

# Iran's Relations with China under the Influence of Two Regional Events

*China's increasing role in the Middle East has gained importance. Beijing has played an influential role in mediating disputes and fostering negotiation among the states of the region. In late 2022 and the beginning of 2023, the Middle East region experienced some changes and developments among them two were most remarkable: The December 2022 China-Arabs summit and its final statement and the development in Iran-Saudi relations mediated by China in March 2023. The Iran and China relations have been influenced by both of these changes. This paper aims to address how these changes affected the relations between Iran and China. It explores Iranians' assessment of both changes and developments.*

**Keywords:** *China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Arabs statement.*

## Introduction

In recent years, China's rising role in the Middle East has gained prominence. Beijing has vigorously pursued its politico-economic, and strategic interests in the region as the world's second-largest economy and major player in international affairs. During these years China has played an influential role in mediating disputes and fostering negotiation among the states of the region. In late 2022 and the beginning of 2023, the Middle East region experienced some changes and developments among them two were most remarkable: The December 2022 China-Arabs summit and its final statement and the development in Iran-Saudi relations mediated by China in March 2023.

From December 7 to 10, 2022 a summit between China, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab countries was held in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia. Chinese President Xi Jinping's Visit to Saudi Arabia was followed by a joint statement. Four of the eighteen points that comprise the joint statement directly pertain to Iran.

After the issuance of the declaration, Iranians started to criticize both China and Iran's governments, particularly for Beijing's endorsement of a GCC claim over three Iranian islands in the Persian Gulf. Yet, a few months later in March 2023, the world observed a significant change when Iran and Saudi Arabia revealed that they had reached an agreement to resume normalized relations through a negotiation mediated by China in Beijing.

The China-backed agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia was well-received by Iranians. Intellectuals, the media, Iranian politicians, and the general public have all enthusiastically embraced and supported the Chinese-supported deal.

This paper aims to explore relations between Iran and China under the influence of these two changes. It addresses Iranians' assessment of both changes; China-Arabs summit outcomes and the China-backed agreement between Iran and

Saudi Arabia after seven years of conflict.

### **Major Points that Dealt with Iran in the China-Arabs Statement**

The China-Arab joint statement on December 9, 2022, contained 18 points four of which directly pertained to Iran:

1-Three Iranian Islands, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa, in the Persian Gulf: the bone of contention unearthed by the Chinese-Arab joint statement was the Iranian ownership of three islands. The China-Arabs joint statement pledged support for efforts by the United Arab Emirates to open formal negotiations about the sovereignty of three islands in the Persian Gulf that belong to Iran, an especially sensitive topic for Iranians. The statement sparked a huge uproar in Iran's public opinion as it called for negotiations over an issue Iran considers non-negotiable. Some officials, newspapers, and media expressed their worries about the joint statement regarding these islands. The Iranian Foreign Minister tweeted: The three islands of Abu Musa, Lesser Tunb, and Greater Tunb in the Persian Gulf are integral to Iran's territory and will always belong to its motherland. Iran will never compromise with any country on the importance of respecting the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran. This means that despite item 12 in the declaration which emphasized negotiation and stated "The leaders affirmed their support for all peaceful efforts, including the initiative and endeavors of the United Arab Emirates to reach a peaceful solution to the issue of the three islands; Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb, and Abu Musa, through bilateral negotiations by the rules of international law" from Iranian perspective, these islands are not subject to negotiation. The Iranian Foreign Minister Spokesman reaffirming the principled positions of Iran described the three Iranian islands of Abu Musa, Greater Tunb, and Little Tunb as an integral and eternal part of the Land of the Islamic Republic of Iran and added: "The Islamic Republic of Iran considers any claims on these islands as destabilizing, interfering in its internal affairs and territorial territory and strongly condemns it" (Prensa Latina, December 11, 2022). According to the Iranian Student News Agency (ISNA), in a meeting on Saturday, December 10, 2022, the Chinese Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Iran, Chang Hua, met Iran's Asia-Pacific Assistant Foreign Minister who expressed deep dissatisfaction with the arrival of the statement "China-GCC Joint Statement" on the issue of Iran's territorial integrity and stressed that "the three Iranian islands of the Persian Gulf are an integral part of the territorial integrity of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which like any other part of the land of Iran has never been the subject of negotiations with any country. It hasn't and won't be." (Iranian Student News Agency(ISNA), December 10, 2022).

