ensure that they find a middle ground in a country such as Yemen. Indeed, Iran and Saudi Arabia can provide the necessary assistance and cooperation to stop the suffering of Yemeni citizens (Al-Mandhari et al., 2019). If both Iran and Saudi Arabia agree to some form of solution, they can order the end of the blockade and ensure that food is efficiently delivered to the suffering Yemeni population (Gause, 2020). A peaceful solution as a result of Iran-Saudi accord may discourage the external aiding or interference that has actually fueled the conflict. The Yemeni civil conflict has also contributed significantly to the instability of the whole region and resultant emergent of other violent non-state actors. Legalization or peaceful settlement of the conflict has potential for the stabilization of Yemen and other neighboring countries (Sharp, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The study shed light on the significant implications of this diplomatic shift in the Arab region. As the history of relationships between Saudi Arabia and Iran shows, the two states have been rivals in the Arab region, competing for influence and power in the given area. According to the study, Saudi-Iranian rapprochement is expected to help to reduce the violence and the ensuing turmoil, which the Arab world has recently experienced. The fact that the initiative has already sparked the interest of other Arab countries means that amelioration will possibly help to moderate the violent conflicts currently defining the Muslim world. In particular, a reduced level of competition between two influential regional means that they will not be seeking to make other countries take their "side" in the emerging violent interventions as a part of sectarian conflict. As a result, the Arab world can be presumed to become more stable and safe as part of a new policy. Improved relationships

between the two countries will also mean that they are more likely to cooperate effectively on the problem of reducing the tension and resolving crises in Yemen, Syria and Iraq (Nadimi, 2021).

The research has shown that a notable reduction of proxy conflicts in the Arab region can occur as Saudi-Iranian relations improve. Indeed, it is a well-known fact that two influential states in the Arab world have supported the opposing sides of both the Yemeni Civil War and the Syrian Civil War. It means that a thaw in Saudi-Iranian relations can result in the abovementioned proxy conflicts being de-escalated. In this case, the level of violence and instability will be greatly decreased. At the same time, the better Saudi-Iranian relations are, the better will be the diplomatic dialog in general. It implies that the effectiveness of diplomatic conflict resolution and crisis management channel can be higher when there is the will of both regional powers to do it. The means to improve relations might be found for resolving the longstanding and minor disputes.

As Saudi and Iran are the two of the most powerful Islamic countries in the region, thus the religious factor was assumed to play a major role in the relations between Islamic countries. Moreover, as Saudi is Sunni countries and Iran is Shiite, the researchers stated that religious differences between two states have affected the relations very much. Thus, the regional feud between two countries got even stronger, as the religious differences increased the rivalry and tension between two states.

It can be concluded that the problem is stated correctly. In general, the main reason why Saudi Arabia's attitude towards Iran has changed is considered to be the other political aspect. The major reason affecting the relation between the countries is believed to be the relationship of the country's governments with Saudi Arabia and Iran. The political strategies of these two countries determine the nature of the relationships between them da free. Saudi Arabia tries to keep its influence in the region, and Iran intends to expand it; therefore, the task of defining the clashes in the political goals of the two nations arises.

Some of the Arab countries which were initially sympathetic to Saudi Arabia either for sectarian or political reasons might change side and pursue more neutral foreign policy approaches, thereby changing the regional dynamics. The second implication is that there are numerous economic opportunities in the Arab region from a period when Saudi and Iran relations improve (Khaleghian & Al-Nasser, 2021). The countries are endowed with a massive economic base and industries. Cooperation between the two countries is expected to escalate economic activities in terms of trade, investment, and economic infrastructure development. This situation is likely to generate employment and boost economic expansion in the region, which translated to economic stability in the Arab region.

The study highlights the possibility of increased humanitarian relief in the Yemin and Syria areas crossing conflicts. The report details that the betterment of relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran might lead to new circumstances affecting cooperation between the two states. Changes in blockades and coordinated delivery might force the two parties to work together helping the populations in both countries (Al-Rasheed, 2019). Moreover, more constructive cooperation and better relations after a period of a cold war might stabilize the situation not only. As the report suggests, it is expected to reduce proxy conflicts, sponsor diplomacy, and enhance conflict resolution. This will ultimately benefit all the sides, both regional and global ones.

The research proves that over the recent years, as regional dynamics change, Arab states might pursue diverse foreign policy strategies and seek more independence in decision-making. In the event of improvement of inter-Arab relations, this could result in a more balanced and multipolar regional order where no external actor, be it Iran, the U.S., or Russia, can exert their dominance. Enhanced economic cooperation can also stimulate economic growth in the Arab region; facilitated trade and investment in addition to improved infrastructure may drive economic diversification and job creation for the people in these countries.

In summary, the study underscored that the Saudi-Iranian rapprochement has the potential to become a major event for the Arab region, with reduced levels of tensions, increased independence of foreign policies of Arab states, and big prospects for economic development. In spite of the existing challenges of achieving this result, better relations between two major regional powers may bring an opportunity for changes and a reconfiguration of the Arab region. Mitigating the existing severe sectarian divide, managing geopolitical rivalry and geopolitical tensions, minimizing the influence of external actors but still enabling a positive role for external powers in

opening new avenues for dialogue, settling long-lasting grievances, and dealing with the complexity of domestic political processes is a serious task, which requires patience, a proactive and strategic vision on the part of negotiators, and big organizational capabilities. There is also a vital role for the international community, as it becomes possible to stimulate negotiations and facilitate ongoing dialogues by providing incentives and guaranties for positive outcomes, thus gradually promoting the transition from zero-sum games to mutually beneficial cooperation. In the case of success of the rapprochement between Saudi Arabia and Iran, prospects are high that many aspects of Middle East dynamics will be reshaped in a profound manner, opening up new avenues for cooperation and peace.

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