



CURRENT AFFAIRS



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SAUDI ARABIA-IRAN RECONCILIATION

This article covers “Daily current events “and the topic is about ‘Saudi Arabia-Iran reconciliation’ which is in news, it covers “International Relations” In GS-2, the following content has relevance for UPSC.

For Prelims: Saudi Arabia and Iran

For Mains: GS-2, International Relations

Why in news: The Saudi Arabia-Iran reconciliation, mediated by China, shows the new reality that Beijing is gradually playing a more significant role at a time when the US is engaged with other concerns.

HISTORICAL REFERENCE TO SAUDI ARABIA AND IRAN’S RELATIONSHIP

- Saudi Arabia and Iran’s conflict is based on Islamic sectarianism.
 - While Iran is the world’s leading Shia state, Saudi Arabia is regarded as the spiritual home of Sunni Islam.
 - This sectarian strife has evolved into a struggle for regional hegemony in modern times.
 - In both the Yemen and Syria wars, Iran and Saudi Arabia are on opposite sides of the conflict.
 - Iran is very critical of Saudi Arabia’s relationship with the United States.
 - Through its sanctions policy, the United States has damaged the Iranian economy for decades.
 - Saudi Arabia is concerned about Iran’s massive network of armed militias across West Asia, which it sees as a danger to its sovereignty as well as the regional balance of power.
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ABOUT THE SAUDI ARABIA-IRAN RECONCILIATION

- Iran and Saudi Arabia will bridge a seven-year rift by renewing a security cooperation pact, reopening embassies in each other's countries, and restarting economic, investment, and cultural ties.



Saudi Arabia-Iran reconciliation

THE TIMING OF THE SAUDI ARABIA-IRAN RECONCILIATION IS CRUCIAL Saudi Arabia's Perspective

Regional peace will be critical to transforming Saudi Arabia into the global hub that Vision 2030 envisions.

- As a result, Saudi Arabia has made aggressive efforts to resolve long-standing disagreements with regional countries, with the Iran deal being the most recent example.
- Further, it has led to Saudi Arabia gradually shifting away from the United States stranglehold on foreign policy.
- While the United States remains Saudi Arabia's largest military supplier, the desert kingdom has courted different powers in recent years, including Russia, China, and now Iran.

Iran's Perspective

- The pact comes as Iran intensifies its nuclear program following two years of failed US efforts to resurrect a 2015 agreement that aimed to prevent Tehran from developing a nuclear weapon.
- So far, Iran's efforts have been hampered by harsh sanctions and internal divisions.
- Seeking regional allies is critical for Iran when the Khomeini regime is at its weakest since the revolution.

ROLE OF CHINA IN SAUDI ARABIA-IRAN RECONCILIATION

- China's role as a peace broker is yet another indication of the region's paradigm shifts.
- China has long maintained relations with both countries, and the latest agreement demonstrates Beijing's rising political and economic weight in the region.

CONCERNS FOR THE US

- For a long time, the United States exercised considerable influence in West Asia.
- It has been the leading global force with influence over geopolitics in the conflict-torn region.
- Most importantly, this agreement, as mediated by China, does not bode well for the United States.

Concerns for India

- **Impact on Energy Security:** Any improvement in Iran-Saudi relations could influence India's energy security.
 - India is significantly reliant on oil imports from both countries, and any conflict or friction between them could result in oil supply disruptions and price increases.
- **The rise of China's influence in the Middle East:** The role of China in mediating the agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia demonstrates the country's rising political capital in the region, which may have ramifications for India's strategic interests.
 - India has long had friendly connections with both Iran and Saudi Arabia, and any shift in the regional balance of power could influence India's interests.
- **Impact on Chabahar port project:** India has made significant investments in the construction of Iran's Chabahar port as a gateway to Afghanistan and Central Asia.
 - Any improvement in relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia could have an influence on India's port plans, which could have ramifications for India's regional strategic objectives.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE SAUDI ARABIA-IRAN RECONCILIATION ON WEST ASIA STAKEHOLDERS

- **Israel:** The move has sparked concern in Israel, which has no formal diplomatic connections with either country.
 - Israeli leaders regard Iran as an enemy and a threat to their existence, whereas they see Saudi Arabia as a potential partner.
- **Yemen:** Riyadh engaged in Yemen against the Houthi movement after the Iran-aligned organization deposed the internationally recognized government.
 - Improved ties between Riyadh and Iran could allow negotiations between Saudi and the Houthis.
- **Syria:** Iran has offered President Bashar al-Assad military, economic, and diplomatic backing since his crackdown on protesters in 2011 left him isolated.
 - The Saudi-Iranian agreement is a step towards Syria's re-admission to the Arab League.

- **Lebanon:** For years, Lebanese politics has been divided between a pro-Iran coalition led by the powerful military group Hezbollah and a pro-Saudi coalition.
- The agreement reached by Tehran and Riyadh raises the prospect of an end to the standoff.
- **Iraq:** With Saddam Hussein's demise, Iran increased its political, security, and economic dominance in Iraq, which alarmed Saudi Arabia.
- Iraqis hope for a general regional truce that will allow them to reconstruct their country.

Way forward

- India must now deal with the new reality in which China has been able to transfer its economic clout in West Asia into diplomatic clout.
- The agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia may have a good impact on regional stability, but India will need to closely observe the emerging dynamics and determine how it may leverage its relationships with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and other regional players to ensure its strategic interests.

Source:
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