Some media went further affirming that by signing this declaration China has confirmed the ownership of the UAE of these three Iranian Islands. The Parliament member Mohammad-Reza Ahmadi Sangari, from Rasht, Gilan Province, twitted on December 11, 2022: "We expect the government of China to have a similar position concerning the three islands of Iran that it wants other countries to have concerning Taiwan." (ISNA, 2022) Yet some media had mild

reactions believing that while the statement does not go so far as to declare that the three Iranian islands belong to the UAE, China's call for negotiations over their status inherently undermines Iran's claims.

2-It is believed that the declaration regarded Iran as a destabilizing country in the region and interfering in the region's countries affairs. In paragraph 11 of the declaration, the leaders affirmed the "importance of a comprehensive dialogue with the participation of the countries of the region to address the Iranian nuclear file and destabilizing regional activities, address support for terrorist and sectarian groups and illegal armed organizations, prevent the proliferation of ballistic missiles and drones, ensure the safety of international navigation and oil installations, and adhere to UN resolutions and international legitimacy"(Joint Statement, December 9, 2022). Iranians criticized the Chinese government believing that by signing this joint statement Beijing officially accepted that Iran is:

- a-destabilizing country in the region
- b-supporting terrorist groups and militants in the region
- c-making problem for shipping oil from the Persian Gulf
- d-interfering in the region's countries' affairs
- e-not concern about UN resolutions and international legitimacy.

To the Iranians, the Islamic Republic not only has not supported terrorist groups but also has fought against terrorists and many Iranians have been victims of terrorism. Mohammad Jamshidi (2022), Iranian Deputy Political Director of the President's Office, wrote on his Twitter account: "A reminder to Chinese colleagues in Beijing. While Saudi along with the US-backed ISIS and Al-Qaeda in Syria, brutalized Yemen, Iran fought terrorist groups to restore regional stability and security and to prevent the spread of insecurity toward both the East and the West,"

3-The joint statement also targeted the Iranian peaceful nuclear program; The Iranian Foreign Minister Spokesman, Nasser Kanaani, rejected the statement on issues related to the country's nuclear program and added that countries that had done their best to defeat the nuclear deal are now protesting Iran's legitimate actions by ignoring Iran's full adherence to the JCPOA and international law. Kanaani reiterated Tehran's commitment to the international 2015 nuclear deal. The spokesperson added Iran never abandons the negotiations to revive the JCPOA, noting his country regards dialogue as the sole means to lift anti-Iran sanctions (Kanaani, December 11, 2022).

4-Interference in Iran's internal affairs, the statement is regarded by Iranians as an interference in Iran's internal affairs. Because the statement has referred to Iran's territorial rights, nuclear program, regional policy, and missiles and security and defense policy. In this regard, the Iranian Foreign Ministry urgently invited the Chinese ambassador to Iran, Chang Hua, and stated that Tehran is concerned about two core issues. First, solving the power problem is an internal affair, and we hope China will not interfere." The second is "the territorial dispute between Iran and the UAE, which is an internal dispute between Iran and Arab countries, including

the three islands in the Strait of Hormuz and which are Iran's inherent territory. We also hope that the Chinese side will not interfere." (Akhbar Rooz, December 11, 2022)

### **Why China has taken such a stance?**

According to the Iranian scholars and media, there are several reasons for China's stance in contradiction of Iran's interests in the China-Arab joint statement;

1. China-US competition; Iranian scholars believe China's priority is the United States. Yet, one can assume that China's improving relations with Persian Gulf Arab states does not mean that US influence in the region will diminish. Particularly, the US military and security relations with the region's Arab states are far more extensive to be affected by developments such as China's extended trade presence in the region.
2. China in its relations with the region's Arab states is concerned with economic interests and particularly maintaining energy supply. The dollar volume of contracts signed between Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries with China is very high. Because of these great economic interests and oil, China agreed to join the Arabs against Iran. According to some Iranian analysts China has signed a statement with Saudi Arabia and the GCC with careful knowledge and information because Beijing is looking for its national interests and benefits and wants to gain a broader market for supplying its products.
3. After the Ukraine war and the escalation of China's rivalry with the United States, Beijing is changing its foreign policy and intends to enter beyond the economic and trade equations in political and security disputes between the countries of the region.
4. China might have been forced by Saudi Arabia and other countries including the UAE they will sign a cooperation agreement with China on the condition that they comment on the three Iranian islands (Ghahramanpour, 2022). In a similar statement, Ali Bigdeli (2022) has said the Chinese president signed these statements in the presence of all officials from Arab countries in the Persian Gulf and has no escaping.

### **Iranians' Reactions to the China-Arabas Joint Statement**

China and Arabs' joint statement was questioned and criticized by officials, scholars, and national media in Iran yet with a different tone. In a meeting with the Chinese Vice Premier, HU chun hua, in Tehran on December 13, 2022, President Seyed Ebrahim Raisi said that relations between the Islamic Republic of Iran and China have been expanding ever since the victory of the Islamic Revolution, and stated that some of the positions raised during the Chinese president's recent visit to the region (referring to China-Arabas joint statement) have caused dissatisfaction

1 and complaints from the Iranian people and government, and the serious demands  
 2 of Iran have been compensated for the positions expressed (Tehran Times,  
 3 December 14, 2022). Needless to mention the visit of the Chinese vice Premier to  
 4 Iran has been evaluated positively and negatively in the Iranian newspapers and  
 5 Media. Some newspapers stated that Chia sent a low-level official to Iran stating  
 6 that HU chun hua , has been removed from the upper echelons of power and has  
 7 been unable to hold or promote a political office seat at the recent Chinese  
 8 Communist Party congress. Some others have mentioned that he did not apologize  
 9 for the China stance against Iran (Jomhuri-e Eslami, December 14, 2022). Yet,  
 10 some officials and state newspapers saw his visit to Iran as important and effective.  
 11 Generally, according to analyses China's warm relationship with the Saudi  
 12 government, which in addition to establishing radicalism in the region helps to  
 13 perpetuate it while not abandoning hostility to Iran, is not good news for Tehran.  
 14 China's sharing with Arabs in regional, nuclear, and territorial claims against Iran  
 15 is a new and troubling phenomenon. Saeed Ajourlu, an Iranian expert on  
 16 International Relations, raised two main questions: why is China willing to be part  
 17 of the traditional Arab policy against Iran? And is the benefit of political  
 18 participation with Arabs more than the cost of Tehran's annoyance? His answer to  
 19 these questions is that "the fact is that China's behavior toward Iran is shocking  
 20 and incomprehensible because our view of the East (China) is an idealistic and  
 21 identity perspective, while China's understanding of politics such as Russia is  
 22 profit-driven and Machiavellian." (Iranian Student News Agency (ISNA),  
 23 December 11, 2022). According to Ajourlu since President Raisi came to power  
 24 Tehran has relied solely on an identity and value attitude on the Chinese issue,  
 25 while in the Chinese view, unlike many countries, "economy" is a priority over  
 26 "value." Basically, China's peaceful uprising is formed on this basis and has  
 27 economic and profitable settings, and in practice, until further notice, it is neither  
 28 involved in liberalism nor socialism. He stressed: "Now is the time to determine  
 29 the task of the Chinese case in Iran, which should start from changing attitudes at  
 30 the domestic policy level and lead to the foreign policy strategy and the proper  
 31 implementation of this strategy. The three sides of the real, targeted policy-making,  
 32 professional, and powerful broker are the grounds for passing the identity literature  
 33 of Shanghai to the "profit-oriented" of these relationships. There is time, but little,  
 34 it is neither so far-reaching nor lost. (Iranian Student News Agency (ISNA),  
 35 December 11, 2022).  
 36 Despite such sharp criticism of China's stance Kayhan Newspaper, a semi-  
 37 governmental newspaper, wrote on December 11, 2022 "The expansion of ties  
 38 between Beijing and Riyadh is more a strategic challenge for the undisputed  
 39 dominance of the US rather than being a challenge for Iran." It added that "China  
 40 is entering a region that has always been considered the backyard of Washington"  
 41 (Kayhan, December 11, 2022).

#### 44 **Criticisms of the Iranian Government's pro-China Policy**

46 Some Iranian newspapers, particularly the moderates, reacted to the Xi visit

1 and joint statement by questioning Iran's dependence on China. Iranians on social  
 2 media criticized their government for what they saw as a slap in the face by an  
 3 ally. They asked the government how China could have acquiesced to such a  
 4 statement that goes against Iran's interests. Moineddin Saeedi (2022), a member of  
 5 the Iranian Parliament (Majlis Shorai Islami) from Chabahar in Sistan and  
 6 Baluchistan Province, said at parliament: "Unlimited trust in China and Russia is  
 7 sheer stupidity." He also criticized the Iranian government for "not giving the right  
 8 response to China."

9 Iranian reformists not only criticized China, blaming Beijing for signing the  
 10 declaration and leaving Iran, but they also criticized the Iranian government. Ali  
 11 Bigdeli,(2022) one of the reformists, said interestingly, that Iran's deputy foreign  
 12 minister asked the Chinese ambassador very cautiously and did not even use the  
 13 word summons for this matter, but declared the cause "dialogue and negotiations."  
 14 Even Mr. Amirabdollahian, the Iranian Foreign Minister, made no mention of  
 15 China's name in response to the statement issued. Moreover, about the presidential  
 16 administration's cautious stance toward China Bigdeli stated: "We have  
 17 unaccompanied because of hatred of the West and we have thrown our book into  
 18 the arms of the East, while China and Russia are none of our strategic friends and  
 19 are trying to reduce the level of relations with us to meet the Persian Gulf's  
 20 Sheikhs' demands and reach a wider market" (Bigdeli, 2022). He affirmed China's  
 21 axis of power is based on trade and added: "Today China has signed these  
 22 statements indicating that it has distanced itself from us. And with the Iranian  
 23 government's cautious stances, the Chinese distance from us is expected to deepen  
 24 and widen. One example of that could also be that China is reducing the amount of  
 25 oil we buy, maybe our government is worried about the same thing that didn't react  
 26 very strongly because it doesn't want to lose China" (Bigdeli, 2022).

27 Jamaran News Agency, in a statement issued on December 15, 2022 by Iran's  
 28 Reforms Front, an umbrella organization of several reformist groups and political  
 29 parties called China's stance "interventionist and opportunist." Meanwhile, the  
 30 Reform Front, said "This has been one of the worst and the most humiliating  
 31 developments in which Iran's tattered foreign policy has damaged the country's  
 32 national authority" (Jamaran, December 15, 2022)

33 The unprecedented criticism of the government's 'Looking East' policy by  
 34 the Reformists continued with an article in the reformist newspaper, Etemad, by  
 35 Esmail Gerami-Moghaddam (2022), the deputy leader of the reformist National  
 36 Trust Party. He wrote that China's stance about the three islands sent a signal to the  
 37 United States that like Washington, Beijing also believes Tehran's regional  
 38 ambitions should be checked. Gerami-Moghaddam added that China preferred  
 39 trade deals with Arab countries. "This shows that Tehran's policy of supporting  
 40 stronger ties with China and its Looking East policy was a serious strategic  
 41 miscalculation." In an interview with Sharq Daily, Ali Fekri, the chairman of the  
 42 Iranian Organization for Investment and Economic Assistance, stated that China  
 43 chose not to invest in Iran and to transfer its capital and investments to other  
 44 Persian Gulf states (Sharq Dially, December 15, 2022).

45 The Iranian Newspaper, Jomhuri-e Eslami (December 14, 2022) criticized  
 46 the authorities' reaction to the joint statement signed by the Chinese president,

1 stressing the need for reconstruction in the country's foreign policy, asking  
 2 officials: "Why didn't you remind the Chinese president of the same literature that  
 3 speaks to others?" According to this Newspaper, all those from various executive,  
 4 legislative, and political apparatuses reacted to Chinese President Xi Jinping's anti-  
 5 Iranian stance during his visit to Saudi Arabia. They criticized the Chinese  
 6 president's positions with extreme conservatism that is incompatible with  
 7 defending the national interest while expecting that without considering political  
 8 consideration, they would give the Chinese president a serious warning for the  
 9 wrongdoing he committed. The authorities of the Islamic Republic, both  
 10 governmental and parliamentary, and especially the custodians of foreign policy, if  
 11 they are complimentary to China, say this clearly, but if they do not have  
 12 compliments and face-to-face, they should not be.

13 The newspaper went on to say that "the Chinese Vice Premier who came to  
 14 Tehran, instead of apologizing, resorted to justification, and the Iranian authorities  
 15 were convinced of the same thing!" and wrote: "What is important is that the  
 16 authorities of the Islamic Republic of Iran take a look at this incident and conclude  
 17 that there is no difference between the West and the East in being unreliable.  
 18 National interests are funded only by balanced politics, which Imam Khomeini,  
 19 former supreme leader, called "neither Eastern nor Western politics" and the basis  
 20 of the Islamic Republic's foreign policy. It seems that we need a serious  
 21 restructuring of our country's foreign policy to protect this basic policy (Jomhour-i  
 22 e Eslami, December 14, 2022).

23 Yet, the government's official Newspaper, Iran (2022), tried to present a  
 24 positive image of China's position in the joint statement. The Newspaper stated  
 25 Beijing officials are ready to spend more on developments related to Tehran than  
 26 ever before, and to strongly support the political and economic interests of each  
 27 member of their strategic allied network. But it should not be forgotten that  
 28 although countries pursue common goals in their international relations at times  
 29 commensurate with developments, in principle, each country adjusts its  
 30 relationship with other countries, taking into account strategic, economic, and  
 31 political priorities, and conflicts of positions and interests on certain issues in the  
 32 reconciliation process resulting from understanding the power equation in strategic  
 33 relations are acceptable. Therefore, we must not analyze that part of the joint  
 34 statement by the leaders of Beijing and Riyadh on Iran's historic and unmissable  
 35 right to its islands to the level of ignoring the realities of the deep relationship  
 36 between Iran and China in alignment with Riyadh.

### 37 38 **Iran-Saudi deal and Chins mediation from Iranian perspectives**

39  
40 Although the China-Arabs statement had influenced the Sino-Iranian  
 41 relationship the meditation of China in the new development of relations between  
 42 Iran and Saudi Arabia is viewed as a good move. Xi's visit to Saudi Arabia at the  
 43 end of 2022 and the China-Arabs summit pushed China-Arab relations toward  
 44 institutionalization. That in turn spurred Iran to strengthen cooperation with China  
 45 and encouraged President Ebrahim Raisi to visit China in February 2023. These  
 46 two top-level diplomatic visits played a key role in improving the relations

1 between Iran and Saudi Arabia (Raine, March 15, 2023). Not to forget that  
2 regional neighbors strongly desired Riyadh and Teheran's rapprochement.

3 A significant development in global diplomacy was reported on March 10,  
4 2023, when Iran and Saudi Arabia disclosed that they had reached an agreement to  
5 resume normalized relations through a negotiation mediated by China in Beijing.  
6 After several days (March 6-10) of intensive negotiations between the Iranian  
7 Secretary of the Supreme National Security Council, Admiral Ali Shamkhani, and  
8 his Saudi counterpart, Musaad bin Mohammed al-Aiban, in Beijing, on March 10,  
9 an agreement was made to reestablish relations between the two countries, in a  
10 ceremony signed by a joint statement between Iran, Saudi Arabia and China. The  
11 two largest Middle Eastern countries by area and oil production, Iran and Saudi  
12 Arabia, announced the agreement in a joint statement. The signed agreement  
13 includes the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries, the  
14 reopening of embassies, mutual respect for national sovereignty, and non-  
15 interference in internal affairs (Pierson, March 11, 2023). After suspending  
16 diplomatic ties in 2016, the move facilitated the restoration of relations between  
17 Iran and Saudi Arabia and is expected to have long-term ramifications for the  
18 Middle East and beyond. By this development, the tensions between Tehran and  
19 Riyadh will be ended after seven years, with the two actors reviving diplomatic  
20 relations with China's role in mediation.

21 Indeed, the deal was a great development for the region and the globe. The  
22 agreement was one of the outcomes of the March 2023 talks between President  
23 Ebrahim Raisi and President Xi Jinping in Beijing, which laid the groundwork for  
24 the establishment of new, extremely serious negotiations between the Iranian and  
25 Saudi Arabian delegations. Intellectuals, the media, Iranian politicians, and the  
26 general public have all enthusiastically embraced and supported the Chinese-  
27 supported agreement.

28 The Iranians have appreciated China for its constructive role in promoting the  
29 development of countries' relations, which is required to address challenges,  
30 increase peace and stability, and promote international cooperation. By refusing to  
31 take sides in the Saudi-Iranian conflict, Beijing has established itself as a player  
32 capable of resolving disputes rather than simply selling weapons to the opposing  
33 parties. On the international stage, Iranians see the development as a significant  
34 victory for China. One could argue that this is China's first effective attempt to  
35 take on a transregional role in the Middle East, which the US had previously held(  
36 Hosseini, 2023). Acceptance of China's initiative by Tehran and Riyadh is another  
37 indication of the US government's decline and the direction the new global order is  
38 taking. A world whose quirks are probably still unclear, but of which Washington  
39 is no longer the goddess. China will now replace the United States in that role and  
40 will benefit from the confidence that the surrounding nations already had in the  
41 US, but this time it will be directed towards China. Stated differently, China is  
42 poised to displace the United States as the dominant power in the Middle Eastern  
43 region. Iranian analysts claim that Beijing's opening of the seven-year-old knot  
44 between Tehran and Riyadh and China's increasing influence in the area signals a  
45 change in political calculations that no longer see Western capitals as the route to  
46 regional agreements.



1 The recent diplomatic relations initiative between Iran and Saudi Arabia,  
 2 mediated by China, has improved the outlook for future peace. Despite high  
 3 tensions and ongoing efforts to resolve the conflict between the two countries by  
 4 other regional (such as Iraq and Oman) and global powers (such as Russia),  
 5 China's engagement could have important implications for regional stability and  
 6 global politics. China is a potentially significant player in resolving this long-  
 7 standing dispute due to its strong economic ties to both nations and its expanding  
 8 regional influence (Ullah, 2023).

9 This achievement demonstrates China's rising influence in defining regional  
 10 dynamics and represents an important diplomatic success for the country.

11 Furthermore, the Islamic Republic of Iran and other Middle Eastern countries  
 12 have shown that they require a guardian or a mediator, and this is no different in  
 13 the eyes of Iranians. The Chinese type is currently being activated in place of its  
 14 US counterpart as the United States' role is diminished. Previously, there was this  
 15 hope, and most notably it was the demand of the Islamic Republic of Iran that  
 16 countries in their region cooperate without the interference of foreigners and  
 17 transregional countries and resolve their disputes, and even at some point Iraq  
 18 played a role as a regional country that they both trusted between Iran and Saudi  
 19 Arabia, but at the end, we see that such a demand was not met, and a transregional  
 20 country of the new superpower has played a role (Hosseini, 2023).

21 Several rounds of continuing negotiations held in Iraq and Oman and China's  
 22 entry into the Iran-Saudi conflict have added to the importance of this issue, and  
 23 on the other hand, some changes in the chess of global developments have brought  
 24 the two sides to the point of convergence. The agreement was a significant  
 25 development, both regionally and globally. It was one of the outcomes of  
 26 President Xi Jinping and President Ebrahim Raisi's talks in January 2023 which  
 27 provided the basis for the formation of new and very serious negotiations between  
 28 the delegations of Iran and Saudi Arabia.

29 Beijing's serious entry into the Middle East and its long-term investments,  
 30 along with its interest in playing an effective role in the future world equations, all  
 31 reflect recent changes in the international system, from the war in Ukraine to the  
 32 development of NATO and the imposition of European sanctions, and the  
 33 involvement of certain countries in these developments. Globally, then, in such a  
 34 setting, the world is confronted with novel and exquisite variables. In other words,  
 35 it seems that the continuation of international conflicts such as the Ukraine crisis,  
 36 financial and trade issues, and the possibility of escalating some crises in the world  
 37 have led Chinese leadership to set a vision for a future in which international and  
 38 regional actors can play a role even with conflicts of interest (GT staff reporters,  
 39 2023). This is a win-win game. China's attempt to resume the deal from analysts'  
 40 point of view is a sign of changes taking place in the world order.

41 The Chin supported-agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia is described  
 42 by Iranians as an earthquake in the political sphere and an end to US hegemony in  
 43 the region, and it is believed that with this agreement the post-US era in the  
 44 Persian Gulf region has begun. For sure China will become an influential player in  
 45 the region. Indeed, China has expanded its geo-economics sphere from the China  
 46 Sea to the Persian Gulf with a clear strategy. China, has succeeded in replacing the

United States and has played an important role in resolving one of the Middle East's most important regional tensions, and as an alternative to America, and presenting itself as the guarantor of this political agreement (Faraji Rad, 2023).

Moreover, China's mediation proved more and more that the era of Western unilateralism and totalitarianism was over with the US focus, demonstrating that Asian countries can form a strong global alliance.

China's involvement in the negotiations and agreement between Iran and Saudi Arabia demonstrated that, in the current environment, other countries have more influence over the balance of power and security in the region than just the United States. China can also effectively participate in the initial phase of international competition aimed at establishing stability and balance in the region. The biggest proof that China is pursuing a more proliferative, benign image in international diplomacy is the surprise news that Beijing used to successfully undermine the US. The Chinese intervention in the agreement between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran is generally regarded as a startling move that strengthens Beijing's capacity to project soft power internationally at the expense of the United States.

Iranian scholars believe that the existing process reflects the fact that new waves of cooperation between Iran, China, Saudi Arabia, and other regional powers and major powers are emerging, and more stability to nuclear diplomacy and Vienna talks they will.

At the regional level, the emphasis on the two countries' strategic security agreement in January 2001 and the General Agreement on Economic Cooperation, Commerce, Investment, Technical, Scientific, Cultural, Sports, and Youth in March 1998 is more important than simply establishing a relationship. This demonstrates that Riyadh has come to the full realization that it must build positive relationships and increase its capabilities with Tehran. Reductions in hostilities between Tehran and Riyadh will also benefit Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, and—possibly most importantly—Yemen (Mostafaei Dehnavi, 2023). Moreover, this China-mediated agreement will influence the growth of economic and trade exchanges amongst the countries of the region, aside from its significant contribution to regional stability and security.

At the national level in general, the relationship with the Saudis is positive and welcomed by Iranians provided it serves the interests of the country. To sum up the Iran-Saudi deal with the help and support of China is a major development that will have several regional and global impacts:

1. It demonstrates China's growing influence on the world stage
2. It reduces tensions in the Middle East between two regional powers
3. It could help lead to the end of the war in Yemen
4. It could complicate the normalization of Saudi-Israeli relations
5. It may cement the Assad's government position in the Syrian
6. It would influence the world order
7. It provides a ground for a new wave of cooperation between Iran, China, and Saudi Arabia.
8. It ensures the national interests of both countries

## 9. It changes the regional order and arrangements

Generally, as experts have noted, the world has praised the China-mediated talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia, as a watershed moment in de-escalating conflicts and restoring peace in the Middle East, as well as injecting stability into an unstable geopolitical landscape. This demonstrated that China's diplomatic philosophy of promoting peace and development is far more appealing than some countries' tactics of inciting conflict to expand their political sphere in the Persian Gulf (Fandi and Shumei, 2023).

## Conclusion

The issuance of the China-Arabs joint statement in December 2022 led Iranians to criticize China believing that by signing such a statement Beijing shrewdly distanced itself from Iran. Most sharp criticisms have been made by some officials and in particular, those who are labeled reformists in Iran on the Chinese government for signing such a joint statement. They have also questioned and criticized the Iranian government for its policy towards China and its “look east” strategy.

Despite some sharp and mild criticisms of the Chinese-Arabs joint declaration, should be noted that Iran still has a sense of proportion in its diplomacy with China. It is not a "direct summons" in Western countries such as the United States. It proves that even though Tehran is dissatisfied, it still attaches great importance to its relations with Beijing and does not want to create unnecessary estrangement with China. For China also Iran is an important country in the region. What is significant in Sino-Iranian relationships is that if China wants to strike a balance between Iran and Saudi Arabia and other GCC states, it needs to also pay heed to Iran's sensitivities. Iran has expressed its strong desire to upgrade relations with China. Therefore, China and Iran have an opportunity to strengthen their relations if both sides' sensitivities are respected.

China's mediation between Iran and Saudi Arabia in March 2023 to get rid of seven years of conflict between the two countries has been evaluated positively by Iranians. The Iranians have appreciated China for its constructive role in promoting the development of the two countries' relations. The development would have a great positive impact regionally and globally. In particular, at the regional level Iran-Saudi agreement will have a significant contribution to the stability and security of the Middle East and China's growing role in the region's affairs.

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